

The Rationales behind Danish Externalization Visions

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Externalization has emerged in Denmark as a policy field championed by the largest party in the country. Since 2018, the Social Democratic Party has promoted plans to expedite asylum processing in extraterritorial reception centers in a third country, and in 2021 the Danish government signed a memorandum of understanding with Rwanda, building the foundations for a relationship in which Denmark compensates Rwanda for accommodating its asylum seekers while their application is processed. Though the policy is still in its early stages and the memorandum contains no binding agreements, the turn to this type of policy reflects broader changes in the view of asylum seekers and migrants and the policy field. The recent externalization proposal has moved the idea from the periphery to the center of the political debate.

This thesis draws on the perspectives of Foucault and Carol Bacchi, employing the latter's WPR (What is the problem represented to be) approach to policy analysis in order to explore the problematizations of refugees within the political discourse. Understanding the policy field of asylum as a discursive terrain, the analysis seeks to illuminate the unexamined ways of thinking behind the externalization proposal by interrogating the arguments for meaning, categorizations, dichotomies, rationales, and assumed truths. The policy analysis will additionally draw on Scheider and Ingram's approach to understanding categorization in policy design to analyze how asylum seekers are divided into deserving or undeserving groups.

Specifically, the thesis will investigate how humanitarian and securitization discourses interplay with each other, constructing refugees as victims and threats at different times. The government's plan is enabled through an argument that harnesses empathy, morality, feelings of compassion, and justice to push for drastic changes in the international asylum system. The analysis is based on paragraph 20 questions in the Danish parliament, political speeches, and the Social Democratic Party political program on asylum from 2018 "Fair and realist."

The current externalization plans are shown to be underpinned by various ingrained rationales. These rationales are investigated by asking how the 'problem' of asylum seekers as presented in the externalization plans has been produced, what rationalities lie at its core, and how the representation of the 'problem' has come about.

Keywords: *Externalization, extraterritorial asylum, Danish asylum politics, deterrence strategies, refugee camps, humanitarian discourse, securitization, policy field*

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1 Introduction

Historically, Denmark has been known internationally as a liberal frontrunner on humanitarian matters, not least in questions regarding the protection of refugees and asylum policy. With its neighboring Scandinavian countries, Denmark has traditionally punched above its weight class in humanitarian affairs by continuously donating generously to the UNHCR and sitting permanently on the UNHCR's Executive Committee.¹ It was the first country to sign and ratify the Geneva Convention of 1951. When Denmark introduced its 1983 Aliens Act to reform the legal framework for foreigners and refugees, it was claimed by critics and supporters alike to be "the world's most liberal asylum legislation."²

Since 1983, Danish lawmakers have introduced more than 100 amendments to the Aliens Act, mostly with restrictions.³ Today Denmark is known for a strict policy on immigration and policies aiming to deter asylum seekers. Especially since 2015, when an unprecedentedly high number of predominantly Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis had arrived in Europe as refugees every year for several years, and displaced people could be seen trudging along Danish highways, the debate in Denmark around asylum has been tense.

Politicians have been getting creative in ways to make Denmark unattractive to potential refugees to discourage refugees from coming to Denmark. To promote the various cuts to benefits and newly introduced obstacles for obtaining residence for asylum seekers in Denmark, the Ministry of Foreigners, Integration and Housing under Minister Inger Støjberg took out advertisements in several newspapers in key countries of transit for refugees in 2015, informing in Arabic of new decisions to further tighten asylum regulation made by the government.⁴

The Danish government also introduced a law in 2016 giving authorities the right to confiscate any valuables brought by the asylum seeker to help pay for their accommodation in Denmark - the notorious "jewelry law,"⁵ for which Denmark received criticism and infamy in foreign media such as the BBC, the Wall Street Journal, CNBC and The Telegraph.⁶

¹ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 99

² Jørgensen, 2007: 141

³ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 102

⁴ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 108

⁵ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 110

⁶ Ritzau, 2016

No strategy for deterring asylum seekers is more ambitious than the plan to establish an asylum center in a third country. Visions of an external processing center for asylum seekers have occasionally surfaced in Danish politics for years but have historically been a controversial proposal with few proponents and many opponents.

Since 2018 though, when the Social Democratic Party became the unreserved champion of the idea, Denmark has become an international frontrunner in the plan of sending away asylum seekers to extraterritorial refugee camps for processing, presenting the externalization of refugee processing as the solution to an inherently broken asylum system.

The problem continued to be that no other nation was willing to lend its territory to the project - but in 2021, the Danish integration minister Mattias Tesfaye and the Rwandan minister of state for East African community affairs, professor Nshutti Manasseh signed a memorandum of understanding putting down the first crucial bricks on the road to establishing external Danish processing centers of asylum seekers in Rwanda.

The plan has been criticized by numerous sources on, amongst other things, doubts that Denmark would be able to guarantee protection to refugees in Rwanda - a country that has been criticized by the UN for unlawful treatment of refugees, including killing, jailing, torture as well as persecution of minorities.⁷⁸ The first bricks toward the externalization of Danish asylum have been laid, but the implementation of the policy is far from a simple question of getting the majority of parliament to support the idea. The logistics of Denmark effectively operating a refugee center on foreign territory is utterly uncharted territory for Danish lawmakers and is headed toward quite a few legal gray areas, such as where the authority of Rwanda ends, and the authority of Denmark begins, and how exactly a refugee can be under the protection of the Danish state in a Rwandan refugee camp.

This turn in Danish asylum politics reflects new rationalities incorporated into the political conversation, blurring former left/right political distinctions on asylum and the 'paradigm shift' to temporary protection status enshrined into law in 2019. The new policy paradigm gravitated toward a practice of giving refugees short-term residence permits with the aim of expeditious repatriation.

⁷ Redder, 2022

⁸ Skovgaard Andersen et al, 2022

The idea of externalizing the Danish asylum system has gone from musings on the fringes into a concrete plan with a partner country already determined in Denmark's absolute center of political power. However, externalization policy has only entered the political imaginary as a legitimate policy line in recent years, still far from the stage of developing a comprehensive logistical and legal framework, so its potential effectiveness and other social, political, and economic implications still have yet to be explored.

The emergence of externalization policy regimes illustrates a historically contingent development in Danish society and politics toward increasingly negative views on immigration and acceptance of ever more drastic policy solutions to counter its effects. The proposal rests upon particular understandings of asylum, certain ways of thinking, and making sense of the world that this thesis will attempt to unpack.

I draw on Carol Bacchi's WPR (What is the problem represented to be) approach to policy analysis, asking questions that inquire into the underlying assumptions behind the policy itself. It will be used throughout the thesis to interrogate policy for hidden understandings and presuppositions that support a policy proposal like the one currently made by the social democrats.

What can the arguments used to justify such a plan tell us about the rationales of its proponents? Which uninterrogated understandings of asylum underpin the proposal? How did the plan enter into the realm of the conceivable?

These questions and considerations have led to the following problem statement:

1.1 Problem statement

What are the rationales behind Danish externalization plans?

Work questions:

Which problem representation(s) of asylum seekers are present in the discourse? What can proponents' statements for the externalization plans tell us about their unexamined ways of understanding asylum? How has this type of policy moved into the realm of the 'thinkable'?

The thesis is a qualitative study of debates and speeches from the Speaker's chair in the Danish parliament. The object of study is studying the unsaid rationales in policy through the asylum discourses - so what is said when proponents are to defend or advocate policy will be the point of departure.

Shortly, the academic fields of externalization and securitization of immigration will be introduced. The next chapter will contain the my methodology (2) for the thesis, my use of Bacchi's WPR method and the poststructuralist disposition to accruing knowledge, as well as the theoretical lenses provided by Schneider and Ingram, Gammeltoft-Hansen, Bigo, and Aradau. Then the selected empirical data will be presented.

To situate the analysis in time, the next chapter (3) will clarify the context of Danish asylum politics and the history of Danish externalization plans. The focus of the analysis (4) will be to interrogate the externalization policy for underlying assumptions and presuppositions by singling out categories and binaries in the statements from parliament.

Finally, I will consider the discursive terrain through which the externalization plans are communicated in the discussion (5) and share my conclusions (6).

1.2 State of the art

The body of literature about externalization in Denmark has grown in later years as the policy has moved from the periphery of the conceivable to the center of the political debate. Martin Lemberg-Pedersen has researched the externalization of asylum as a broader political strategy that states such as Denmark employ to manage migration and control borders. He argues that even though the Danish government underscores the need to address an increasingly dysfunctional asylum system, the political emphasis of the proposal is on avoiding rather than protecting asylum seekers in Denmark. He contends that the government disregards problematic systemic and economic incentives the policy would generate.⁹

Nikolas Feith Tan's work has examined the externalization of asylum in Denmark from a legal and policy perspective. He argues that Denmark's legal basis for extraterritorial asylum is fragile, potentially inconsistent with international obligations, and at risk of undermining the principle of non-refoulement. Denmark will not be able to delegate the responsibility for protecting asylum seekers to a third country without seriously infringing upon international human rights and refugee law, with very few assurances of international protection existing in the externalization policy regime.¹⁰ He has also studied Denmark's turn from protection to temporary protection from a legal perspective, uncovering gaps in the law of cessation.

