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The Nature of the Social Contract in Egypt

*Perceptions and Attitudes
in the Aftermath of the Forced Evictions on al-Warraq Island*

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“The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is [...] one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights (Harvey 2008, p. 272).”

This thesis is dedicated to the people whom I met on al-Warraq island

اود أن أوجه كلمة شكر وتقدير لأهالي جزيرة الوراق بمحافظة الجيزة على تعاونهم ومجهوداتهم كي يتقدم البحث بهذه الصورة

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Abstract

In July 2017, the Egyptian police and military forces implemented a government decision that intended to force the residents of al-Warraq island out of their homes. The eviction decision involved 720 homes, but the security forces were only able to demolish five homes before clashes broke out and the security forces withdrew from the island. The disputes between the police forces and island inhabitants resulted in the death of a young man and the detention of 19 island residents who tried to block the machines from demolishing the homes of people. The eviction day marked a turning point in the history of the island and impacted residents' opinions on the state, which makes it relevant to study their perceptions on the Egyptian state following the eviction day. This case study portrays these perceptions and attitudes gathered through fieldwork in Egypt and analyzed using the authoritarian social contract theory. The results of the thematic analysis show that, in the aftermath of the forced evictions, residents developed a weakened sense of legitimacy towards the state, perceiving that state interests take priority over citizen interests. Moreover, the results show that people have developed feelings of insecurity because of the state.

Key words: Egypt, al-Warraq island, forced eviction, social contract, authoritarianism, legitimacy, state-society, individual insecurity

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Egypt has throughout time been recognized for its unique history and civilization. Politically, the country has been known for its strong authoritarian character (Blaydes 2011, p. 1). The Egyptian state can be best categorized as an authoritarian regime (Freedom House 2018). Some of the characteristics of an authoritarian regime is the privileging of an elite interests over those of the citizenry (Cook and Dimitrov 2017, p. 8). The ways in which authoritarian states secure their positions of power over time, and manage to achieve long-term stability relates to the relationship they negotiate with people. This type of informal agreement between state and society can be explained with the authoritarian social contract whereby people give up their political freedom in exchange for public benefits (Desai, Olofsgård and Youssef 2007, p. 4). The state maintains ultimate control and disregards human rights and civil liberties but, in return, the people receive price subsidies, protection from external enemies, the promise of stability and strong leadership. This authoritarian bargain allows people to benefit in some regards in exchange for their many deprived rights (Loewe 2012, abstract). The contract between the Egyptian state and the citizens is, therefore, an authoritarian social contract dependent on the exercising of the authoritarian bargain. One of the government's last moves concerned the eviction of al-Warraq island in the Giza Province of Cairo. State-led forced evictions can be considered displays of authoritarian power. Tilly (2003) describe the use of force as 'a strategy rather than a creed', and a practice that conveys a message to the audience (Tilly 2003, p. 237). In a country like Egypt, the use of authority by the Egyptian regime to privilege an elite few, is a common occurrence which can contribute to people's weakening legitimacy towards the state and thus negatively affect the state-society relations. The forced evictions which this thesis studies falls in line with the Egyptian state's practice of prioritizing its own interests at the expense of the human rights of its citizens. What is particularly provoking in this specific case, however, is the use of force by the state against a community due to its geographic location. This harsh response by the regime is suggestive of changing dynamics in Egypt between the state and society under the new Sisi regime.

Map of El-Warraq Giza



(MadaMasr 2018)

As Egypt's largest island, al-Warraq island has been a key point of focus for the Egyptian state over the last several years. The former Prime Minister (1999-2004), Atef Ebeid, declared the island as a 'nature reserve' which in turn made residents of the island appeal to the supreme administrative courts where they submitted supporting documentation of owner contracts for their homes. After winning the lawsuit in 2002 when the State Council confirmed people's right to the land (Maroun 2017), people assumed the disputes over the island were over. Little did they know, the state would be encouraging investors from the Gulf among other places, to invest in economic development projects like shopping malls, resorts, hotels and commercial buildings like cafés, and restaurants on the island (Bahgat 2017). Nor did they know that on July 16th 2017, police and military forces would invade the island with no prior warning to evict and demolish huge parts of the island in order to gain control over the space (Aohruk 2017). The police and military forces attempted to enforce the eviction decision by ordering the demolition of around 700 buildings (Mada Masr 2017) only to be interrupted by unexpected clashes with island residents. The consequences emerging from this encounter included the

injury of 19 island inhabitants (Ismail 2017) and the death of the 26-year-old Sayyed Tafshan (Aohruk 2017). The quickly escalating events made the forces withdraw from the island after demolishing only five households instead of 720. They left behind homes that had been flattened, as well as residents who were shocked and uncertain about their future on the island (Contact person, Physical introduction meeting, December 24, 2017). This thesis is interested in examining the mark these forceful evictions left on the island residents when it comes to their perceptions and attitudes of the Egyptian state. Did it make them think differently of the regime in power, and if yes, in what ways? The forced evictions were the first of their kind on the island, and therefore mark an unusual case in the actions of the state towards the al-Warraq people. As a case study, the island residents constitute an interesting population in which to examine the authoritarian bargain between the Egyptian state and its people, and how it might be changing due to new practices.

1.1.1 Aim

This study aims to understand how al-Warraq island residents perceive the roles and responsibilities of the Egyptian state towards its citizens in the aftermath of the forced evictions. In particular, this thesis seeks to explore how perceptions and attitudes of state-society relations may be changing in Egypt under the new regime and its increasingly repressive practices. I analyze responses collected through fieldwork, more specifically, interviews with 15 island inhabitants on their perceptions and attitudes of the Egyptian state, in the face of the use of increasingly violent, forceful practices (in particular, forced evictions). The idea of a ‘social contract’ – which is a type of framework made up of formal and informal rules, laws and expectations that frame how people and government interact – is used to explore the analysis.

1.1.2 Purpose

By interviewing island inhabitants, the purpose of this project is to develop a better understanding of how residents perceive current state-society relations in Egypt under the Sisi-regime, and what impact significant rights violations have on their views of the state legitimacy as well as on their feelings of insecurity.

Most of the existing research on state-society relations in authoritarian regimes examines public ‘displays’ of discontent (mobilization, resistance, protest, etc.) but few studies look at the everyday perspectives of people. If attitudes are indeed changing towards the state, what *could* this mean for the state’s long-term stability? Since little is known about the relationship between

the Egyptian state and its people, new insight can contribute to increased understandings of the dynamics of the state-society relationship. Thus, I am addressing the existing gap by looking at ‘everyday attitudes and perceptions’, particularly among the people who have suffered from the state’s human rights violations. By using the concept of authoritarian social contract, I study how changes in the relationship between the state and the people could impact the delicate balance the regime has maintained in the past when it comes to questions of stability on the part of citizens.

1.1.3 Research Question

Placing my research in the field of state-society relations in the Middle East, I investigate how the island inhabitants of al-Warraq island perceive such relations concerning the role and legitimacy of the state to its people and vice versa. I study this by looking at how these people’s opinions and perceptions changed as a result of the government’s forced evictions. Looking at these specific aspects, the central question this study aims to answer is:

What are the perceptions and attitudes of al-Warraq island residents of the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions?

1.2 Disposition

Chapter one of the thesis introduces the research topic and argues for its academic relevance. Chapter two offers the reader a substantial literature review on issues of state-society relations in authoritarian countries and the authoritarian social contract as a framework. Moreover, I address reasons to the survival of authoritarian regimes, state-society relations in Egypt specifically and how these changed after the uprisings. This literature review serves as a stepping stone towards this thesis’ research. Chapter three provides a theoretical background and offers an understanding of the analytical framework this thesis utilizes to analyze the study’s data findings. The analytical framework presented involves several concepts attempting to depict different theories relating to the authoritarian social contract as an analytical framework. Chapter four discusses the methodology this thesis pursues. When presenting the study’s paradigm, strategy, philosophy, approach, and data collecting methods, I explain how I have conducted this research. This chapter also describes the limitations I have encountered during my work. Chapter five discusses my findings and analysis from the lenses of the three chosen themes and *a priori* codes which are: (1) The perception that the state lacks legitimacy, (2) The perception that state interests take priority over citizen interests, (3) Feelings of

insecurity because of the state. In this chapter, the research question is answered based on the interviews conducted with the 15 island inhabitants and I use the authoritarian social contract theory to analyze the study's findings. Chapter six presents the study's conclusions. In my conclusion, I emphasize and argue that the island residents' perceptions and attitudes of the Egyptian state have worsened since the eviction day by highlighting relevant examples. Moreover, I discuss this study's contribution to research. Chapter seven lists all sources used in this thesis according to the Chicago Manual of Style. Finally, the thesis is concluded by appendices including a brief background on al-Warraq island, the interview guide used when conducting the fieldwork in Egypt, and photos of some of the demolished island houses. I gathered this pictorial material during my visits to the island.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will discuss existing literature on the state-society relations in authoritarian countries before examining research that has been carried out on state-society relations in Middle Eastern regimes, and Egypt more specifically.

2.1 Studies on State-Society Relations in Authoritarian Countries

There are several key dynamics which are recurrent in research discussing state-society relations in authoritarian countries. One such aspect many of the studies address is “civil society” and its relationship to the authoritarian state (Adamolekun and Bell 1987, Albrecht and Kassem 2007, Lewis 2013, Pollard 2014, Schirch 2015). In this, many analyses of state-society relations seem to focus on the scope and nature of civil society since “society” in much of the literature represents some key elements of “civil society”, including youth, social media users and minorities (Al-Zoby and Baskan 2014). Existing literature addresses how civil society organizations interact with the state (Al-Zoby and Baskan 2014) – do they oppose the state, work parallel to it, or in cooperation with it (Springborg 1991)? Scholars argue that the state and society are currently separate spheres and need to be more closely integrated (Springborg 1991).

Regarding the Middle East context more specifically, much of the literature tends to focus on civil society, and especially on the nature of civil society in Arab countries after the uprisings (Wittes 2016). It is argued that in Egypt formal institutions have a far stronger impact on the society than elsewhere, which is considered the result of the state leaders’ goal of making their organizations overpowering (Pollard 2014, Migdal 1988). Elaborating on the state-society relation from a broader lens, it is claimed that social science literature has not properly established a notion of political opposition as an independent analytical category. Instead, research has explained different forms of opposition with concepts such as the civil society approach, democratization theory, and social movement theory (Albrecht and Kassem 2007) which has resulted in insufficient research on the state-society relations in authoritarian regimes.

2.1.1 What Has Made Authoritarian Regimes Survive?

The literature looking at the relationship between the Middle East’s authoritarian regimes and their citizens is extensive. Many scholars have explored authoritarianisms’ persistence in the

region, with studies exploring its nature being a point of focus (Brynen et al. 2012, Cavatorta 2012, Hinnebusch 2006).

The unique persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East has been explained through research showing that despite repression, a system of specialized patronage relationships is usually what sustains autocracies. Strategic transfers to the head of armed forces, national and local government bureaucrats or individuals who control the apparatuses of the ruling party are common strategies to sustain authoritarianism. Making strategic transfers to parts of the business world is also common (Desai, Olofsgård and Youssef 2007, p. 6). Moreover, studies on dictatorial survival show that dictators must offer combinations of public and private benefits to remain in power. However, this is nothing unique, as scholars argue all policies contain aspects of both public and private rights (de Mesquita 2002). For instance, expenditure for a program that supposedly benefits all of society (e.g., national defense) contains transfers to specific groups (e.g., defense contractors) – thus, benefits are generated to both groups even if the communicated intention concerns only the public group.

