

# **‘Children of the Stones’: The Securitization of Palestinian Children by Israel**

Written by Kristiana Eleftheria Papi

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KRISTIANA ELEFThERIA PAPI, FEB 19 2016

### **‘Children of the Stones’: Israel’s Securitization of Children and Young People in the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

#### **Introduction**

The Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question in particular, has attracted scholarly analysis across a wide array of academic disciplines. In light of the recent outbreak of violence in the summer of 2014, attention to the region and its continuing instability has been renewed in both the media and in academic scholarship. Despite literature on the conflict being prolific, an area that has been severely under-theorized is the role and presence of children and young people. While security threats abound in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), little has been said of how the child fits into discussions of security in the region. This dissertation seeks to elucidate the position of children in Palestine in relation to state security, arguing that they have been securitized by the Israeli state. Using the Copenhagen School’s securitization framework as a theoretical basis to inform the discussion, this dissertation seeks to understand and evidence the presence of a *subtle* and *covert* securitization process, constructing the Palestinian child as a threat. Through examining both official statements concerning the involvement of children in ‘security-related offences’, and the Israeli practice of legal discrimination in child detention, it will be shown that a highly complex process of securitization is taking place, that only an analysis that goes beyond the Copenhagen School can elucidate.

Whilst the idea of the child as the securitized subject remains under-theorized, their active presence in the conflict has received significant attention, particularly during the First and Second Intifadas. Having endured decades of oppression under Israeli occupation; for the Palestinian people in December 1987, “frustration boiled over finally in the sustained period of unrest known as the *intifada* (an Arabic word meaning literally “shaking off,” but also used to denote political uprising).”[1] Quite uniquely, the First Intifada was characterized by mass civil disobedience, “restricting itself to stone-throwing, demonstrations and protests.”[2] It was at this time that Palestinian children became visible. Considering the very grass-roots nature of the uprising, and the subsequent lack of institutionalized coordination, “demonstrations were often arranged at the local level by youths”. [3] Whilst eventually harnessed by organized factions[4], it was clear that the resistance movement had been birthed out of the dissatisfaction of Palestine’s young people, demonstrating that “a younger generation of Palestinians had come of age.”[5] It was therefore, the young of Palestine that caught the attention of the world in 1987. The most common means of resistance employed by children and young people was to use “homemade slingshots to pummel passing cars and Israeli Army outposts with stones”. [6] People across the world watched as “Young boys with stones confronted Israeli soldiers with automatic weapons, like David standing in the face of Goliath.”[7] The stone thus became ‘a symbol of the uprising’[8], and the children throwing them, ‘*atfal al-hijara*’, ‘*the children of the stones*’.[9] The perceived power and influence of these ‘children of the stones’ cannot be overemphasized. As Siraj Sait states, “These “children of the stones”, as popularized by Arab media, have been perhaps the single most important factor in sustaining the Palestinian resistance of the Israeli occupation of their lands.”[10]

Throughout the outbreaks of violence that have followed, children and young people have continued to be present

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and active contributors to the resistance movement. This has however, come at a cost. Illustrative of their wartime experiences is the most recent outbreak of violence, in July 2014, during Israel's Operation Protective Edge. In this most recent surge of armed conflict, "Palestinian health officials say 2,139 people, most of them civilians, including more than 490 children, have been killed in Gaza".[11] United Nations estimates put the figure of wounded children at around 3,100[12], and the number of children in need of direct psychosocial support following the cessation of the Operation at 37,000.[13]

## *Disclaimers*

As evidence of Israel's securitization of Palestinian children, this dissertation will examine official rhetoric in statements issued by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs', found in their online public statements archive. It must be noted, however, that the documents directly cited throughout the empirical analysis, evidencing the securitization process, are only selective. The specific documents cited are the most useful and pertinent to the discussion on child securitization. Thus, due to space constraints and in order to conduct a more in depth analysis, not all available supporting evidence is cited in the main body of the dissertation. However, should the reader wish to engage with the topic further, they are invited to see an extended collection of sources in the Appendix at the end of the dissertation.

An additional disclaimer concerns the use of Israeli Military Orders pertaining to the OPT, concerning the practice of child detention as evidence of the securitization process. The information cited in this analysis is of a secondary nature, due to not being able to access the documents first-hand. The Israel State Archives, the Palestinian Mission in the United Kingdom and the Israeli Embassy to the United Kingdom were contacted for information on how to retrieve Israeli Military Orders; however due to geographical and financial constraints, it was not possible to gain access to them.

It should also be noted, that both the Israeli official statements and the Military Orders that are referenced as evidence of Israel's securitizing process, are not confined to a specific period of time or a particular episode of violence. Such sources are representative of the attitude and practices of the Israeli state regarding Palestinian children, throughout the conflict.

## *Overview of the Chapters*

In an attempt to evidence and analyze the securitization of Palestinian children by the Israeli state, this dissertation shall begin by outlining the Copenhagen School's theory of securitization in order to define the theoretical basis of the discussion. It will be shown however, that the Copenhagen School framework is deficient and benefits from the application of selective critiques. There shall be a discussion of critiques concerning the misplaced prominence of the speech act as the constructor of security, and of the importance of including a study of *practice* in analyses of securitization. Additionally, the prominence of the state and its ability to securitize in the Copenhagen School framework will be critiqued. It shall be argued that the framework's theorization excludes certain actors (here the child) from speaking their own security concerns, and thus allows the state to dominate the security agenda.

The second chapter will situate the child within current international relations scholarship, addressing a key gap in securitization theory. This discussion shall be informed by debates in the literature concerning the nature of childhood and their position in the international system; as well as by literature that addresses the under-theorization of the child as a valuable source of knowledge.[14] Through identifying this gap as a key flaw in the Copenhagen School's framework, it will be argued that the child represents a key source of knowledge for security studies, and that their exclusion has negative implications for the field's analytical strength.

