The Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Moving Towards Securitization

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini menganalisis kebijakan Lebanon terhadap pengungsi Suriah yang ada di negaranya. Konflik berkepanjangan di Suriah berdampak pada gelombang pengungsi skala besar yang menyumbang penambahan 1,5 juta jiwa terhadap 4,5 juta penduduk Lebanon. Di saat negara Timur Tengah lain seperti Yordania dan Turki merespon dengan menerima kedatangan pengungsi tersebut, Lebanon mengambil langkah sebaliknya. Melalui analisis dengan teori sekuritisasi dan hubungan antara migrasi dan keseimbangan demografi dapat dipahami bahwa Pemerintah Lebanon menggunakan strategi speech of act dalam melakukan sekuritisasi. Speech of act dilakukan melalui diskursus politik dan peran media dalam menggambarkan pengungsi sebagai ancaman yang membutuhkan tindakan khusus untuk menanganinya. Lebanon juga menggunakan isu perubahan demografi, keseimbangan sektarian, dan ancaman munculnya konflik baru, sebagai isu yang mengancam stabilitas dan keamanan domestik Lebanon.
Kata kunci: sekuritisasi, pengungsi, Lebanon, Suriah, speech of act, media.

Abstract

This paper analyzes Lebanese policy towards Syrian refugees within their country. The prolonged conflict in Syria has generated a large-scale influx of refugees that contributed to the addition of 1.5 million to 4.5 million Lebanon population. While other Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan and Turkey responded by accepting the arrival of these refugees, Lebanon took the opposite response. Through the analysis of securitization theory and the nexus between migration and demographic balance, it can be understood that the Lebanese Government uses a speech of act strategy in conducting securitization. Speech of act is carried out through political discourse and the role of the media in portraying refugees as an existential threat that require special measure to handle them. Lebanon also uses the issue of demographic change, sectarian balance, and the emergence of the new conflicts, as issues that threaten Lebanon's domestic stability and security.
Keywords: securitization, refugee, Lebanon, Syrian, speech of act, Media.

INTRODUCTION

Erupted in 2011, the Syrian conflict has resulted millions of displaced people who have spread into its neighboring countries. Among those countries, Lebanon, whose geographic position direct to the Syrian border, has become the second largest recipient country in the Middle East, after Turkey, for a large number of the refugees (Weaver, 2017). Until 2018, there were more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees resided in Lebanon. Out of this number, only 991,917 were registered by UNHCR, while the remainders were considered illegal because they could not fulfill the required documents (UNHCR, 2017). Looking at the number of population which reached 4 million in total, with an additional 1.5 million refugees, has turned Lebanon as a country with the highest concentration of refugees per capita in the world. It means, one-fifth of people in Lebanon is refugee, or 173 people out of every 1,000 Lebanese are refugees. This considerable number has further contributed to the changing of demographic order in Lebanon (McCarthy, 2017).

Discussing the issue of refugee in Lebanon and how the issue has been securitized is fascinating. Since the first arrival of Syrian refugees, this country has implemented a

more restrictive policy compared to its neighboring host-countries, such as Jordan and Turkey. While Jordan and Turkey have built an official refugee camp, Lebanon was taking the opposite policy. The condition is also exacerbated by the actions of Hezbollah, the largest Shiite political and military group in the country, which also acts as the parties who support the Basher al-Assad regime. As happened in 2017, Hezbollah decided to repatriate hundreds of Syrian refugees to their home country (Abdullah, 2017). Nonetheless, the geographical proximity, the similarity of language, and a large number of Syrians who had previously worked in Lebanon made this country as the main destination. As a result, many refugees lived amid Lebanese society while the others paid rents for housing or built an informal camp (Favier, 2016).