Other analyses stress the importance of secure and stable economic conditions between rulers and citizens to avoid breaking the bargains between the two parties and thus risking a loss of power. It is argued that weak financial performance decreases the bargaining power of dictators while empowering the opposition and destroying the bargains struck between leaders and their supporters. In other words, financial crises result in a specific political problem, namely the reduction of a regime's capacity to continue securing public support through the provision of benefits (Desai, Olofsgård and Youssef 2007, p. 6). Factors such as recession, inflation, and currency collapse hinder governments from maintaining critical support in the population since they consequently lack the resources needed to maintain support and thus stay in power (Haggard and Kaufman 1995). Governments that lack the resources to resolve these crises perceive themselves to be facing disloyalty, organized violence, and a rapid loss of legitimacy. To develop political openings, focus on negotiation, bargaining, and alliances are thought to be needed in which the latter could be between opposition parties and incumbents or moderates and extremists (di Palma 1990, Gleditsch and Jinhee 2004). Providing a limited voice to opposition groups is a common strategy under such conditions and happens through restricted elections in which party activities, candidate recruitment, or voter registration are limited.

Scholars argue that holding “arranged” elections has enabled autocrats to remain in power for many years (McFaul 2002).

The idea of an “authoritarian bargain”, referring to a tacit arrangement between the state and citizens whereby people give up their political freedom in exchange for public benefits, is widespread in the literature (Desai, Olofsgård and Youssef 2007, p. 4). While these bargains are not unique to the Middle East particularly, the ideologies, institutions, and social conditions they involve are argued to be unique to the region (Kamrava 2014, p. 20). In the Middle East, authoritarian bargains have remained resilient for long, particularly in oil-rich states. In these countries, oil exports have historically granted rulers significant autonomy and enabled them to guarantee citizens a privileged life (Heydemann 2002, pp. 102-108) while the authoritarian bargain in non-democratic Sub-Saharan Africa is practiced in a different form based on types of solidarity. There, it is common that groups depending on ethnic or linguistic solidarity are provided with private benefits by rulers (de Sardan 1999). Meanwhile, in Tunisia, the ex-president Zayn al-Abidin Ben Ali operated the ‘2626 program’ which distributed funds to the needy. During economic liberalization, strong central state representatives pushed wealthy farmers into contributing to welfare mechanisms in rural Tunisia. This is an example of the authoritarian bargain or social contract between the state and citizens where the purpose was to use populist rhetoric and policies to gain support by making urban and economic elites contribute to charity for the economically disfavored. While the volunteers were those contributing, the state was the one operating the program. So, regarding legitimacy, several revolutionary leaders in the Arab world relied on promises to improve citizens’ living standards rather than on ideological ideas. In this sense, the authoritarian bargain was used as a legitimising resource, binding the state to provide services in exchange for political obedient and passivity. This minimized the chance to achieve shared economic gain as leaders in the Arab world have throughout history threatened their base of legitimacy by practicing authoritarian bargains (King 2009, pp. 13-14).

2.1.2 Studies on State-Society Relations in Egypt

Egypt is no exception when it comes to how authoritarianism manages to survive the face of protests and revolts. The idea of a ‘bargain’ or authoritarian social contract has been identified in research looking at state-society relations in Egypt (Brown 2011, Kamrava 2014, King 2009, Shokr 2017).

During his reign period, president Gamal Abdel Nasser was keen on implementing the authoritarian social contract during his time in office. He provided the Egyptian population with the provision of government jobs, price controls in the form of subsidies, rent ceilings, free health care and education, housing and a generally high degree of social mobility in return for the political compliance (Loewe 2012, abstract). The government also promised to ensure social justice, promote economic development and guarantee national interests. It was during the Nasserist state when the height of the ruling bargain was reached (Kamrava 2014, p. 20). Nasser sought to include different segments of society in the authoritarian government he founded, building a coalition between military and state bureaucrats with the support of the middle class and organized labor (Shokr 2017, p. 3). Anwar Sadat continued in the footsteps of Nasser and practiced the authoritarian bargain by, for instance, selecting a diverse group of Egyptians in 1971 to draft a constitution. The group included feminists, Islamic legal scholars, socialists, liberals, nationalists, and Christians. Outwards, it communicated diversity, openness, and inclusivity but while the resulting constitution promised a little to everyone, it promised a lot to the president (Brown 2011). In the aftermath of Nasser and the Free Officers' military coup in 1952, the new regime has based its legitimacy on statist and populist policies that enabled workers and peasants to make important gains in Egypt's domestic political economy, which in the mid-1970s faded due to the emerging economic and political liberalization. A "new authoritarianism" began when politicized privatization policies benefited economic elites and included changes in political institutions, policies, ruling coalitions and legitimacy strategies. This new era of authoritarianism in Egypt began in connection with Mubarak's political opening in 1984 and continued until the revolution of January 25 broke out in 2011 (King 2009, p. 92).

Throughout the years, the Egyptian government noted different waves of protests expressing people's discontent with the authoritarian social contract the government had set. The demonstrations included strikes against privatization in the early and mid-1990s within the textile industry (King 2009, p. 97). Beginning in 2004, an extended wave of worker protests and strikes took place by food processing workers, garbage collectors, Cairo subway workers, and others who resisted the regime. In response to this, government authorities have used proceeds from high oil prices and the sales of state-owned enterprises to rapidly deal with striking workers' demands for unpaid bonuses, benefits, salaries, and compensation for lost jobs and discharges due to privatization. In doing so, the government used revenues to appease

workers and silence them by paying them off (King 2009, p. 97). In late April 2007, the government closed the headquarters and local offices of the Center for Trade Union and Workers' Services (which among other offered legal aid to Egyptian factory workers), an example of the Egyptian regime's forceful position against people-led movements (King 2009, p. 98).

When the Kefaya protest movement¹ and the Muslim Brotherhood demonstrated in 2004 broad popular support for democracy, the Egyptian government clamped down on both, as well as the workers' movement. The government's repression was intensified as activist workers, through the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, shifted their focus from salaries and benefits to political questions and to the state. In an effort to preserve the relationship between the state and the people, the government attempted to compensate them financially through different projects, but the implementation of these drew many complaints from critics, for instance, that the pensions were less than half of what workers would have received under the old plan (King 2009, p. 98).

There are many examples of how the authoritarian social contract was practiced during the past few decades in Egypt as well as how protests have grown to be stronger, culminating in widespread public calls for alternatives to Mubarak. Economic woes and political frustration are thought to be the reason behind this shift as recessions hit the economy, unemployment reached new levels, and inequality was more apparent than any other time. Despite these negative factors, the police brutality is argued to have caused additional anger resulting in a wake-up call among the people (King 2009, p. 108). It is possible to conclude that the Egyptian state-society relationship has shifted from being somewhat stable during Nasser's time to being damaged and breaking down during the period of Mubarak's long reign. Along with the increasing challenges the Egyptian society faced, the state tried to bargain the population with different forms of compensation that turned out to be accepted by some and criticized by others who called for their full rights. The reason that some accepted or put up with the promised compensation is thought to be because of fear of losing the minimal rewards offered by the state as many were still not granted the same opportunities (King 2009, p. 99).

¹ Kefaya - The Arabic word for 'Enough' referring to the Egyptian Movement for Change seeking political reform (Oweidat, et al. 2008)

According to the Egyptian political scientist Amr Hamzawy, the lack of a fair social contract was the main reason for the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011. He used the concept of the authoritarian social contract to examine the reasons behind the uprisings. He argues that wide gaps among social classes are what led to the sense of injustice, which was a main reason for the revolutions. Further on, he claims that with the authoritarian social contract comes widespread corruption and the absence of the rule of law. These two aspects separated the poor, lower-income majorities from the political and financial elite which in turn resulted in exclusion. This segregation created an unbalance in the society that by time led people to revolt. Hamzawy analyzes the state-society relations through the lenses of authoritarianism and explains that having recognized the connection between the poor economic and social standard and the widespread corruption and lack of democracy, people decided to revolt and demand a new social contract that is not of authoritarian character (Hamzawy 2016). They had simply had enough of the authoritarian bargain so when Mubarak made his attempt to compensate Egyptians by appointing a vice president for the first time in his presidency, people refused, demanded his resignation, and kept protesting until this happened (Kamrava 2014, p. 41).

i) Egyptian State-Society Relations After the Uprisings

The revolution that happened in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring has changed the model the Egyptian government uses to define its relation to its citizens. The “ruling bargain” which had been the obvious strategy since the 1950s began to dissolve as people demanded a new social contract to replace it (Kamrava 2014, p. 17).

Over the past few years, the Egyptian government has tried to deal with vulnerable groups in urban areas through new mechanisms, like direct cash transfers with the goal of mitigating the effects of urban poverty (Shokr 2017, p. 4). Other non-Egyptian governments have often tried similar strategies to solve the problems of rural displacement that have consequently led to large urban populations with lost access to their land and without access to formal wage employment (Shokr 2017, p. 4). A similar strategy was used in the case of al-Warraq island where residents attested to scenarios where state representatives approached them and offered them financial compensation in exchange for leaving the island (interviewee 2 and 11). The current problem facing the Egyptian government considers the absence of a new social contract in Egypt which hits the middle-class citizens as many risk becoming among the poor segment of the population. The middle-class has been shrinking in recent decades, and in 2011 it roughly constituted 44 percent of the population. As there is no explicit social contract developed by the Sisi

government, the absence of a stable welfare state that could support a new kind of gracious authoritarianism is notable in making the government establish its authority by relying increasingly on coercion instead of economic co-option (Shokr 2017, p. 6). While it is argued that an open political system could be an alternative to include voices of stakeholders like opposition parties, trade unions and civil society, the Sisi government appears uninterested in this which leaves citizens unclear on the possible existence of a social contract between them and the state. Moreover, it encourages the Sisi government to continue investing in the military and its connected business interests (Shokr 2017, p. 6) where Rawd el-Farag Axis (which is one of the reasons to the eviction decision) is among many projects carried out under the supervision and guidance of the Egyptian military.

To remain in power, the Sisi government relies on its ability to uphold order and security through the heavy-handed use of force to convince the Egyptian population. With the limited resources mainly due to constrained financial resources, the government faces challenges in trying to model a new social bargain through which it can firmly establish its claims to political legitimacy (Shokr 2017, p. 2).

2.2 Gaps in Research

The literature review is based on some studies that touch upon the main aim of this research: to understand how island residents perceive the state in the aftermath of the evictions. No academic text has yet been discussing the relationship between the inhabitants of al-Warraq island and the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions. Though the case has been presented in the media from different perspectives, academic discussions are thus far absent. This research therefore addresses this gap by providing an in-depth examination of the state-society relations in general, in the Middle East and Egypt per se. This study is intended to contribute an academic explanation with the findings resulting from the interviews held with residents from al-Warraq island. Understanding how the social contract has historically been designed enables us to appreciate the island residents' perceptions and attitudes in the aftermath of the forced evictions and contributes to the discussion on why they oppose the eviction decision. The innovation in this research comes from the fact that I am looking at the perspectives of the people directly affected by the evictions, while building the study on their perceptions as Egyptian citizens. In this way, this thesis is a unique contribution to existing research that has not yet examined how the Egyptian state-society relations has been affected because of this particular eviction decision.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The theories that will be used as analytical tools are introduced in this chapter as well as why they fit with my project. The theory that will help to analyze the study's findings is the authoritarian social contract theory. To explain it, two interconnecting concepts must first be discussed; social contract and authoritarianism. These two sections serve as the foundation for the chapter's third section which combines both parts and discusses the authoritarian social contract as a theoretical framework. Finally, the chapter is concluded by a section on criticism and the analytical framework's relevance to research.

