
The Securitization theory's contribution to understanding Germany's reaction to COVID 19.



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Abstract

This thesis answered the question How does the securitization theory help us understand the German government's reaction to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19? Beginning with an elaboration on the securitization theory's critical aspects, the thesis creates a base understanding of the theory. The thesis then moves on to examine existing scholarly works regarding the topic. The thesis then proceeds to apply the four key factors of the theory to the real-life example of COVID 19 in Germany. The first examined factor resulted in Angela Merkel reflecting the securitizing actor's parameters of authority and relevance. The second and third examined factor used a close reading strategy of Merkel's address to the nation from the 18th of March 2020 to identify that Merkel uses several rhetorical tools to portray the German health care system as existentially threatened. The last factor examined was the reaction of the German citizens (audience) to the securitizing actor and its speech act. Combining the results makes us understand that the measures taken by the German government with respect to Covid can be considered as a securitization strategy, as understood by the Copenhagen school. The theory then allowed us to use the knowledge from the case study and briefly compare it to other countries. By applying the theory to the real-life example of Germany, one can understand the reaction of the German government to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19.

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Introduction

"If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it's most likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war. Not missiles, but microbes." – Bill Gates (Gates 2015)

Bill Gates said this in a TED talk in 2015, where he spoke about the risk of upcoming pandemics. His concern was not unreasonable as the number of viruses with pandemic potential has significantly increased since 1980 (Katherine F. Smith, et al. 2014, 3). While viruses such as SARS in 2002 and Ebola in 2014 were still containable, the COVID 19 virus that emerged in late 2019 spread to a global pandemic.

At the end of 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) country office in China noticed viral pneumonia emerging in Wuhan, China. The viral pneumonia started to infect an increasing amount of people who develop high fever and have difficulties breathing. On January 11th 2020, China reported its first death (Carvalho, Krammer and Iwasaki 2021, 245). Three days later, the infections spread outside of China and were first identified in Thailand. By January 20th, the virus also spread to Japan and South Korea (WHO 2020). On January 24th, the virus was identified as SARS- CoV 2, in short COVID 19. January 24th also marked the first case COVID 19 in France, only four days later, COVID 19 also arrived in Germany (WHO 2020). On January 30th, the WHO declared the COVID 19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (Carvalho, Krammer and Iwasaki 2021, 245) (WHO 2020). COVID 19 developed into a security threat that would have disastrous effects.

Security threats were traditionally only understood through a military perspective. The state would only be threatened by another states army, and that security is a matter of state survival. Many of the most threatening security issues to a state were often military, as anyone with a more extensive military was seen as a threat (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 56). What this thinking can result in was displayed by the second world war. Post-war, the emphasis on the military started to decrease. Many modern states do not focus most of their resources on military means anymore, yet rather discovered the advantages of collaboration and globalization (Keohane and Nye 1989).

Nonetheless, security issues remain relevant. Yet, the values of a state shifted to a modernist perspective, and with them, the perception of threat. While a traditionalist views the

only threat to the state being of military means, the modernist expands their range of possible threats to also be found in the economy, the environment, political and the social sectors (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 15-16).

While there was an expansion on perceived threats, a question remained open: how does a state deal with such security threats? An answer to this was given by Barry Buzan, Japp de Wilde and Ole Wæver by developing the Copenhagen securitization theory. Within this theory, the way to deal with existential security threats is to securitize the issue using a speech act. "Meaning the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). The theory's basic assumption is that an actor can securitize a public issue as long as it convinces an adequate audience of an existential security threat, justifying the implementation of extreme prevention measures (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998).

COVID 19 has no doubt proven that it is a security issue. To prevent the spread of COVID 19, actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure were necessary. There was no other way to stop the infection rate than to separate people's contacts. Therefore, many states implemented measures that restricted social events, almost completely halted public life and put non-essential work at a complete standstill. These measures were then referred to as lockdown. One of the countries that implemented lockdown measures was Germany. While Germany recorded a total of 3.5 million infections since COVID 19 began, its initial reaction made Germany a success story (Robert Koch Institut 2021) (Wieler, Rexroth and Gottschalk 2020). Of interest to this case study is the question of how Germany was able to implement successful measures. Applying the securitization theory to Germany helps us understand how Germany reacted to the political/health crisis that emerged from COVID 19.

The Copenhagen securitization theory attempts to explain how actors securitize an existential threat. The Harvard epidemiology professor Marc Lipsitch predicted that COVID 19 would infect between 40% and 70% of the World Population in the coming years, with a mortality rate of 2% between 64 million and 112 million people would fall victim to the pandemic (Hamblin 2020). As COVID 19 started to infect an increasing number of people, it soon developed into an existential threat. This allows the thesis to apply the theory to a real-life example to examine if the theory does help explain how the German government reacted to COVID 19. Therefore, the research question for this thesis will be: How does the

securitization theory help us understand the German government's reaction to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19?

To understand the full extent of the securitization theory, the following chapter will outline the theoretical framework. Once the securitization theory has been outlined, it is necessary to highlight the method in which this thesis will answer the research question. This will be found in the Methodology chapter. Prior to answering the research question with the main chapters, it is essential to understand what the existing literature states about securitization and health security. The literature review will examine the existing perspectives of various literature. With an expanded understanding of the securitization theory, the thesis will then apply the theory to Germany's real-life example.

Theoretical Framework

"A theory attempts to make sense of the world by indicating that some factors are more important than others and specifying relations among them" (Halperin and Heath 2017, 117). This thesis's theoretical framework is based on the Copenhagen School of thought securitization theory developed by Buzan, De Wilde and Wæver in 1998.

The securitization theory attempts to make sense of how existential threats are transformed from political matters to security issues. Specifically, to understand how actors react to existential threats and how they manage to securitize a public issue. A public issue is then securitized when an issue is "presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). Once the audience accepts the necessity to use actions outside of the normal bounds of political procedure, securitization occurs.

To achieve securitization and therefore prevent further development of the existential threat, the securitization theory uses a speech act consisting of a securitizing actor, a threat and a referent object. These three factors have to be accepted by an audience to approve securitization. The theory's basic assumption is that an actor can securitize a public issue as long as it convinces an adequate audience of an existential security threat, justifying the implementation of extreme prevention measures (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998). Taking a deeper look at the factors enables scholars to make sense of the complex process of securitizing an issue.

Securitization

The most crucial aspect to understand is securitization itself. At the start of every securitization process is security. Depending on perspective, sector and circumstances, security threats can vary significantly. Traditionally, security threats were primarily perceived within the military sector. From this perspective, security is about the survival of the state (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 21). For the Copenhagen securitization theory, the necessity for securitization is "when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, the state, incorporating government, territory, and society)" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 21). Buzan et al. add that "The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them." (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 21-22). How an actor manages to proceed to the level where the audience accepts extraordinary measures is what the securitization theory attempts to explain.

According to Buzan et al., securitization is the next step after politicization. The Copenhagen school places any public issue into nonpoliticized, politicized and securitized issues. Nonpoliticized issues are issues that the government has no concern about and does not use time or resources on discussing solutions. Politicized issues are issues that are part of public policy and require government decision and resources to be addressed. A securitized issue is an issue that is "presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 23). This means that when an actor securitizes an issue successfully, the given actor will have the ability to implement political measures that would otherwise not be acceptable. However, "Securitization is not fulfilled only by breaking rules (which can take many forms) nor solely by existential threats (which can lead to nothing) but by cases of existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules." (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). In other words, threats and vulnerabilities "... have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 5). Having understood the essence of securitization, the focus naturally shifts to asking how securitization is achieved.

The Copenhagen securitization theory argues that securitization hinges on the acceptance of a securitizing move. The securitization move consists of a securitizing actor, a threat and a referent object. However, "The issue is only securitized when and if the audience accepts it as such" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). The way the securitizing move is

presented to the audience is done using a speech act. A speech act is an utterance of a speaker's intention (promise, prediction, request) to a specific audience (Tsohatzidis 2010). The securitization theory speech act consists of a securitizing actor presenting a threatened referent object to an audience. (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26) (Waever 2003).