Chapter 3 shall turn to an empirical analysis of the Palestinian situation. Using Israeli Foreign Ministry public statements as evidence, it shall be argued that through the visible securitization of *other* Palestinian actors, namely the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian society as a whole, children and young people have become securitized subjects. This phenomenon of 'securitization through association', it will be argued, constitutes part of a complex and subtle process that remains hidden without a consideration of securitization as a multi-layered and complex process.

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Continuing the empirical analysis, Chapter 4 shall evidence an additional method of securitizing Palestinian children, through Israeli legal discrimination regarding the detention of children for 'security-related offences'. The chapter shall further evidence the complex nature of securitization, here highlighting the role of *practice* in such processes. Through analyzing Israeli Military Orders and their application to Palestinian children it will be argued that it is also through the routinized practice of legal discrimination that the Palestinian child is constructed as inherently threatening to state security. It shall also be considered, as a reflection on the two empirical analyses, what the implications are on the ability of the child to speak its own security, and therefore who is speaking for them in these instances.

It shall be concluded, that a process of multidimensional, complex and highly subtle securitization is being enacted by the Israeli state. This process seeks to construct the child as threatening to state security through both securitizing other actors in official discourse, and through legal practices. This securitization, it will be argued, is highly dangerous and has serious implications for the rights of children living in the OPT. Therefore, moves towards desecuritization are recommended with a view to restoring the rights of the child, whilst recognizing their potential for agency in the conflict.

## *Contributions*

Through this dissertation a new lens will be formulated, through which to view the position and role of Palestinian children in relation to the Israeli state – as securitized actors. In academic literature so far, there has been little focus on the Palestinian child as the subject of security. This dissertation contributes therefore, to this understanding through linking the Copenhagen School and some of its prominent critiques to children and young people in a new way. Current literature on children in Palestine focuses on the fields of psychological, trauma discourse and sociological enquiry. This dissertation seeks however, to look at children and young people in a different light, analyzing them instead within the realm of security studies, and thus offering an alternative approach. Additionally, this dissertation offers the valuable contribution of connecting the theoretical basis of securitization with empirical case studies, providing new insight into the idea of complex securitization and its relevance to the Palestinian context.

## **Chapter 1 – The Copenhagen School and Securitization Theory**

Conceptualized by so-called 'Copenhagen School' theorists, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde in their investigation, "*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*"; the study of securitization seeks to understand and explain the formation of security threats. Their concern is primarily with *why* and *how* certain issues in global politics come to be perceived as threats to state security, and in turn why some issues are not. The concept of *security* itself is elusive, and the authors argue that through portraying an issue as a 'matter of security', it is moved "beyond the established rules of the game" and is framed as either "a special kind of politics or as above politics".[15] This elevation from what is referred to as 'normal' politics into the realm of the 'exceptional', results in the legitimization of 'exceptional measures' to handle the security threat, "justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure." [16]

At its core, securitization theory contends that security is in essence, socially constructed. Seeking to break down this constructive process, the authors identify the actors involved in securitization, the *securitizing actor* (the individual or group "who performs the security speech act"[17]), and the audience (whose role is to accept the securitizing move). Additionally, we are introduced to the concept of a security referent. This refers to the object that is framed as either posing a threat, or as being threatened. The Copenhagen School argues that the state is "still generally privileged as the actor historically endowed with security tasks and most adequately structured for the purpose." [18] This, as we will see shortly, is an understanding that has been questioned heavily by securitization critics, and is particularly interesting considering our study of Israel.

The performative act of speech, employed by the securitizing actor is the distinguishing feature of the Copenhagen

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School's theory. The authors discuss issues of security as being presented as existential threats[19] through the use of speech. Therefore, the Copenhagen School focuses on the concept of the *speech act* to define the specific moment in which security is created, and an issue may become securitized. The idea of the speech act has its roots in language theory and was conceptualized by Austin[20]. At its base, it suggests that through the utterance of words, something is done and an action is taken. Thus, on this basis, the Copenhagen School argues that *security* is "a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat." [21] The use of the speech act, a *securitizing move* as the authors call it, is however insufficient on its own. The success of the move is conditional on its acceptance by the intended audience, most often the general public. Without such acceptance, the move will be unsuccessful and fail to become securitized.[22]

According to the theorists, the ultimate goal in processes of securitization is in fact, desecuritization. In their view, an issue becoming securitized (that is being referred to in the language of *security* and *threat*) evidences a failure to deal with the issue in the realm of normal politics[23]. Moving an issue into the realm of security, should in their minds, not be idealized. "It works to silence opposition and has given power holders many opportunities to exploit "threats" for domestic purposes, to claim a right to handle something with less democratic control and constraint." [24] Therefore, desecuritization, "is the optimal long-range option...it means not to have issues phrased as "threats against which we have counter-measures but to move them out of this threat-defense sequence and into the ordinary public sphere." [25]

Securitization theory proves useful in analyzing the creation and construction of security threats in contemporary international relations, with considerations of the speech act revealing the realities of security discourses on national and international levels. The theory will as such provide the basis for our analysis of the construction of Palestinian children in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as security threats.

## *Critiquing the Theory: Complex Securitization*

Despite its usefulness, the Copenhagen School has attracted significant criticism on various fronts, all of which would be impossible to address in the scope of this investigation. For the purposes of our study, however, it is important to address the critiques levied against the School's theorization of the *speech act*, namely the exclusion of other forms of communication such as physical practices, and the implications of privileging the state in its ability to securitize issues. In this way, we may be able to utilize a more refined securitization framework in order to analyze the Israeli/Palestinian context in a more effective manner.