Ahlam Chemlali points to concerns about using North Africa as a potential site for extraterritorial asylum camps, poor protection standards for migrants and asylum seekers, and

⁹ Lemberg-Pedersen et al, 2021: 19

¹⁰ Lemberg-Pedersen et al, 2021: 51

increasing human rights violations..¹¹ Jens Vedsted-Hansen has investigated how the ‘paradigm shift’ officially proclaimed in legislation in 2019 fundamentally reoriented the Danish approach to protecting refugees from a focus on integration to temporary protection and deportation. However, the ‘return turn’ in Danish asylum politics was initiated in 2015 with the introduction of the temporary protection status.¹²

Securitization literature has also been a particularly illuminating resource to consult to analyze dominant asylum and migration policy paradigms. For example, Barry Buzan’s work with Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde offers a framework for analyzing security issues, including securitization processes, which provides insights into understanding migration as a security concern in 1997.¹³

Didier Bigo examined in 2002 how immigration has increasingly been understood as a matter of security, identifying securitization as a “*transversal political technology, used as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease.*”¹⁴ This sort of securitization analysis of European conditions with concepts borrowed from Michel Foucault like governmentality has become prolific; Claudia Aradau has analyzed the securitization of human trafficking.¹⁵ Violeta Moreno-Lax has made several inquiries focusing on migrants and the Mediterranean Ocean, contrasting the humanitarian ‘saving lives’ ethos of European border sea patrols with the perception of the same people who are saved as threats to border security.¹⁶ Jef Huysmans investigated how the politics of insecurity influence the securitization of asylum in the EU.¹⁷ Didier Fassin explored the intertwining of security and humanitarian discourses in the context of migration, analyzing how these discourses shape practices and policies.¹⁸ Saskia Sassen has examined the impact of globalization on migration and sovereignty, shedding light on the complex interactions between migration, security, and globalization.¹⁹ Finally, Mikkel Rytter’s research engages with questions of migration and integration from a more anthropological angle, discussing the increasing political will to

¹¹ Lemberg-Pedersen, et al: 42

¹² Vedsted-Hansen, 2022: 13

¹³ Buzan et al, 1997

¹⁴ Bigo, 2002

¹⁵ Aradau, 2004

¹⁶ Moreno-Lax, 2018

¹⁷ Huysmans, 2006

¹⁸ Fassin, 2011

¹⁹ Sassen, 1996

define and measure attachment to Denmark and the options for foreigners to live up to these ideals in the context of family reunification regulation.²⁰

My focus is not on integration per se but on the advocacy for the externalization of asylum. It is through these stated motives for the policies that the rationales behind the policies will be accessed, interrogating the statements of the proponents of the policy for specific understandings and problem representations. To do this, I have used Carol Bacchi's 'What is the problem represented to be' approach, which will be introduced along with my methodology, theoretical considerations, and empirical data collection in the following.

2 Methodology

2.1 Problem representations in policy

I draw on Carol Bacchi's WPR approach to interrogate the policies and investigate the "unexamined ways of thinking" they rely on.²¹ The WPR approach is a critical policy analysis framework that aims to reveal underlying assumptions and power relations that shape policy issues. It challenges the notion that policy problems are objective and preexisting, instead arguing that they are socially constructed through discursive practices.

Suppose policy problems, or particular 'problem representations' as Bacchi refers to them, are considered neutral problems that must be solved. In that case, the solutions of the governing body in the form of the policy can seem like a natural outcome of the rational decision-making processes. It obscures the productive power of policy and how it takes part in constructing the problem (representation) that it is introduced as a means to resolve.

Bacchi's WPR approach *"challenges the conventional view that policies address problems; it approaches policies as problematizations that produce "problems" as particular types of problems."*²²

Accepting the premise that policies are not necessarily solutions to problems that are waiting to be solved but instead that they are themselves productive, we must scrutinize the problem representations presented in policy and bring to the fore assumptions and ideas that underpin these representations. The policy is itself a complicated social construct loaded with meaning

²⁰ Rytter, 2010

²¹ Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 16

²² Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 6

that needs to be unpacked and put into context for its meaning to be understood. It is necessary to pay attention to this elusive productive ability of policy to critically analyze its causes and the discursive terrain of which it forms part. To achieve this, Bacchi suggests focusing on problematizations to interrogate taken-for-granted ways of thinking in the policy. She underlies that policies are not exogenous, existing somewhere outside of the policy-making process, but rather shaped by and created within the policy-making process.

The WPR approach is a poststructural perspective. Poststructuralism is not a theory but rather a school of thought that underpins Bacchi's approach and emphasizes that phenomena are not fixed and can not be attributed to an essence or natural state. Instead, they are historically contingent human constructs that need to be challenged and not accepted, unaddressed, as "truths." This thesis is also grounded in poststructuralist views, such as the rejection of stable, fixed, and essentialist meanings or truths, the importance of discourse in shaping our understanding of reality, and the influence of power relations in the production of meaning. Discourses refer to *socially produced forms of knowledge* encompassing a specific subset of practices and systems that recognize specific symbols and understandings.

Now when saying that the discourse is not delimited to linguistic elements - it does not mean to say that everything can be broken down into language, but it relates to two fundamental points - one epistemological and the other ontological. Firstly, insight always happens by the way or through a discourse or truth regime, and the other, social phenomena, as well as material objects, do not possess an innate essence or objective truth to them. The idea of objective or true knowledge is rejected in favor of understanding knowledge as a social construct, contingent on history and power relations mediated through a discourse. Likewise, the poststructuralist ontological perspective challenges essentialist and fixed notions of reality and instead emphasizes reality's contingent, fragmented, and discursively constructed nature as we experience it. Reality is not preexisting or objective but is actively produced and shaped through social, cultural, and historical processes and practices.

2.1 Power and discourse

Bacchi draws on the works of Foucault, particularly his notion of power as a productive force that, rather than being possessed by sovereign individuals, like a king or other head of state, power is a pervasive and diffuse force that operates through social relations and practices. Power is, according to Foucault, *"the name that one attributes to a complex strategic*

situation in a particular society."²³ It involves a myriad of micro-conflicts and confrontations in the interplay of "non-egalitarian and mobile relations." Power is relational, multi-directional (functioning from the top down as well as from the bottom and up), and furthermore, productive:

*"We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes," it "represses," it "censors," it "abstracts," it "masks," it "conceals." In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production."*²⁴

*"The operation of power is not so much to forbid as to bring into existence, to foster, to encourage, to multiply, or to intensify. It is through this action that things, gestures, words, and desires take on reality and truth."*²⁵

Power is not negative but positive; it manifests 'something' into existence, creating and enforcing definitions, norms, values, and practices that shape individuals and society. It operates through the production and dissemination of knowledge - which is inherently not objective but rather vested with interests and values. According to Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow's reading, power is not a commodity but the operation of governmental technologies, which sets up these non-egalitarian, asymmetrical relations.²⁶

Foucault identifies a distinct form of power with its origins in Christian institutions. Pastoral power ultimately aims to assure salvation in the next world. It must be ready to sacrifice itself for the flock's salvation, thus differing from royal power, where the subjects are called upon to be sacrificed to save the crown. It needs to explore the inside of people's minds and souls and create knowledge about each individual's conscience to direct it better.²⁷

*"This form of power is salvation oriented (as opposed to political power). It is oblativ (as opposed to the principle of sovereignty); it is individualizing (as opposed to legal power); it is coextensive and continuous with life; it is linked with a production of truth - the truth of the individual himself."*²⁸

²³ Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 28

²⁴ Foucault, 1984: 204

²⁵ Foucault, 1978: 92

²⁶ Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 185

²⁷ Foucault, 1982: 783

²⁸ ibid

Instead of simply dissipating when the church had its truth-producing authority critically diminished during the 18th century, pastoral power has spread beyond ecclesiastical institutions in an altered version. In the modern state, its purpose has warped into ensuring salvation in this world instead of the next, salvation here taking on several different meanings such as health, standard of living, and security.

After being limited to a well-defined institution for centuries, pastoral power spread out through the entire social body, finding expression in modern institutions that are concerned with the individual and seek to inform themselves of their inner thoughts, disciplining and herding individuals, producing knowledge about them, such as in medicine, psychiatry or education.²⁹

Another important concept in Foucault's terminology is the portmanteau governmentality, which refers to mentalities or ways of thinking in governing - different governmentalities - that also encompass rationalities and technologies. Governmental rationalities are the ways of thinking produced to justify and legitimize specific modes of rule and conduct to make something thinkable and practicable. These rationalities are shaped contingently and historically and can not be attributed to the intentions or tactics of any individual in particular.³⁰ Governmental technologies can involve various activities that classify, divide, organize, define, and arrange the social world, creating knowledge and shaping understanding. Bacchi views political vocabulary as one of these governmental technologies for its role in "*making politics thinkable*."³¹

Knowledge/discourses are central objects in this process of governing. Discourses are knowledge regimes that set the limits to what is possible to think about a related social practice or object, truth regimes that not only divide legitimate knowledge from excluded but set up the barriers and parameters of comprehension to what is "able to be known."³² It makes some outcomes seem likelier, and some solutions appear more feasible. Studying the discourse can enable us to glance at how it was possible to do or say particular things at a given time. Discourses are not merely forms of communication, linguistic expressions, and rhetoric but broader systems of knowledge and practices that shape and produce meaning

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 42

³¹ Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 44

³² Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 35

within a specific field and historical context. The discourse determines what is acceptable, deviant, or even intelligible.

Foucault uses the "statement" - "*énoncé*" - as units of analysis. They are not simply utterances - as many can be repeating the same statement. They do not have to be confined to grammatical constructions; maps or images can also be statements, depending on the context. Rather than being isolated incidents, they exist within broader discursive formations that promulgate particular ways of understanding and organizing knowledge.

*"The constancy of the statement, the preservation of its identity through the unique events of the enunciations, its duplications through the identity of the forms are constituted by the functioning of the field of use in which it is placed."*³³

The analysis will draw on this understanding of statements, remembering that rather than being understood by themselves, they each form part of a broader system of knowledge.

2.2 The WPR approach

Foucault's understanding of power as relational and productive underpins the WPR approach, which seeks to make policy intelligible through discourse analysis. Knowledge, rather than being objective truth is based upon specific understandings of the world mediated through a discourse. Categories are not neutral but are embedded in problem representations that build on diagnoses of perceived problems - policies represent the prognosis of what should be done with the alleged problem.

I will engage with three of Bacchi's research questions for the analysis, utilizing the WPR approach³⁴ to make the policy visible.

The first question, "*What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policies?*" is the starting point of analysis, the initial work with statements to access the deeper layers of meaning behind the policy. The objective here is not to understand the policy's intention - nor to assess whether a policy is "delivered" or not. We are not comparing expressed solutions with expressed problems, but rather to have a starting point to analyze the implicit problematizations; we begin with the stated solutions.