Having explained how securitization takes place, it has also become clear that each factor builds on another. The securitizing actor is necessary to communicate the threat of a system referent to the audience. If one factor is unavailable, then the theory considers securitization as failed (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998). Therefore, to examine the securitization theory, it is essential to examine each factor.

Functional and Securitizing Actor

In order to communicate the securitizing move, it requires an actor. Buzan distinguishes between a functional actor and a securitizing actor. A functional actor is an "actor who affects the dynamics of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for securitizing on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36).

In comparison, a securitizing actor is understood to be someone who is in a position of relevance concerning the referent object and holds a certain authority that enables him to convince a relevant audience about an existential referent requiring securitizing. (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36). Buzan et al. highlight that "Common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups. Their argument will normally be that it is necessary to defend the security of the state, nation, civilization, or some other larger community, principle, or system." (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 40). However, a securitizing actor cannot be an institution as it requires the verbalization of the securitizing move to the audience. For example, the state as an institution cannot vocalize an idea; therefore, states usually have a clear idea of who can speak on their behalf, making the representative of the state the securitizing actor (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998). The securitizing actor then has to reflect authority, relevance in context with the referent object, and a relationship with the audience. If these three parameters are met, a securitizing actor has a high chance of being accepted by the audience, contributing to the possible success of the securitizing move.

Referent Object and Threat

The existential referent object is another component of the Copenhagen securitization theory. According to Buzan et al., "referent Objects are things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36). While this idea may seem straightforward, its complexity is dependent on the definition of existential. Concerning this problem, Buzan et al. distinguish between two kinds of referents; the mid-level referent and the system level referent.

The mid-level referents are identified by Buzan et al. as "things that can be threatened but are not existential to the sector" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 35). Buzan uses a firm as an example for a mid-level referent; the nature of a firm allows it to be exposed to the threat of bankruptcy; however, if one firm goes bankrupt, the stability of the overall economic system is rarely threatened. In contrast to the mid-level referent is the system level referent. This referent is, as the name says, system relevant. System referent objects must establish security legitimacy in terms of a claim to survive (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 39). Therefore, the securitization theory requires a referent object to reflect a high system relevance, be existentially threatened and valued by the audience.

While Buzan et al. see both threat and referent object as essential, they cannot be seen as two separate parts. This is because the referent object can only be seen within the context of the threat (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). Without an existential threat, there is no referent object. Therefore, when examining the referent object, one must also examine the threat. For this reason the threat and referent object are often examined together.

Audience

The audience is a crucial parameter of the securitizing move success. As mentioned above already, Buzan et al. view the discourse of presenting an existential threat to a referent object as securitizing move. Only when the audience accepts the aforementioned securitizing move can the issue be securitized (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). Buzan et al. simplify this by stating that "The security act is negotiated between securitizer and audience—that is, internally within the unit—but thereby the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). Therefore, an audience can be understood as a group of people that are in the position to supply the

securitizing actor with a formal mandate to use extreme measures to control a security issue. Hence, according to the theory, the securitization of a threat is only possible if the audience accepts the premiss given by the securitizing actor.

Threat

The most straightforward yet also the most undefinable concept of the securitizing move is the threat that causes a securitizing move to occur. The key requirement to recognize a threat is not the threat itself, but to what extent the threat is perceived to endanger a system referent object? Buzan et al. highlight this by saying, "Existential threats can only be understood in relation to the particular character of the referent object in question ... The essential quality of existence will vary greatly across different sectors and levels of analysis; therefore, so will the nature of existential threats" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 23). The thread and the referent object are interdependent. Therefore to understand the referent object, one must examine the threat first. The nature of the threat is to be decided by the securitizing actor and to be accepted by the audience.

The securitization theory builds a skeleton of the securitizing process by focusing on the four factors mentioned earlier. This skeleton version then should allow scholars to understand the process of securitization. Hence, when analyzing the process of securitization, these four factors should be reflected. Consequently, if these four key factors are not reflected in the securitization process, the theory loses validity.

The author is aware that the Copenhagen's school of thoughts securitization theory remains purely a theory, and therefore is not expected to cause reality but rather be reflected in reality. There is no evidence that the practitioners were aware of and actively deployed the theory to guide their own actions. This thesis takes the framework of the securitization theory and applies it to the real life example of Germany and COVID 19. Therefore, this thesis does not expect the mentioned factors to cause empirical developments, neither are they expected to be directly found within them

In other words, the thesis does not imply that the German government used the securitization theory but instead, it uses the securitization theory to understand the reactions of the German government to COVID 19.

Nonetheless, examining if these factors can be identified in real life helps scholars evaluate the theory's strength in aiding to understand the complex phenomena of securitization

(moving from politicized to securitized). Using the securitization theory framework, the thesis examines if these factors indeed aid in understanding the complex process of securitizing. To do so, the case study of Germany will be used. Using the case study and combining it with the examination of the securitization theory's factors, the thesis will be guided with the following research question; How does the securitization theory help us understand the German government's reaction to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19?

Germany as a single case study

The securitization theory attempts to make sense of how a politicized issue transfers to a securitized issue. This makes it possible to use the theory to also understand how actors react to existential security issues. This can be analyzed on a vast number of political levels reaching from the international system down to individual security issues. On the international system, issues are securitized on a global level. An example of this could be a world war that engaged the majority of the worldwide community. On the level of international subsystems, the issues are securitized by "groups of units within their international system that can be distinguished from the entire system by the particular nature of intensity of their interactions with or interdependency on each other" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 6). This includes institutes such as African Union (AU) or the European Union (EU). On the level of units, issues are securitized by institutions or groups that "have standings on a higher level" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 6). This level includes predominantly states and nations. Securitizing issues on the level of subunits focuses on bureaucracies and lobbyist group, while the smallest form of level of analysis is the individual (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 6). Each level of analysis does not create a theory of itself but rather a level provides the framework within which one can theorize (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 6).

The Unit level plays an essential role as it is the level of states and nations which affect the framework of all other levels of analysis. This is due to the fact that international systems and subsystems are all build-ups from states. The forging policy of nations such as the US and China heavily influence the international system and subsystem. The reason that the states have such a high influence on other frameworks is their internal and external sovereignty. The concept of external sovereignty sees the state acting independently and autonomously on the world stage (Heywood 2015, 4). Internal sovereignty refers to the super authority within the state, which means that a state has no higher authority to control its actions within its territories

or foreign policy (Heywood 2015, 4-5). This is relevant to an international system and subsystem as both levels require the state to actively contribute to the system. On a subunit and individual level, the states use their internal sovereignty to determine the legal framework in which subunits and individuals have to act. In any security aspect, the influence of the state is present.

Using the example of the COVID 19 pandemic, states were the only units that had the authority to implement measures within their territories. The WHO declared COVID 19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30th 2020. However, the PHEIC only triggered a set of recommendations to the global community (WHO 2020). The WHO had no authority as an international organization to implement measures within sovereign territories. While a worldwide pandemic, the reactions to COVID 19 were primarily national. Therefore, the most effective way to answer the research question is to apply the theory to the level of units (states).

However, the reactions of states to the global pandemic can vary immensely. A large number of countries have enforced nationwide lockdowns. Italy implemented a nationwide lockdown on March 9th 2020 (Lehmann 2020), Germany on March 22nd (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit 2021). Other countries such as the USA and Canada only had regional lockdowns (Calfas, Stancati and Yap 2020) (Rodrigues 2020), while Sweden did not implement a lockdown at all (Vogel 2020). To understand why each government reacted differently to the pandemic would require the thesis to investigate each characteristic of the securitization theory within multiple countries. Meaning one must identify the actor, the threat, referent object and audience to each individual state. This is especially problematic as many countries used emergency laws, which also would have to be examined to fully understand all government's reactions. Examining each factor and parameter in contrast to several different countries with individual emergency laws would not be possible within the boundaries of this thesis without sacrificing the quality of analysis. This is why a comparative study of units would only be possible at the expense of understanding the theory.