This paper aims to provide an analysis of the Syrian refugees presence in Lebanon and its impact on the demographic change in the country. The main purpose of this study is to find the strategy of the Lebanese government in dealing with the issue, which later generates the securitization towards Syrian refugees. This study applied the methods of qualitative approach to address the problem of the study. To discuss, this article starts with the theoretical framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The security studies of migration and refugee have risen along with the increasing concern of relationship between refugees as victims of forced migration and the issue of population growth, and also between the demographic changes and the emergence of new conflict in the host country. Nevertheless, many others have seen refugees as victims of violent conflict. By the increasing pattern of forced migration to the host country, many latent conflicts are found in the host country and this is related to the presence of a large number of refugees in the country. This migration pattern, according to Champion (1994), has a significant impact on changes in number, composition, and distribution of populations in both origin and host country.

Salehyan (2006), one of many who sees the international migration in general and the migration of refugees in particular, will inflict the security consequences between and within countries. In this case, the massive waves of refugees are not only seen as victims of violent conflict but also as a group who contributes to produce conflict in the host country. Salehyan mentioned several factors on how the arrival of refugees in large numbers is seen as a security threat to the host country (Salehyan, 2008).

First, refugees are considered as those who can bring up rebels, new militants, and ideologies from their home countries, and this is assumed as facilitating the emergence of conflicts between refugees and local citizens. Second, refugees can be the parties who participate to oppose the domestic government in the host country, especially when the opposition and the majority of refugees have the same ethnic background and political views. Third, large numbers of refugees can contribute to the change of sectarian balance in the host country, especially when the stability of a particular country depends heavily on the ethnic balance. Fourth and last, refugees can be a source of new conflicts related to economic balance. When the host country condition is unstable and has limited natural resources, then the struggle between refugees and local citizens of occupation, food and water access, housing, land, and so forth will be seen as a threat to the national security of the host country.

Furthermore, another statement which still relates to the influx of refugees contribution in the demographic changes, Nichiporuk (2000) believes in a certain condition, the refugees could contribute to create security problems in the host country. Forced migration pattern is greater in increasing security threats directly, compared to migration that is solely carried out for economic reasons (irregular migration) (Nichiporuk, 2000). Some factors mentioned by Nickiporuk (2000) are, first, refugees burdened the citizens' infrastructures and natural resources. It impacts on the economic problems and the effectiveness of resources usage. Second, groups of refugees who affiliate with minority groups in the border areas of the host country can threaten the emergence of separatist groups. Third, the existence of refugees in areas with less local citizens will make the refugees capable of fully control the area. It is worried to minimize the role of local citizens. Fourth, refugees can change the order of ethnic balance in the host country. Fifth, refugees are feared to

bring the effect of their home country's conflict, so it will trigger a new source of conflict in the host country.

In this case, similar to Salehyan, Krcmaric (2014) reveals how the influx of refugees in the host country can affect the demographic balance which impacts on the changes of long-established ethnic balance. This condition is very vulnerable that possibly creating potential conflicts between refugees and local citizens. The potential conflict will only subside when refugees have returned to their home country. But then, in fact, in many cases the return of refugees to their home country is hard to realize and takes a long time.

The perception of refugees as threats of stability and security in the host country is similar with the securitization theory, carried out by a group called as Copenhagen School such as Barry Buzan (1998), Ole Weaver (1998), and Thierry Balzacq (2011). According to Buzan and Weaver, securitization is "… seen as a more extreme version of politicization. In theory, any public issue can be located on the spectrum ranging from non-politicized to securitized (meaning the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedures" (Buzan *et al.*, 1998: 23). From the definition, politicization and securitization have different contexts of understanding. In this case, Buzan and Waever view securitization as an extreme form of politicization.[1]

Securitization is a result of securitizing actors' construction, in portraying an issue as an existential threat or in other way of a non-dangerous issue. Therefore, the issue which actually can be handled in the normal and usual way is solved in a special way. In a securitization, an issue which is considered as a security threat will become a priority. The actors who carry out securitization will use methods beyond the normal procedures. According to Buzan and Waever, the securitization will success only if the community (audience) perceive and acknowledge the issue as a security threat. If the 'existential threat' only concedes by securitized actors, that is not securitization but a securitization move (Buzan *et al.*, 1998).