Of particular relevance to our discussion, is the centrality of the speech act as the *creator* of security threats. Various scholars of security studies have contested the Copenhagen School's focus on the conceptualization of security as a self-referential practice, and on the centrality of the speech act as the mechanism through which security is created. As Thierry Balzacq posits in his book, '*Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*', "securitization is a practice, which can be either discursive or non-discursive" [26], and that "beneath and above the discursive "level" loom subtle yet decisive processes of securitization that only an approach through practices can disclose." [27] Balzacq conceptualizes securitization in the sociological variant, highlighting the social construction of security through argumentative processes and emphasizing the role of various practices.[28] He identifies security as "a strategic (pragmatic) process that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances" [29]. This perspective is positioned against the philosophical approach whose focus is situated on the centrality of the speech act, and on its self-referential nature. In his view, focusing on the speech act, *ultimately* reduces security to a *conventional procedure...which the "felicity circumstances" (conditions of the speech act) must fully prevail for the act to go through.* [30] His approach to 'securitization through practices' is particularly useful, since it allows us to move beyond the Copenhagen School's prioritization of the speech act in constructing security.

Didier Bigo's idea that nondiscursive practices such as "legal devices, political rhetoric, police practices, surveillance technologies...and so on" [31], contribute to the construction of security is central to understanding implicit and often hidden processes of securitization. Balzacq describes this idea as a 'web of practices' held together by various policy tools [32], activating a "specific *dispositif*" [33] and "contributing to the routinization of practices" [34]. To understand

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securitization in the Israeli case, it would be extremely beneficial to broaden our approach to identifying securitizing mechanisms beyond the speech act. Balzacq's argument highlights a key failure of the Copenhagen School, its lack of attention given to the potential for multiplicity in the construction of security[35].

Another criticism that the Copenhagen School faces is the emphasis it places on the specific moment in which securitization takes place. The focus on the speech act presents an inaccurate and limiting understanding of the construction of security, since it suggests that the movement of an issue into the realm of security can be narrowed down to a specific moment. Put simply, securitization is a process, not occurring in a singular moment[36]. For scholars like Matt McDonald, security is constructed through "routinized practices rather than only through specific speech acts that enable emergency measures." [37] Therefore, to position security in the realm of the exceptional, and of 'dramatic emergency measures'[38], reifies a false perception of a polarity between 'normal' and 'exceptional' politics. As Rita Abrahamsen has argued, "focusing on a moment when an issue ceases to be a political issue and becomes a security one suggests an either/or approach to politics in which there are no gradations or continuums of issue/problem/threat." [39]

With regards to the Israeli case in particular, it is also necessary to acknowledge the possibility for institutionalized securitization. Copenhagen School theorists highlight the idea of *institutionalization* as a means of explaining deeply entrenched securitization within a society, arguing that, "Securitization can be either ad hoc or institutionalized"[40]. The term *institutionalization* "is used to highlight when security no longer needs to be uttered every single time in order to designate what constitutes an existential threat"[41], meaning that for the audience, understanding the issue as a matter of security becomes "taken for granted." [42] In this, a state of security becomes the norm, and questions regarding the legitimacy of such securitizations are disallowed. We shall see that recognizing securitization as potentially institutionalized is extremely useful for understanding Israel's securitization of Palestinian children, since it offers us a clearer view of securitization in environments, like Israel, where there is an in-built perception of "persistent or recurrent" threat[43].

Another incredibly important critique to be aware of when questioning the traditional conceptualization of securitization concerns the privileging of the state within the framework. Copenhagen School scholars privilege the state in its ability to 'speak' security and focus solely on the state or the nation as the referent of security.[44] This is problematic, since in this, "important normative commitments"[45] are made regarding who is permitted to dominate the security agenda. This is particularly relevant to our study since we are dealing with the voices of non-state actors, particularly children and their inability to speak their own security. Placing the state above non-state actors in this way, according to McDonald, "serves to marginalize the experiences and articulations of the powerless in global politics, presenting them...at worst as passive recipients of elite discourses." [46] Lene Hansen in her analysis of the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School securitization framework, further questions the placement of the state and elite actors as the primary referent of security, and the exclusion of the individual from its conceptualization. Additionally, she takes issue with the privileging of speech as the creator of security. She argues that "the focus on speech produces problems in situations where the possibilities of speaking security are constrained, and the conditions for becoming a referent are such that gender security is almost excluded from qualifying." [47] Though a gender-based critique, we may draw parallels from her study to our understanding of the child's position in the securitization paradigm, specifically with their lack of ability to express their own security concerns. She highlights the Copenhagen School's requirement that women find a way to insert themselves into international discourse in order for their security concerns to be heard. This need, she argues, excludes subjects whose means of securing themselves do not center on speech.[48] This point is crucial to our understanding of the exclusion of children's voices in securitization theory, for as Hansen eloquently puts it, "if security is a speech act, then it is simultaneously deeply implicated in the production of silence"[49].

## **Chapter 2 – Children as Subjects of Security**

The critiques of the previous chapter regarding security as a speech act, and security as a process constituted by various practices, allow us to analyze the reality of securitization more comprehensively. They offer valuable

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contributions to our study of the role of the state in the Copenhagen School and its elevated potential to speak its own security whilst addressing the lack of non-state voices in international security discourses. However, while scholars such as Hansen[50] choose to widen the scope of security studies by opening up the debate on the role of gender (or the lack of) in the field, there has very rarely been significant attention given to an analysis of the *child* as the subject of security. This chapter shall, therefore be devoted to highlighting the glaring gap in the Copenhagen School framework; the absence of an analysis of children and young people. Alison Watson in her book, *Children and International Relations: A New Site of Knowledge*, speaks of children in the discipline as "silent force[s]", with little attention being given to understanding their contribution as subjects of analysis to the field of study.[51] This observation is extremely problematic for security studies, and the study of international relations as a whole, since children are present and active in all areas of life and their inclusion therefore is important for our understanding of the discipline.

## *The Victim v's Agent Dilemma*

If we may agree that we have first established that the Copenhagen School and its common critics do not seek to include the child in their analysis, then we may now proceed to assess how children are presented and analyzed more broadly in international relations studies. A key theme that seems to present itself in the literature, concerns children as essentially contested subjects, that is, they embody a tension between *victimhood* and *agency*. The question of the child's agency in the general sense is problematic, since as Tamar Schapiro notes, "childhood...is essentially a predicament...the condition of childhood is one in which the agent is not yet in a position to speak in her own voice because there is no voice which counts as hers"[52]. This observation encapsulates a central dilemma that scholars face when seeking to identify the potential role of the child in international politics; namely, to what extent can the child exercise its own agency and make its own choices. In the majority of contemporary child studies and media accounts, children are presented as "victims, of senseless wars, grinding poverty or natural disasters and famine"[53]. This identity ascription implicitly isolates children from the political and social contexts in which they exist, disempowering them from active engagement with their environments. Referring to the child as 'victim', actively removes their independent agency and "obscures the instrumentality bestowed on and found in children"[54].