An alternative to examining the use of the theory to help understand the reactions of a government to COVID 19 is the use of a single case study. The single case study makes it possible to examine the theory in a qualitative method. This means that each factor and parameter can be investigated in detail while also investigating any important aspects that emergency laws might influence. Overall it allows a more in-depth analysis of how the

securitization theory helps us understand the reactions of a government in a health and political crisis that emerged from COVID 19.

Nonetheless, a single case study can also help understand the reactions to wider political events. This is due to the increase of political interdependence and globalization within our political system, which means that one country's reaction can affect other countries and regions as well. Examples of this are trade and travel restrictions, which have impacted the interconnective global system (Davies and Wenham 2020, 1234). Choosing a case study with a significant economic and political position, therefore, makes it easier to use this example to examine a wider effect.

With Germany being the fourth largest economy globally, it holds economic relevance (Wieler, Rexroth and Gottschalk 2020). Furthermore, Germany is also a member of the group of seven (G7), which includes the seven leading industrial nations (Die Bundesregierung 2020). In addition, Germany's political power is significant. One example is the former Minister of Defence, Ursula von der Leyen, who holds the European Commission's presidency (European Commission 2019). Another example is Germany's position as + 1 to the five permanent members of the security council when engaging in diplomatic efforts with Iran regarding its nuclear program (Smith-Spark and Sciutto 2013). Furthermore, Germany took the diplomatic lead (with France) to negotiate a deal between Russia and Ukraine during their military crisis (Hillebrand 2019, 5). German economic and political relevance is significant on the global stage. This makes it even more interesting to examine Germany, as the reactions of the government to COVID 19 clearly have an effect past the borders of Germany.

Using Germany as a case study also has another advantage. Germany was viewed as a success story during the pandemic. While countries such as Italy and France suffered an overwhelming amount of infections in the early months of 2020, Germany's infection rates remain relatively stable (Wieler, Rexroth and Gottschalk 2020). When signs of an increase of infections appeared in late March, Germany proceeded into a three-week lockdown. By May 2020, the hospital capacity in Germany remained abundant, and by October 2020, Germany even started offering its unused ICU units to other countries in need (Wieler, Rexroth and Gottschalk 2020). Germany's reaction to the COVID 19 pandemic was seen as a reaction par excellence. The responses of Germany, therefore, yielded positive results. The specific measures themselves are not explainable by the theory; however, in order for these measures to implement the theory demands a successful securitization. Therefore, from the theory

perspective understanding the reaction of the German government helps understand a successful reaction to COVID 19.

This thesis uses the single case study of Germany to examine how the securitization theory helps us understand the government's reaction to the political and health crisis that emerged from COVID 19. Germany's political and economic power make it relevant from an international perspective as their reaction will have a wider effect. Especially in times of an emergency crisis, the investigation of several governments' reaction becomes more demanding and resource consuming. Going into detail as done with Germany will not be possible in the boundaries of this master thesis without sacrificing quality analysis. However, as the state remains an important aspect of the international system and subsystem, the analysis of a single state remains relevant. Once this analysis is completed, it is able to be developed further in future works. In order to understand how this thesis attempts to answer its research question, the following segment will outline its methodology.

Methodology

When taking the theory's fundamental ideas about securitization, it can be argued that Germany has securitized COVID 19 in early 2020. COVID 19 has created a health and political crisis that is unique within modern German history. In her speech on March 18th, Merkel even placed the challenges of COVID 19 over the ones of reunification (Merkel 2020). As a reaction to the COVID 19 crisis, the German government implemented extreme measures.

The extreme measures connected with the securitization process were first seen on March 22nd, when Germany entered a nationwide lockdown (Die Bundesregierung 2020). Several constitutional rights were set aside, which can be considered extreme measures, particularly in a democratic state such as Germany. The implementation of extreme measures can be used to make the case that Germany securitized against COVID 19. Therefore, the thesis does not attempt to argue if Germany has securitized COVID 19. Instead, this thesis uses the securitization theory to understand how Germany reacted to the health and political crisis that emerged from COVID 19.

A theory is used to help understand a complex issue by highlighting specific important factors that create a skeleton of the more complex issue at hand (Halperin and Heath 2017, 117). The Securitization Theory highlights several factors (actor, threat, referent object and audience) that should help us to understand the process of achieving securitization. By focusing

on each parameter of the theory and applying it to the case study, the thesis will see if the measures taken by the German government with respect to COVID 19 can be considered a securitization strategy understood by the Copenhagen School.

The interest in examining the theory's factors in real life relates to this thesis's overall importance. As the process of securitization (on a national/ global level) is highly uncommon, the thesis has the rare opportunity to apply the theory to real-life conditions. This thesis uses the securitization theory and applies it to reality. The reality being the reaction of the German government to COVID 19. By doing so, one can examine how the securitization theory helps us to understand the German government's reaction.

Sub Question Actor:

According to the Copenhagen securitization theory, the securitization move has to be presented to an audience. Due to the nature of the COVID 19 pandemic being of national concern, securitization occurs on a national level. However, as the state's institution cannot vocalize a securitizing move, it requires an adequate representative to do so. According to the theory, a suitable representative should have a significant amount of authority, relevance, and a relationship with the audience (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998). Naturally, the most relevant representative of the state is also its leader. In Germany, this would be Chancellor Angela Merkel. Her position as chancellor gives her authority, relevance and a relationship to the audience. However, it is necessary to evaluate this in detail. Therefore, the first subsection will answer the question: To what extent does Merkel embody a securitizing actor as defined by the Copenhagen school?

To answer this question, the subsection must examine each parameter individually to evaluate if Angela Merkel and her policies arguably reflect the securitization theory requirements. Furthermore, it will be examined within each category if other actors fulfil the theory's parameters as well. This will enable the thesis to differentiate between functional actors and securitizing actors. When examining the parameter of a securitizing actor, the thesis will use legal documents such as the German Constitution as well as the Infektionsschutzgesetz (IfSG) to ensure no other actor holds more significance than Merkel.

Sub Question Referent and Threat

The securitization theory also highlights the importance of a referent object within the securitization process. Therefore, the second sub-question will be How have the Copenhagen school of thoughts parameters regarding the referent object been reflected within the vocalization of the securitization move?

The theory makes sure to highlight what would classify as an appropriate referent object. As already mentioned above, the theory distinguishes between a mid-level referent and a system-level referent. For the securitization move to be successful, the theory requires a referent object of system relevant importance and legitimate reason to be protected. Hence when attempting to view the extent to which the theory is reflected in reality, this thesis must focus on a system referent object. However, in order to evaluate the extent to which the theory's referent object is reflected in reality, it requires a securitizing actor.

Therefore the second sub-question builds upon the first sub-question. This thesis sees Angela Merkel as securitizing actor; therefore, her most prominent and earliest speech will also be considered the securitizing movement's vocalization. This is because the securitizing move has to be vocalized to proceed, and within this vocalization, the actor requires a large audience, hence its prominence. In addition, a securitization of an issue is a pressing matter, making the vocalization of the securitization move more likely to occur in the early stages of COVID 19.

Considering the circumstances in early 2020, the speech of March 18th 2020, fits the two criteria the best and, therefore, would be subject to examining the referent object. A more extensive justification for why Merkel's speech holds significant relevance will be found with the Referent object chapter.

In addition, a referent object can only be identified why being placed in the context of the threat. This thesis chose to not dedicate a whole main chapter to the identification of a threat as there is little argument as to if COVID 19 is threatening. However, since the referent object requires to be understood in the context of threat, the referent object chapter will include a segment briefly examining how COVID 19 specifically threatens the health sector. Consequently, a key element of securitization is fulfilled while also aiding the identification of the referent object within Merkel's Speech act.

In order to identify and examine the referent object within Merkel's speech act, a close reading strategy will be used. The thesis attempts to identify which referent object reflects the

theoretical criteria the most by using close reading. This is done by examining the vocabulary, syntax and formal structure that Merkel uses within her speech. This enables the thesis to evaluate the referent object's strength, making it possible to evaluate the extent to which the theory's referent object contributes to understanding the more complex securitization process.

Sub Question Audience:

Due to COVID 19 being of national concern, the securitizing moves audience is the general public. While the Copenhagen securitization theory highlights the importance of an actor and referent, the securitizing move's success depends heavily on the audience's acceptance. Therefore, the last sub-question will answer how the audience reacted to the securitizing move?