Furthermore, the success of securitization can be understood through these three factors (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). First, the issue has created an existential threat. Second,

the need for emergency efforts to deal with (emergency action), and third, the efforts made to solve the issue is done by violating the official political rules. In addition, the securitizing actor is generally using the speech act methods to implement the securitization (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). Buzan and Waever state the success of the speech act is a combination of language and society. Language by its intrinsic features, and people who will authorize and justify the speech. In terms of the speech act, Balzacq concluded the basic idea of speech act can be simply expressed by certain statements that carried out with more depiction of the existing conditions of reality (Balzacq, 2011).

Therefore, according to Buzan and Waever, there are three actors that should be comprised in securitization: securitizing actors, referent objects, and functional actors (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). Securitizing actors are those who securitized by making the existential threat as a threat to the existing entity. They generally refer to individuals or groups that securitize through their speech act. In this case, political elites, government officials, lobbyists, and enforcement groups are the category of securitizing actors. The next actor is referent objects, the object that will be threatened if the issue is not promptly addressed by special measure. They generally refer to nation-states, communities, and territories. The last actor is functional actors, the parties who are not directly involved but affect the dynamics of securitized issues.

In line with Buzan and Waever, Balzacq also sees that securitization comprises three things such as referent objects, securitizing actors, and functional actors, but he added an additional criterion: the audience as an effort to securitize (Balzacq, 2011). He said the audience, the public or society, has an important position in securitization theory. As Buzan *et al.* previously stated, securitization is an inter-subjective process, even the success of securitization is very depended on audience approval (Balzacq *et al.*, 2016).

Due to the securitization process, not only does Watson see political actors as initiators in securitization but also believes that in some cases, media agents can be initiators and transmitters of the securitization process (Bourbeau, 2011). In addition, Vultee in Balzacq (2016) argued about the process, securitization is inseparable from the role of the media through its 'framing' that can be an initiator of

the securitizing moves.

Furthermore, the forced migration issue is often associated with securitization.[2] According to Hammerstad, securitization towards migration issue is an effort of how people try to maintain their rights from the 'outsiders' where their numbers and differences are seen as an existential threat to the communal identity and the rights of the local community (Hammerstadt, 2014). Similar to Hammerstad, Huysman argued the efforts to free up themselves from the existential threats (outsiders), forms what is called as 'political community of insecurity.' It means the securitization of refugees will shape political trust, loyalty, and identity through the distribution of fear and intensification of alienation. So it takes an effort to free them up from the existence of the threat (Huysmans, 2006).

In terms of this case, the theory of securitization is very compatible to explain the relationship between forced migration and demographic changes in triggering the securitization actions carried out by the Lebanese government towards Syrian refugees. The securitization theory will be used to explain how Lebanese government and media act as securitizing actors try to make the issue of forced migration, such as an existential threat that could threaten the stability of Lebanese security (referent object), and how those securitizing moves can be accepted by Lebanese who act as the audience.

RESULT AND ANALYSES

THE POLICY OF NO POLICY

Since the first arrival, Lebanon played an ambiguous policy to Syrian refugees. At first, Lebanon was praised by the international community for its generosity in accepting refugees with an 'open door policy.' However, in 2014 the government launched restriction policy by closing the border in order to reduce the number of incoming refugees. Since that time, the policy of no policy has been implemented and the refugee issue has been securitized.

Syrian refugees previously could enter Lebanon either to dwell or work by showing their ID cards without any restrictions. Only after 2014, the government under General Security Directorate (GSD) launched a surprising policy that every Syrian who enters Lebanon were required to fill out some documents and explained the reason for arrival besides humanitarian reasons. This policy continued in early 2015 when Lebanon required Syrian to renew their residents permit by paying US$ 200 annually. Syrian refugees who were not listed in the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugee (UNHCR) were obliged to find Lebanese sponsor who will act as their 'guardian' to gain a legal authorization of work and live (HRW, 2016a). For refugees who were already listed in UNHCR must sign a pledge that they agreed to not apply for work in the host country and if they violated the agreement, they would be deported (HRW, 2016b).