³³ Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982: 45

³⁴ Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 20

We must then work backward to see how the problem was represented - how the state of affairs was problematized. An omission can also be telling as a reference to the desirability of one thing signals that its opposite constitutes a sort of problem. To which question is the policy we are studying an answer? What is the problem to which externalization of asylum processing is the proposed solution?

The second question, "*What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem" (problem representation)?*" points to understanding the background underpinning the problem representation of asylum - the understanding of asylum as problematic. Here, the object of analysis is the assumptions that lie behind the representation of refugees and the policy plans to resolve the problem. The idea is to discover how this problem representation became possible by examining the "unexamined ways of thinking" that needed to be in place for it to make sense.³⁵ Which discourses/knowledge makes this representation of the problem intelligible? Then we analyze the problem representation by deconstructing it into the concepts and binaries it relies on, looking for potential patterns that can point toward the employment of a specific governmental rationality. The aim here is to critically interrogate these "unexamined ways of thinking" to reflect on which implications they could have.

The third question relates to the history of the problem representation: "*How has this representation of the "problem" come about?*" The idea here is to disrupt assumptions that what *is* reflects what *has to be*. It involves a form of Foucauldian genealogy, tracing the 'roots' of the idea, taking into account discursive practices that create forms of authority for specific knowledges. Here we are encouraged to reflect upon the developments and decisions that have contributed to the understanding of the problem and recognize competing problem representations over time and space - hence countering any notions that the given problem representation is "natural" or the only feasible outcome of history.

These questions will be operationalized to interrogate the externalization policy field of hidden understandings and rationales. It will be supplemented with Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider's categories of deserving and undeserving groups in policy design to use as a way to point to the unequal consequences for distinct population groups in policies. Their approach will be introduced in the following.

³⁵ Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016: 27

2.3 Deserving or undeserving

I will be utilizing Ingram and Schneider's understanding of deserving and undeserving groups to analyze the categorizations of asylum seekers in contemporary Danish policy design.³⁶ The two analyzed how powerful social constructions interact with political power to categorize people into groups with distinct assumed qualities and morality, who are treated very differently in the governance process.

The distinct groups they use are:

Advantaged target populations who have significant resources and political power and are positively constructed as deserving and entitled people.

Contenders also have political power resources, like those who belong to the advantaged category but are not perceived as deserving. This negative social construction as unworthy derives from their perceived moral values or their perceived lack of them.

Dependents constitute a group with few political resources but are socially constructed as helpless and deserving of aid in a moral sense.

Deviants have little to no legitimate political power and are constructed as undeserving because they are seen as a threat or a burden to society, such as criminals, terrorists, and gang members.

Their thesis is that certain policy fields have become degenerative, wherein the government fails to treat people equally but instead tends to produce policy that benefits advantaged populations, who are deemed worthy recipients, imposes punishment, and puts at a disadvantage those deemed deviants. The rationale for penalizing the deviants is that, because of their irresponsible or immoral behavior, they deserve precisely that kind of treatment or that disciplining is essential in order to deter this kind of conduct.

I will apply Schneider and Ingram's categories to contemporary discourses on refugees in Denmark. The categorization of different people into groups pre-understood as worthy/unworthy and moral/immoral will be used to analyze the social construction of refugees in the statements.

³⁶ Ingram & Schneider, 2004: 17

2.4 Theoretical framework

The selection of appropriate theoretical frameworks has been a critical aspect of this thesis as it lays the foundation for understanding and analyzing the discourse surrounding asylum policy in Denmark in a systematic manner. Accordingly, I have aimed to construct a conceptual framework to facilitate the interpretation of the empirical data. The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the selected theories, highlighting their relevance, applicability, and potential contributions to my understanding of the discourse on asylum in Denmark.

2.4.1 The securitization of migration

The gradual movement toward perceiving migration as a threat to the sovereign state and its border security has given rise to extensive descriptions for decades. Bigo examined in 2002 how immigration has increasingly been treated as a security issue and how securitization has become the dominant paradigm in shaping policies and practices that relate to immigration. *Securitization* is the theoretical framework used to explore how issues or objects are transformed into matters of security, enabling states to present a particular situation as an existential threat or risk to society, thus justifying exceptional measures. Bigo sees the securitization of migration as "*a transversal political technology, used as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not yet exist, so as to affirm their role as providers of protection and security and to mask some of their failures.*"³⁷

Bigo creates his version of Foucault's governmentality with his "governmentality of unease," which describes how security concerns are used to govern and control immigrant populations and how security professionals become the managers of risk and unease, playing on fears by designating dangerous qualities to certain minorities. Securitization of immigration happens through a structural feeling of unease, framed by neoliberal discourses in which "*freedom is always associated at its limit with danger and (in)security.*"³⁸

A broad discourse on global security enables the securitization of migrants and the tightening of regulation and norms and works through the 'governmentality of unease' with lawmakers and bureaucrats channeling these public feelings of unrest and uncertainty in the modern risk

³⁷ Bigo, 2002

³⁸ Bigo, 2002: 65

society. In this discursive formation, unemployment, for example, is generalized and reduced to direct a consequence of immigrant labor force competition, creating binary categories of natives and immigrants.³⁹ Securitization is a governmental technology used for managing feelings of anxiety and fear as well as the social distribution of "bad."⁴⁰ Bigo finds that the word "immigration" has become a term for catalyzing fears concerning the economic, social, or political development of Western countries. It provides a solution to anxiety and incertitude concerning national cultural identity challenged by the gradual dissolution of national boundaries by a myriad of interconnected globalization processes. The governmentality of unease is a governmental tool providing relief and sense in an incessantly chaotic World by focusing only on identified risky groups or groups at risk to disquieted populations through a reassuring and protective pastoral power.⁴¹

Bigo identifies humanitarian discourse as a by-product of securitization discourse, with the debates existing in the interim between the two (about the human rights for asylum seekers, for example) serving to conceal the general conditions of securitization present in both discourses.

This investigation of the interconnectedness of these two seemingly opposing discourses is also the focus of Claudia Aradau, who delves into the securitization of human trafficking and explores how the use of specific discourses, namely risk, and pity, shapes the political response to this issue.

The humanitarian discourse can be conceptualized as a "politics of pity." This discourse strategically employs emotions to restructure the dynamics surrounding human trafficking, ultimately governing the situation in a manner believed to be advantageous for trafficked women. Numerous non-governmental organizations have practiced and advocated for a 'politics of pity' with anti-trafficking campaigns explicitly attempting to counter governmental practices that categorize trafficked women as illegal immigrants.⁴² In this perspective, the women are the victims here, having already fallen victim to traffickers and with a potential risk of being re-victimized by states that see them as illegal immigrants and will try to identify and deport them. The 'politics of pity' can be seen as an 'emotional' governmental technology insofar as they have the capacity to influence the behavior of the

³⁹ Bigo, 2002: 79

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ Bigo, 2002: 82

⁴² Aradau, 2004: 259

populace. It attempts to externalize the threat and dissociate it from the trafficked women.

Correspondingly, the security regime operates as a "politics of risk," employing various risk management technologies to govern and regulate the complexities of human trafficking.⁴³ The risk here is not to the women. However, since they are construed as illegal immigrants and prostitutes engaged in illicit activity, they are the ones potentially posing a risk to society. Aradau argues that the securitization of human trafficking is driven by a paradoxical relationship between risk and pity, which ultimately reinforces power dynamics and perpetuates harmful policies. This relationship between risk and pity shows that humanitarian and security interventions by no means are mutually exclusive. Instead of being considered opposite or separate entities, these two different discursive regimes are logically related, interconnected, and mutually reinforcing.

To make this inquiry into the relationship between these two discourses, Aradau analyzes them using Foucault's notion of governmentality, showing "*how women metamorphose from suffering beings worthy of pity into risky beings who are to be contained and disciplined.*"⁴⁴ By critically examining the discursive strategies employed in the securitization process, Aradau sheds light on the complex and problematic nature of addressing human trafficking as a security issue.

Securitization and humanitarian discourses are thus shown to be interlinked regimes of knowledge. By paying attention to Aradau, we can analyze the effect of the interplay between these discourses on Danish asylum policy. The politics of pity functions through a humanitarian discourse that plays on empathy and emotions through an emphasis on the vulnerability and exploitation of the trafficked - enabled by a mobilization against the antagonists of the narrative, in this case, the human traffickers. At the same time, the victims are perceived as threats in their own right to the sovereignty of the nation-state's territorial borders. I will attempt, in the analysis, to illustrate how this double identification, this seeming paradox, is at play in the statements relating to asylum seekers in Denmark when discussing the possibilities of establishing extraterritorial reception centers.

⁴³ Aradau, 2004: 254

⁴⁴ Aradau, 2004: 255

2.42 Negative nation branding and the deterrent effect

European states have been racing to introduce policies to deter migrants from ever setting foot on their soil and claim their legal right to asylum. Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen investigated how Denmark, like several other European states, has rather than restricted asylum regulation (or, for example, impeding asylum seekers from ever setting foot on national soil and applying for asylum by resuming passport controls as Denmark did at its German border in 2016) pursued policies of indirect deterrence that meant to render protection conditions as unattractive as possible, inducing what he calls a 'beggar-thy-neighbor' effect - where asylum seekers are diverted to neighboring countries.⁴⁵ Even though this strand of policy can, under some circumstances, be effective in bringing down the number of refugee arrivals (and though hard to determine, Gammeltoft-Hansen's research suggests that deterrence policies collectively have for Denmark in the period following the turn of the millennium, corresponding to indirect deterrence policies implemented by the new VK government)⁴⁶, there are consequences to its use. Firstly, it is likely to affect refugees who are already in the country, having a negative impact on integration efforts.