In Germany, multiple companies design political opinion polls and surveys. Regarding the politics and COVID 19, the most present company are Infratest Dimap. Opinion polls regarding the perception of different political actors during the crisis, acceptance of measures, and the fear of COVID 19 would help get a sense of the public's perception regarding the securitizing move. Especially the monthly polls of Infratest dimap regarding the acceptance of measures and trust in the government help examine a relationship. In addition, the opinion polls of Infratest dimap regarding the trust in specific political actors will also be important to analyze. Furthermore, a survey of the Freie Universität Berlin (FU) is used to examine the audience reaction to the referent object. The combination of the level of acceptance/trust and the reaction to the referent object enables the sub-section to evaluate the extent to which the audience agrees to the securitizing move. Consequently, the subsection would also be able to evaluate the importance of the audience regarding the overall research question.

After having answered each sub-question, the thesis will examine the influence of each factor of the theory. When combining each sub-questions results, an overall picture of this thesis' effectiveness should be possible.

Literature Review

Having outlined the theoretical framework and the methodology this thesis will use, it is vital to examine the past work of scholars related to securitization and health security. This examination will make it possible to understand the pre-existing literature, yet also aid in understanding why this thesis holds significance within the subject of securitization.

Securitization

Within security studies, there are two dominant perspectives. The Traditionalist perspective sees security issues only relevant if they are to do with the military, as military threats are the single immediate threat to the state existence. Other issues, such as health issues, are only relevant if they directly affect any military operation (Smallman-Raynor and Cliff 2004). The Traditionalist perspective has been countered by the non-traditionalist (or wide) school of thought. This school of thought objects to the military anchor, and acknowledges security issues outside of the military scope (Balzacq, Léonard and Ruzicka 2016) (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998) (Nunes 2020) (Beck 1999). Buzan et al. attempt to place security into a wider agenda that looks at security outside the traditional perspective (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998).

In order to do so, Buzan et al. highlight that the four components of the securitization theory must be placed into a social context, but also into context with each other, as the context of international security differs from sectors such as "social security" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 21). The question that arises in light of this is what a security threat is? Buzan et al. develop the answer from the traditionalist perspective that says "Security is about survival" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 21). Anything that threatens survival can be seen as a security threat. Placed into a different context, the idea of survival also applies to the wide perspective of security.

Schegloff outlines the difference between a "proximate" context – which includes features of the interaction – and the distal (or external) context – which focuses on areas such as social class, ethics of participation, areas of discourse and ecological, regional and cultural settings – (Balzacq, Léonard and Ruzicka 2016, 502). Environmental, health, and even economic security can be justified when placing them into a proximate context that ensures the

survival of system relevant sectors. When the audience of a securitizing move agrees with the threat, it is also placed into a distal context (Balzacq, Léonard and Ruzicka 2016, 515).

While the speech act might place a security issue into context, scholars debate about what sectors should be placed into a security context and what is a risk context. Wishnick argues that issues similar to "non-traditional security problems such as climate change and pandemics are better understood through the context of risk, which emphasizes prevention and precaution, rather than securitization, which focuses on emergency mobilization in response to urgent dangers (M. Trombotta 2007, 10) and decisions to designate threats (McDonald 2008)" (Wishnick 2010, 456). Risk management, therefore, can be viewed as an alternative to the "confrontational logic of securitization" (M. Trombotta 2007, 18).

However, Risk management is important for securitization, as securitization is the result of risk management failing (Wishnick 2010, 456). Aradau even says that "... risk is a social technology by means of which the uncertain future, be it of a catastrophic nature, is rendered knowable and actionable" (Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero and Munster 2008, 150). This actionability makes it possible to prevent potential threats to grow into a security issue. Therefore, risk management prevents securitization issues from occurring more frequently. Hence, risk management and securitization overlap as the success of one influences the necessity for another (Bigo 2002, 63).

China, for example, has been a host of many diseases with pandemic potential and even had to somewhat securitize SARS and Avian Flu in 2002 (Wishnick 2010). As examined in more detail below, the Avian flu was managed fast; however, SARS caused several nations within East Asia to securitize. Wishnick and Beck claim that the reason for China's host potential is an extreme lack of risk management and large, often dense population (Wishnick 2010, 463) (Beck 1999, 77). Meaning that the securitization of SARS could have been prevented if not for the lack of risk management.

However, regardless of whether health issues were subject to risk management or not, they are often securitized immediately once they become a security issue. In order to understand why this occurs, it is necessary to examine the sector of health security in more detail. The health sector is especially interesting as it displays how securitization has been successful, yet also has examples that highlight a key issue regarding the Copenhagen school of thought.

Health security

Within the sector of Health security, there have been multiple examples of when some extent of securitization took place. Scholarly literature concerning the securitization of health issues predominantly uses the example of the 2002 SARS outbreak (Curley and Thomas 2010) (Jin and Karackattu 2011) (Yuk-ping and Thomas 2010) (Wishnick 2010) (Caballero-Anthony 2006) (Hanrieder and Kreuder-Sonnen 2014) (Cook 2010) or HIV/AIDS (McInnes and Rushton 2011) (Singer 2011) (Elbe 2006) (Sjostedt 2011, 152), while, other diseases such as the Avian flu of 2003 (Youde 2008) (Jin and Karackattu 2011) (Yuk-ping and Thomas 2010) (Wishnick 2010) and Ebola in 2014 (Enemark 2017) (Hoffman 2020) (Angulo, et al. 2017) are hardly considered.

Even though Ebola is arguably the most recent global security threat (besides COVID 19) “by contrast, has attracted little attention from security scholars, and there has hitherto been only limited consideration (in the context of HIV/AIDS) of the UNSC as a contributor to public health governance” (Enemark 2017, 138). Angulo et al. argue that the reason for Ebola and Avian Flu not being examples of securitizing health issues is due to the fast development of medication that rendered their threat level unsuitable for further securitization (Angulo, et al. 2017). David Heymann disagrees with Angulo et al. as he believes that the reason why Ebola was not a larger issue is due to the fast response from international and national authorities preventing the disease from becoming an existential threat (Heymann 2015, 1884).

Regardless of the extent to which Ebola and the Avian Flu have been securitized, infectious diseases have increasingly been framed as a security issue (Jin and Karackattu 2011, 181). However, not all scholars are in support of framing diseases as a security threat. The reason for this is that calling a disease such as the Avian flu a security threat would take away valuable resources from other sectors, leaving them vulnerable to existential threats (Youde 2008, 149). Nevertheless, Youde's perspective is only applicable to a certain extent as he focuses on risk prevention rather than securitization. Once risk prevention fails and pandemics arise, extreme measures are inevitable.

This can be observed during the 2003 SARS outbreak in Guangdong, China. The Chinese government chose not to communicate a SARS outbreak within their country till almost three months after its first case was identified. By that time, the virus spread to multiple regions in China and even managed to travel into other south-east Asian nations. After a doctor

individually reported the possible outbreak to the WHO, the organization was able to issue a global alert and increase intense communications with ASEAN + 3 nations (Wishnick 2010, 458). Facing a possible global pandemic, states were forced to implement extreme measures. Following the WHO recommendation, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore implemented travel restrictions from hot zones as well as, “temporarily stopping issuing visas to people from infected areas, health and temperature checks and quarantining people infected areas for at least 10 days” (Curley and Thomas 2010, 22). These extreme measures contributed to the relatively low death toll of 800 people. However, Curley and Thomas argue that the Chinese government's late honesty was the reason the virus was able to spread so rapidly. Without the WHO's global alert and the immediate reaction of other regional countries, the spread of SARS could have been a lot more serious (Curley and Thomas 2010, 21). This example shows that while risk prevention is important, securitizing health issues when necessary can be a solution to prevent further global damage.

Nonetheless, there is one health issue that has been urged to be securitized by scholars, yet has never been fully securitized by a state. HIV/AIDS has affected more than 75 million people and has killed an estimated 32 million people (UNAIDS 2020). Impoverished countries in Africa, Central Asia and Latin America have faced serious issues in connection to the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Singer 2011). However, HIV/AIDS has never been displayed as an existential threat by most governments and, therefore, has never been subject to securitization.