Lebanese government's policy towards the refugees is closely related to the severe past when Palestinian refugees arrived in Lebanon since the Arab-Israel conflict emerged in 1948. It has been decades since their first arrival, but the Palestinian refugees remain in Lebanon. This experience has influenced Lebanon's government in deciding refugees issue in order to avoid a similar situation. Therefore, Lebanon decides to apply the 'No Camp' policy that the country does not build formal camp for refugees remains in Lebanon. The consequence is that many Syrian refugees build informal camps or rent an apartment or dorm. 'No Camp' policy exacerbates the refugees' situation and condition because they are vulnerable with exploitation and extortion by their landlords, sponsors, even bosses (Favier, 2016). The security risk of non-formal shelter policy also complicates the humanitarian agency to distribute the aids.

Mencutek (2017) described the absence of policies and efforts from the Lebanese government as policy paralysis. It is the condition of the government unable to form and apply a certain policy program. This is due to the lack of a clear commitment from the political elite to form a set of rules for public relations and policies that can be agreed upon by all parties (Mencutek, 2017). Since 2005, Lebanon has experienced political polarization. The political block was divided into two, March 14 Alliance and March 8 Alliance. The existence of political polarization, along with the country historical events that suffered a lot of civil wars caused by ethno-religious issues, was caused difficulty in gaining consensus among the Lebanese political elite that has been adhering the 'confessional' government system.

The absence of an explicit central government position and efforts to solve refugees cases has made the municipalities elaborate their respective policies and rules. The absence of a fixed policy from Lebanon is also based on the perception of the refugees' existence will not last in an extended period, as what had happened to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. However, the absence of conflict resolution to end the prolonged Syrian conflict makes Syrians still come to the Lebanese border to seek protection although it is a dangerous route.

The absence of a fixed policy to handle the refugees was caused by the absence of efforts to carry out durable solutions. It is also based on the assumption that the crisis of refugees will only take place in a short period. Moreover, the government more focuses on maintaining the stability of foreign investment rather than formulating strategies to solve the protracted humanitarian crisis (Atallah & Mahdi, 2018). In the protracted refugee situation, the durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration are needed to apply to prevent the recurrence case of Palestinian refugees that had been settled in Lebanon for decades.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

The existence of numerous Syrian refugees has contributed to the change of demographic order in Lebanon (McCarthy, 2017). The facts show how the exodus of Syrian refugees to Lebanon led to the population growth and changes the demographic aspects of the country. In the case of Lebanon, demographic change was substantial to be learned, because it has a profound effect on Lebanon's security, political, and economic stability. It is caused by Lebanon adoption to a particular rule known as confessionalism (Nordström, 2017). As part of the consociational form of the government system, confessionalism refers to a regulation over the division of power between various sects within a country. That is, the seat of government is arranged based on the demographic distribution of ethno religious groups in Lebanon (Dekmejian, 1978). Based on Lebanese 1943 constitution, demographic conditions showed that Maronite Christians dominated 54% of the population, followed by 44% Muslims and the other 2% consisted of other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the

constitution mentioned that Lebanese President should come from Maronite Christian, the vice-president originates from Shiite Muslims, and the prime minister comes from Sunni Muslims (Khouri, 2017a).

Powers division that represents the demographics of each ethnic group is taken to create a sectarian balance, in order to avoid any division caused by the sectarian conflict. It shows how the demographic balance based on the sectarian group has a significant position because it dramatically influences the security and stability in Lebanon (Turbay, 2015). However, the current condition indicates that the demographic balance begins to change as the Syrian refugees enter Lebanon. With 95% of the majority of Syrian refugees coming from Sunni, the current condition has changed the ethnic balance whereas Sunni dominates the population that encompasses 54% of Lebanon total population (Turbay, 2015).