"Policies involving deliberate delays in processing asylum claims, a lack of access to labour markets during the asylum phase, automatic national dispersal policies and short-term residence permits, which have each been shown to impact negatively on the later employment opportunities and economic performance of those who are subsequently afforded protection."⁴⁷

Apart from this, there is the 'beggar-thy-neighbor' effect. Neighboring states are incentivized to introduce similar policies and underbid their neighbors in perceived hospitality toward potential asylum seekers - creating a downward spiral and putting the long-term effectiveness of indirect deterrence policies under question. Similar policies in neighboring countries could reduce or even reverse the deterrent effect.⁴⁸ Gammeltoft-Hansen characterizes this contest to introduce most policies of indirect deterrence as a kind of reputation management that he calls 'negative nation branding.'

⁴⁵ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 100

⁴⁶ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 114

⁴⁷ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 117

⁴⁸ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 119

As Denmark is amongst the first European countries to entertain the idea of externalization seriously, the policy could be effective in bringing down the number of spontaneous asylum seekers for a time, according to Gammeltoft-Hansen's analysis of the deterrent effect. However, if Denmark's neighboring countries introduced a similar policy, the effect could be negated or reversed, as the majority of the refugees who would avoid Denmark would be diverted to Sweden, Germany, or other countries in the region. Moreover, the policy could have a contagious effect, as is also suggested by Denmark signing a memorandum of understanding with Rwanda about the possibility of sending asylum seekers there for processing just five months after the UK did the same.

These theoretical lenses, paying attention to humanitarian and securitization discourses and negative nation branding, will inform my analysis of the emergence of externalization plans in Denmark. Accordingly, I will supplement my reading of the statements with these concepts, discovering to which degree these theoretical frames can be applied to better understand the motives and rationalities that enable the contemporary discussion on asylum in Denmark.

2.5 Empirical data collection

2.51 Reflections on the data

I have been utilizing the webpage archive of the Danish Parliament to access parliamentary debates, choosing a selection of documents from after 2015 containing transcripts of debates and speeches from the speaker's chair. The data will be used to analyze how refugees and the institution of asylum are problematized in the political discourse and how this problematization is produced.

Much of this data consists of debates initiated by a direct question to a minister. Paragraph 20 of the rules of procedure of the Danish parliament covers questions that any member of parliament can ask in written form directly to a sitting minister to disclose their opinion on a given current case. The minister must answer within six work days, and the asker can request the answer to be in written or oral form. The minister has two minutes to answer the question initially, followed by two minutes for the asker to follow up with questions generated by the

answer. The minister then has half a minute to answer, and after that, the asker can ask two more times for half a minute with equal answering time allocated for the minister.⁴⁹

The restricted time frame makes for concise arguments, directly reaching into the subject matter. The §20 question often sets off debates, where the minister has to defend the government's policy to their political opponents as well as the electorate - the transcripts of the debates are publicly available, and the meetings are open to the public. The debates provide demonstrations of the government's arguments to justify their policy. The reasons that advocates of a given policy give are not to be taken at face value but rather to be used as a starting point for analysis - to use the arguments that the proponents themselves employ to present the policy to understand which kind of rationales and perspectives on reality lie underneath.

With similar objectives, I have been accessing speeches from politicians at their national congress to see how they rally their base and gain support for their policies "at home." This is an instance of the political machine addressing itself, the internal dialogue of a political institution.

This is a different kind of audience than in the speaker's chair of parliament, where political rivals, as well as allies, are assembled. That is why I have included speeches on the speaker's chair of parliament as well, where the individual lawmaker is speaking to peers of the entire political spectrum - the ones they must appeal to and the ones they assume to be opposed.

When one uses the web archive of the parliament to gather data, vast amounts of documents concerning the preparation and implementation of new laws are inevitably encountered.

These are documents containing transcripts of hearings, agreements, communications, juridical texts, debates, and answers from various actors outside of parliament, not all of which are equally relevant for the analysis.

I have excluded most of these texts; juridical texts, for example, have been excluded in favor of debates as the formal language and standardized terms are used to describe the implementation of decisions already taken. The main focus of this analysis will be the implicit assumptions behind policy decisions. So, the resistance encountered in parliament provides a much lusher scenario in which to analyze the argumentation for a given policy. These §20 debates have sometimes proven to be of great relevance, even though they do not lead to a decision or a change. They are instead just clarifications, where both explicit and

⁴⁹ Folketinget, n.d. Forretningsordenens §20

implicit articulation of the reasons, opinions, and understandings underpinning the pursued policy are exhibited.

2.52 Presentation of the data

The chosen §20 debates are chosen by their relevance to the subject of asylum and externalization, spanning various years.

The first is from the 28 of January 2022: "*about the safety of sending back refugees of war to Syria*"⁵⁰ by Sikandar Siddique to the Minister of Foreigners and Integration Mattias Tesfaye. Siddique is the leader of the Free Greens, a small protest party vehemently opposed to the government's externalization plans.

The second debate is from the 12 of March 2021, "*about asylum processing in a third country*,"⁵¹ asked jointly by Morten Messerschmidt from the Danish People's Party and Inger Støjberg, former minister of foreigners, integration, and housing for Venstre, also to the sitting minister Tesfaye.

The third debate, "*about when the government establishes asylum camps abroad*,"⁵² from the 3 of June 2020, is asked by founder and former leader of the Danish People's Party Pia Kjærsgaard to Tesfaye. These are the debates identified as most emblematic of the stances on externalization.

I have also selected two speeches by Mette Frederiksen, closing and opening parliament as minister of state in 2020, and her speech at the social democrats' party congress of 2015, wherein she is problematizing asylum seekers in ways that give sense to the externalization proposal. Finally, I have chosen to use the social democratic program on foreigners from 2018, "Fair and realist," in which they clarify their stances on asylum, immigration, and integration for analysis.

This program was part of an election bid where the Social Democratic Party firmly took ownership of the externalization idea, presenting the arguments for the broad electorate. It

⁵⁰ Folketinget (2022). §20-spørgsmål S 430 Om det sikre i at sende krigsflygtninge tilbage til Syrien (translation mine)

⁵¹ Folketinget (2021). § 20-spørgsmål S 1106 Om asylbehandling i tredjeland(translation mine)

⁵² Folketinget (2020). §20-spørgsmål S 1338 Om hvornår regeringen får etableret asyllejre i udlandet. (translation mine)

will be interrogated for unseen understandings and used to discover how the problem representations in externalization policy have come about.

The debates and speeches from parliament are all in Danish, so I have translated all direct quotes into English.

2.6 Analysis strategy

First, I will outline the historical context of asylum politics in Denmark to provide some background understanding of the political climate in which the externalization plans are created. Then, the chapter contains an overview of key political changes, as well as a brief history of the externalization plans in a Danish context.

Throughout the analysis, I will pay attention to the first two WPR questions, first asking how the problem is represented in the externalization proposal. The arguments employed in the political statements are used as an access point into the underlying presuppositions in the policy. Then I will explore how these representations became possible, interrogating the statements to approach the rationales behind them. What is taken for granted for the problem to be represented as such? The first part of the analysis (4.1) specifically looks at externalization as a deterrence strategy, attempting to unpack the rationalities of deterrence. The second part (4.2) identifies problem representations in crisis rhetoric from 2015 and in contemporary debates referencing the situation of 2015. The third part (4.3) identifies and describes traces of a humanitarian discourse in the advocacy for externalization. The fourth and final part (4.4) highlights key binaries produced in the statements. Distinctions between genuine refugees and irregular migrants will be unloaded through Schneider and Ingram's concepts of deserving and undeserving groups.

The discussion (5) will take inspiration from the third WPR question relating to how the representation of the problem came to be. It inquires into the origins of the several rationalities represented in the externalization proposal.

3 Historical context

3.1 The 1983 Aliens Act and its legacy: clashing views on immigration throughout the 1980s and 1990s

The Aliens Act was unusually unrestrictive for the period and was quickly branded "*the world's most liberal asylum legislation*" by critics and supporters alike.⁵³

At the time, Denmark received relatively few asylum seekers (the number of applicants in 1983 was 332),⁵⁴ and acceptance rates were high. The goal of the 1983 Aliens Act was not necessarily to establish a considerably more liberal policy but rather to establish greater legal clarity regarding the rights of asylum seekers in Denmark concerning asylum, family reunification, and the circumstances under which asylum seekers could be removed from the country.⁵⁵ It was desired to have more specific national legislation to avoid different cases being arbitrarily decided where the law was not sufficiently explicit.

The 1983 Aliens Act is looked back upon with critique amongst others by the former leader of the Danish People's Party, Pia Kjærsgaard, who called it "*the foundation for the way to end Denmark as a nation populated by Danes, with the Danish culture, Danish norms and Danish values as guides in existence*" in the closing debate of the Danish parliament in 2008.⁵⁶ She founded the Danish People's party in 1995 along with three other defectors from the parliamentary group of the Progress Party - itself a protest movement that swept into parliament in the landslide election of 1973 with 28 mandates and almost 16% of the national vote at the expense of the grand old parties, the Social Democratic Party, the Conservative People's Party, Venstre and the Danish Social Liberal Party.⁵⁷ Whereas the Progress Party had been radically opposed to taxation, the Danish People's Party's platform also came with an anti-systemic element (inherently a protest party outside the political establishment). However, they had a social and welfare policy that much more resembled that of the social democrats. They most clearly disagreed on immigration policy, which was a critical issue for the Danish People's Party from its inception.

⁵³ Jørgensen, 2007: 141

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017: 101

⁵⁶ Altinget, 2008 (translation mine)

⁵⁷ Folketingsvalgene 1953-2022 (n.d.)