The reason why HIV/AIDS was never fully securitized is also a large critique of the Copenhagen school of thought. The main concern is the focus on perceived reality rather than external reality; meaning the speech act only focuses on how the actor or audience perceives a threat and not how threatening the issue really is (McInnes and Rushton 2011, 118). This can be seen in the example of South Africa.

In South Africa, then-president Thabo Mbeki (1999-2008) refused to view HIV/AIDS as a security issue, even though a variety of experts have spoken out on the effects the virus has on South Africa (Elbe 2006, 131). The South African government refused to speak out on the threat in fear that the stigmatized nature of the illness and the long-lasting cycle could trigger social and political consequences that would endanger the government stability (Elbe 2006, 131-132). Only after studies showed that military personal were increasingly infecting with HIV/AIDS did South Africa consider implementing minor laws such as a ban for military and police personal to donate blood (Singer 2011, 148). However, HIV/AIDS was never fully

securitized within South Africa, even though Singer predicts that a speech act would have been successful (Singer 2011, 132). The example of South Africa uncovered one problem of the Copenhagen securitization theory. If no adequate actor is willing to display a security issue as an existential threat, then securitization will not be achieved (Elbe 2006, 132). This takes the power of identifying a security threat away from the audience and into the hands of elites. Hence, the identification of a security threat is too focused on perceived reality rather than external reality.

While Health security can be seen as an issue that has developed since the end of the cold war, the largest challenge facing health security has only occurred recently. Emerging at the end of 2019, COVID 19 has grown into a global pandemic. With a higher case fatality rate than influenza A and a longer incubation period, COVID 19 can be seen as a serious threat to health security (Nunes 2020, 2). Hoffman even argues that due to the international dimensions the virus has developed into, COVID 19 is the first health security issue that is of global concern (Hoffman 2020, 10). Nunes builds on the global perspective of Hoffman by adding that COVID 19 has to be seen as an existential threat as it is not only a health issue anymore. Nunes explains by saying that “the economy is organized in a neoliberal format, it cannot withstand a suspension of circulation, even temporary” (Nunes 2020, 2). Implementing extreme measures such as a lockdown would potentially create a “neoliberal crisis” of its own (Nunes 2020, 3). This interconnectedness makes COVID 19 a health issue large enough to endanger other system referents if not handled effectively.

In light of the information above, two key aspects have to be highlighted. The first being that there has not been a health security issue as threatening as COVID 19, and secondly, that scholars tend to focus on the extreme measures of securitization and not the implementation. Therefore, this thesis will help develop the understanding of the securitization theory in a truly existential crisis while focusing on its implementation rather than its consequences. As this pandemic threatens multiple sectors and has triggered extreme measures, both on a national and global scale, the argument can be made that COVID 19 is the largest threat to be securitized after the end of world war two.

Securitizing actor

The theory's basic assumption that an actor can securitize a public issue as long as it convinces an adequate audience of an existential security threat, justifying the implementation of extreme prevention measures (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36). The actor who presents a referent object as existentially threatened is understood as the securitizing actor (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36). However, for an actor to qualify as a securitizing actor, they have to reflect the parameters of authority, relevance regarding the referent object, and relationship with the audience (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36).

COVID 19 is a pandemic of national concern, which calls upon securitization on a national level. The highest national actor would be considered the German government. The government is the only unit within Germany that holds the authority to implement prevention measures on a national level. In addition, the government has the ministry of health, as well as the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), which are specialized in health and pandemic issues. This makes the government highly relevant in regards to the referent object. Lastly, the government was elected by the citizens, granting it a relationship with the audience. The German government reflects all three previously mentioned parameters. Therefore, the argument can be made that the German government reflects the securitizing actor.

To a certain extent, this argument holds. All parameters match the government; furthermore, the German government was the institution that implemented prevention measures in late March 2020. However, the theory clearly states that "A securitizing actor is someone, or a group, who performs the security speech act" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 40). The government as an institution is not capable of performing a speech act. Nevertheless, the state can appoint a representative to embody the securitizing actor on its behalf. "The state (usually) has explicit rules regarding who can speak on its behalf, thus when a government says "we have to defend our national security," it has the right to act on behalf of the state. The government is the state in this respect" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 41). The securitizing actor is not the state but rather the person that speaks on behalf of the state. In Germany, the explicit rules regarding who can speak on the state's behalf can be found within the constitution. The constitution identifies chancellor Angela Merkel as the spokesperson for the government. Merkel, therefore, is given the task of being the securitizing actor on behalf of the state.

While the parameters of authority, relevance and relationship with the audience apply for the government, one must still examine how these parameters translate to Merkel. Therefore, this chapters sub-question will be; to what extent does Merkel embody a securitizing actor as defined by the Copenhagen school?

The constitution outlines five constitutional organs, of which one is the executive government (Bundesregierung). To understand the full extent of Merkel's authority, one must first understand Bundesregierung's authority compared to the other constitutional organs. Only then it is possible to grasp the authority Merkel has as a representative fully. Of significant importance when examining Merkel's authority is the Infektionsschutzgesetz (IfSG). This pandemic emergency law places Merkel's authority in the context of the COVID 19 crisis.

As mentioned above, the government's relevance regarding health is based on the minister of health and the RKI. As Merkel speaks on behalf of the government, it is the government relevance that Merkel is measured by. The government relevance is built by functional actors within the field of health. A functional actor is an "actor who affects the dynamics of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for securitizing on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 36). The two key functional actors within the Bundesregierung are the minister of health (Jens Spahn) and the RKI. Both actors have contributed to the government's reactions to COVID 19 by providing information and expertise. To understand how the Bundesregierung provides Merkel with relevance, one must understand how the functional actors give relevance to the Bundesregierung. The relevance the Bundesregierung received from the functional actors can then be transferred to its representative.

The last parameter important for Buzan et al. is the relationship with the audience. This parameter examines if the audience accepts the securitizing actor as one. If the audience does not recognize the securitizing actor, the securitizing move fails. Since the acceptance of the securitizing actor and move are based on the audience reaction, both will be examined in the later audience chapter.

Authority

Due to the history of Germany, the distribution of authority within the German state is complicated. Especially emergency laws remained a very problematic topic, as it was an emergency law that Hitler used to gain complete power over Germany. The constitution of 1949 was explicitly designed to prevent another abuse of power by political leaders and guarantees the fundamental rights of individuals.

Prior to examining the extent to which Merkel holds authority, it is important to understand the different constitutional bodies. This will place the Bundesregierungs authority into context.

The constitution gives power to five constitutional bodies: The parliament (Bundestag), the Federal Council (Bundesrat), the Government (Bundesregierung), the President (Bundespräsident) and the Federal constitutional court (Bundesverfassungsgericht). The Bundestag is the German parliament, which has the responsibility to approve laws and check the Bundesregierung. In addition the Bundestag appoints the Chancellor (Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949, § 70 -§ 82). The Bundesrat represents the 16 different federated states within Germany on a national level. Many laws can only be passed with the approval of the Bundesrat (Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949, § 50). The Bundesregierung is the German government, which consists of the chancellor and its ministers. The chancellor is the head of the Bundesregierung and decides on the political direction of Germany while being fully accountable for the functioning of the government (Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949, §64 - §65). The Bundespräsident is the head of the German state and is responsible for protecting and representing Germany's interests as a nation (Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949, § 60). The Bundesverfassungsgericht is the federal constitutional court responsible for that ensuring the core of constitutional rights is not violated (Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949, § 94).