3.1 Social Contract Theory

The social contract theory is thought to be as old as philosophy itself and asserts that “persons’ moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live” (Friend 2018). It is an essential foundation in society and determines the relationship between citizens and the state. Generally, a social contract clarifies what rights and duties citizens and the state have towards each other but should according to Rousseau benefit all parties with equal profit (May 2002, p. 9). Its originating premise is considered to go back to Socrates who used an argument similar to a social contract to explain to Crito why he must stay in prison and accept the death penalty (Friend 2018). However, the theory is usually correlated with modern political theory. During the Enlightenment, the idea was developed in the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, each of whom looked at different aspects of why citizens would be willing to submit themselves to political authority. They all had different views on the human being's state before the establishment of society (Friend 2018). This is usually referred to as the State of Nature. While Hobbes gave the theory its first full exposition and defense, Locke and Rousseau are usually referred to as the theory's best-known proponents (Friend 2018).

Rousseau was one of few who argued that by accepting to give up some rights for the common good, citizens in return gain civil rights. He favored people's sovereignty and emphasized the General Will which he defined as the will of majority citizens to which complete obedience should be given. Moreover, he stressed that the state and the law were the product of people's General Will. Therefore, since people are those who contributed to the production of the state and the law, government and laws should adapt the General Will or otherwise be discarded. The citizens do, according to Rousseau's social contract, bind and commit themselves to the common good of all; they are willing to sacrifice for their political community. In return,

Rousseau argued that citizens must be guaranteed values and individual rights such as freedom of speech, equality, assembly, etc. If one of the parties to the contract is degraded or harmed in any way, the contract is void. Indeed, citizens should devote much to the common good for all, he reasoned, but they may not consent to give up life, freedom or other essential elements of their humanity. Rousseau based his theory of social contract on the principle of “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains” which portrays the dynamic relationship between state and citizen (Elahi 2005, p. 4).

On a similar note as Rousseau, John Rawls discusses what he refers to as ‘The Difference Principle’ in which he argues that “any inequality that is permitted in society should only be permitted on the basis that it benefits the least favored in society” (Premchand, p. 1). This goes in line with Rousseau’s attempt to create a balanced relationship between state and citizens. Meanwhile, Robert Nozick does not agree with Rawls’ ‘Difference Principle’ as this would, according to Nozick, not only allow but also facilitate for the poorer to make claims at the expense of the richer (Nozick 1973, p. 81). A question raised in connection with this is why the state does not get a bad conscience when taking from the already poor to give to the already rich, especially when this act risks the trust of the masses. A Marxist approach to this dilemma suggests that the wealthy class controls the intermedium of the capitalist state. Because a society’s upper-class already controls the state, it is argued that there may never be a state policy that aims to benefit social classes that do not economically benefit the state in a direct way (Adebanwi and Obadare 2010, p. 56). This argument is relevant for this research as it gives a theoretical context to the Egyptian government’s motives to the eviction as well as how the responsible officials handled the eviction.

While the classic social contract is about citizens permitting a centralized political entity to have coercive powers in order to create an organized society, Chesterman (2011) argues that a different form of social contract emerges when individuals allow the state (and by extension, many other actors) power over information in exchange for security (Chesterman 2011, p. 24). This comes with the advantages of living in the modern world since the new social contract in the modern world is about granting the state with access to information through levying taxes and the monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Chesterman 2011, 253). In contrast to the classic social contract, the benefits people are provided include measurable security and the convenience of living in the modern world rather than political order as such (Chesterman 2011,

253). In Egypt, the state has a robust State Security Investigations Service which allows it power over the type of information Chesterman is referring to. Therefore, Egypt has an authoritarian pact or social contract with its citizens. The following sections present the meaning of authoritarianism and the authoritarian social contract theory.

3.2 Institutional Trust

An important concept when discussing the social contracts which frame state-society relations is the concept of institutional trust. This refers to the dynamic relationship between an individual and an institution. Lühiste (2006) argues that institutional trust depends on how individuals trust each other and how well people believe the economic and the political system to function (Lühiste 2006, abstract). Trust in institutions, including the state, is essential in any state-society relation and is, therefore, relevant to look into in this study, particularly given the fact that political trust is an important measure for island residents' sense of the state's legitimacy. Many scholars have addressed the aspect of trust and its origins and extent. Most of them agree that trust is essential for the survival of democracy and its effective functioning (Citrin 1974, Citrin and Luks 2001, Miller 1974, Mishler and Rose 2005).

3.3 Authoritarianism

'Authoritarianism' is a widely used term and has been a focus of extensive study, originating in the 1970s when a series of authoritarian roll-backs took place in the developing world in countries that had previously transitions to democracy (O'Donnell and Schmitter 2013, vii). The concept was therefore developed to help explain the set-backs noticed in the developing world. Some scholars argue that authoritarianism along with democracy are reflective of ongoing struggles between dominance and resistance (Jalal 1995, p. 3).

In the Middle East, nearly all regimes are defined and categorized as authoritarian ones concerning regime categorization (Bölme 2015, p. 9). The few liberal features they have led some scholars to doubt how they should categorize regimes in the gray zone between democracy and autocracy, but Linz (2000) generally identifies the authoritarian regime with a strong level of institutionalism of military (Bölme 2015, pp. 9-10). Further on, he has designed a useful typology for authoritarian regimes along the dimensions of pluralism, ideology, and mobilization in which he argues there are different types of authoritarian regimes. These include bureaucratic military authoritarian regimes, authoritarian corporatism, mobilizing authoritarian regimes, postcolonial authoritarian regimes, racial and ethnic democracies, incomplete

totalitarian and pre-totalitarian regimes and finally, post-totalitarian regimes (Linz 2000, pp. 252-350). Moreover, Linz's (2000) definition of authoritarianism is usually referred to in the discussions on the authoritarianism and authoritarian social contract. He explains authoritarianism as a type of political system with: "... limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones" (Linz 2000, p. 159). Similarly, other scholars have defined authoritarianism as organized power embedded in the institutional structure of the state. The degree of competitiveness has often been used to measure the presence of institutional opportunities for participation of the opposition (Diamond 2002, Jalal 1995, Levitsky and Way 2002).

The Middle East as a region began experimenting with democracy in the 1970s after several leaders implemented economic and political reforms that intended to open up some political space for the opposition. However, these reforms, which did not aim to change the political structure and the strategies used by Middle Eastern leaders, confirm that they share the same plan on how to function and remain in power. The reforms with democratic features were revoked by the authoritarian regimes when economic crisis turned into popular uprisings in many Middle Eastern countries throughout the 1980s. In connection with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the region witnessed another short political liberalization wave, but it was not until after the Gulf War that a process of democratization supported by the United States and other Western powers was initiated (Bölme 2015, pp. 7-8). However, the political reforms that were supposed to be implemented – thanks in part to development aid by external donors – did not happen. Instead, the authoritarian leaders used this aid to reintroduce elections as a tool to consolidate their power (Brownlee 2007, p. 6). Many regimes manipulated the elections resulting in their cancellation, the ban of the opposition and the arrestment of opposition members in case the polls showed signs of their defeat (Bölme 2015, pp. 7-8). Brownlee (2007) argues that multiparty elections in authoritarian countries do not represent a step towards democratization since regimes do not allow them to be free and fair (Brownlee 2007, p. 6). Furthermore, corruption is not prevented by allowing independent or outside observers, which according to scholars creates opportunities for vote rigging (Levitsky and Way 2002, p. 54). With an increasing number of undemocratic regimes adopting multiparty elections,

authoritarianism with elections has become a modern form of autocracy (Brownlee 2007, p. 25). While the elections in authoritarian regimes are viewed as a tool assisting the governments in weakening and containing the political opposition, it is a strategy to satisfy democratization demands from inside and outside. Buehler (2013) calls this the “safety-valve” metaphor (Bölme 2015, p. 24). In this way, the authoritarian regime maintains legitimacy and power among the citizenry. Scholars conclude that the democracy promotion of the West has instead helped hold back its emergence. The Arab Spring was the last move by citizens of the region to overthrow longtime leaders, but eventually, the optimism of the Arab Spring faded (Bölme 2015, pp. 7-8).

The Middle East has for long been conceived of as an exception in the world regarding its democratic deficit. While some of the literature presents socioeconomic explanations to the persistence of authoritarianism, other more persistent explanations are culture and religion. Researchers viewed the region as exceptionally culturally resistant to democratization, meaning that Arab culture and Islam were the reasons for authoritarianism (Bill and Springborg 2000, Fish 2002, Sharabi 1988). Despite “Middle East exceptionalism” being founded on an orientalist perspective, it is still the most comprehensive explanation (Bölme 2015, pp. 13-14). One of the proponents of this approach, Sharabi (1998) used the concept of “neopatriarchy” to explain the region’s resistance to democracy. He argues that the dominance of the father (patriarch) in the family and of the male in relations between men and women is a question of repressiveness and unquestioned dominance. This dominance results in one-way relations between ruler and ruled, father and child. Sharabi (1998) claims that these relations repeat themselves not only in broader society but also in the state-society ties (Sharabi 1988, pp. 6-8). In this respect, Linz’s classification of autocratic regimes has been valuable since it has provided researchers with different insights on dimensions explaining authoritarianism through his typology referred to.

3.4 The Authoritarian Social Contract

The relationship between an authoritarian regime and its citizens can be explained by an agreement between the two parties around the benefits citizens receive in exchange for their political rights. This kind of pact has in the literature been referred to as the authoritarian social contract, which is a modified version of Rousseau’s social contract. The authoritarian form means it doesn’t benefit the people as much as it benefits the authoritarian regime and its interests (Achy 2014, p. 304). What is significant about the authoritarian social contract is that

authoritarian rulers frequently implement legal means of repression through ‘emergency laws’ and different types of restrictions of people’s freedoms that attempt to repress contestants and potential rivals that may threaten the survival of authoritarianism (Achy 2014, p. 304). Moreover, authoritarian regimes are strongly dependent on the authoritarian bargain which according to scholars relies on a strong network of alignments deeply rooted in the business sector and within a wide range of state institutions including the security sector, the bureaucracy, the media and the judiciary. Some characteristics of the authoritarian social contract are said to be high-profile corruption, position abuse and the defalcation of public money (Achy 2014, p. 304).

The Arab Authoritarian Bargain Model (ABM) is an accurate concept which has been discussed and elaborated on by several scholars (Achy 2014, Desai, Olofsgård and Yousef 2011, Dilek 2015). A central pillar of the ABM is the repression by the security sector, including the police, the intelligence services, the military and the parliamentary forces and government agencies (Chutter 2006). In the context of the authoritarian social contract, authoritarian regimes in the Arab region used the security sector as an extension of their executive power to repress domestic political opponents (Achy 2014, p. 304). In the case of Egypt, the military holds a central role in the state-society relationship since its hegemony is well-established. This has to do with the fact that more than half of the country’s governors have a background in either the military or the police (Said and Bakry 2011, Schirch 2015, p. 57). The authoritarian bargain, as the conceptual foundation on which the authoritarian social contract ideas build on, was used in the 1950s as a strategy by the government to silence the citizens and hinder eventual protests or revolts mirroring the existing issues people are facing (King 2009, p. 97). Since the authoritarian social contract’s persistence relies on an authoritarian rule itself, the contract’s destruction is heavily dependent on changing the security system’s culture and reforming all components of the security sector (Sayigh 2007).