In 1999, Poul Nyrup, minister of state and leader of the Social Democratic Party, said the now iconic words "...*stuerene, det bliver i aldrig*",⁵⁸ roughly translating to "...*housebroken, you'll never become*" referring to the Danish People's Party's harsh tone toward foreigners. At the heart of their rhetoric toward foreigners was a perspective on immigration as being detrimental to Denmark. A vision of a culturally homogenous and cohesive Danish nation being gradually changed by foreigners with different, incompatible values. Nyrup was referring to the kind of statements you could hear Pia Kjærsgaard give at the annual meeting of the Danish People's party in 1999:

"(...) the next generation in Denmark will ask the older generation a similar question (what did you do when Denmark was ruined" posed by reverend Søren Krarup, later to become a member of parliament for the Danish People's Party, in a chronicle in Ekstra-Bladet.). "They will look at the conditions around them and they will read about what Denmark was before the immigration began, they will experience how the immigration became a national catastrophe that tore Denmark asunder as a nation and created a fragmented, divided and incohesive country."⁵⁹

The context in the chronicle, Kjærsgaard referred to was a comparison between 1930s Germany and the state of affairs with immigration in Denmark. Statements like these explicitly problematizing immigrants as threats to national cohesion assume national identity to be a relatively fixed entity that is threatened by the difference of outside cultures represented in migrants and refugees. Nyrup's comment shows how unfeasible cooperation between the two parties was at the time.

During the late 1990s, the debate on integration and asylum politics was split between a culturally pluralist faction on one side consisting of the Green Left, the Red-Greens, and the Danish Social Liberal Party, perceiving culture as a constantly changing phenomenon, considering immigration into Denmark an enrichment of Danish culture, and on the other the right, headed by the Danish People's Party and Venstre, advocating a definition of Danish culture that is more static - based on specific values, such as democracy and freedom of speech - that needs to be preserved and protected from outside influence.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Nielsen, 2018

⁵⁹ Danske Taler, 2001. Pia Kjærsgaards tale ved Dansk Folkepartis årsmøde 1999 (translation mine)

⁶⁰ Jønsson, 2018: 140

The Social Democratic Party was wedged in between those two factions in Danish Politics; the difference in perspective on immigration also reflected in two opposing factions within the party - one arguing that problems with immigration had a cultural dimension and another more closely aligned with the multiculturalist, pluralist line of the Social Liberal Party that counted among others the previous leader of the Social Democratic party, Sven Auken.⁶¹ During the 1980s and early 1990s, it had been an explicit goal of the social democrats to counter racism and xenophobia, as reflected here by the former leader of the social democratic committee on foreigners in 1987, Ove E. Dalsgaard:

"The danger of racism is (...) always latent. It is increased when foreigners are assigned to isolate themselves from the rest of society, because society doesn't offer them chances to be integrated. That is why it is so important that we take on policy on foreigners that promotes the integration process on all fronts".⁶²

National integration policy was, from the onset of modern immigration, the preferred response of the social democrats to immigration in order to define the relationship between foreigners and the Danish state, emphasizing the right of foreigners to equal access to society and the welfare state if complying with the duty of working and contributing. The question of how to react to asylum seekers and how best to integrate foreigners into Danish society existed in the form of a rampant debate in parliament in addition to internal debate in the Social Democratic Party during the 1980s and 1990s. By the late 1990s, the party still needed to resolve internal divisions and vagueness in the party line that made the party lose credibility in the debate on foreigners to voters.

3.2 Political developments after 2000

Voters did decide to chastise the Social Democratic Party in the election of 2001, where the Danish People's Party had an exceedingly good election and went from 13 to an all-time high of 22 mandates in parliament, succeeding in absorbing part of the social democrats' electorate.⁶³

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² Socialdemokratiets Udlændingekomité, 1988: 3

⁶³ Folketingsvalgene 1953-2022 (n.d.)

Venstre's leader Anders Fogh Rasmussen formed a government along with the Conservative People's Party and the Danish People's Party acting as regular support party, thereby unseating Nyrup as minister of state and the Social Democratic Party as the governing party.

The debate on immigration in Denmark had already had a cultural dimension at that time, but in the aftermath of 9/11, the side viewing Muslims as especially problematic immigrants and harmful to Danish society was bolstered and became even more explicit.

Among the islam critics was Mogens Camre, a member of parliament for the Danish People's Party at the time on the speaker's chair of the Danish parliament:

*"All the countries of the World are infiltrated by muslims. Some of them speak nicely, but they are waiting to become enough to kill us... (...) What we are facing is not a short-lived military operation. It is concerned with driving this ideology of evil out of Western civilization. Never shall islam get a place in our countries."*⁶⁴

The VK government's platform on foreigners and immigration was launched under the slogan "a firm and fair policy on foreigners."⁶⁵ Both parties had argued throughout the 1990s that the foreigner question could not be singularly answered with integration - access to Denmark should be kept under tighter control. Their two terms in government with the Danish People's Party's uneasy support - contingent upon consistently tighter regulations in policy on foreigners - became loaded with numerous measures with the explicit aim of restricting access to Denmark for foreigners.⁶⁶ The VK government also made it a key issue to help refugees where they were, which in most cases are neighboring countries to the refugees' own countries of origin.

This augmented focus on the near areas is presented in the speech Anders Fogh gave at the Danish Refugee Council's yearly fundraiser in 2002:

*"With the new near area effort, we will work to secure refugees a safe and decent life in the near areas. This is not just a prerequisite for that they can live as close to their original home as possible. It is also a prerequisite for them to preserve hope to return home one day."*⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Gram & Elbæk, 2001: 6 (translation mine)

⁶⁵ Jønsson, 2018: 150 (translation mine)

⁶⁶ Jønsson, 2018: 151

⁶⁷ Statsministeriet, 2002 (translation mine)

Notions that refugees should stay in their regional areas of origin and receive our aid there and that the focus of asylum politics should be on contributing to the protection of refugees in those areas increased in popularity in this period. The tone was set here for the next phase in Danish asylum politics, with the Danish People's Party in a privileged position to influence a government that envisioned the solution to immigration problems in Denmark as helping refugees in the near areas of their home country long before they reached Danish soil. The discussion of Danish values and defining what they were, played an incrementing part in the national debate. Since the ascension of Helle Thorning-Schmidt as leader of the social democrats in 2005, the party now also advocated consistently for a restrictive policy on foreigners. When the social democrats recaptured government in 2011 with the Green Left and the Social Liberal party, the latter party and their leader Margrethe Vestager had a strong negotiating position in defining the policy on foreigners of the new government.⁶⁸ By the time of Helle Thorning Schmidt's ascension as leader of the Social Democratic Party, the parties of the political right had appropriated the social democrats' key issue of state-regulated integration with a focus on affiliation to the labor market, language skills, and Danish values, and the social democrats had assumed the position from the right of tighter control with entrance into Denmark.⁶⁹

2015 was to be an absolutely seminal election for the Danish People's Party, where it again reached unprecedented parliamentary influence with 37 mandates, up from 22 the past election cycle, at the expense, mainly of the parties of the political left as well as the Danish Social Liberal Party and Venstre. Moreover, the Danish People's Party had eclipsed every other party in the Danish parliament except the Social Democratic Party in size, becoming the largest party in the blue block.⁷⁰

Shortly after the election, Helle Thorning Schmidt stepped down from leadership and was succeeded by vice chair Mette Frederiksen, who took up the responsibility of getting the Social Democratic Party back in power.

⁶⁸ Jønsson, 2018: 189

⁶⁹ Jønsson, 2018: 198

⁷⁰ Folketingsvalgene 1953-2022 (n.d.)

3.3 The 'paradigm shift' and the turn to temporary protection

The new Venstre government that reclaimed the government in the summer of 2015 set out to introduce numerous measures to establish temporary protection and stay in Denmark as the standardly given asylum status to new arrivals.

"As the first element of the new policy paradigm, all asylum residence permits are to be issued not only as temporary permits with a limited duration of validity, but now explicitly for the purpose of temporary stay in Denmark, regardless whether they have been issued to Convention status refugees or to those with subsidiary protection status or temporary protection status."⁷¹

Jens Vedsted-Hansen in his November 2022 report on the 'return turn' in Danish asylum politics.

The category of 'temporary protection status,' however, was first introduced before the election of 2015, when the Minister of Justice was still Mette Frederiksen, as a first-stage response to the emergence of what was consistently referred to, in the political climate as well as in the media as the refugee crisis. This turn made it easier to remove residence permits for asylum seekers who had only been granted temporary protection status.⁷² This status was created as a political tool that would soon be operationalized as the default protection status given to new arrivals.

"The new focus on temporariness was operationalised by amending the rules on extension and revocation of residence permits issued to all categories of refugees. This was indeed intended to provide the legal mechanism required to expand the scope of non-extension or revocation of asylum permits. Given that the criteria for refusal of extension were previously identical with those on revocation of residence permits, the tightening of the revocation rules combined with the separation of the rules on extension from the revocation criteria is to be considered the most significant concrete impact of the 'paradigm shift' in terms of the stability of refugees' residence in the country."⁷³

⁷¹ Vedsted-Hansen, 2022: 20

⁷² Dahlins, 2023

⁷³ Vedsted-Hansen, 2022: 20

The 'paradigm shift' was enshrined in law on 15 January 2019 by the government when they introduced a comprehensive bill containing amendments to the Aliens Act, the Integration Act, and the Repatriation Act in addition to the labor market, social welfare, educational and penal laws, turning the focus toward temporary protection of refugees rather than integration, creating the legal framework for revoking refugee status. The bill was based on a political agreement that the government had made with the Danish People's Party in November of 2018 as part of the negotiations of the state budget 2019, pledging an approach to immigration policy with a focus on temporariness and return.⁷⁴

The policy proposal makes plain that a driving motivation for the change in policy direction was to deter asylum seekers from coming to Denmark:

*"With the present proposal the government wants to further restrict the conditions of asylum and access to Denmark, so that it will become markedly less attractive to seek towards Denmark."*⁷⁵

If Denmark becomes known for its policies of not offering residence above the bare minimum of living up to international commitments on refugee protection, the tally of asylum seeker newcomers is assumed to decrease significantly. If this kind of deterrence policy successfully channels the refugees to neighboring countries with laxer regulation, it could accelerate the race between European states to look for increasingly more drastic solutions, such as the present Danish proposal on collaborating with Rwanda.