Besides the changes in sectarian and political balance mentioned above, Syrian refugees contribute to the change of economic order in Lebanon. It relates to job opportunities between refugees and local citizens. The existence of Syrian refugees is considered as a source of problems that caused the rising prices of basic needs, electricity and gas, and increased the number of unemployment in Lebanon. It also impacts on the struggle for health access, education, and other public facilities, between refugees and local citizens (Sahin, 2015).

SECURITIZATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEE

The perception change toward refugees to as a threat for national security cannot be separated from the role of political elite and media in Lebanon (Dionigi, 2016). The shifting of Lebanon policy impacted on the changing of Lebanese perception toward refugees. Initially, the Lebanese showed their sympathies towards refugees, but then, this perception changed when refugees were considered as burdens and dependents to Lebanon as a whole. Since that time, refugees were seen as a source of instability to national security. They were also often used as scapegoats for various problems experienced by Lebanon.

The policy ambiguity towards refugee cases has made the municipalities elaborate on their policies. In response to this ambiguity, several cities in Lebanon made unila-

teral policies and a curfew policy for refugees. This enforcement was a form of public fear of perception that refugees were the source of insecurity in Lebanon (Khatib, 2014). This enforcement was also based on the absence of a fixed policy from the Lebanese government about refugees. For example, the municipalities of Mount Lebanon has set banners containing restrictions that prohibit refugees from leaving in the afternoon to morning (Mourad, 2017). The form of fear and rejection from the citizens was proved from leaflets, brochures, and pamphlets containing denials and threatening sentences to refugees, and the desire of local citizens for refugees to return to their home countries (Khatib, 2014).

Furthermore, the dispute between refugees and local citizens also caused by the limited number of job opportunities. It was because the unemployment rate was still relatively high in Lebanon and the numbers of job seekers in low-level sectors were also high. Seeking a job for refugees was difficult because they had to compete with subordinate local citizens. Moreover, the high numbers of refugees increased the government's budget and decreased the country's average income because it depended on total income and populations size (Christopersen & Thorleifsson, 2013). The perception of refugees as a threat is seen from how they were called as 'time bombs.' They were considered as a threat of terrorism because the camps of refugees were referred to a source of militants who embraced extremism. It could explode any time, and that was supposed to threat Lebanon's national security (Daily Star, 2016).

Henceforward, refugees are considered as a threat to Lebanon's stability and security. The perception of refugees as a security threat cannot be separated from the statement expressed by the Lebanese political elite. There are seven political parties in Lebanon and each of them has different sectarian ideologies: Kataeb (Christian), Future Movement (Sunni), Lebanese Forces (Christian), Progressive Socialist Party (Druze), Free Patriotic Movement (Christian), Hezbollah (Shiite), and Amal Movement (Shiite). The findings conducted by Atallah and Mahdi (2018) revealed that it was rhetoric of the majority parties in Lebanon that actualized a common sentiment and presumption, so the refugees were considered as burdens on the economy and

infrastructure, and thus exceeding Lebanon's capacity to accommodate them.

Lebanese's Former President Michael Suleiman in 2013 said, "It is not just a matter of material help and relief—the geographic and demographic capacity is saturated and the problem is the massive numbers of affecting us socially and economically and on security" (Stott & Nakhoul, 2013). Suleiman also said the refugee problem had become a burden for Lebanon, by associating it to the number of refugees that affected Lebanon demographic conditions, "The problem of the Syrian refugees constitutes a pressing additional burden on the general situation in the country, as their numbers have grown up to one-fourth of the population of Lebanon" (Turbay, 2015: 19). Lebanese Foreign Minister in 2014, Gebran Bassil, stated there was an assumption that the refugee existence had a potential to create rebel and militant groups as well as was in Syria, and it was considered as an existential threat to Lebanon security (Kholaif, 2014). Meanwhile, Lebanese Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, expressed his concern about the dispute between local citizens and refugees, by his reason that they generally live in the midst of local citizens, "Today, if you go around the most host communities, there is huge tension between Lebanese and the Syrians ... I fear civil unrest" (Al-Jazeera, 2017).