"An increasing trend in low-intensity conflict in failing states is the use of children as irregular soldiers in both insurgent and state military forces"[55], and it is this phenomenon that has highlighted the problematic duality of children as potentially both victim, i.e. the *threatened* subject, and also as the *threat* to security. There is subsequently, another side to the discourse surrounding the presence of children in studies of international security; namely their potential for agency. Whilst, as has been discussed, there tends to be a voiding of agency through a general perception of victimization, there are instances when children are included in security narratives, and their agency is highlighted. Most often, however, their inclusion appears in terms of *negative agency*. In certain instances "states are more accepting of the notion that children can acquire 'negative agency' as opposed to 'positive agency'"[56] meaning that "children may be held responsible for the crimes that they have committed (negative agency) at an age when it is generally assumed that they are too young to make any particular societal contribution (positive agency)."[57] This, as shall be evidenced, is particularly pertinent to our study, considering the negative agency ascribed by the Israeli state to Palestinian children involved in the conflict.

As a brief caveat, it must be noted that in the face of debates pertaining to agency versus victim status, it can be easy to lose sight of the realities that children with these dilemmas face. It is therefore important to recognize the right of all children, in whichever context they are growing up, to be free from violence. It is crucial that questions concerning their potential agency and activity in conflict, should never diminish their rights enshrined in international law, to be entitled to special protection, and to be "given opportunities and facilities, by law and other means, to enable him to develop...in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity."[58]

## *Children as Sources of Knowledge*

Scholarship surrounding the role of non-state actors in the security environment is now coming to the fore, with greater attention being given to exposing the voices of subjects with whom securitization theory does not concern itself. In the case of Palestine, we see scholars such as Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, focus on addressing the

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perceived silencing of gender in the conflict, and on the "mis-representation of women in the reality of political conflicts." [59] It is her belief that through presenting "women's contestatory narratives", "alternative spaces for discourse" may be created [60]. It is this approach – the articulation of women's experiences under occupation – that needs to be transferred to the child subject.

That said, with an increasing body of literature developing on the position of the child in armed conflict, it is slowly becoming recognized "that children have their own very valuable perspectives and priorities" [61]. Their inclusion as *speakers* in analyses of international security (if attempted) has the possibility to "allow for a fuller understanding of what agency means, and may result in the inclusion of children as 'knowledge agents' whose presence may contribute to the demarcation of the discourse itself." [62]

Despite the glaring lack of attempts to place the child within the securitization framework, Maria Hellman et.al's case for the inclusion of non-traditional groups in security frameworks is particularly helpful as it specifically notes the importance of including the child in such discussions. The authors argue for a "rethink[ing] of the concept of security" [63], as a concept that acknowledges the role that "Children, women, and grass-roots movements" play in the "making and breaking of security". [64] Pertinent to our case study, they note that the "Recognition of children as political agents is especially important in societies where children and youths dominate the population in numerical terms." [65] As we see in Palestine, the majority of the population of the Occupied Territories is under the age of eighteen [66], a fact that must drive scholars of security and conflict to acknowledge the weight that children and young people can carry in the conflict environment.

The absence of children in these political arenas is reflective of their (and other non-state actors) dismissal by traditional international relations theories, and also by the Copenhagen School itself. In this vein, Cynthia Enloe, points out the most glaring problem with traditional IR scholarship, (and this author believes with securitization theory also), which is relevant to a discussion of children in the discipline. "By definition" she writes,

*"people on the margins, those who are silenced, those perched on the bottom rung are precisely those who...lack what it takes to have a meaningful impact on the course of those particular events that together cause certain regional or world patterns to take shape the way they do."* [67]

The problem with traditional international relations thought, she argues, is that it "presumes *a priori* that margins, silences and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent and far from power that how they are *kept* there could not possibly be of interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer." [68] While securitization theory in many ways seeks to set itself apart from this epistemology, it seems that in practice, it's focus on the state and the exclusion other actors as subjects of analysis serves to keep existing understandings of power firmly in place, disallowing the voice of the child, or other subjects to be heard. In the words of Ken Booth in his analysis of the future of international relations scholarship, it is crucial for us to critically assess existing approaches, something that requires "listening carefully to the subject's 'screaming silences'." [69] In so doing, it should be expected that we may be able to gain a fuller understanding of the place and voice of the child in security debates and discussions, providing emancipatory knowledge that benefits the child and society as a whole.

## Chapter 3 – Israeli Representations of the Palestinian Child: Securitization through Association

Thus far, we have analyzed the expediency and various limitations of the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, as well as entering into a discussion of the notable absence and subsequent necessity of including a child-focused perspective within security studies. Having developed the backdrop against which we may analyze the securitization of children, attention shall now turn specifically to Israel, and will consider it's securitization of Palestinian children during armed struggles.

In Israel we observe an extremely unique society, inherently preoccupied with maintaining security. As Yuval Yoaz notes,

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*"Israel is in a permanent state of emergency. This is not a security evaluation or a statement about people's state of mind. It is a legal fact. The legal state of emergency, which grants the government extensive, even Draconian, powers was declared on the establishment of the state and has never been revoked."*[70]

Therefore, here it is not sufficient to talk simply about selective securitizations, based on political will or for other purposes. In the state of Israel, "normal politics" is immersed in the discourse and praxis of "existential threats"; making the distinction and movement between 'normal' and 'exceptional' politics almost indistinguishable.[71] This characteristic, has its roots in the persecution of the Jewish people throughout history and across the world, and has led to the development of a sort of 'ghetto mentality'[72]. As Ronnie Olesker puts it; "The slaughter of the Jewish people during World War II and later the attacks of the Arab nations on Israel following its declaration of independence serve to elevate the principle of security to mythical proportions." [73] Their historical experiences have manifested in "what some call 'siege mentality'" or, "crusader anxiety"[74]. It is against this backdrop, that we must base our analysis of Israel's response to the involvement of Palestinian children in violence and activism against the occupation.