3.5 Danish visions of externalization

The idea of sending refugees abroad instead of having to process their asylum cases on its territory has lingered in the political memory of Denmark for several decades. Mentions of possible externalization visions have occasionally surfaced, but never quite as structured and advanced as the social democratic proposal from 2018.

Back in 1986, the Danish Schlüter government led by the Conservative People's Party proposed the establishment of extraterritorial processing centers for refugees at the UN Third Committee - but the proposition was quickly and firmly rejected as lacking in solidarity.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ Vedsted-Hansen, 2022: 16

⁷⁶ Lemberg-Pedersen, 2021: 14

Different versions of the idea have occasionally surfaced in Danish politics in the decades since then.

In 1998 Venstre and the Conservative People's Party launched a joint proposition on asylum policy advocating that Denmark should take part in creating refugee camps in the same part of the World from where the refugees came. Lene Espersen, political spokesperson for the Conservative People's Party emphasized, however, that asylum seekers would not be send away from Denmark to camps: ""(...) *it would be inhuman to send back these people to miserable refugee camps in the Third World.*"⁷⁷ This direct reference to the inhumanity of sending away people at the border is indicative of the period, where a broader moral outcry mostly followed notions of externalization. The idea that all Syrian asylum seekers should immediately be flown off to Africa from Denmark was echoed by Martin Henriksen from the Danish Folk Party's parliamentary group in 2014.⁷⁸ The spokesperson on foreigners for the Social Democratic Party, Mette Reissman, called the proposal *'indecent.*'⁷⁹ The leader of her party Mette Frederiksen briefly dismissed it at the party congress of 2015:

*"Real leadership to me is having the courage to be honest. To share the available dilemmas. Find the solutions. At one and the same time we have to do what is right and what is smartest. I am convinced that the time where one could get by with symbol politics, propositions about camps in Kenya, immediate braking and quick fixes is a thing of the past."*⁸⁰

This was before her party launched its externalization plans with a third country in Africa and became the driving force for this kind of policy in Denmark. The notion of sending away asylum seekers at the door has been criticized for being at odds with international refugee law and the principle of *refoulement*. However, it has never before been much more than unsupported and unfinanced musings as opposed to structured proposals with a partner reception country already consenting to cooperate.

⁷⁷ Larsen, 2000

⁷⁸ Lemberg-Pedersen, 2021: 13

⁷⁹ Jessen & Arnfred, 2014

⁸⁰ Danske Taler, 2015. Mette Frederiksens tale ved Socialdemokratiets partikongres 2015.

Scattered externalization visions have been mocked and rejected on moral grounds by broad opposition from around the political spectrum, always put forth by a minority and often from parties on the fringes of the political power center.

Now a memorandum of understanding has been signed with Rwanda, and most of the parliament agrees about accepting the premise of extraterritorial asylum camps. It has entered the realm of the 'thinkable': even if some parties do not agree with the premise or do not want to cooperate with social democrats toward completing their vision for externalization, it is continually discussed in parliament, the debate about the hows and the whys of externalization is on-going, making it an increasingly more viable policy to pursue for the future.

4 Analysis

4.1 Deterrence of asylum seekers in the externalization plans

The hopes for accelerating deterrent mechanisms feature as an integral part of the reasoning behind the current Danish externalization plans. It is the product of an escalating political will to go further than political rivals, an impetus to prove less welcoming than regional neighbors with the explicit objective of deterring potential asylum seekers from pursuing residence in Denmark.

Here is how Tesfaye puts it when asked about it in Parliament in 2021:

“That is why we propose to move the asylum process out of Denmark. Herewith, we would remove the incentive to even transport oneself up here. I do not believe that an asylum seeker would pay a large sum of money to a human smuggler to travel thousands of kilometers with great danger of assault on the way, jump in an overcrowded inflatable boat across the Mediterranean, expose oneself to mortal danger, seek toward Denmark, if an asylum application does not give a entry ticket to a long term stay in a welfare state like Denmark.”⁸¹

The assumed effect can be seen as another attempt at ‘negative nation branding’, where the government, with this policy proposal, attempts to position Denmark as a country known for being difficult to obtain residence permits in for more than shorter periods.

⁸¹ Folketinget, 2021. §20-spørgsmål S 1106 Om asylbehandling i tredjeland. (translation mine)

“That is why I expect that we will see a significant drop in spontaneous asylum seekers in Denmark with a reception center arrangement. Herewith the concern for the number of exceptions to the arrangement, to which the asker (Morten Messerschmidt of the Danish People’s Party) has shown concern, is vanishingly small. When we have an agreement, I expect that practically no one would be inclined to seek toward Denmark to apply for asylum.”⁸²

Deterrence is presented in several statements as the key argument for why the externalization of asylum processing is such a robust solution - because it is assumed to once and for all deter asylum seekers from coming by sending a powerful message that Denmark is not a potential place for them to make home. Deterrence rationales have underpinned the discourse on asylum through several years and successive governments. However, by the time of the current externalization plans, these have become crystallized as self-evident to be effective and desirable even though their social and political implications and long-term effectiveness are left largely uninterrogated.

The actual implementation of reception centers for asylum seekers in a third country is foreign territory for any European politicians. It will involve vast amounts of negotiation and administration around massive political and legal complications. If the policy is brought to fruition in some form in the future, it may still be many years away. However, the deterrent effect of the policy might already be unfolding; the frequency at which externalization is featuring in political debate in Denmark, might be sending a message on its own, managing Denmark’s reputation in a manner that will keep asylum seekers away from Denmark. This is what ‘negative nation branding’ is about; making sure that Denmark is well known as a frontrunner in European externalization efforts, sending a loud and clear message.

To take as given the effectiveness of deterrence strategies, potential asylum seekers are assumed to take note of Denmark’s general reputation regarding asylum. If this is the case, Denmark’s heraldry for externalization solutions could potentially be capable of deterring asylum seekers in itself even if the policy is never implemented.

⁸² Folketinget, 2021. §20-spørgsmål S 1106 Om asylbehandling i tredjeland. (translation mine)

4.2 A broken system in urgent need of revision

Examining the debate on asylum after 2015 more closely, one gets the sense of urgency of a broken system that needs to be repaired as fast as possible - with bold and decisive innovation. This is where the plans of externalizing asylum processing come in - as a radical solution to a problem that demands this degree of intervention. This problematization is foundational to the idea that the externalization of asylum is not only desirable but necessary. How the problem of asylum seekers coming to Denmark is represented to be an existential crisis is making swift action in the form of a complete overhaul of the system appear to be the rational choice and the only choice.

Here is an excerpt from a debate in Parliament in 2021, where sitting minister of foreigners- and integration Mattias Tesfaye is defending the government's ambitions to externalize asylum:

*"... it would be catastrophic both for Denmark and Europe, if we experienced the refugee crisis again as in 2015, where people walked the highways. That is why we must think new and innovative in the policy on foreigners, and that is what the government is attempting."*⁸³

We are reminded of the uncertainty of the previous period, of the crisis that could re-emerge at each given moment if another solution is not found. We must act now because it would be a tragedy if such conditions were to be repeated. The urgency gives meaning and credence to the policy, ultimately serving as justification for the externalization plan: desperate times calling for desperate measures.

Here is how Mette Frederiksen, leader of the Social Democratic Party and minister of state to be four years later, puts it at the annual congress of her party in 2015:

"I need you to be with me. That we walk the same path. That we meet both the danes and our political opponents with stubborn insistence to create real freedom for more, worthy choices through life and secure all who can and want a space in our community. To walk together. And stand together. That is what we Danes must do in the contemporary refugee crisis."

⁸³ Folketinget, 2021. §20-spørgsmål S 1106 Om asylbehandling i tredjeland. (translation mine)

The Middle East is burning. Millions are fleeing Syria, and thousands of people from both East and South are trying their luck in peaceful Europe. Children. Entire families on the run. ⁸⁴

A graphic image of this horrible crisis is conjured, vividly relating the tragic human costs and evoking compassion by emphasizing the children and families. The world is ablaze, and millions are coming for our Europe - a continent that appears to be in danger of being overrun by masses from the East and South. The statement illustrates how notions of unease and crisis are mobilized through a securitization discourse. The warning of looming threats and general uncertainty is never far from the plea for unity. Invoking the Danes to unite behind her proposals for solutions constructs the community around national identity, creating the binary of Danes and the others. This appeal to the national feeling of the Danes constructs an “us”, which is addressed in statements concerning “them” that, more often than not, leaves one left with feelings of unease or uncertainty. We need to support her leadership and decision-making because the situation is as pressing as it is made out to be.

The construction of the movement of refugees as a crisis is vital to understand the government’s propositions of externalization. A crisis arises when we reach a point where continuation becomes unthinkable without a fundamental shift. The most absolute necessity characterizes it - a looming danger that demands resolution. When one is in a crisis, a decision, for better or worse, becomes imperative. Security is compromised, so credence is given to the opinion that extraordinary measures must be employed to tackle the threat.

The statements producing a definition of the situation as a crisis operate within a system of knowledge in which migration is considered a question of national security. The threshold for when something constitutes a crisis is not given beforehand or defined by any objective parameter - but the presented solution seems more proportional and becomes all the more acute by the perceived danger of the crisis. The crisis rhetoric lends its sense of *urgency* to the situation. Policy must be implemented not necessarily because it is a good solution but because it is necessary - and it appears that it is the only one available to us at the moment. The concept of the crisis underpins the policy line as a looming reminder of the stakes - and of the risky conditions that could return at any moment.