Perception of refugees as a threat is not a new thing in international security studies. The interest in the study of refugees and migrations has significantly grown in the post-cold war period (Hammerstadt, 2014). It is in line with the progress in the development of security studies. While the study previously emphasized the state-centrism approach, now it shifts to human-centered security studies by focusing the individual as the objects of the study. The shift of the object of study has made the issue of migrations and refugees as a major discussion in the scope of security studies.

Lebanon has neither ratified the 1952 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol. Nevertheless, the concept of non-refoulement has obliged the country to not expelled refugee when their lives are threatened. Thus, the concept of non-refoulement has become an internal customary law. It means the principle compels not only the country that ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention but also the coun-

try that did not do it; all countries must respect the principle. Moreover, Lebanon has signed the victim protection protocol of international armed conflict and various human rights charters which it obliged them to respect the rights of refugee as a human. Thus, providing wide-range rights to refugee becomes an obligatory and the resipient country should not require them to be a citizen of the country to obtain these rights (Turbay, 2015). This consideration made Lebanon must not to heed the issue of Syrian refugees.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL MEDIA

Nowadays, media has a significant role in reporting the situation related to humanitarian crisis. In the case of refugees and immigrants, the media has an essential role in constructing public opinion and sparks debates over the refugees existence. Media plays a major role in constructing and promoting a particular standpoint of the issue (Esses *et al.*, 2013). Besides, the media describes the refugees condition and situation from the 'humanitarian' viewpoint. Many media prefer to see refugees as a burden and threat than to see them based on the fact that they are the ones that should be protected.

In many host-countries which accept numbers of refugees, the media tends to create negative perception towards the refugees and migrants. It happens because refugees are considered as a threat for local citizens (Esses *et al.*, 2013). This is what happens to the refugees in Lebanon when the media and political elite played a considerable role in constructing public opinion and perception towards refugees. It is because of the political elite has a strong affiliation, so the most of media become the representation of certain political groups (Abu-Fadil, 2015a). This is similar to the television stations in Lebanon which mostly owned by sectarian political parties or a number of business people who have strong political ambitions. It also happens to the Lebanese newspapers which generally owned by elite families which usually used it as a tool of propaganda (Abou-Zahr, 2017). All of these become worse with local laws that impose difficult rules for independent journalists to establish their own newspapers. Finally, reporting profitable news of particular parties becomes unavoidable and it certainly violates the journalist code of ethics (Abou-Zahr, 2017).

As stated in a headline of the Daily Assafir "The Patriation/Naturalization Choice: Syrians or Palestinians?" and in other media, Al-Joumhouriya, who writes headlines "Before Lebanon Becomes a Depot for War Refugees" (Abu-Fadil, 2015b), likewise the headlines in one of the print media, An-Nahar, that has been criticized for showing a racist report when describing how the Hamra District, which once known for its beauty and diversity, turned from *Hamra* (red) to black because it was invaded by 'dark-skinned Syrian' (Abu-Fadil, 2015a; El-Behairy, 2016). According to El-Behairy, the two major media in Lebanon, An-Nahar and As-Safir, routinely portrayed Syrian refugees as a threat and being a burden to Lebanon. On the other hand, it is hard for refugees to speak up because the journalists generally do not interview many Syrian refugees. The journalists only describe the refugees as time, statistics, and associate it with the cost problem (El-Behairy, 2016).