As discussed, securitization as conceptualized by the Copenhagen School, is a linear process focusing on the presence of a speech act. When assessing the Palestinian case however, working within this framework obscures more than it reveals about the securitization process. In the Israeli/Palestinian situation, an expansion of the framework in view of the aforementioned critiques is necessary. Arguments acknowledging the potential for multi-layered securitizations, and the non-linear nature of securitizing processes shed much more light on the situation in Palestine. We can see that in the case of Palestinian children involved in conflict-related activities, (and extending to all children in the OPT), the securitization occurring is not singular. Through a more detailed inspection, it can be observed that the framing of children as security threats materializes through the overt securitization of other Palestinian actors. It is for this reason that we may assert that the kind of securitization we see regarding children, manifests itself in incredibly subtle and nuanced forms, less visible through the Copenhagen School's framework. We see that children are securitized indirectly through their association with *other* actors in the conflict; namely the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Palestinian society more broadly.

## *Securitizing the Palestinian Authority*

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs[75] (IMFA) publishes official statements and documents on a regular basis. If we look back to statements issued during the Second Intifada, we can see a very specific representation of children and young people in the official discourse; as linked to the influence of other groups when discussing their activities during the conflict. When the violent activities of children are discussed, it is almost always in conjunction with the narrative that the PA is actively encouraging and seeking to influence them towards violent behavior. One way that this is exhibited is through the common link made between children's involvement in the conflict, and the PA-administered education system. IMFA statements assert that;

*"The textbooks used in the Palestinian Authority school system...are replete with strong expressions of hatred towards Israel, negation of its right to exist and praise for the struggle against it, as well as anti-Semitic expressions against the Jews."*[76]

They state that, "*Palestinian youth are educated from birth in an atmosphere of religious and nationalist incitement...which results in a deepening of their hatred towards Israel*"[77] and that "*Jihad is taught as a value for the citizen who desires to defend his homeland.*"[78] There is constant reference to the PA as negatively influencing children and inciting them to violence, with statements even going as far as to argue that the PA deliberately places children in harms way in order to further their own political agenda. We see this in statements such as these: *the Palestinian leadership continues to encourage the involvement of young children in the violence*"[79]; "*These children are being manipulated and endangered by the Palestinian leadership for its own political gains*" [80]; and "*the Palestinian leadership is deliberately and illegally involving children in violent activities and hostilities against Israel.*"[81] Statements asserting the indifference of the PA to children's suffering are plentiful. For instance, a report on the use of children in armed conflict states, "*In the eyes of the Palestinian leadership, the fact that their children are being wounded or killed, as sad as it may be, is secondary to the fact that the world sees them being wounded*



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or killed"[82]. Another example can be seen in an additional report on the presence of children in zones of conflict, stating that, "*the PA has not taken any effective steps against it and even uses injured children and youth for propaganda purposes at home and abroad.*"[83] These limited number of examples are illustrative of the official portrayal of the PA, as negatively influencing and inciting children to violence for their own purposes.

In addition, statements concerning the involvement of children in violent activities are presented as connected to the influence of extremist factions. The IMFA states in separate instances, that, '*Children, whose innocent appearance does not arouse suspicion, are an ideal pool of recruitment by terrorist organizations for carrying out suicide attacks*'[84]; and that "*the terrorist organizations view children and youths as the most convenient recruits for suicide bombing missions, since they are easily influenced.*"[85] Headlines published by the IMFA such as "*Fatah tricks 12-year-old-boy into Becoming Suicide Terrorist*"[86] portray children and young people as either 'brainwashed' or 'tricked' into committing violent acts by these existentially threatening groups; and the emphasis is placed on the vulnerability and susceptibility of young Palestinians to influence by forces hostile to Israel.

### *Securitizing Palestinian Society*

If we may argue that the actions of Palestinian children during violent struggles are framed as closely linked to a securitized PA; then we may also see evidence of a similar association to Palestinian society in a broader sense. IMFA statements regarding children's involvement in conflict implicate Palestinian society and therefore the Palestinian people collectively, as inherently threatening to the security of the Israeli state. An IMFA document states that, the "*Palestinian Authority has deliberately created a culture of hatred*"[87], teaching children from a very young age to hate Israel and the Jewish people. In a separate instance, they state that "*Palestinians exploit children for terror*"[88] [emphasis added]. In statements like these, the Israeli government labels Palestinian culture and the Palestinian people, collectively, as a threat, and as hostile to the state.

Evidence of Israel's securitization of Palestinian society can be seen in the ascription of responsibility to parents of children involved in violence through the so-called '*Parent's Law*'. "The original Order Concerning the Conduct of Minors (Imposition of Bond) (Temporary Provision) was enacted in Judea and Samaria on 29 April, 1988 and in Gaza on 1 May, 1998, when the "Intifada" was in full swing".[89] The order "empowered the military to hold parents "criminally liable" for the actions of their children by imposing a fine or jail sentence on the parents".[90] The stated purpose of the Israeli government in this action; was to attempt to "redress one of the main characteristics of the "Intifada" – the loss of parental authority in Palestinian society in the Territories."[91] In this case, we can see that there is a transferal of responsibility for the child's actions (in this case, legally), to the society, namely the parents. In this, the very structure of Palestinian society, the family, is framed as presenting a threat. Though not portrayed in this instance as explicitly inciting violence, there is an advancement of the perception that parents are *allowing* and even *endorsing* the violence of their children. Through this, young people are again presented as victims, not of their political leaders, as is the case in their association with the PA, but this time of parental neglect.[92]