⁸⁴ Danske taler, 2015. Mette Frederiksens tale ved Socialdemokratiets partikongres 2015. (translation mine)

4.3 The humanitarian discourse and responsibility

In several of the statements propagating externalization policy, refugees are depicted in acute need, as we saw exemplified in the vivid description above by Mette Frederiksen of the hardships with which migrants are faced. The vulnerability and suffering of the asylum seekers are emphasized, stoking empathy and compassion. The only decent way forward is to aid those in need by changing the system that is hurting them. In this excerpt of Tesfaye, there is a clear link between the humanitarian argument and the urgent need for implementing the government's externalization plan:

*“ So I don't think there is an alternative to do everything in our power to get this done (externalize asylum processing by creating reception centers in Rwanda). It is also the only humane thing to do, I think. ”*⁸⁵

In a more recent answer from 2022, Tesfaye reproduces the unease and moral panic that the refugee situation in 2015:

*“Many of us woke up and were terrified, when we saw the pictures of a six year old boy, washed up on a European coast. I think we both were terrified over this. But there are 22.000 people who have died in the latest years in the Mediterranean. We should not sleep calmly at night, but that is because the asylum system is broken.”*⁸⁶

The argumentation here is relatively straightforward: it is precisely *because* the plight of refugees is so dire, *because* of the emergency of the humanitarian crisis, that we must change this broken system - by sending the asylum seekers to Rwanda upon arrival in Denmark. This focus on the victimhood of the refugees gives rise to the notion that the broken system must be changed for the refugees' own sake and serves to justify and, indeed, make intelligible the government's visions for externalization. The humanitarian discourse and the 'politics of pity' - this discursive turn toward emotions and morality - play a foundational role in the reasoning underpinning current externalization plans. The reform of the entire asylum system is presented through a humanitarian discourse as a responsibility and the only decent way to proceed given the dangerous circumstances.

⁸⁵ Folketinget, 2020. §20-spørgsmål S 1338 Om hvornår regeringen får etableret asylyljre i udlandet.

⁸⁶ Folketinget, 2022. §20-spørgsmål S 430 Om det sikre i at sende krigsflygtninge tilbage til Syrien.

The degree to which not only a motivation or a need but a *responsibility* to change the system is underscored is concisely displayed in the social democrats' political program on asylum from 2018:

*“We let down our responsibility to other people if we let the current system continue.”*⁸⁷

This appeal to live up to the invoked responsibility by “doing the right thing” is emblematic of the rhetoric promulgating the externalization plans, successfully rallying a humanitarian agenda in support of the externalization plans.

The reminders of the sheer peril of the whole situation around 2015, epitomized in the anecdote of the six-year-old drowned boy invoked by Tesfaye above, make decisive action seem all the more pressing and the government's externalization plans more proportional. Feelings of compassion and solidarity amongst humanity are harnessed and managed toward the acceptance of the new policy paradigm.

4.4 Deservingness and justice in the refugee representations

But to whom is it that the refugees fall victim? There is a group repeatedly pointed to, as we can see in Mette Frederiksen's speech as minister of state at the opening of Parliament in 2020.

*“Thousands of people drowning in the Mediterranean. It is a humanitarian catastrophe. Part of those that reach their destination get their asylum applications rejected. After risking everything. At the same time, human smugglers benefit from the misfortune of others.”*⁸⁸

Refugees are victims, but not of their own states, who might be persecuting them or other factions making their countries of origin unsafe by engaging in acts of violence, nor of the foreign states waging wars in their home country (in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq counting Denmark among them), but of the human smugglers who facilitate their journey for a steep price. It almost seems that thwarting the human smugglers has become a goal in itself:

⁸⁷ Retfærdig og realistisk, 2018: 7 (translation mine)

⁸⁸ Statsministeriet, 2020. Statsminister Mette Frederiksen's tale ved Folketingets afslutningsdebat den 22. juni 2020. (translation mine)

*“A reception center can contribute to stopping the mortal, risky and uncontrollable flight across the Mediterranean. It will destroy the business model of the human smugglers.”*⁸⁹

The human smugglers are playing the role of antagonists in this narrative, criminals and deviants, following Schneider and Ingram’s terminology, who are pocketing great profits at the expense of the suffering victims while simultaneously undermining the sovereignty of the European nation states. They are a danger to both the states and the migrants who purchase their services.

From the 2018 social democratic program on asylum:

*“The present asylum system is contributing to creating a vicious injustice. Where people fleeing are exposing themselves to mortal danger. And where cynical human smugglers earn billions on other people’s misfortune.”*⁹⁰

There is a certain call for justice (which indicatively forms half of the slogan for the social democrats’ program on asylum from 2018) that permeates the discourse through which the statements promoting externalization plans are produced in recent years. The asylum system is reflected as unjust because it allows the deviant human smugglers to earn on the misfortune of the unfortunate migrants. The system is articulated to contribute to the injustice committed to the refugees. Images of huddled masses trodding along Danish highways are incessantly brought up in statements, referencing the moral panic of 2015 and 2016 as a warning of the inevitable if we do not proceed with the only viable solution; externalization of asylum. Feelings of responsibility are mobilized, and the fear and unease of the population are managed toward acceptance of gradually more drastic policy solutions. The externalization debate takes a new ethical turn here, as varying externalization propositions have several times been rejected through the years precisely on humanitarian, and moral grounds. The present ‘justice’ discourse plays on feelings of indignation and morality, mobilizing responsibility and compassion to turn the perception of externalization from an inhumane policy to the *only* humane one. It is created on a solid backdrop of chaotic scenes from 2015, reproducing the moral panic and fear from the collective memory of refugees walking the highways and drowning in the Mediterranean Ocean as a constant reminder of the risk. Here is from Frederiksen’s speech at the opening of Parliament in 2020:

⁸⁹ Retfærdig og realistisk, 2018: 7 (translation mine)

⁹⁰ *ibid*

“No one flees for fun, but right now we are letting down both the ones fleeing with the aid of the human smugglers and the ones who stay behind - and need help the most.”⁹¹

The statement points to a different injustice: the system benefits the wrong type of people. The people we receive in Denmark are, in fact, not the ones in most dire need - there are more deserving recipients of help out there, and we are letting them down by leaving the asylum system as it is.

Here is Tesfaye in Parliament in 2021:

“Meanwhile many refugees are sitting in camps in the near areas and do not have the opportunity to skip the queue by paying a human smuggler to come to Europe: they need help.”⁹²

Another binary between truly deserving refugees and opportunistic migrants is reproduced in the statement. The genuinely deserving dependents in this construction are the poor people of the world that do not flee and the ones seeking asylum through the proper channels. The state is wasting resources by processing the claims of irregular migrants and spontaneous asylum seekers. The deserving group is constructed as morally superior because they did not skip the line in front of everyone else. At the same time, the customers of human smugglers are “cheaters” in the sense that they skipped ahead by breaking the law at the expense of their compatriots and the system. The justice discourse works through the tactical stoking of indignation to construct the refugees who have transgressed the national boundaries illegally as less deserving of pity than those in the nearby areas. This is because they broke the law, becoming illegals by crossing the border. In this sense, they are constructed as deviants along with the human smugglers. They are also perceived to have a more advantaged position than most, as they were able to afford the services of the human smuggler and, therefore, less deserving of aid. This binary of deserving and undeserving refugees is shown plainly in the division between ‘actual’ refugees and economic migrants:

⁹¹ Statsministeriet, 2020. Statsminister Mette Frederiksens tale ved Folketingets åbning den 6. oktober 2020 (translation mine)

⁹² Folketinget, 2021. §20-spørgsmål S 1106 Om asylbehandling i tredjeland. (translation mine)

From the 2018 program on refugees:

*“Many of the people who have come to Denmark and Europe in recent years are not refugees. They are migrants, seeking a better existence in Europe. One can not blame them for this. But if we accept that economic migrants can get residence in Denmark, many will come. This is not something that our society can manage.”*⁹³

Potential refugees arriving in Denmark are bifurcated into asylum seekers, deserving of protection, and economic migrants, who are simply trying their luck without a worthy cause. This differentiation between refugees was described by Bigo in 2002: *“... discourses concerning the human rights of asylum seekers are de facto part of a securitization process if they play the game of differentiating between genuine asylum seekers and illegal migrants, helping the first by condemning the second and justifying border controls.”*⁹⁴

This differentiation of asylum seekers and irregular migrants contributes to the construction of ‘real’ victims and threats whose morals are in question. Subcategories are created to differentiate between the deserving and the undeserving. Indignation over the sheer unfairness of the system that fails to help the people who need it most and even benefits deviant human smugglers is channeled into deterrence policies, including current externalization plans. The last part of the statement concerning how much ‘society can manage’ points to an understanding of migration that is central in the discourse and the policies that it produces. The arguments alluding to a maximum capacity of society for refugees give meaning to deterrence strategies such as the current externalization plans. The following discussion will be an elaboration on this.

⁹³ Retfærdig og realistisk, 2018: 8 (translation mine)

⁹⁴ Bigo, 2002: 79

5 Discussion: The discursive terrain represented in the externalization proposal

The externalization plans are communicated through a discourse in which refugees are taken to be a threat. This danger, however, is expressed mainly in the form of economic concerns in recent statements:

"Two out of three of those coming here irregularly, don't even have a need for protection. We spend enormous amounts of resources on this. We can't get people sent away. One rejected asylum seeker is costing Denmark 300.000 DKK a year. That is 800 home care service hours, it is emergency help for 600 children close to the conflicts with vaccines and blankets, and what do I know - for one rejected asylum seeker."⁹⁵

Tesfaye in Parliament 3 of March 2021

The rationale of this argument constructs refugees on strictly economic terms, transforming the question of asylum and irregular migration into a concrete mathematical equation that would spell the end of the welfare state. The equation highlights that the money spent on rejected asylum seekers could just as easily have gone to welfare services. The threat of refugees to the state is constructed as an economic burden that the Danes must sustain through the extensive Danish welfare state.

The statements come in continuance of an older discursive field in which refugees are always considered a disadvantage, a corrosive, foreign element to an otherwise socially cohesive country. Through the 2000s, the Danish People's Party had a particularly privileged strategic position to set the tone for the immigration debate, forming the decisive part of the government's parliamentary basis. As exemplified in 4.4, their rhetoric explicitly constructed Muslims as a threat to the Danish national identity and immigration, in light of the war on terror, as a security affair. They propagated a vision of the world in which some cultures, possessing different essential traits and values, were incompatible with Danish society. Consequently, people of certain cultures are represented to constitute a danger to Denmark, especially Muslims.