The fact that the concept of the authoritarian social contract is Western-centric confirms that the idea is defined through external eyes that have no personal connections to the authoritarian states (Pratt 2011, Ramón 2010, Sadowski 1993, Tamdgidi 2012). This might be problematic from an orientalist point of view where scholars argue that the relationship between Orient and Occident is a relationship of power, domination, and hegemony. The idea that the authoritarian social contract comes from what in this case could be referred to as the Occident would mean

that the theory was developed to help the Occident identify and categorize itself and its political system likewise the Orient is argued to have been Orientalized to facilitate the definition of the Occident. In this respect it would mean that non-authoritarian states developed the concept of the authoritarian social contract to identify what they are *not* and thus understand what they *are* (Said 1979, pp. 4-5).

Although the authoritarian social contract theory is not necessarily labeled as explicitly 'authoritarian' in the literature, it has been used in studies to explain the state-society relations following different incidents. The theory has among other been used to explain why the Turkish state did not guarantee citizens the right to housing in informal settings after a methane explosion in Istanbul (Davy and Pellissery 2013). It has moreover been used to explain why lower-class Egyptians were affected the most after the Arab Spring (Shokr 2017) and the reasons behind the Arab Spring (Hamzawy 2016). Some of the criticism against the authoritarian social contract includes its lacking role in predicting the outbreak of the Arab Spring. This is illustrated by the fact that scholars have exclusively focused on the factors that for so long have made authoritarian regimes survive while they have put less focus on the factors that might provoke people to replace a current authoritarian social contract through revolts. Though most criticism refers to the authoritarian resilience theory (which explains how Arab regimes control civil society, the elites and other institutionalized forms of society - (Nathan 2003)), the criticism can be applied to the authoritarian social contract theory since it also addresses the methods used to control citizens, institutions etc. Scholars argue that by directing the focus on understanding how authoritarian regimes maintained power, the authoritarian social contract failed to understand and describe the underlying societal changes that were to upset citizens (Gause III 2011, Volpi 2013, pp. 971-972).

3.4.1 Egypt's Authoritarian Social Contract

Each country's existing social contract is heavily dependent on the type of regime ruling, particularly if it is a democratic or an authoritarian regime. In the case of Egypt, the old social contract was first introduced by Gamal Abd el-Nasser, who created a system based on a mix of rentierism and despotism. This was intended as a sort of dictatorial regime or authoritarian bargain in which citizens voluntarily gave up their political rights to the elites and, in return, were provided with all kinds of social and economic services (Dentice 2017, p. 1). While Sadat continued on a similar authoritarian social contract as his predecessor, Nasser, Sadat's successor, Mubarak, set new rules for the agreement between his government and citizens. His

new form of the authoritarian social contract included many economic and political reforms that disadvantaged mainly workers and farmers – an aspect that drove the Egyptian people out to the streets in 2011 claiming their right to a new social contract (Shokr 2017).

The current Egyptian government is maintaining power differently from previous governments due to a changing nature of the benefits provided to citizens. The lack of a fair social contract developed by the Sisi government in the aftermath of the Arab Spring shows that the social contract in non-democratic societies has come to mean something different from the initial idea behind the definition of the concept (Shokr 2017, p. 6). Throughout previous presidential regimes, people were part of a ruling bargain; they were offered multiple benefits in exchange for being politically passive. The current state, where the Sisi government is failing to provide social benefits to citizens, is a new phenomenon for Egyptians in which they are obliged to remain silent, suffer from the economic and political reforms the government is implementing and in return receive minimal benefits (Shokr 2017).

Although authoritarianism in the Middle East has been addressed in research (Brynen, et al. 2012, Cavatorta 2012, Hinnebusch 2006), there is a gap in research regarding studies on how modern illiberal democratic regimes function and how these have designed a social pact with the citizens. In practice, this poses several problems, including others that when looking at how these regimes function, a state is either classified as a democracy or an authoritarian dictatorship. Since Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi technically is democratically elected, he is technically ruling in a democratic state, but the mere presence of elections does not make this true. The problem appears as the concept of the authoritarian social contract does not take into account that labeling a country authoritarian or not is more complicated as it excludes the countries that are neither a full democracy nor an authoritarian dictatorship.

3.5 Relevance to Research

The authoritarian social contract theory is relevant to this research since it addresses the civil pact between the Egyptian regime and the citizens and in which rights and duties for both parties are set. Using the authoritarian social contract as a theoretical framework enables me to focus my attention on the relationship between Egypt's authoritarian government and its people. The theory provides a lens through which the analysis of the data specifically looks at aspects that relate to state-society relations. Since the analysis chapter is about interpreting and commenting upon the data, it is crucial to understand the design of the state-society relation in Egypt, mainly

since the current relation is a new phenomenon for the people. The necessity to explore the relationship between rulers and ruled is mainly to be able to place my findings within a context and elaborate on the underlying reasons to island residents' perceptions and attitudes of the state in the aftermath of the forced eviction. While the chosen theory helps analyzing the study's findings, the chosen methodology to conduct this research has been crucial for the final outcome of the findings which are analyzed with the authoritarian social contract theory. In the following chapter, the study's methodology is presented and discussed.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This thesis aims to understand how 15 island inhabitants perceive the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions that took place in 2017. The chapter is divided into sub-sections outlining different elements of a research methodology. The various components that make up a research design and that are discussed in this chapter are the project's philosophical stances, research design approach, strategy for investigation, techniques of data collection and analysis and procedures. These are reflected on in the sub-sections of this chapter which is followed by a discussion on ethical considerations that were raised during the research process, with particular attention to issues of safety. Finally, the chapter is concluded with a discussion on the study's reliability.

4.1 Constructivism

The research paradigm that orients my investigation is constructivism. Constant changeable statuses reflect the core of constructivism where reality is thought to be non-fixed and subjective, based on the interpretations of the reality of individuals over time. Thus the construction of reality is an ongoing process based on the active role of individuals whose subjective experiences and understandings shape their interpretations of what is true and real (Bryman 2012, pp. 33-34). From a researcher's perspective, as Walsh (1972) argues: 'we cannot take for granted, as the natural scientist does, the availability of a pre-constituted world of phenomena for investigation' and must instead 'examine the processes by which the social world is constructed' (Walsh 1972, p. 19). Therefore, constructivism invites the researcher to view how social reality is an ongoing accomplishment of social actors. When researchers produce studies, they are consequently presenting a specific version of social reality rather than one that can be regarded as definitive (Bryman 2012, p. 34).

Since my study is seeking to understand the perceptions and attitudes of al-Warraaq island residents of the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions, it acknowledges that people's opinions will differ, and therefore there is no one single reality shared by everyone.

4.2 Case Study

The methodology design that guides this project is a case study which means that I, as the researcher, aim to understand and explore one specific case deeply (Bryman 2012, p. 45). This design is also suitable whenever the researcher intends to include one or two units of analysis (Bryman 2012, p. 12). Stake (1995) observes that case study research is concerned with the

complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman 2012, p. 66). Such a study often involves an intensive examination of a chosen setting (Bryman 2012, p. 67), in this case, the forced evictions on al-Warraq island. Utilising a case study will thus enable me to focus on one specific dynamic – perceptions of state-society relations that are held by island residents – and how these might have changed in the aftermath of the forced evictions these people experienced.

4.3 Data

The data methodology chosen to answer the study's research question is interviews. This is due to the characteristics of the research and its aim to understand how island inhabitants' perceptions and attitudes of state-society relations have changed in the aftermath of the forced evictions. This demanded the use of semi-structured interviews to understand the participants' interpretations of their relationship to the state. The interviews are carried out with 15 adult males and females who are all island residents.

4.3.1 Snowball Sampling

The selection of interview participants was done through snowball sampling, which means that I made initial contact with my gatekeeper whom I used to establish connections with others. My first interviewee was a connection through my gatekeeper, and the interviewee then forwarded me to the second and so on. Some scholars criticize the snowball sampling method and argue that the data produced is not representative of the population. However, I view it as the most relevant method for this study since the question of representativeness is not out of interest within my qualitative research strategy to answer the research question (Bryman 2012, pp. 202-203). Instead, the snowball sampling method constrains me from being selective in my choice of participants and offers me a random selection of interviewees. Since snowball sampling was used when producing the 15 interviews, one could assume that they all presumably might share the same perspectives and opinions. However, since their recommendations of participants mostly dependent on who was available at that time, I know that some of the participants had no personal connections to the person they recommended while others did. This poses a condition where there is a risk that the ones knowing each other might share the same views on aspects regarding the eviction day, which could mean that the findings presented might not be as nuanced as they could have been if the participants were strangers. Nevertheless, since most island residents highlighted the fact that all island

inhabitants to a great extent share the same attitudes and perceptions, a less varied depiction was to expect anyway even if snowball sampling would not have been practiced.

My gatekeeper was a resident of the island who therefore had a well-established network with most island residents as well as a good knowledge about the case of al-Warraq. According to Bryman (2012), some gatekeepers seek to influence how the investigation takes place, the questions that can be posed and the focus of the study (Bryman 2012, p. 151). Despite advising me on who to interview first, warning me from traps I could fall into and from acting in a way that could provoke the State Security Investigations Service, my gatekeeper stayed out of the interview process. The latter issue was the most important aspect which I paid attention to as there have been instances of foreign researchers getting into trouble in Egypt because of the sensitive nature of their studies – or at least what the state perceived as politically sensitive. During our first meeting, my gatekeeper informed me about the island, its culture, the relationship residents have towards each other and some of the island's history including conflicts with the state that has impacted people. I asked my gatekeeper to do this to help me place the interviewees' answers in context and understand the background to these.

After the first interview arranged by my gatekeeper, each of my interviewees used their social network to provide me with the next participant. To make sure the candidate was relevant for the research, I made sure to present the characteristics I was looking for from potential research participants to the interview person nominating the next participant. The conditions I had on my participants were first to have resided on the island for at least five years, and secondly to be over 18 years of age. Thirdly, the participants were to be a mixture of both men and women.

The fact that I am of Arab origins was helpful in my interview process because it meant that people could talk to me directly without having an interpreter as a wall between us. Moreover, my knowledge of Egyptian culture likely made the participants feel more comfortable since I master the Egyptian dialect including common expressions and sayings that tell much about their attitudes and perceptions. My knowledge of the Egyptian culture and speaking the correct dialect therefore helped me in my interview process since I was perceived as 'one of them' which conveyed a comfortable feeling. I, thus, did not feel that my ethnic background had a negative role in my meeting with island residents. Furthermore, many expressed their

admiration of that I chose to travel all the way from Sweden to their island which lately has been characterized as an unsafe place.

4.3.2 Participants

It is essential to reach out to the relevant interviewees to produce robust research findings with enough insight. The eviction decision concerned 720 homes, but only five houses were destroyed on the eviction day due to clashes between police forces and island residents that interrupted the eviction plans. I interviewed 15 individuals with different experiences when it came to the forced evictions led by the state. The mutual characteristic that all participants shared is the fact that they all are island residents. While some of them knew each other, others made an effort to put me in contact with the next interviewee and asked random people who seemed to fit my requirements if they were willing to participate. Thus, there are no specific connections relating all participants to each other despite the island as their home. Some of the interviewees were residents whose homes were selected to be demolished, and some of the interviewees were residents of the island whose homes were unaffected. Ensuring a mixture of participants with different experiences dealing with the forced evictions from the state allows for a more nuanced understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of island residents towards the state. Considering the limited time in the field (1.5 months), it would have been difficult to hold more interviews. All interviews were carried out across an eight day period. Since I needed to commute to al-Warraq island from Cairo, I tried to carry out two or three interviews per day. The distance between my residence and the island where all interviews took place was around 20 kilometers, though the journey time took approximately 1.5 hours due to heavy traffic. Thus, I chose to hold the interviews during the evening, when there was less pressure on the roads.