So how does the overt securitization of other Palestinian actors result in the securitization of children in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? The association of children and young people's activism with the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian society, positions children as unreliable, easily influenced and manipulated subjects. In this assertion, Palestinian children and young people are constructed as security threats through their connection to hostile groups, constructing the perception that their behavior is unpredictable and not easily controlled or managed. In this case, the intent is not to devoid them of 'victim' status. Instead, the aim is to argue that the victimizer causing their suffering, is not Israel, but is instead, found in "a whole range of Palestinian authority figures, including parents, teachers, and political leaders."[93] Absolving themselves of culpability for the injuries and deaths suffered by children at the hands of its military forces, the Israeli government enacts a process of subtle securitization. This process, indirectly poses the child as a threat, through its relation to other explicitly threatening and securitized actors. As a result of this, there is an enhanced perception that the dissenting activities of children are matters worthy of exceptional measures; allowing considerations of their rights to be sidelined in favor of national security concerns.

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## Chapter 4 – Child Detention Law: Securitization through Practices

In Israel's securitization of children's actions during violent conflict, we see a strange contradiction taking place. In the previous illustrations we saw an ascription of victim-status to the child, and a labeling of children as unreliable due to manipulation. However, simultaneously there is a sense that the concept of childhood loses its privilege during conflict. Namely, that the activism (violent or non-violent) of Palestinian children becomes perceived and thus responded to, no differently to the actions of adult Palestinians. A lawyer representing Palestinian children accused of security-related offences in the West Bank stated that, "Palestinian children are seen less as children and more as Arabs...They are as dehumanised as the adults, dehumanised and feared by Israeli society." [94] It is worth noting, the perception that these children are first-and-foremost *Palestinian* is reflected in the military language that is used to detail children's offences. "[O]fficially there has been no childhood in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The word 'child' is never used in military announcements: they refer to either an infant or a youth, but never a child. So a ten-year old boy shot by the military forces is reported to be a 'young man of ten'." [95]

As discussed, securitization, when departing from the Copenhagen School model, can aid us in understanding the possibility of multiple securitizations concerning a single subject. Additionally, this detailed understanding may also be useful in revealing the ways in which something may be securitized. To understand the process of securitizing the child in this particular case, it is important to look beyond the use of speech as the sole securitizing move, and recognize the importance of a practice-based approach also. In view of this, we shall now address the securitization of children through the Israeli practice of discriminatory child detention. Here we are concerned specifically with the legal discrimination that governs the arrest and detention of Palestinian children for 'security-related offences' in the OPT.

### *Systematic Legal Discrimination*

As will be discussed in depth, the laws concerning the detention of Palestinian Children in the West Bank and Gaza are inherently and purposefully discriminatory. To engage in this discussion however, we must understand such instances as part of the wider context of Israel's legal administration of the OPT. In the Occupied Territories, two separate administrative and legal structures exist; "Jewish settlers are subject to Israeli civil law, whereas the native Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law." [96] The difference in legal and political status of Jews and non-Jews is a defining feature of life in the Occupied Territories [97]. "The rigid distinction between persons who are Jewish and persons who are not defines the limits and possibilities of an individual's personal and family life; it also provides the basic logic defining spaces and places in Israel and the occupied territories" [98]. The system of Military Orders governing the lives of Palestinian civilians was first instituted in 1967 with the issuance of Military Proclamation No. 1. The Order "justified itself with the words 'in the interests of security and public order'. Since that time, the Israeli authorities have issued over 2,500 such military orders, with enormous impact on Palestinian life." [99] Military Orders are considered legally binding from the moment of issuance, and apply to all Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. [100] These Orders, however, are not applicable to Israeli settlers living in the Occupied Territories, who are governed by Israeli civil law. [101] The use of Military Orders to control occupied areas is legitimated in international law through the Fourth Geneva Convention [102], which "establishes the right of an occupying force to legislate military orders as well as to amend existing legislation...to allow for the contingencies of security and public order." [103] As such, Military Orders govern all aspects of Palestinian life in the name of security, from "controlling the Palestinian population, facilitating the confiscations of land", to managing the growth of the Palestinian economy. [104] Acknowledging the wider context of the Israeli military-legal system, we can identify practices that securitize Palestinian children alongside the wider Palestinian population. Primarily, this securitization is evidenced through legal procedures that frame Palestinian children as threatening and Israeli children as benign.

### *Discrimination in Child Detention Law*

As has been mentioned, the most common offense of Palestinian children involved in opposing the Israeli occupation is stone throwing. "[M]ost imprisoned Palestinian children are charged with throwing stones at military personnel and military installations or at Israeli settlers." [105] "In 1998, in response to the first *intifada*, military orders were promulgated for the West Bank and Gaza making stone throwing a felony offense and allowing the arrest of children,

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including very young children.”[106] The main Order concerning the arrest and detention of children, and which serves to highlight the distinction made between Israeli settler and Palestinian children in the OPT, is the *Order Concerning the Trial of Juvenile Offenders*. [107] The following instances of discriminatory practices come as revisions to this original Military Order.

In terms of the age of criminal responsibility, in both Israeli civil law and military law applicable to Palestinians, children under the age of twelve years are not held criminally responsible.[108] However, when considering offenses committed by children and young people above the age of twelve, in Israel there is a clear distinction between minors and adults, with different rules of arrest applying. In the West Bank and Gaza, however, children are subject to the same terms of arrest and detention as adults.[109]

Concerning the authority to arrest children, we see serious differences in the procedure for Palestinian children and Israeli children.