In German day to day politics, the Bundesregierung is the most prominent constitutional body. When COVID 19 started to emerge within Germany, the Bundesregierung turned to the IfSG. The IfSG was part of the SeuchRNeuG law passed by the Bundestag in 2001. The SeuchRNeuG was specifically created to outline the possible reactions of the government in times of a pandemics. In case of a human transmitted pandemic, the IfSG outline the Bundesregierungs responsibilities and powers. These powers include implementing prevention

measures that may restrict certain constitutional rights (Infektionsschutzgesetz - IfSG 2020, § 1). Constitutional rights that the IfSG can restrict include the freedom of assembly, freedom of individuality and the inviolability of the home (Infektionsschutzgesetz - IfSG 2020, § 28). On March 22nd 2020, the Bundesregierung implemented these measures by restricting larger groups of people to meet, closing any areas with high human contact (such as restaurants, bars and festivals) and enforcing quarantine or house arrest measures (Infektionsschutzgesetz - IfSG 2020, § 28a) (Die Bundesregierung 2020). The Bundesregierung even prohibited people from any form of demonstration as the risk of spreading COVID 19 seemed too high. This measure was retracted on April 14th 2020, due to the Bundesverfassungsgericht ruling it unconstitutional and not justifiable by prevention measures (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2020).

As head of the Bundesregierung, Merkel has significant authority on political decisions. She can decide how the government should function, what goals it wants to achieve, and what boundaries it shall not exceed (Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949, § 65). In addition, the IfSG gives the Bundesregierung the ability to implement extreme prevention measures in times of a pandemic. As Merkel has the ability to influence political decisions, she was likely a leading actor in deciding to implement lockdown measures. In light of the arguments above, Merkel holds a significant amount of authority. Therefore, this thesis views the parameter of authority reflected by Merkel.

Relevance

The second characteristic that a securitizing actor needs to reflect is relevance in regards to the referent object. The specific referent object remains to be identified (see Referent object chapter); however, Due to COVID 19 being a pandemic, the referent object will most likely be found within the health sector. Therefore, the relevance of Merkel has to be seen in the context of the health sector. As Merkel is chancellor and speaks on behalf of the state, she is able to utilize the relevance of the Bundesregierung as her own. The Bundesregierung gains relevance by using its minister of health, Jens Spahn and the RKI. To understand how both contribute to relevance, one must understand their position as functional actors.

Spahn was the main actor to manage COVID 19 in January when the first cases arrived in Germany. In February, Spahn's daily public appearances informed and advised the German public on the dangers and prevention of COVID 19 (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit 2020). Between February 1st and March 22nd 2020, Spahn held Ten press conferences and spoke to

the parliament three times. In the same period, the ministry of health launched three educational campaigns concerning the spread of COVID 19. Spahn and the RKI were also responsible for constructing a list of advice for citizens to limit exposing behaviours such as shaking hands and close body contact (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit 2021).

During January, February and early March, Spahn was the main actor related to the COVID 19 pandemic, not just on a national level. Spahn also immediately implemented EU wider regulations to control travel from East Asia, specifically China, to ensure no external infections spread within Europe (Council of the European Union 2020) (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit 2020). The constant contact with national and international organizations made Spahn a relevant actor in the early stages of the COVID 19 pandemic.

However, Spahn is not a securitizing actor, as he lacks the legitimacy to speak on behalf of the government beyond the sector of health. As the extreme measures implemented effects sectors beyond health, the government had to be represented, which only Merkel could do. Spahn is, therefore, a functional actor, as he supports the government in matters of health yet does not engage in the securitizing speech act.

Another functional actor that contributed to the strengthening of the government's relevance was the RKI. The RKI is an institute of the ministry of health responsible for disease control and prevention (Robert Koch Institute 2017). In case of a pandemic, the RKI advises the government on future prevention measures. This was already the case concerning virus outbreaks such as Ebola in West Africa or the swine flu in Europe (Robert Koch Institute 2017). In addition, the RKI has close cooperation with the WHO Centre for Emerging Infections and Biological Threats and the WHO Centre for Global Outbreak Alert (Robert Koch Institute 2017). These corporations ensure that the RKI is always aware of possible pandemic outbreaks and global reaction possibilities.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, the IfSG expands the responsibility of the RKI also to include data collection and analysis as well as the monitoring of virus mutations (Infektionsschutzgesetz - IfSG 2020, § 5) (Robert Koch Institute 2017). As the RKI is an institute of the ministry of health, it is responsible for advising the Bundesregierung on COVID 19 issues and measures. It does this by collecting and presenting daily, weekly, and monthly statistics about infection rates and recommending prevention measures. The Bundesregierung then uses these statistics and recommendations to decide on further measures. For example, the

first lockdown in early 2020 was advised by the RKI in order to prevent further infections (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit 2021).

However, the RKI is also to be seen as a functional actor as it lacks authority. The RKI often advised measures regarding COVID 19 yet did not hold the power to implement them. For example, the first lockdown was advised by the RKI, yet the IfSG only allowed the Bundesregierung to decide when lockdown measures were to be implemented. Therefore, the RKI heavily influences the government's reactions within the health sector yet lacks the authority to implement measures.

The expertise of both functional actors gives relevance to the Bundesregierung. This is important as the audience has to trust the government's public health advice to accept it (Davies and Wenham 2020, 1243). The constant communication of Spahn and the pandemic expertise of the RKI make the Bundesregierung more relevant. If the audience acknowledges the relevance of the Bundesregierung, then it will more likely accept its representative.

As Merkel is chancellor and speaks on behalf of the Bundesregierung, she also embodies its relevance. Therefore she also embodies the relevance of the minister of health as well as the RKI. This explains how the relevance of functional actors extent to Angela Merkel (via the Bundesregierung). She therefore also holds significant relevance in the context of health. This allows the thesis to view the second parameter of a securitizing actor to be reflected by Angela Merkel.

The securitizing actor requires specific characteristics to increase their chances to be accepted by the audience. This chapter answered the sub-question to what extent does Merkel embody a securitizing actor as defined by the Copenhagen school? To do so, it has examined both authority and relevance in regards to Angela Merkel as a securitizing actor. Due to the Bundesregierung constitutional authority and responsibility to react to the pandemic, Merkel embodies a large extent of responsibility and authority. While the extent to which Merkel holds authority within the government can be found in the constitution and the IfSG, the extent of relevance could only be examined when looking at the functional actors. Spahn and the RKI are both actors who have significantly affected the reactions of the Bundesregierung regarding the COVID 19 pandemic. However, the lack of authority prevents them from qualifying as securitizing actor. As Merkel is chancellor and speaks on behalf of the Bundesregierung, its relevance can be extended to Merkel. The parameters presented by the theory are therefore

applicable to Angela Merkel as a securitizing actor. This thesis can therefore view Angela Merkel as securitizing actor.

Referent object

The securitization theory requires that the actor presents a threatened referent object to the audience. The actor has to do this in the form of a speech act. A speech act is an utterance of a speaker's intention (promise, prediction, request) to a specific audience (Tsohatzidis 2010). For Buzan et al. this means a speech act is the process in which the actor presents the threatened referent object to the audience (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). As the chapter above has investigated the securitizing actor, it remains to identify the threatened referent object for the speech act to meet all parameters. However, the referent object can only be seen within the context of the threat. The overall threat is COVID 19; nonetheless, it remains to be seen how COVID 19 threatens the health sector specifically. Once the threat has been examined, one can focus on how Merkel presents the referent object in her speech act. This will then make it possible to answer the chapter's sub-question; how have the Copenhagen school of thoughts parameters regarding the referent object been reflected within the vocalization of the securitization move?

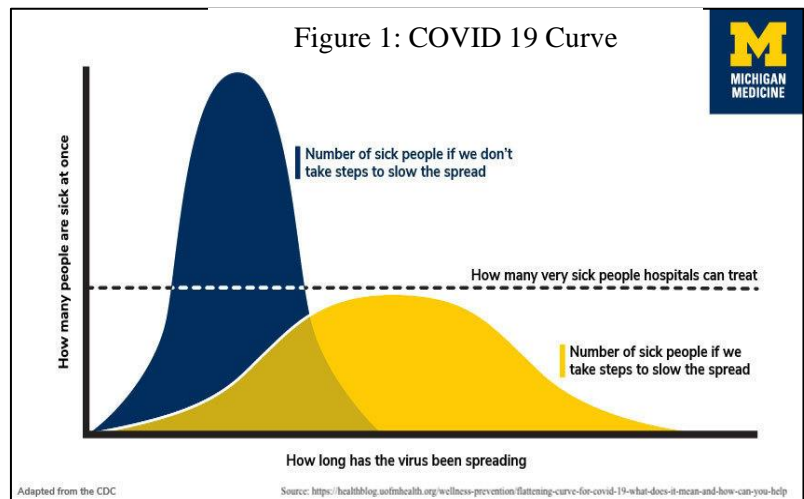
Existential Threat to Health

Considering the nature of the COVID 19 pandemic, the health sector as a referent object was to be expected. However, in order for the speech act to function, Merkel has to portray the referent object as threatened. To examine how she does this, it is crucial to understand how COVID 19 threatened the health sector.