Ensuring a gender balance among my participants was a significant challenge. The majority of my interview participants were men – a total of nine – while six were women. The first couple of interviews were carried out with men, but in an attempt to get a nuanced group of participants, I asked if it was possible to talk to some women too. One of the reasons why men were more available to participate was because I reached the island late in the evening when many women were at home with their families while men were often outdoors that time. Five of the women were strangers to the participants connecting me to them meaning that the male participants directly approached these women and asked them if they were willing to participate in research concerning the carried-out evictions since the person behind the study needed some female participants. This while one male participant recommended his wife since he believed she might

have different views than him regarding the safety issue. My experience interviewing the women did not differ much from the men, aside from the fact that they more frequently referred to their family and what the evictions could mean for their children.

Table 1 – Presentation of key information concerning research participants

Participant	Gender (m/f)	Age	Date & time	Is the participant a lawyer? If yes, question 9 & 10 are relevant	Listed on the eviction list
1	M	23	24/12, 21.12		Yes
2	M	65	28/12, 19.31	Yes	No
3	M	29	2/1, 19.47	Yes	No
4	M	45	2/1, 21.10	Yes	No
5	M	54	4/1, 18.26	Yes	don't know
6	F	32	4/1, 20.37		Yes
7	F	23	4/1, 22.19		Yes
8	M	27	7/1, 18.14		No
9	F	31	7/1, 19.55		Yes
10	F	46	8/1, 19.10		Yes
11	F	36	8/1, 20.18	Yes	No
12	M	32	10/1, 19.56	Yes	Yes
13	F	41	10/1, 21.47		Yes
14	M	25	11/1, 17.42	Yes	Yes
15	M	31	11/1, 19.17		No

The table’s first column outlines each interviewee (labeled from 1-15 due to anonymity). The second column shows the person’s gender while the third presents the age and the fourth the day and time of his/her interview. The fifth column presents whether or not the participant is a lawyer and thus relevant to answer question 9 and 10. Since all interviews must be rewarding and useful for the study’s purpose, it is considered that some legal background is necessary to answer question 9 and 10 which explains why the questions were posed to lawyers only. The sixth column states whether or not the interviewee’s house is listed among the ones that are to be evicted.

4.3.3 Data Collection

This project is based on data collected through semi-structured interviews. It is relevant to conduct interviews with island inhabitants that have experienced the forced evictions in one way or another, and thus have perceptions to share when it comes to how they view the state’s

responsibility to them as citizens, as well as the state's legitimacy and their view on changing state-society dynamics. The semi-structured design of the interviews meant that they were flexible, giving the participants room to discuss their perceptions and experiences and allowing me to ask follow-up questions. The interview guide of this study consists of eleven questions with a total of six sub-questions. The issues explored pertained mostly to their perceptions of state-society relations, feelings of trust towards the state, and how the participants viewed the regime's roles and responsibilities towards citizens. Questions also concerned the consequences the violations by the state had on their views of these responsibilities. My chosen theory also helped to formulate the questions I asked. Since I am using my theory as an analytical tool, I wanted to make sure my data linked with the concept of a social contract between the state and citizens, so that I could explore its dynamics looking at my particular case.

The interviews were held in-person when I traveled to Egypt on a scholarship in December 2017. The meetings were held in both December 2017 and January 2018. The interviews were conducted indoors, either in the interviewee's home or office to generate a high level of safety and to prevent the spreading of the responses outside the room. The location was always dependent on the interviewee's will; my only conditions were that 1. the place had to be calm enough, so we could hear each other and 2. considered as the most appropriate interview location regarding safety. It was vital to me that my interviewee was part of this decision and felt relaxed and safe when talking to me. All interviews were carried out in Arabic as it is the mother tongue of all interviewees. Since I am fluent in Arabic, I did not need an interpreter and could therefore communicate directly with my participants which ensured I caught all their feelings and attitudes, as we did not have any language barriers between us. All interviewees agreed to have their meetings digitally recorded with an audio recorder. This was considered to be the most relevant method to use considering the structure of the interview guidelines and the expected length of each interview. To document ongoing events, the atmosphere, notable aspects that could be out of interest for the study or general thoughts I had after each interview, I used my notebook to write these things down and mark them with a star if they were particularly noteworthy.

I met with all my participants once, and most of them had talkative characters which resulted in several very long interviews with well-developed answers, making me content with the amount of material I have. I had an agreement with all my interviewees that is that I would get

back to them if anything in my recorded files were unclear or if I needed them to further elaborate on something. They would as well feel free to contact me if they would have any thoughts or concerns regarding their participation or any other question related to my research – I would be glad to clarify. Several asked me if they could have a copy of my finished thesis and I promised them I would send them a digital copy through the Facebook group island inhabitants have added me to.

4.3.4 Interview Ethical Considerations

The nature of the study's data is sensitive as it is based on personal statements about how specific individuals perceive the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions. To openly criticize the government in Egypt is risky as the political culture is closed, allowing no question or criticism of the regime without facing severe consequences, including imprisonment or physical abuse by the State Security Investigations Service. Therefore, I made sure to protect my participants during and after their participation in the interviews, by guaranteeing them full confidentiality. This means that any details about my 15 participants and contact person are kept private by me and not disclosed to any third party – this is to ensure the safety of my interviewees also after their participation in the research.

From an ethical point of view, I was obliged to secure 'informed consent' from my participants, for instance, by informing all of them of the risks, probable consequences and the alternatives they face as participants. It was then up to them to decide whether or not they agreed to participate in my interviews. I informed them that participating is voluntary and for those who agreed to do so, they could choose between letting me audio record the interviews or take notes. The latter alternative could be an option for those who, because of security reasons, did not want to be recorded and preferred interview notes instead, but luckily, all 15 interviewees agreed on being voice recorded. They were as well informed that they could terminate their participation at any time with no consequences. Further on, it was important to mention that the collected data would only be used for the master's thesis project and that the master's thesis may be published at an open-access website managed by Lund University Library. Understanding the context in which their responses would be used is a fundamental right that participants ethically hold. It was therefore important to clarify their role in the study as well as the conditions for participation – in this case, to agree on contributing with honest answers that would be used in the study. After explaining all necessary information to my interviewees, I informed that their participation is anonymous which means that I do not mention their names

or any information that could identify them as individuals. Several interviewees expressed their will to participate with their real names if that would in any way benefit my research, but I explained that my study is as valid with anonymous participants.

Although most people do not accept research that risks harming participants, there is a split understanding of what harm includes. Usually, harm refers to physical harm, harm to participants' development, loss of self-esteem, stress and 'inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts' (Bryman 2012, p. 135). Several strategies have been considered to ensure that my participants are safe. One tactic was to label the interviewees with numbers to minimize the risk of exposing their identities. This is especially important since all island inhabitants know each other by first name and family name. My audio recorder held all interviews during the work and, at the end of the fieldwork, they were transferred to an encrypted folder on my personal computer where all data today is stored. Knowing that even encrypted data can be hacked, I try to decrease this risk by changing the password regularly.

4.3.5 Limitations and Delimitations

A major limitation of my study was the time frame I had to carry out the fieldwork. Since I had expected that I would be able to plan the interview meetings beforehand, I thought that 1.5 months would be more than enough time in the field, though it turned out to be a challenge. 15 interviews were the result of this amount of time in the field. This, as it is thought to be more difficult to interpret the result or reach meaningful conclusions with a more significant amount of data. Also, the fact that this study is a case study makes the question of generalization an inherent limitation as only residents of al-Warraq island fit the definition of the research population which in turn means that this thesis is limited to the attitudes and perceptions of 15 island inhabitants. This makes the answers of the participants not representative as it is not possible to conclude that all island residents share the same comprehension on the issue. Therefore, the study's findings and conclusions cannot be generalized to the larger populations.

Conducting research in Egypt can be a safety concern due to the current political situation and the country's long history trying to make it harder for foreign researchers to carry out studies about Egypt within the country. This can mostly be explained by the Egyptian state's trust issues towards foreign researchers. This meant that I had to take extra precautions including not talking to the police or military about the evictions issue as initially planned and conducting all interviews on the island where the police are absent. The security situation in Egypt was one

reason I solely concentrated on the perceptions and attitudes of people. On the same note, the general political system in Egypt does not motivate people to speak up. Instead, people are, in many cases, afraid of talking to strangers about anything related to politics. Knowing this confirms the fact that a closed environment is reality in Egypt and that anyone openly criticizing or discussing politics with strangers can be regarded as a spy sent out on behalf of the State Security Investigations Service. Such accusations risk posing serious security harms, like being reported to the police by people or being recorded to and then forwarded to a relevant department at the government where consequences await.

Since I evaluated the risk of interviewing evicted families as high, I chose to interview regular island residents instead as they share a lower risk of being identified, while being part of a larger mass of 130 000 island residents. I was prepared that some might feel uncomfortable speaking about sensitive issues, like their perception of the state's power and their trust towards the government for instance, but no one appeared to be feeling uncomfortable or even frightened; they all spoke openly and with confidence. Several of my interviewees have already been featured in media in connection with the evictions and have thus no hostile attitude towards participating in interviews or answering personal questions.

One delimitation concerns the fact that this study is a case study which makes the question of generalization an inherent delimitation resulting of a choice I have made that set boundaries for my research. Since the study examines one specific case, it is not possible to apply the findings of this research on other studies. Another delimitation concerns my choice only to carry out individual interviews, rather than focus groups or questionnaires for instance. It was evident that I needed to make decisions and constraints that would enable me to procure the detailed data required to develop a better understanding of how residents perceive current state-society relations in Egypt under the Sisi regime. By conducting individual interviews, I was able to delve into people's attitudes and perceptions and in person, asking them about the reasons behind them, which would not be possible with structured questionnaires. Further on, focus group interviews would not enable participants to share their honest views of the state since it would mean sharing these with other people. Individual interviews are thus the most suitable data collection method to protect my participants.

Moreover, approaching only adult island inhabitants is a delimitation I chose to apply in order to receive fair answers on the interview questions addressing people's perceptions before the eviction day. Since much of the incidents referred to occurred several years ago it would be impossible for non-adults to elaborate on their views of the state fairly without disregarding from the time before the eviction day in 2017. Including people under the age of 18 would moreover require more of my time since I would need to issue parent consent form and ask for allowances to include their children as participants in my study. Due to my limited time in the field, this would not benefit me.

4.4 Data analysis

The data analysis stage is mainly about data organization with the goal to reduce the vast collection of information that the researcher has gathered so that he or she can make sense of it. If a data reduction is not made, it is more or less impossible to interpret the material (Bryman 2012, p. 13). The analysis approach used in this research is thematic analysis meaning that I identify passages of text that are linked by a common theme or idea and then index these texts into categories (Gibbs 2007). My first step in the data analysis process was to review the recordings to discover any flaws that may affect the quality of the audio records as soon as possible. I did this while still being in the field so that I had the chance to re-do or adjust anything as required. When this was done, the audio material was ready to be transcribed before being analyzed.

4.4.1 Coding

My initial coding process was determined by the chosen *a priori* codes that relate to my theoretical framework, my literature review as well as the research question. Since the *a priori* codes (presented in chapter five) cover three levels: state-level, community level and individual level, these codes manage to give a full overview of people's attitudes and perceptions of the Egyptian state. Moreover, the chosen *a priori* codes depict the authoritarian form of the social contract, which refers back to the study's theory and the literature review addressing fundamental dynamics closely related to the *a priori* codes. The reason why I decided on *a priori* coding is due to its relevance to the study's research design and research question. Since this research is a case study interested in looking at the nature of the state-society social contract in Egypt and specifically among residents of al-Warraaq island, the study is narrowed down to address one specific happening or case. Utilising *a priori* codes helps to direct the focus of the

coding to what indeed is relevant for the study while disregarding from the rest. With the *a priori* codes, I am sure that the codes generated are answering the research question.