*“A police officer may detain Israeli children in only eight specific circumstances, including situations in which minors commit an offence in the presence of a police officer, escape from lawful custody, or refuse to identify themselves or accompany the police officer.”*[110]

When considering Palestinian children, “the powers to arrest...are very broad”.[111] “Military Order No. 378 allows any Israeli soldier or police officer to detain a Palestinian child merely on suspicion that the child has violated a military order, regardless of the severity of the offence or the likelihood that the child actually committed it.”[112] Additionally, Military Order No. 898 “gives Israeli settlers the right to detain any Palestinian, including children, whom they deem to be ‘acting suspiciously’.”[113]

Regarding the length of time a child may be detained before sentencing, “Israeli civil law stipulates that the maximum initial detention period of an Israeli minor is ten days.”[114] Whereas, “The military court can imprison a Palestinian child for up to six months without an indictment.”[115] Children’s rights of access to a lawyer once detained are also highly discriminatory, since whilst Israeli children have open access to a lawyer, “Military Order No. 1500 automatically denies Palestinian detainees from the OPT the right to see a lawyer for 18 days.”[116] Military Order No. 1500 also enforces much stricter rules on Palestinian children regarding the length of detention permissible before being brought before a judge (eighteen days in comparison to the twenty-four hours required for Israeli children).[117]

The Israeli practice of discriminating against Palestinian children in the judicial system reflects a securitization through practices. Through treating children of Palestinian nationality more harshly than Israeli settler children, the assertion is implicit that they are inherently *more* dangerous and represent a more acute security risk than their Israeli counterparts. Even when the crimes considered are identical, Palestinian children are framed as *more* responsible for their actions and thus worthy of greater punishment. This process, when working within the Copenhagen School framework is almost invisible. However, in acknowledging the potential role of routinized practices, we see in this case how legal procedure has succeeded in framing the Palestinian child as a threat to state security.

As discussed, although the use of Military Orders in the OPT is legitimated through the Fourth Geneva Convention; such discriminatory practices are clearly in violation of the child’s rights under international law, as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). “Article 2 of the Convention demands that state parties respect and ensure the rights of the child set forth in the Convention “*to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind.*”[118] In applying different legal policies and procedural rules to children of the same age found within its jurisdiction, Israel is violating its obligation to treat such children equally.”[119] The severe legal treatment of Palestinian children has extended from periods of heavy violence, namely during the First and Second Intifadas, into recent years. Mass arbitrary arrests of children and young people after the flare-ups of violence in the last decade have been met with strong criticism from the international community[120] yet even today, Israel’s discriminatory and draconian laws persist. In 2014, Israel further enhanced their policy towards the act of stone throwing by voting to increase the maximum prison sentence to twenty years, a sentence that can apply to both adults and children alike.[121] In the words of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, “Israel is operating aggressively against terrorists,

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against stone throwers, against hurlers of firebombs and firecrackers. We will legislate more aggressive legislation to this regard..."[122]. Unfortunately, in presenting stone throwing by Palestinians as a grave security threat, a large number of children involved in low-level resistance to the occupation are securitized alongside the wider Palestinian population. This results in a lack of consideration of their rights, and the legitimization of extreme measures against them.

## *Who Speaks for the Child?*

Through the preceding instances, we can see that children are securitized on two fronts. Firstly, through their association to other more overtly securitized actors such as the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian society; and additionally through the use of discriminatory legal practices concerning child detention. This multi-faceted process, singles out the Palestinian child as particularly dangerous and threatening to state security. There is however, an issue that has not yet been addressed. Who, in all of this, is speaking for the child, and what is their agency throughout this process? If we take firstly, the securitization of children through their association to other actors, we see the assertion that they are committing acts of 'violence' due to their inherent vulnerability to negative influences. "In the process...young people...are reduced to the status of passive, innocent "children", instead of the self-motivated activists many saw themselves to be."[123] Young people's actions are reduced to products of manipulation from various sources and thus depoliticized. If we take for instance, the *Parent's Law*, responsibility for the minor's actions is placed with the parents. This has the effect of removing independent political agency from the child, and reducing their actions to little more than disobedience and unruly behavior. More significantly, introducing the *Parent's Law*, seeks to frame the activism of children and young people primarily as a 'parenting' issue, and less of a legitimate and politically motivated activity. The problem with this portrayal is that it obscures the importance of children and young people in the conflict. As has been noted, the activism of the young has been, and continues to be central to the resistance against Israeli occupation. Many young people "exhibited a profound sense of empowerment and insisted that because of their actions in support of the national cause, they should not be referred to as "children"...but should be treated with the respect normally given to adults."[124] Here it is important to recognize that during the Intifadas, it was the 'children of the stones' that caught the attention of the world and that played an integral part in the uprising.

The multiple securitizations occurring have significant impacts on the possibility of allowing the child to speak its own security. Concerning the voice of the child, when assessing children's securitization through their association to other actors, IMFA statements are significant. The statements that have been quoted from the IMFA assert that it is in fact the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian society and its community leaders that are influencing, and therefore speaking for the child. In this assertion, Israel simultaneously speaks *for* the child, whilst claiming that other actors are doing the same thing. The problem is, in this narrative however, that the voices of the children themselves are not present or valid at all.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation has evidenced that if we seek to properly understand the way in which Palestinian children living in the Occupied Territories are constructed as security threats, it is necessary to look beyond the Copenhagen School framework and adopt a more complex approach. Firstly, this dissertation detailed securitization theory as defined by Copenhagen School theorists in order to offer a theoretical basis on which to build an analysis in relation to the Palestinian child. Arguing that security issues emerge from the use of threat-related language by the securitizing actor, the theory offers a means of understanding *how* certain issues (and subjects in this case) become elevated above *normal* politics and are dealt with in the exceptional realm. The theory's conceptualization of the speech act as the constructor of securitized narratives, reinforces the idea that security is a self-referential practice, enacted by the state, often in the absence of a legitimate threat. It is in this way, that the state is enabled to utilize exceptional and often extra-legal measures in order to deal with what they themselves have labeled as threatening.