Between the discovery of COVID 19 in late 2019 and the speech by Angela Merkel in March 2020, the number of deaths per day was averaging around 5000 worldwide. To put this number into context, the total deaths of the SARS outbreak in 2003 was 800 (Curley and

Thomas 2010, 21). The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the number of deaths by the Ebola virus to be around 11.500 people between 2014 and 2016 (Centers for Disease Control And Prevention 2019). Within a time span of about 18 months, COVID 19 claimed the lives of almost 4 million people (Elflein 2021) and infected more than 163 Million worldwide (Ritchie, et al. 2021). However, what do the infection cases mean for the German health care system?

A reoccurring topic regarding COVID 19 was the idea of keeping the "curve flat" (figure 1). What is meant by this is that the amount of people a hospital can treat at a given time is limited. In figure 1, the maximum capacity of a hospital is represented by the dotted line. If the number of COVID 19 infected patients increases rapidly, the risk of



exceeding hospitals' maximum capacity is given (as the blue curve shows) (Gavin 2020). Once the hospitals are overworked, the health system is in danger of collapsing. In order to prevent overcrowding, the curve must remain under the dotted line, as seen with the yellow curve.

In Italy, the consequences of an overworked health system cost multiple Italian lives (Sakpa 2020). In a matter of two weeks, northern Italy went from 350 confirmed cases of COVID 19 to over 10,000 (Lehmann 2020). Of these 10,000 active cases, around 1000 people required respiratory support, yet the region only had 724 intensive care units (ICU) capable of doing so (Armocida, et al. 2020). This rapid development had the consequences that resources and medication became scarce, leading to many patients not receiving adequate treatment, while others had to be placed in improvised intensive care units (Horowitz 2020). In order to overcome the shortage of ICUs in the short run, Italy had to depend on the solidarity of other European states such as Germany, which provided unused ICUs to Italy in late March (Reuters 2020). This is a positive example of how the political relations of one nation can affect the situation in another. To avoid similar problems, in the future, Italy spend over 660 million euros on new ICUs, increased staff and medication (Armocida, et al. 2020).

Italy was not an isolated example within the EU where the health system encountered trouble. During the same time span, Spain reported almost 6,000 daily COVID 19 infections. What made situations worse was that of the overall total of around 60,000 infected, around 5,000 were medical staff who faced COVID 19 infections within the first three months of the pandemic (Minder and Peltier 2020). In France, a similar situation occurred, with patients being transported aboard due to a staff shortage (Reuters 2020). The reason for this could once again be the high infection rate of medical staff. In France, three of five non-hospital doctors were infected with COVID 19 (Clercq 2020). With more than 6,500 daily, the overall number of identified infections increased to 82,500; France also recorded one of the highest infection counts in Europe (Clercq 2020).

The fear that a similar situation would occur in Germany in the future could be realistic, considering that the quality of all healthcare systems are comparable (Tandon, et al. 2000, 18) (Johns Hopkins 2019, 20). The main concern is that the number of infected people rises to a level where the health system cannot treat all of them.

Therefore, the relation between COVID 19 and the health sector is the health system, specifically the hospitals' capacities. The examples of Italy, France, and Spain already introduce how COVID 19 is a threat to the health system. The fact that Italy, France and Spain were in the above-described situations was not unnoticed by Germans. They were aware that COVID 19 had the potential to cause a similar situation in Germany. However, the speech act does not intend for the actor to introduce a potential threat to their audience but rather to verbalize that the referent object is now threatened.

The significance of Merkel's address to the nation

Before investigating how Merkel presents the referent object to the audience in her speech act, it is necessary to explain why the thesis views Merkel's address to the nation on March 18th 2020, as her speech act. When using the framework of the securitization theory in combination with already examined facts, one can identify why Merkel's address to the nation qualifies as her speech act.

Securitization has three components; existential threats, emergency action, and effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). In other words, "If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the

securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). The theory's securitizing move outlines the way in which this argument is presented. For securitization to occur, the theory uses the securitizing move made up of a securitizing actor, an existential threat and a referent object (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). The actor's presentation of the existential threat to the referent object is done using a speech act. The speech act is the vocalization of the securitizing move (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). Nonetheless, Buzan et al. emphasize that "A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such." (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 25). Therefore, apart from the three factors required for a securitizing move, one also has to consider the audience. To identify the speech act, one needs to know the actor and audience.

When applying the theory to reality, one can already identify several aspects. The first aspect is that the situation in Germany fulfils the characteristics of securitization. This can be seen when examining the emergency actions. These actions are understood to be actions that would not be acceptable under normal circumstances. The restriction of constitutional rights, as seen in the chapter above, are justified as emergency measures. The first nationwide emergency measures were implemented during the lockdown on March 22nd 2020 (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit 2021). This lockdown, therefore, marks the moment in which securitization has occurred. The extreme measures suggest that COVID 19 transferred from a highly politicized to a securitized issue.

Having pinpointed the securitization date in Germany to March 22nd 2020, the focus shifts to when the speech act occurred. As the theory requires the securitizing move to be accepted prior to the implementation of emergency measures, it can be seen that the speech act has to be presented before March 22nd 2020. As securitization naturally is linked with an emergency, time is a pressing matter. Therefore, the speech act had to take place in close proximity to March 22nd.

In the previous chapter, Merkel was identified as securitizing actor. The theory dictates that a securitizing actor presents the speech act (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 26). Combining the timeframe with the actor already limits the number of vocalizations that would qualify.

The last information that aids in pinpointing the securitizing move is the audience. Buzan et al. highlight that "What is essential is the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience" (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 27). The emphasis has to be placed on "a significant" audience. As COVID 19 is of national concern and requires extreme measures on a national level, the audience can be seen as the whole nation, specifically German citizens (See Audience Chapter).

Combining the parameters above with the already identifiable information, the speech act was presented by Merkel, to the citizens, prior to March 22nd 2020. Within this presentation, Merkel would have to identify the existential threat to a referent object. The only vocalization of Merkel with a significant audience in close proximity to March 22nd would be her address to the nation on March 18th 2020. This speech qualifies as Merkel (the securitizing actor) spoke to a significant audience (the citizens of Germany) about a threat (COVID 19). Therefore, Merkel's address to the nation on March 18th 2020, is very substantial, as it can be seen as Merkel presenting the threatened referent object to the audience. In comparison, alternative vocalizations such as press conferences or parliament hearings either lack the audience, an actors authority or presentation of the referent object.

Having examined why Merkel's address to the nation qualifies as her speech act, it is now possible to investigate how Merkel identified the referent object. This will be done by using a close reading strategy. The subject of this close reading strategy will be Merkel's address to the nation on March 18th 2020. One will examine specific words and rhetorical tools to fully comprehend the way Merkel communicated the referent object.

Merkel's Speech act

The first parameter examined is how Merkel displays the threat within her address to the nation. Merkel uses three rhetorical strategies to clarify how the threat is existential.