Table 2 – The table on the following page is a sample of the study’s findings. The codes used to organize the data are presented as well as the axial codes and eventual themes which were developed from the data. These codes emerged from the 15 semi-structured interviews physically conducted on the island of al-Warraaq with nine males and six females, all adults and island residents. All interviews were recorded with a voice recorder, then transcribed, coded, and finally presented in the findings chapter. A combination of predetermined as well as emergent codes was used to analyze the data and identify overarching themes that provide insight into the perceptions and attitudes of al-Warraaq island residents towards the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions.

Themes	Axial codes	Codes
1. The perception that the state lacks legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Violations of human rights - Feelings towards the state - Trust - Transparency - Contradictions - State messages - Corruption - Unfair compensations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous eviction attempt in 1998 - Non-functioning hospital - Incomplete school on the island - No transparency - No re-location schemes - Contradicting its own constitution - Claims that the eviction decision concerns those who lack construction permits while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evicting residents holding construction permits issued by them -Evicting public buildings constructed by the state itself - False reporting from state-owned and controlled media channels
2. The perception that state interests take priority over citizen interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The state's responsibility towards the island - Sense of exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A widespread feeling of exclusion - No warnings - Demolitions - Violence resulting in death and injuries - Unfair compensations - Transforming the island for the privileged at the expense of the residents
3. Feelings of insecurity because of the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear - Insecurity - Individuality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No police station on the island - Old ferries that once resulted in drowning - No proper roads - Safety not dependent on the state - Strong social fabric - Uncertainty of future - A sense of having the police against them as island inhabitants

One common criticism of the coding approach is the risk of losing the social context of what is said while focusing on some parts more than others. This can, in turn, result in a fragmentation of data meaning that the narrative flow of what people say is lost (Bryman 2012, p. 578). My role in identifying the key elements of my data that relate to my research question was probably influenced to some degree on the perceptions I developed while on the island. I may unconsciously have been emotionally impacted by some codes more than others resulting in more attention paid to some areas while analyzing my data. To minimize my influence in this process, I made sure that between one interview and the other took time for reflection where I reviewed my role in producing the data attempting to look equally hard for data that links to all

of my codes. This meant that a few interviews which I was not sure I treated equally were re-visited.

4.5 Reliability

The uniqueness of each qualitative study brings up an aspect that is more accurate in quantitative research and that is reliability. Reliability is about whether the results of a study are replicable, depending mainly on whether the measurements that are devised for concepts in the social sciences (such as poverty, racial prejudice, etc.) are consistent (Bryman 2012, p. 46). As this study examines a question that concerns few individuals in a specific environment and who are affected by the president's eviction decision, one can conclude that it may be possible to generate the same findings if the researcher interviews the same participants with the same questions in the same geographical environment. Even if there is a chance this could happen, it is not a guarantee as the timing is believed to affect the answers generated. The interviews are all held between December 2017 and January 2018. If the residents' situation changes, their answers might as well change and thus affect the outcome.

Chapter 5: Findings & Analysis

In this chapter, the qualitative data collected through fieldwork on al-Warraq island is presented. The chapter is divided into four sections where the first three ones present and discuss the study's three themes that are the result of the coding process. The last section analyses what the findings indicate concerning the current Egyptian government's chances to survival. In this chapter, I provide insight into what the perceptions and attitudes are of al-Warraq island residents towards the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions, and what this means for the relationship between the state and society in the country. I, further on, explore what my findings say about the authoritarian social contract in relation to what existing research says when it comes to how authoritarian states work, and how they structure and maintain their relationships with their citizens.

5.1 Theme 1: The Perception That the State Lacks Legitimacy

In the context of this study, the concept of legitimacy refers to the island residents' perceptions of the state as a governing regime with duties and responsibilities towards them as citizens. Legitimacy was a major recurring term that was raised in all of my interviews. People referred to it in different ways; feelings of breach of trust on the part of the residents due to the eviction itself but also due to other violations of basic human rights. The mistreat by the state of processes, money and upholding the law have made people hesitate in their relation to the state and how much legitimacy they should have towards the Egyptian authority and its exercising power. Notable is that island residents' perceptions on legitimacy are results of the mentioned and the yet to be mentioned factors. Under this theme, issues such as violations committed by the state against the island inhabitants were raised by the interviewees. They also highlighted the lack of accountability of the state towards al-Warraq island residents, examples of corruption in connection with the evictions as well as issues of unfair compensations. These topics illustrated people's perceptions of the state's legitimacy in connection to the forced evictions. Many of the interviewees raised the point that the weakening feelings of legitimacy towards the regime have been developing over a longer period of time, but that the eviction event was the catalyst in breaking their already weak trust in the state. Since trust is necessary for legitimacy to be accurate, trust as a concept is what is frequently referred to in spoken language when participants addressed the issue of legitimacy. Many of the people interviewed expressed their lack of trust towards the government and its overall lack of legitimacy stemming several decades. "It's saddening to admit that I, like many others, have never trusted the government" (interviewee 6). According to another interviewee: "The government in Egypt has

throughout history always used some tools to benefit itself, so they are for sure using their power to build the bridge [Rawd el-Farag Axis] to benefit themselves and disadvantage us, unfortunately” (interviewee 4). Another resident expressed: “In my nearly 30 years of life, I’ve never heard about a governmental decision that intends to facilitate our lives on the island and when there’s finally a decision, it is issued to harm us” (interviewee 10).

According to the participants, several violations have been committed by the state against them. For instance, not notifying the residents about the planned evictions violates the UN Habitat’s listed general obligations. Also, one of the state’s duties, as listed in the UN Habitat’s general obligations, is to respect “the rights to information and to meaningful consultation and participation” to be at all stages of the process (UN Habitat and UN Human Rights 2014, p. 30). The island residents who were spoken to pointed out that this right was not enforced. Violations committed by the government including not providing the residents with warnings about the eviction time as well as implementing the eviction decision with violence, which resulted in the residents’ weakening legitimacy towards the Egyptian state. It was further weakened as the state repeatedly contradicted itself and its constitution which made people doubt the legitimacy of the state. An island resident highlights a few examples by stating that:

Many rights are being violated here, not only one or two. The amount of contradictions coming from the government makes anyone doubt one’s trust towards them, how is it possible to issue an eviction decision of the island’s only school when the school, in fact, is a public one, designed and built by the state? They are the ones that have issued construction permits, and they are the ones who now claim it is illegally built. Where is the logic? Also, they want to demolish the elementary school and keep the upper school as if they are saying ‘well, if you want to stay here, do it, but we bet that generations will not be able to live here’ (interviewee 1).

On the morning of July 16th, island residents were surprised by the police and military forces reaching the island. Apart from one participant that heard rumors (through personal contacts) about a possible eviction the night before, no one knew such an operation was about to happen (general opinion among participants). People were thus surprised by the security forces invading the island to demolish one property after the other (general opinion among participants). The way in which the eviction proceedings took place worked to further tarnish

residents' view of the Egyptian state as a legitimate governing body looking out for the best interests of the Egyptian people. An island resident describes the eviction: "The people that came to the island to implement the eviction decision claimed that the 720 houses were listed since 20-30 days before, but I can tell you that this was planned even 3-4 months before 16/7 and my evidence is the call I got around that time which I, by the way, seem to be alone about receiving. The call warned me that my home would be evicted" (interviewee 4). What the person was highlighting is the lack of information given to the island residents, and the lack of transparency when it came to the decisions made about the island and the fate of the residents. The same participant described people's feelings when they discovered the police and military: "We were all surprised. No one knew that something would happen on this day. We were shocked seeing the forces on the island with their equipment" (interviewee 4).

Moreover, island residents argue that the police and military forces' violent approach contradicts the state's obligation to protect them as citizens. According to Article 63, the state violated its own rules and laws since the constitution does not support forced evictions and prohibits all forms of arbitrarily forced migration of citizens (Egypt's Constitution 2014, p. 23). A lawyer resident on the island explained that: "In order to take an administrative decision, [the state] should consult before it becomes an actual decision. Also, in order for this decision to be taken, it has to have a background in the constitution or system of rules." He notes that since the state did not do this, the decision to evict residents is not valid. He claims that "invalid is illegitimate and the illegitimate has no legal support. The foundation of this decision is thus incorrect, which makes the whole decision invalid and nothing but invalid. I have a Master's degree in law, so I know what I'm talking about" (interviewee 3). Multiple contradictions by the state have, thus, further decreased people's view of the state's legitimacy. One of the contradictions concerns the constitution which the government disregarded when issuing the eviction decision. People's perceptions of the state's actions support Linz's definition of authoritarian states as predictable with regimes that have neither extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development. In those, he argues that the leader(s) exercises power within formally weak defined limits but entirely predictable ones (Linz 2000, p. 159), which in this case result in increasing mistrust threatening the state's legitimacy.

“Please tell me what trust I should have towards a government that doesn’t respect me as a citizen. After demolishing several houses, after killing one innocent guy and after traumatizing us with the used violence, they sent someone to face us with the reality, that they don’t care about us but only care about their image” (interviewee 7). Other participants admitted that they have never trusted the Egyptian state and will never do so after what happened. “I’ve never had trust towards the government, so I didn’t lose it in connection with this incident [laughing]. In Egypt, you can expect anything from the government, and in return, you should welcome anything they do, applaud and encourage them to continue. Otherwise you’re an enemy, you’re from the opposition” (interviewee 15). Island residents are aware that the state is continuously contradicting itself and many do not feel the necessity of respecting the government as what is apparent is that it is not respecting its production – the constitution. An island resident elaborates on this saying “They could have tried to follow their own constitution, be a role model, you know. How can you encourage people to follow the laws when you, the source of these laws, are disregarding from the constitution? I mean, what makes it correct for you but wrong for us?” (interviewee 14).

The interviewees also highlighted corruption as one of the main reasons for the absence of legitimacy towards the state. The most evident form of corruption that affected the island residents hit them through Egyptian media channels in connection with the eviction attempt in July 2017. Since this personally harms them, island residents’ mistrust towards the government increases with the increasing power the Egyptian government holds on Egyptian media. Participants noted that Egyptian TV channels portrayed the story of al-Warraq island in a way that supported the government’s position. In other words, the story was presented in a way that made it seem like the government was following the law and removing unlicensed buildings and relocating the residents in newly built homes. The media made it seem like island residents had nothing to oppose to which made many Egyptians wonder what is wrong with the residents, who could say no to fresh houses as a compensation? One interviewee asserted that: “The media was an extended voice of the government” (interviewee 6). The vast majority of the media coverage of the island evictions focused on the will of the Egyptian government to increase economic development by commercially developing the island. A resident admits: “I don’t believe in the Cairo 2050 Vision, it’s a marketing tool he’s using at our expense” (interviewee 5).

Additionally, much of the government directed media coverage misrepresented the island residents as terrorists or citizens against the state.

Most of the Egyptian channels portrayed us as terrorists, especially in connection with the eviction day. Even when we were featured in several TV-programs, the presenters were far from neutral. No one portrayed our stories fairly. Good media coverage is about voicing people and not taking a side. Others depicted us as rebels. Like what do you expect from people witnessing their whole life being erased? To stand there and watch while the demolition is happening? Of course, we have the right to defend our land, our homes and our families (interviewee 3).