Though providing a useful theoretical basis for discussions of security, in order for us to better analyze the

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securitization of Palestinian children, it was necessary to highlight some critiques of the framework. It has been highlighted that any discussion of securitization in real-world situations, such as the one we are dealing with, requires an acknowledgment that security-narratives are constructed in a much more complex manner than the Copenhagen School suggests. In this, it was noted that securitization is not necessarily a singular and linear process, as Copenhagen School scholars suggest. Securitization is rather a *process* and has the potential to be multi-layered and may occur in complex and subtle ways that the original framework cannot comprehend. Additionally, it was highlighted that, any empirical analysis must also, by necessity, seek to look beyond the speech act. Informed by Bigo's idea of the *routinization of practices* it was acknowledged that including a recognition of the role of practice in security issues is crucial for a holistic analysis.

Through this, a more comprehensive theoretical framework was constructed in order for us to analyze the securitization of the Palestinian child. Through this lens, two connected issues were highlighted as evidence of a process of complex and subtle securitization.

Firstly, a securitization of children was identified in an analysis of official Israeli government statements. We saw that in a variety of statements, Palestinian children are framed, not independently, but in relation to *other* Palestinian actors framed as security threats, namely the Palestinian Authority, and more broadly to Palestinian society as a whole. Through this official discourse, we can see evidence of a multi-layered and non-linear securitization, constructing the child as a security threat. By framing the child as easily manipulated and influenced by other actors, they are portrayed as difficult to manage and control. This portrayal infers an element of unreliability and thus emphasizes them as dangers to security.

The second case study approached an analysis of Israeli Military Orders pertaining to the Occupied Territories regarding discriminatory child detention. Contributing to the idea of the securitization of Palestinian children as multi-layered and as enacted through practice as well as dialogue, here we saw the implications of Israel's use of the law to securitize. It was evidenced that through applying legal practices that discriminate between Israeli and Palestinian children, the Israeli state is framing Palestinian children in a particular way. Through legal discrimination, Israel attempts to infer that Palestinian children are worthy of more severe punishment, and are therefore inherently *more* dangerous than their Israeli counterparts.

Through the analysis of these two cases, we can see that Palestinian children are being securitized by Israel. This securitization is however is incredibly complex and does not fit within the Copenhagen School's traditional framework. The process becomes visible, when a more nuanced and non-linear approach is adopted. This approach recognizes the method of subtle securitization through association to other explicitly securitized actors, and acknowledges the role of routinized practices as contributing to the construction of security threats.

## *Contributions*

Through a nuanced analysis, this dissertation has offered a new way of linking a critiqued and thus more relevant Copenhagen School securitization framework to the case of Palestinian children living in the Occupied Territories.

The framework has been applied to instances of securitization through association with other actors, and through the use of discriminatory legal practices. In this way, this dissertation has sought to make new connections between the theoretical and the empirical in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the framing of children in Palestine as security threats.

These new insights have highlighted the importance of understanding the relationship between security and the child in Palestine. In focusing on the link between security and childhood, this dissertation has sought to go beyond the usual analyses of Palestinian children. Departing from the common focus on discussions of psychosocial trauma, this dissertation has sought to widen the scope of academic analysis, and to emphasize the importance of recognizing the child as the potential subject of security.

## *Future Lines of Research*

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Though an in depth analysis has been conducted, the information cited as evidence of children's securitization is part of a wider pool of sources, that due to space constraints and in order to have a more in depth analysis, could not be analyzed individually. The additional Israeli government statements listed in the Appendix would be valuable as sources of further research into the entrenched nature of Israeli securitization of children through securitizing other Palestinian actors.

An additional line of further research that would be of value in enhancing our understanding of the child as the subject of security, may be to pursue the link between the child and agency. The idea of Palestinian children as active and engaged in the conflict has been present through this dissertation. One important question that has emerged in discussions of their securitization has been that of the tension between children's perceived passivity and agency. Though only discussed briefly due to space constraints, this area would merit further analysis. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian[125] in particular has sought to engage with the agency of children in Palestine, and her work is part of a much wider area of scholarship concerning the potential of children to be included in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction more generally. Though not within the scope of this project, attention to Palestine in this regard remains under-researched, and therefore merits further research.

## *Final Remarks and Recommendations*

Having adopted the Copenhagen School's securitization framework in order to look for evidence of the Israeli state's securitization of Palestinian children in the Occupied Territories; we may conclude that there is a protracted process of subtle and highly complex securitization taking place. The implications of this finding are significant and have a large bearing on the way that Palestinian children are both perceived and dealt with in the OPT. Children in the Occupied Territories, just like everywhere else in the world are entitled to both basic human rights and additional special provisions granted due to their status as minors. The requirement to act in the child's best interests as dictated through the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a central state responsibility. Israel's multi-layered securitization of Palestinian children creates the perception that they are first and foremost, dangerous. The characterization that they are inherently threatening to security changes the way that they are seen and in turn the way in which they are treated. Rather than adopting an attitude that respects and privileges children as rights-holders, securitization enforces a response that prioritizes hostility and suspicion towards them. As perceptions of children are developed and entrenched in this way, measures to counter the supposed threat that they represent are moved into the exceptional realm. In this, Israel risks renegeing on their responsibilities to protect and respect child rights under international law, and this has serious consequences for the safety of children in the region.

For this reason, it is apparent that in order to reaffirm the importance of the rights of the child during conflict in Palestine, a process of desecuritization is necessary. This requires the movement of children out of the *exceptional* – the realm of security, and into the *normal* – where the rules of child protection apply in full.

This decision must come alongside the recognition that children involved in anti-occupation activism often are conscious and politically motivated individuals with a real awareness of their environment and the decisions they are making. Striking this balance will be difficult, however the dangers posed by securitizing children, show that finding it is crucial.

Unfortunately, as of this moment, little seem to be changing in the Occupied Territories. The recent outbreak of armed violence has ceased, yet conditions for Palestinians and their children have seen little improvement. Children continue to be spoken of as security threats[126] and the legal discrimination towards children involved in activism remains undiluted.[127] A recent study undertaken by Save the Children in the Occupied Territories asked 120 children living in the region what they could see in their future, and most predicted violence and poverty.[128] It is for this reason above all others, that a reconceptualization of the child as a conscious, rights-bearing subject is necessary. If this can happen, then an alternative vision of the future for Palestinian children and young people may be envisioned.

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