⁹⁵ Folketinget, 2021. §20-spørgsmål S 1106 Om asylbehandling i tredjeland. (translation mine)

This position was reinforced and emboldened by international events and security politics during the 2000s but was already represented during the 80s and 90s on the political right. During the 2000s, securitization rationales became ingrained in the Danish political debate, proliferating the view that asylum seekers account for a danger to the security and well-being of the country to an unprecedented degree.

Migration became increasingly problematized through the prism of national security, and distinctions were continually made between those from cultures suitable for adapting Danish norms and learning to participate productively on the terms established by the Danish welfare state.

A shift in the discursive becomes discernible in the period from 2015 with the construction of the crisis, the initial introduction of the temporary protection status leading to the enshrinement of the general paradigm shift into law, and the current externalization proposal. The policies are the results of securitization rationalities interplaying with humanitarian agendas internalized through more than a decade.

In their 2018 program, rather than naming Muslims, the social democrats' focus is on the category of non-Western immigration, conceiving a community of the West, a constructed region with shared values and ideals, such as love of liberty and democracy. It is a somewhat geographically and culturally defined category, more open for interpretation than its opposite 'non-Western', which could theoretically encompass people of most nationalities.

It is followed by a prescription of how to gain access to the community:

*"Many foreigners have become an integrated part of Danish society. Because they speak the language, are employed and in other ways contribute, and because they share our values. They are danes, like everyone else. Because they have wanted it themselves, fought for it and because we as a society have given them the opportunity."*⁹⁶

The message is that anyone can become part of the Danish community if only they want it enough. Membership is not given out idly; it must be earned by living up to Danish values and norms.⁹⁷ The door is left open for the truly willing newcomers to join the community if one is willing to fight for it.

⁹⁶ Retfærdig og realistisk, 2018: 13 (translation mine)

⁹⁷ For an investigation into the strategies foreigners can employ to become "real Danes" and how the state apparatus measures national attachment to Denmark, see Rytter 2010

This appeal to duty and contributing by working echoes the traditional social democratic integration ethos. Do your duty and claim your right; the duty here being working your fair share, in addition to increasing your overall Danish affiliation. Integration is an offer that must be actively accepted. The integration deal can be seen as a sort of consensus between foreigner and host state, the former pledging the duty of working and participating in society, thus earning access to the rights of the welfare state and eventually of becoming Danish. Current statements, however, underscore the responsibility of individual foreigners to ensure their own successful integration into Denmark. After the recent turn to regularizing temporary protection status for refugees, national integration ideals are de facto abandoned; the faith in the feasibility of assimilation is exchanged for faith in the rationales of deterrence. At the program's core still lies the base understanding that immigration is slowly harming Denmark. Refugees are still constructed as a threat, a risky element to society that can compromise its security if allowed to increase. There is a fear that the Danish nation will be diluted over time:

*"In Denmark, the population has changed fast in a short time. In 1980, 1% of the Danish population was of non-Western origin. Today that number is 8%. That is a development that has happened over one generation."*⁹⁸

From the 2018 program of the Social Democratic Party

The part of the population with non-Western origin has grown exponentially in the past decades. Another mathematical argument is suggestive of the notion that the development will continue, and when it does, Denmark will at some point be populated mainly by non-Danes, assuming that non-Western origins never integrate and become Danes themselves. There is a fear that Danish values and culture will thin out, and eventually the Danes will become a minority in their own country, unable to recognize their home:

*"Unfortunately, part of the non-Western immigration to Denmark also entailed that we today have areas of our country where liberty does not exist for all, where one is not part of a Danish community. And where the consequences of social control are deeply disturbing. Forced marriages, honor killings, violence, pressure to wear a scarf, recondition trips, and prohibition of leisure activities. All this goes on in Denmark."*⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Retfærdig og realistisk, 2018: 3 (translation mine)

⁹⁹ Retfærdig og realistisk, 2018: 13 (translation mine)

The practices understood to undermine Danish freedom ideals, such as liberty of speech and gender equality listed above, are constructed as corrosive elements to society in the sense that they have a disintegrating effect on Denmark's democratic foundation. Therefore, this kind of non-Danish activity must be held in check so as not to spread and overwhelm society.

The specific focus on the high unemployment of non-Western women in the 2018 program¹⁰⁰ illustrates how the different reasons for non-Western people posing a risk to and having a destructive effect on Danish society blur together, in another instance of categorizing the deviants. Their unemployment can be perceived and presented as an economic concern, with fears that the women will burden the state, living on benefits from the welfare state. If they do not enter the labor market, they can not pay taxes and contribute their fair share to society. Nevertheless, the concern is inherently social and cultural as well as economic, as unemployment also implies staying at home, not learning Danish, and not participating in any meaningful way in Danish society, thus threatening the social cohesion in society at large. The economic and cultural arguments essentially stem from the same basic rationality in which refugees are always problematized to be threats; it is taken for a fact that Denmark will be ruined if too many come, a breaking point, some threshold at which Denmark finally succumbs to the foreigners. It is a rationality that makes the objective of bringing down the tally for spontaneous asylum seekers to zero self-evident.

A humanitarian discourse that highlights the saving of lives in the Mediterranean and the suffering of refugees had already been absorbed into securitization discourses on asylum years before social democrats successfully mobilized it in support of the externalization plans in 2018.

The humanitarian plea to responsibility is harnessed in support of the plan, but ceases at that. After all, as Lemberg-Pedersen¹⁰¹ pointed out, had the primary objectives of the policy been to thwart the human smugglers and the illegal border crossings, and the unnecessary deaths in the Mediterranean, they could simply reinstate the right to apply for asylum in Danish embassies around the world as was the case in the 2000s.

Within this discourse that enabled the current externalization proposal, the most humanitarian option is deterring asylum seekers from ever making the trip as it is taken as a self-evident

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*

¹⁰¹ Lemberg-Pedersen, 2021: 19

fact that there is no room for them here - because they would harm Danish society whether the perceived danger is to the welfare state or the Danish culture, the most humane choice is deterring them from coming - saving them the trip to Denmark followed by a flight to Rwanda.

The advocacy for externalization contains an echo of emblematic social democratic principles, such as the principles of right and duty in the integration of foreigners that closest resembles a hypothetical stance as asylum seekers are viewed and treated mostly as short-term additions to Denmark, entitled to temporary protection, but not permanent residence after the paradigm shift in 2019. The social democrats have internalized key positions from the political right and securitization discourses, such as understanding refugees primarily as a threat to the country and that entrance must be kept under rigorous control.

Within the discourse that has enabled the present externalization proposal, asylum seekers are always seen as a disadvantage to the state, whether constructed as burdens to the welfare state or dangers to Danish customs and values and society at large. The discourse builds on ideas that have existed in some form or the other in the Danish debate on foreigners for many decades: that the foreigner is corrosive to society itself. Taking measures to avoid them entirely becomes an explicit objective of the majority of the political spectrum as the notion that asylum seekers are threats becomes internalized. Whether asylum seekers are constructed as a peril to social cohesion, burdens to the welfare state or direct threats to border security, the same basic rationale persists, making self-evident the objective of circumventing them.

6 Conclusions

Externalization plans are underpinned by deterrence rationales, taking, as a matter of fact, the desirable effect of deterrence strategies, even though the parameter of success mostly taken into account seems to be the short-term effect on asylum seeker arrivals and not social and political implications as well as long-term effectiveness of the policies.

The advocacy for externalization frequently reminds us of the gravity of the situation in 2015, that it could always happen again, pressing the need for radical change. The crisis rhetoric makes decisive action seem more pressing, and the government's externalization plans more justified and appropriate given the presentation of a desperate situation - drastic measures for desperate times. The call for urgent change is also based upon the notion of unfairness in the system; it is culpable of benefitting the wrong kind of people and fails to help the ones who most need it. Feelings of compassion, responsibility, solidarity, indignation, and outrage are harnessed and managed toward the acceptance of the new policy paradigm. The new proposal is presented as the only humane solution in light of the injustices of the current system.

Humanitarian statements are adapted into a broader securitization discourse, in which the asylum seeker presents a threat to the state first and foremost. The asylum seeker category is then deconstructed and reclassified into groups of genuine refugees deserving of protection and irregular migrants, deviants to society, and trespassers on the sovereign state's territory. The current externalization proposal has elements of older social democratic ethea, highlighting duty and right in integration, but is also indicative of the internalization of asylum seekers as a negative influence on society - a threat that should be avoided if possible. The externalization effectively hollows out efforts at integration plans as asylum seekers can now only expect short-term residence permits after the policy turn to temporary protection status. The problematization of asylum seekers as inherently destructive for society is often presented as an economic concern for the costs of processing each asylum seeker in Denmark. However, there is also a specific focus on the problems of non-Western immigration. Although using different categories and terminology, the program echoes earlier representations of 'the others' in parliament in the past two decades, problematizing members of certain peoples to be less compatible for life in Denmark than others. The notions that the welfare state will succumb to the costs of asylum and that the Danish culture is under threat by refugees come from the same base understanding that the presence of asylum seekers is harmful to the country.

The externalization plan signals the internalization of deterrence rationalities in the Social Democratic Party, the trust in deterrence mechanisms such as that general information about the asylum policy of Denmark reaches asylum seekers, as well as the understanding, from the political right, of refugees as threats.

The proposal is firmly rooted in a securitization discourse in which refugees can be represented as both threats and victims and mobilize humanitarian concerns to push the boundaries of what is politically possible by emphasizing the injustice and brutality of the current asylum system, reversing previous morality on sending away asylum seekers to a third country.

Externalization policy has recently moved into the realm of the conceivable and is on the rise in Denmark. Although, admittedly, we might be many years before seeing the policy implemented, however, the discussion has been initiated, which might even have the implications in itself of diverting asylum seekers, inspiring other countries to match the proposal with similar initiatives.

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