Among all news features and reports covering the ongoing events on the island, only one specifically focused on the views of the island residents. One of the island residents who participated in the episode explains:

We had a full episode with [television program host] who gave us the space needed to portray the situation fairly to viewers in their homes. At first, he wanted only two of us to appear live, but we were ten from the island. When we reached the studio, we were surprised that he wanted to design the episode in a different way, but we opposed the idea and made it clear for him that either we all go live and say what we have to say, or we can leave (interviewee 2).

Several interview persons stress the fact that they feel humiliated by the state as no consideration is taken to their rights nor is respect paid for those. Regarding what the government could ought to do different, a resident says: “Perhaps treated us like human beings?” (interviewee 4).

5.2 Theme 2: The Perception That State Interests Take Priority Over Citizen Interests

All island residents who were spoken to depict the state’s role in their life in a similar way emphasizing the fact that it has never shown interest in protecting them from danger, affording them with necessities for everyday life or aiming to benefit them as island residents (general opinion among participants). Their testimonies show that despite endless appeals to the government, their fundamental calls concerning safety, health and education were not answered. Instead, the state has acted to further its own economic development objectives to the benefit of an elite few. An island inhabitant expresses: “You [the state] don’t have to erase our identities by transforming the island, you can do it while having us here, we would be happy

to witness such a change. In fact, the transformations planned are not for people like the island residents, but for the society's wealthy classes" (interviewee 3). "If he really wants to better the image of Egypt, why wouldn't he start by developing and fixing the real slums in Egypt? He's just going to forget about it as if they don't exist and build a new city from scratch where we pay the highest price for it? [Silence] The benefit of the group begins with the individual's personal benefit" (interviewee 5).

Over the last several decades, the state has continuously ignored the existing problems on the island including guaranteeing island residents the necessities like the sewage system, and safe ferryboats despite many calls from the inhabitants. The many ignored problems have resulted in a lacking trust towards the state which several interviewees talked about and which strengthen the claims of scholars who argue that institutional trust is necessary for citizens' relation to the state (Citrin 1974, Citrin and Luks 2001, Miller 1974, Mishler and Rose 2005). Interviewees claim that despite numerous calls, the government has ignored their appeals for basic services such as safe ferryboats, a sewage system, a police station, functioning schools, an equipped hospital and proper roads (general opinion among participants). The main attention paid to the island by the state has been in relation to the island's economic development to pursue its economy development interests.

The government's role includes having this balance between the protection of each individual citizen's rights and pursuing great plans for the country on a macro-level. One should not exclude the other, but both are important...develop, go on, but without harming me, the citizen. There's a large area on the island that is empty. Why don't they develop there? Go there and do your thing, build skyscrapers and high buildings, do whatever you want, cultivate or transform it, but don't violate our right to live on the island. You [the state] don't have to erase our identities by transforming the island (interviewee 3).

From the interviews, it is possible to conclude that the demolitions of homes that took place on July 16th, 2017 and the violations committed in the lead up to, during, and after the eviction day have negatively impacted the residents' institutional trust towards the government. This has, in turn, had a negative effect on people's overall perceptions and feelings towards the state and their acceptance of the state's legitimacy to rule. Concerns related to the state's unwillingness

to provide basic services for the residents, its multiple attempts to take over the island and force people off it, and its willingness to contradict its own constitution have contributed to a breakdown of trust and acceptance. Instead, island residents perceive that state interests take priority over citizen interests. Residents argue that the state, which is supposed to protect them instead contributes to what makes them feel insecure by neglecting them, by attempting to break apart the social fabric of the community, and by violating their basic rights as residents to live on the island. This, in turn, makes them worry for themselves, their families, and their community. Many island residents wonder how it is possible to trust the apparatus that has violated all means of their basic human rights. This general opinion that has been raised in all interviews is considered to be the central reason to people's perceptions of the state.

When it comes to the residents' physical security, the state has also ignored its role. One interviewee noted: "We have previously asked for a sewage system, high school, hospital machines and a good police station but we didn't get that... Even the landline, they've removed it from the island" (interviewee 9). In the face of limited institutional services on the island like health care facilities, education and police, residents have come to rely on their fellow residents for practical and economic support, which the state would otherwise provide. Some of these services the state does in fact provide for Egyptian citizens living on the mainland, like access to hospitals or access to police stations. In other words, people are dependent on the island community to fill the hole created by the state when it comes to basic provisions and services. Some residents felt the neglect on the part of the state was a strategy to push people to leave the island. In the aftermath of the eviction, many residents fear the neglect would get worse. The absence of trust has led the island residents to take things into their own hands instead of waiting for the state to act. Their initiatives strengthened the community feeling and created a unique social fabric on the island. At the same time, feelings of insecurity, suspicion, and resentment towards the state developed in the absence of state support, cooperation or even recognition that the island is their rightful home. Nearly all respondents reflect on the same aspect – their mistrust towards the government. They argue that the state is working to benefit the rich at the expense of the poor (general opinion among participants), (Al Masry Al Youm 2017) which opposes to Rawls' 'Difference Principle.' They, moreover, worry that it is not the last attempt by the government to force people off the land. Several participants confirm this, among others the following:

“Yes, but not now. They will wait until people forget about the first incident” (interviewee 3). “I think they are trying to be smart, like calming down the situation after Sayyed’s death and appear as they have listened to our calls. In fact, they will wait ‘til after the presidential elections” (interviewee 1). “As they have already issued this decision, be sure that one day they will implement it. They are just waiting for the right time to do that. I would guess that they would re-try to evict us after the presidential elections or so” (interviewee 7).

5.3 Theme 3: Feelings of Insecurity Because of the State

The different forms of violations experienced on the eviction day have led to widespread feelings of vulnerability and insecurity at the individual and community level. The attitude of individual insecurity among island residents has eventually developed in part due to the forced evictions. The findings show that island residents have developed this attitude of individual insecurity throughout time and in connection with every threat they felt from the state. Inhabitants explain that this feeling of threat is a natural consequence to the state’s multiple moves intended to weaken their role as island residents. The state’s strategies include expelling them to free up the island for people of stronger social class, instead of developing the island by providing the essential needs of the contemporary inhabitants (general opinion among participants). The state’s strategy to weaken citizens’ role by evicting them affects their level of individual security since it contributes to the split of people who for decades have been neighbors. Due to the evictions carried out by the state, the social fabric on the island is threatened and with that residents develop a stronger attitude of individual insecurity since community feeling is the main source to island residents’ safety. Affecting the community feeling negatively would automatically mean contributing to people’s individual insecurity.

Witnessing their personal living standards getting worse over the years instead of developing generates feelings of being less important citizens in comparison to the more privileged who have their living standards all set and organized by the state. Many participants argue that the state’s eviction plans intend to ruin a central part of their identities as island inhabitants since the demolition of their houses will turn beautiful memories into a nightmare scenario (general opinion among participants). Knowing that all feelings of individual insecurity are because the state intends to transform the island so that it suits upper-class citizens strengthens the residents’ constant sense of being second-class citizens. This, in turn, affects the residents’ safety feelings when believing that the state is prioritizing its self-interests and disregarding from the residents’

necessary needs for a functional life on the island. An island resident tells a story that has contributed to residents' feelings of individual insecurity:

Around three years ago, two Christians came to my house and asked for my help. They told me that rumors circulated that the following day, right after the Friday prayer, someone would attack them and perhaps attack their church. So, after the Friday prayer, we were a large group of Muslims who walked to the church and protected the building, but nothing happened. What I want to tell you by this is that our relation to our fellow Christian friends is robust, we are one family. Also, only God knows, perhaps this was a move by the police to test us in some way, I don't know, because no police showed up. However, we didn't know if this was a move by the police or not, but we handled the situation with our feelings. We were around 10 000 Muslims who surrounded the church that day and refused to leave until we made sure things were under control, and everyone felt safe (interviewee 4).

Island residents experienced the feeling of being ignored by the state and police many times including once when the presence of the police was considered as crucial in preventing any harm. One of the island residents spoken to depicts the story: "... there were two big families here, one originally from the southern part of Egypt and the other from here, they had a big issue and started talking about revenge and some other serious things. We, the whole island, got involved in this dispute and did our best to solve the conflict. They called the police to come and witness the peacemaking between these two families, but they never came" (interviewee 8). For the state, less favorable perceptions towards it might mean that the Egyptian state needs to be acutely aware of the island residents, as well as their needs and rights in order to ensure there is no mobilization against the state at any point. Being involved in matters that benefit island residents helps the state to protect its power since gaining the trust of people usually prevents social movements to grow against the state. To prevent such movements is essential for the regime to secure its long-term survival, since these often develop into becoming social mobilizations that, in turn, could threaten the state's persistence as well as the state's legitimacy.

The authoritarian social contract is strongly dependent on the ruling bargain which gives the state the authority to limit its citizens' political rights and freedoms in exchange for providing them with a certain amount of services and benefits like stability, security, health care, safety, education and clean water (general opinion among participants). In the case of al-Warraq island,

these benefits do not seem to be in place. In fact, findings reveal that there is a limited social contract between the residents of the island due to the forced evictions. This is a condition that dates back to before the eviction day in 2017 because of the previous attempts of the government to evict residents as well as the years of neglect from the state. Since the Egyptian government began to show increasing interest in taking over the island for its own commercial development plans starting in 1998, residents have lived in fear and uncertainty, not knowing what to expect next. Inhabitants of al-Warraq island have, as a result, had to create their own sense of individual level security. Emotional and social support for one another was a key theme that came up in the interviews. Many stories told, and many examples shared on how the entire island is like “one big family.” They share happiness and sorrow, assist with help and protection and have a long mutual history which brings them even closer each other (general opinion among respondents). A respondent explains this notion in his own words: “the government has never been the reason to our safety, the fact that we have each other’s backs is what makes us feel safe and secure. So, in that sense, as long as we have each other, we are safe” (interviewee 6). With an eviction comes the question of relocation which forces neighbors who have for generations lived side by side to split. Participants claim that a relocation would make them lose their individuality and identity which are strongly dependent on the island as a place of residency. The fact that the state’s actions are even more unpredictable since the eviction day makes people fear the government in a new way. They have witnessed the power of it in practice through the 19 detained island residents who were arrested by the police on the eviction day, an incident which people described as “war” and “something they had not witnessed even during the revolution” (interviewee 10). A resident states the following: “What happened was that we got to taste of what many other Egyptians have already tasted from the hands of the government. This was like our portion of the cake if you know what I mean. It was sad that we got to experience all this, but I wasn’t surprised, because I’ve heard about their violent methods from everyone” (interviewee 13).

From the interviews, it is possible to note a connection between the experienced violence from the security forces on the eviction day, the lacking legitimacy towards the government, and the feeling of insecurity since one is argued to lead to the other. Most participants claim that since the eviction day, they are more worried. They worry about another sudden governmental move that could harm their family members and make them lose their homes (general opinion among participants). An island inhabitant confirms that her feeling of insecurity has increased. “After

the eviction day, I call my husband and children more often to make sure they are okay” (interviewee 13). One’s family and one’s home are key components of people’s feelings of individual safety and security. This was reflected in the data with participants who have mainly referred to these two aspects as safety concerns. The interviewees explain that their refusal to leave the island is not an aspect related to stubbornness or a random will to oppose the government, but it goes well beyond such reasons. For them, it is a question of identity, roots, and loyalty towards their home (general opinion among participants). An island resident explains the matter by referring to an example:

Any person from the city who originally is from the countryside and is a bit depressed or down always say: ‘I’ll just go back to my village for two days.’ When he’s back to his birthplace, he feels peaceful because that is his roots. Well, if they transform the island to this commercial place and if I would have to move to the 5th settlement or 6th of October and would want to be reunited with my homeland to feel this peace, what will I find here? I’ll definitely not find anything that reminds me of my home (interviewee 3).