Moreover, the use of 'displaced' rather than 'refugee' term which widely lists in media and delivers in television broadcasts, illustrates the common perception that Syrians in Lebanon are not categorized as refugees. In the same case, the use of the words 'the other' refers to refugees, shows the existence of discrimination in emphasizing that refugees were categorized as an alien that is different from Lebanese society. The status quo mentioned above has proved what once expressed by Watson that the media in Lebanon, besides act as an initiator, it also played as a transmitter in the process of securitization executed by the Lebanese political elite. The media framing in seeing Syrian refugees as a threat in Lebanon, it demonstrates how the media contributes to the process of the securitizing move.

FORCED REPATRIATION?

In the midst of uncertainty and the prolonged refugee case, the debate emerged among the Lebanese political elite to repatriate refugees back to Syria in the mid-2017 (Francis, 2017a). This was considered as one of the fastest ways to resolve the prolonged refugee situation. The idea for repatriation was vocally conveyed by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gebran Bassil who has been actively voicing the repatriation of Syrian refugees since 2013. This was

also supported by Hezbollah which was the spearhead in negotiating with the Syrian regime to return their citizens to Syria.

Furthermore, the intention of repatriation increased when the Lebanese government, military groups, and the Kataeb Party proposed the establishment of 'safe zones' which were supervised by the international community and the United Nations along the Lebanese-Syrian border. The establishment of 'safe zones' required several conditions to be established such as declaration for no-fly zones, arms trajectory, an agreement between all parties and groups involved in the Syrian civil war in ensuring security in the specified area (Atallah & Mahdi, 2018). In relation to repatriation, 'safe zones' were used as an excuse for the Lebanese government to show that the repatriation process was done by examining the security conditions with full considerations. However, there were parties who disagree with the establishment of 'safe zones,' one of them was UNHCR through its High Commissioner revealing "Let us not waste time planning safe zones that will not be set up because they will not be safe enough for people to go back" (Francis, 2017b).

At the end of 2017, Lebanon began to repatriate the first wave of refugees back to Syria. The repatriation carried out through an agreement between the Hezbollah and the anti-Assad regime in Syria, Saraya Ahl al-Syam. Amidst the repatriation, Hezbollah said to have held talks and obtained agreement with the Lebanese government and the military (Abdullah, 2017). Through the agreement, prior to the end of 2017, Hezbollah as the largest and strongest armed group in Lebanon has repatriated tens of thousands Syrian within the boundary area of Arsal City in Lebanon to the Idlib Province in Northern Syria (Chulov, 2017).

The ongoing repatriation reaps the pros and cons of whether it was done voluntarily or forcibly. This debate happened especially between Lebanon and the UNHCR representative who believed the repatriation process was not working based on the applicable provisions. UNHCR believed it was not done based on voluntary principles, safety, and dignity (Perry *et al.*, 2018). In fact, if we refer to the durable solution to solve the problem of protracted refugee, repatriation must be done based on voluntary principles. Besides, both the host country and home country have to ensure the repatriation process is carried out safely and dignity (Long, 2013). Besides Lebanon guarantee the repatriate process undertaken safely without any coercion and violence, the Syrian government has to think of reconstruction in the post-conflict situation (Vignal, 2018). If we look at the current condition of Syrian conflict which has not found a light path, it is difficult to make reconstruction efforts before the disclosure of final conflict resolution for Syria.

Furthermore, Lebanon policies of the repatriation process are not appropriate with UNHCR which led to Lebanon refusal to provide status for Syrian refugees submitted by UNHCR staff. Lebanon also accused UNHCR of obstructing repatriation efforts. It complained the institution had instructed the refugees to bravely refuse to be repatriated if their security and dignity were not guaranteed. On the contrary, UNHCR believed the repatriation was not appropriate with the rules and accused it as a force action although Lebanon said it was a voluntary action because most of the refugees do not know their rights in repatriation agreement.

The Lebanon operation of repatriation was considered as an action that not commonly used to solve this kind of problem. The existed perception of refugees as an existential threat for national security has made various parties in Lebanon agreed the best and fastest way to resolve protracted refugees problems was to repatriate the refugees back to Syria. If it refers to Buzan securitization, Lebanon action of repatriation was called as an emergency action as a response to the existential threat towards Lebanon's security and stability.