5.4 What Do the Findings Say About the Government’s Chances to Survival?

For the residents, the lack of faith and trust in the state mean an even weaker bargain is in place between the state and its people. It is possible to note that the lowered support and trust in the government does affect the residents’ willingness to accept the regime – which is what the social contract is all about, namely how two parties accept each other in order to secure stability. The lack of support for the government is, therefore, a concern for the state since it could pose a threat to its survival. The increasing tolerance for public expression of discontent in Egypt has previously been reflected in several social movements, including the Kefaya Movement, that eventually grew bigger and gained significant public support (Vairel 2013, p. 34). The power social mobilization holds, namely in reaching out to the mass population is one main reason that the revolution of 2011 is not something the Egyptian state would like to witness again. While history has shown what consequences great unbalance in a social contract could have, this does not mean that Egyptians will because of the case of al-Warraq island start a new revolution against the current regime and demand its resignation. However, what it could mean is that the disputes on the island become an eye-opening incident for fellow Egyptians making them realize how challenging island inhabitants’ lives always have been, and how affected they were by the new regime’s unfairly designed social contract. Further on, it could make non-island residents realize how the evictions are threatening island inhabitants’ well-being which,

despite the circumstances, they have managed to create. As a result, this could potentially mean that Egyptians eventually establish a social mobilization against the state and thus threaten its legitimacy. However, given the current condition is new for Egypt, it is difficult to foresee these potential happenings.

The analysis generated from my findings make me view the relationship between the current Egyptian state and island inhabitants as a minimized depiction of the relationship between the former government and the Egyptian population on a national level with its lack of rewards for the people in exchange for their deprived political rights and freedoms. The last time Egyptians came together and protested against the unfairly designed social contract, the world witnessed the results in what came to be referred to as the Arab Spring. People had had enough of giving up their fundamental human rights in exchange for mediocre deals provided by the state. They therefore went out on the streets, protesting and demonstrating for 18 days, during which they had power over the state for the first time. Their persistence resulted in the overthrow of the Mubarak regime and sent a strong message to the next regime that Egyptians would from now on not accept history to repeat itself. The perceptions highlighted in the findings indicate a more vulnerable balance between the state and the people, which could be dangerous for a regime not to have a complete domination on power. Scholars have argued that an authoritarian state ruling without the use of an authoritarian bargain risks losing power in the future (Desai, Olofsgård and Youssef 2007, p. 6). In Egypt's case, since al-Sisi seized power, rewards in the form of services and benefits have not been offered to people, which explains the frustration of island residents and their sense of being non-prioritized by the state (Shokr 2017, pp. 1-3). The lack of benefits affects the nature of the social contract that frames the relationship between the Egyptian state and citizens as it creates instability in a system that should, according to its natural form, be fair and beneficial for all involved parties (May 2002, p. 9). On the same note, Hamzawy argues that the weak version of Mubarak's authoritarian social contract was one primary reason to the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution in 2011 which makes it possible to understand the discontent of island residents on the fact that their rights were forgotten during Mubarak's time in office. The poor living conditions on the island – which people have multiple times called for its development – confirm the reality scholars refer to, that wide gaps among social classes are what led to the injustice resulting in the revolution that removed Mubarak from his post (Hamzawy 2016).

The theory of authoritarian social contract says that it relies on appeasing the people in order to maintain control, mainly by practicing the authoritarian bargain. However, in the case of al-Warraq (and Egypt more generally), this does not seem to be happening, especially after the forced evictions. Concerning the usefulness of the theory to help explain state-society relations, this could mean that there are other models of authoritarian rule that might exist or that the theory of authoritarian social contract highlights an outdated understanding of how authoritarian societies work. In the case of the island residents and the Sisi regime, it is difficult to determine what citizens, in this case, island residents, can expect from the regime in the form of social contract benefits like a police station, safe ferryboats, health care services and clean water. In fact, the findings reveal that there is a limited social contract between the residents of the island and the state which dates back to before the eviction day in 2017. This claim is supported by scholars who argue that there is no explicit social contract between the Egyptian state and society (Shokr 2017).

Despite it being a non-ideal form of the initial social contract developed by Locke and Rousseau, the authoritarian social contract still has to function in benefit of both parties to persist, because why would people otherwise hold on to it if it does not benefit them (Shokr 2017)? The fact that a social contract should benefit both the state and its citizens is by Rousseau highlighted as the main condition but since the Egyptian state is lacking a clear contract with its people, it is hard to acknowledge what rights the residents, in this case, have as they are currently part of a worse version than the authoritarian social contract where they get nothing in exchange for their deprived political rights. In the case of al-Warraq island, the findings reveal that there has never been a fair contract between the citizens of the island and the state, even during the decades before the eviction day in 2017, meaning that the people received few benefits from the state like security and stability. In fact, all perceptions shared testify to the absence of any particular services and benefits citizens should gain according to the authoritarian bargain on which the authoritarian social contract is dependent. The frustration evident in people's shared perceptions are due to the feeling that the state is trying to take what is left and what residents have for generations worked hard to maintain, namely their houses and lives on the island. My findings thus support the claim of scholars who argue that this frustration is a natural consequence to the absence of any type of social contract (Shokr 2017, pp. 1-3).

Moreover, the findings presented confirm that in the case of the island residents, the assertion of Harvey (2008) is accurate. He notes that: “The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is [...] one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights (Harvey 2008, p. 272).”

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis investigates how the perceptions and attitudes of the island inhabitants about the state changed in the aftermath of the forced evictions on al-Warraq island that took place on July 16th in 2017. Investigating people's perceptions before and after the eviction, I provide an understanding of how state-society relations changed following the evictions by looking into one aspect, that is the perceptions and attitudes of the island residents. After careful reflection, my research question – *What are the perceptions and attitudes of al-Warraq island residents of the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions?* – can be answered as follows.

The perceptions and attitudes of the island residents on the state have worsened since the eviction day. Before the eviction, the absence of necessities on the island like a police station, safe ferryboats and a properly equipped hospital, were among the reasons for the lack of legitimacy on the part of the state. However, it was in connection with that day when island residents felt betrayed by the state and had their mistrust increase and feeling of insecurity worsen. The fact that the police and military forces without warning invaded the island without warning, demolished the homes of people, killed one island inhabitant and detained 19 residents for opposing their plans to demolish the rest of the 720 homes are all violations committed by the state. These are all reasons island residents listed as to why their safety no longer is dependent on the state and why they now perceive the state as standing against them. This study confirms that Egypt is a strong authoritarian state. Its authoritarian character explains the unfair social contract the state is practicing with the Egyptian citizens. Since this condition including an agreement that benefits one party at the expense of the other is new for the island residents, the discontent increased among the residents leading to their perceptions and attitudes shared in this research.

So, how do the changing perceptions of island residents matter to the way we understand authoritarian regimes? The findings of this study show an interesting dynamic between the Egyptian state and the island residents. This dynamic does not correspond to what research has said about the idea of an authoritarian social contract since the literature addresses the main tool and strategy with which authoritarian regimes build a foundation to their pact with the citizens, namely the authoritarian bargain. But while nearly all of the literature emphasizes the essence of the authoritarian bargain with the people to effectively keep them from revolting, this is not the case in my study. I have found a group of people who are not benefitting from the state and

who have not benefitted from the state according to the authoritarian bargain even before the eviction day. This has consequently had negative impacts on the way island residents address the state and led to their perceptions and attitudes reflected in this study. In the long-term and depending on the state's coming steps towards the people, these perceptions could either benefit or disadvantage the state. If the Egyptian state changes its attitude towards the island and its residents, it *could* mean a turning point in the practice of the authoritarian bargain towards the island inhabitants where residents are benefitted with social services and guaranteed fundamental rights. In the opposite case, where people would remain outside the authoritarian social contract, a social mobilization against the state threatening its survival *could* spread and eventually result in mass protests against the state. Despite this, since the current condition is new for Egypt, it is difficult to foresee these events in the near future.

Furthermore, the uniqueness of this research goes beyond the perceptions and dynamics highlighted as the results produced contributes to existing research by addressing a gap. There are currently no other studies examining the Egyptian state-society relations from the perspective of al-Warraq island inhabitants in the aftermath of the evictions. On a more general level, research on the state-society relationship since al-Sisi took power is limited which makes this study extend knowledge about the field as it contributes to the task of understanding how island residents perceive the state following the evictions. Finally, this thesis casts light on a small portion of Egyptian citizens' view on the state as it presents their perceptions on their relationship with the current government. In this respect, my thesis represents a free space in which the individuals I spoke to could air their views, without having to consider the possible risks and harms that often follow such testimonies.

Chapter 7: References

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Background: al-Warraq Island

Al-Warraq island is the biggest and most populated Nile island in Egypt, located in the Giza Province. Al-Warraq island makes home to 130 000 residents (Contact person, Physical introduction meeting, December 24, 2017) among which the majority are lower-income earners. As part of the island community, residents are socially as well as economically isolated from the broader Egyptian society. Being surrounded by the Nile, not only creates a strong community feeling but encourages people to work as fishermen and cultivators (Maroun 2017). The fact is that al-Warraq island has been famous for its cultivation of potatoes since the British occupation of Egypt when it became the first place in the Giza Province to cultivate potatoes and quickly became the leading potato supplier to the British occupation camps. Alongside potatoes, the island is known for growing corn and vegetables (Shahine 2001).

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

Research question: *What are the perceptions and attitudes of al-Warraaq island residents of the Egyptian state in the aftermath of the forced evictions?*

Questions to my contact person to get an update before arriving to the island (24/12-2017):

- Have the evicted families been replaced, or do they still live on the island?
- I want to interview island inhabitants, do you know how I can get in touch with them?
How can I reach them when I arrive to the island?
- Which day is best for visiting the island and conducting the interviews?
- What has been the biggest change since the 16th of July 2017?

Interview questions to non-evicted island inhabitants/neighbors to evicted houses:

1. The eviction decision concerned 720 households, do you know if your home was one of those?
2. Did you know that such an eviction would take place on the 16th of July? If YES, how did you get to know about it?
3. Was the eviction an expected move by the government? If YES, what incident made you think that the implementation of such a decision was to happen?
4. Did representatives from the Ministry of Interior or any other government officials approach to you after the evictions took place on the island?
 - a. If YES, what was the purpose?
5. Have the evictions affected your trust towards the government? If YES, how?
6. Have the evictions on the island affected your feeling of security/safety? If YES, how?
7. Do you believe the government will re-try to evict the island? If YES, when and why?
8. How have your life been affected by the threat of the evictions on the island?
 - a. Has this disrupted the social fabric of the community?
 - b. Commercially has it been bad for the island?
 - c. Have the inhabitants been forced to re-organize their lives (socially, economically, geographically) substantially differently?
9. - **Question asked to the lawyers** - What do you think the government could have done differently, or ought to have done differently?
10. - **Question asked to the lawyers** - How do you view the power of the government?
 - a. Is it the government's job to protect the well-being of them, or the well-being of the country more generally?
11. What has the response been from fellow Egyptians?
 - a. How did you feel about any media attention or public outcry etc.?

Appendix 3 – Photos From al-Warraaq Island

Photos 1-5 are of homes demolished by the police and military forces on the eviction day. All photos in this section are captured by me during my multiple visits to the island.



1



2



3



4



5



6

According to the eviction decision, half of this occupied house should be evicted and demolished. In the middle of the picture, it is possible to note a diagonal marked line marking where the demolition should start.