The repatriation did by the Lebanese authorities considered as inappropriate. It was because the other neighboring countries such as Jordan and Turkey, which also deal with the numbers of Syrian refugees, did not carry out the repatriation. Turkey, for instance, received 4.5 million Syrian refugees, while Jordan with 600 thousand refugees registered by UNHCR since the Syrian conflict first erupted in 2011. Turkey and Jordan's attitude that has not proposed the establishment of safe zones or repatriation as Lebanon did could not be separated from reality that repatriation was not possible as long as the con-

flict in Syria is still ongoing. Due to the existed repatriation rules and procedures, the process should be based on the aspects of voluntary, safety, and dignity.

CONCLUSION

The perception of refugees as a burden and how their existence has changed the demographic order in Lebanon made the country begin to securitize Syrian refugees. Thus, the securitization was carried out through the strategy of speech act executed by the political elite in Lebanon. The Lebanese elite has sparked the discourse to the society and saw the refugees as existential threat to the stability of Lebanon. They also often used refugees as scapegoats for various problems happened by Lebanon. This Lebanese elite last action has resulted in the change of Lebanese perception towards refugees and affected their actions towards them.

The demographic balance was indeed played a crucial role in Lebanon. Because it did not only affect Lebanese population structure but also affected to the ethnic balance in the country. The exodus of Syrian refugees to Lebanon led to the population growth and changes the country's demographic aspects. The demographic change was substantial and has a profound impact on Lebanon's security, political, and economic stability. The ethnic balance also played a significant role in the country stability. The history of Lebanese has witnessed how the civil war mostly caused by the imbalance of sectarianism in the country. Prior to the presence of Syrian refugee, the Maronite Christians dominated the population. Nowadays, the Sunni Muslim reversed that position and dominated Lebanon's ethno-religious group. This kind of change was worried to provoke the emergence of new conflict in Lebanon. Apart from the Lebanese elite, media in Lebanon did not only act as initiator but also acted as transmitter player in seeing refugees as a threat and burden for Lebanon. It was because many biggest media companies in Lebanon were owned by some Lebanese political elites. Therefore, stirring the media to create a perception of refugees as a burden was not a big deal to maintain the securitization process.

Thus, the refugees securitization in Lebanon seemed to be a success because the local citizens accepted the assumption made by the agents of speech act in seeing refugees as the existential threat and has threatened Lebanon stability and security. Therefore, extraordinary actions are needed to apply in order to deal with the issue. The recent efforts to repatriate refugees back to Syria were the result of the process of securitization. In this case, repatriation was portrayed as a special measure to handle an existential threat. As a form of emergency action, the repatriation of Syrian refugees has caused considered debate, due to the fact that the process was carried out by ignoring the aspects of voluntarily, safety, and dignity. While the Syrian conflict is still ongoing, the durable solution to end the protracted refugee situation is still difficult to be imagined.

ENDNOTES

[1] In theory, a public issue can be categorized into several spectrum ranging from non-politicized, politicized, and securitization. Non-politicized means that the state does not look at the issue as something that must be overcome through public debate or government policy-making. Whereas politicized means that the problem becomes part of public policy that requires government policy to allocate funds to deal with the issue. Then in securitization, an issue has been considered as an existential threat that requires emergency efforts to deal with (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998; Bourbeau, 2011).

[2] The intensity of the study regarding securitization on the issue of migration has increased significantly following the terrorist attacks September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington. The discourse that had appeared in the 1990s regarding the wave of migration in threatening national security re-emerged after thus 9/11 incident. Consequently, the issue of migration then linked to acts of terrorism. This is because the wave of migration makes immigration control weaker, and thus allowing the infiltration of actors who are members of the international terrorism network. Many countries then began to limit the arrival of migrants and refugees by tightening the border of their immigration system (Hammerstadt, 2014).

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