Merkel's first way to portray COVID 19 as a threat was by simply stating the situation is serious. Merkel repeated this notion multiple times in her speech. She repeats the sentence "Es ist ernst" (it is serious) at the beginning, middle and end of her address (Merkel 2020). This repetition is a tool that displays emotional language while also making sure to highlight an idea (Rivkin and Ryan 2004, 151-152). Using repetition is one way in which Merkel stressed

COVID 19 as a threat. Merkel's second method to portray COVID 19 as a severe issue is by using a powerful analogy. Merkel's speech profile reveals that she tends to use analogies and metaphors in her speeches to illustrate the importance of a situation (Forster 2012, 146). Merkel used a powerful analogy in her address to the nation when comparing the need for solidarity and unity to the end of the second world war (Merkel 2020). War is historically and culturally sensitive for Germany, making it difficult and powerful to use in times of crisis (Paulus 2020). However, Merkel referred to COVID 19 as serious as the end of the second world war adds to the perception of the virus being an extreme threat. Merkel's final method to portray COVID 19 as a threat is to highlight the importance of life. She does this by saying that the people who could end up in the hospital could be grandparents, mothers, fathers, or partners ending the sentence with the words every life matters (Merkel 2020). She adds that "these are not just numbers, these are people" (Merkel 2020). She has placed the COVID 19 pandemic in a context that is relevant for the individual.

The use of repetition, analogies and individual examples portrays COVID 19 as a threat to life and people. While the people were already aware of COVID 19 prior to the securitizing move, Merkel emphasized that COVID 19 is a threat to Germany and its people. For the securitization move to be complete, Merkel had to identify a referent object.

Merkel already outlined why COVID 19 should be taken seriously, which was then put into context with the referent object. Merkel does this by stating that Germany has an excellent health system, possibly one of the best in the world. However, even the German hospitals would collapse if infections increased drastically (Merkel 2020). The latter statement is of essence for the referent object. Merkel highlights that the rise of infections is a threat to hospitals and the health system. This identifies the health system as the referent object. This is also supported by Merkel outlining measures to decrease the numbers of infections. She says that it is essential to slow down the spread of the virus, and for that reason, it is existentially important to minimize public life (Merkel 2020). Merkel, therefore, presented the threat (infection rates of COVID 19) and the referent object (Health care system), which therefore calls for extreme measures (minimizing the public life). Consequently, the characteristics of the threat and referent object are reflected within Merkel's vocalization of the securitizing move.

When combining the arguments outlined above, it is possible to answer this chapters sub-question; How have the Copenhagen school of thoughts parameters regarding the referent

object been reflected within the vocalization of the securitization move? Within Merkel's vocalization of the securitizing move, the parameters regarding the referent object have been reflected sufficiently. The use of repetition, analogies and personal examples portrait COVID 19 as a threat for Germany. This threat was then placed into the context of health, which leads to Merkel identifying the referent object as the German health care system. As Merkel is seen as the securitizing actor who presented a threatened referent object, it can be said that her speech act has reflected all the parameters outlined by the theory. For the securitizing move to develop into securitization, it only remains to be accepted by the audience.

Audience

When combining the results of the chapters above, the securitizing move is complete. For successful securitization to take place, the only remaining factor is the approval of the audience. Once the audience has approved the securitizing move, the German government has the legitimacy to securitize COVID 19. However, it remains to identify the audience that is to accept the securitizing move.

Considering the nature of COVID 19 as well as the target audience of Merkel's address to the nation, identifying the audience is relatively easy. COVID 19 is a pandemic of national concern, meaning extreme measures were implemented on a national level. Therefore the people affected by the measures are all people living in Germany. Hence the securitizing move has to be accepted by the German citizens making them the significant audience.

Merkel's method to address the nation supports the argument that German citizens are the audience. Merkel reached more than 25 million people live, a record number for a political speech (Weis 2020). In addition, the speech was also featured within news media outlets through the private and public broadcasting network. These networks are able to amplify the speech and its meaning to 71% of Germans, making it a viable tool to perform her speech act (Weis 2020). Several news agencies even claimed Merkel's speech was the single most viewed political speech in German history (Der Tagesspiegel 2020) (Zeit 2020). Both the nature of COVID 19 being a pandemic of national concern and Merkel's speech act's method make the citizens of Germany the audience of the securitizing move.

Having identified the German citizens as the audience, it now remains to examine how they have accepted the securitizing move. Therefore, this chapter's sub-question is how the audience reacted to the securitizing move?

As mentioned in this thesis already, there is no evidence that the German government was aware of and actively developed the theory to guide their actions. This can be extended to German citizens as well. Therefore it is understandable that there are no surveys that specifically examine the approval of the general securitizing move. However, when examining the factors of the securitizing move individually, one can find surveys that reflect the audience reactions. Hence, to examine the overall acceptance of the securitizing move, one must examine the reaction to each securitizing factor individually.

The first factor that will be examined is the actor. Within the Actor chapter, the authority and relevance were discussed. The last parameter necessary for the securitizing actor to be successful is the relationship with the audience. As the relationship between the actor and the audience determines the likelihood of the audience accepting the speaker as a securitizing actor, a positive relationship also hints at audience acceptance (Buzan, Wævers and Wilde 1998, 33). If this relationship is positive or negative will be examined below.

The second factor that will be examined is the referent object. The acceptance of the referent object by the audience will also show an acceptance of the threat. This is because the referent object can only be identified as one if there is a threat. Accepting Merkel's referent object is also accepting the threat. The audience would not view the referent object as endangered if a threat was absent. Therefore, it is only necessary to examine the acceptance of the referent object that Merkel presented.

Once both reactions have been identified, one can combine them to see the overall reaction of the audience to the securitizing move. This reaction will then make it possible to evaluate if the audience accepted the securitizing move.

Factor One: Acceptance of the Securitizing actor

When examining the audience reaction to the securitizing actor, the work of Ifratest dimap is beneficial. Ifratest dimap creates opinion polls for the DeutschlandTrend. The DeutschlandTrend is a group of opinion polls that are produced monthly. The questions within the DeutschlandTrend are often the same, making it possible to look at the opinion of people over a certain period of time. The survey that is of importance for this thesis is the

Politikerzufriedenheit survey. This survey asks citizens how satisfied they are with specific political actors. This section will examine the surveys of March and April. The study in March was taken between the 2nd and 3rd of March, as the securitizing move has not been presented yet; this can be seen as the base survey (Infratest dimap 2020). The survey that will reveal a reaction is the one of April. The survey for the April DeutschlandTrend was recorded on the 30th and 31st of March, a few days after Merkel's speech act (Infratest dimap 2020).

In March 2020, one of the questions asked was how satisfied people were with different political figures (Politikerzufriedenheit). In this survey, 53% of the people were satisfied with Merkel's work in the government (Infratest dimap 2020). The survey also shows the increase or decrease compared to the previous month. Compared to the February survey, Merkel is the only actor with no change in her statistics yet still receiving the highest percentage. The most significant increase in the March survey was the satisfaction with Jens Spahn, who reaches 51% (+7%) (Infratest dimap 2020). This hints towards the audience recognizing Spahn's work as minister of health, reinforcing his contribution as a functional actor.

In the April survey, Merkel gained 11%, increasing her overall percentage to 64%. Merkel remains the political actor with the highest satisfactory rating (Infratest dimap 2020). The Surveys in March were conducted prior to the speech act, while the April survey was conducted after securitization took place. Therefore, there is no absolute way of knowing how the audience reacted right after Merkel's speech act. This means that any political measures between the speech act and the survey could also affect the survey results. However, if the measures implemented by the Bundesregierung would have been seen negatively, then this would most likely also have reflected back on Merkel. As this is not the case, there is no evidence that would support the claim that the audience did not accept Merkel's as securitizing actor. The positive reactions in April and Merkel's highest percentage in March suggest that people accepted Merkel as a securitizing actor. Nonetheless, the surveys only hint towards acceptance and don't prove it.

The overall positive trends only support the claim that the audience accepted the securitizing actor. Merkel already held the highest percentage a month earlier, meaning that Merkel would have been the most likely actor to be accepted as securitizing actor even before the securitizing move was presented. Hence, the surveys suggest no other actor within German politics that the audience was more satisfied with than Merkel, regardless of prior or after her speech act. Therefore, Merkel can be seen as an accepted securitizing actor.

Factor Two: Acceptance of the Referent object

The second factor of a securitizing move is the referent object. The extent to which the audience agrees with the referent object is important to the overall acceptance of the securitizing move.

A study from the Freie Universität Berlin (FU) investigated the perception of citizens regarding different sectors. One of the investigated sectors was the health sector. In this survey, most people agreed that the German healthcare system had experienced a lot of strain around March and April. Due to this increased strain on hospitals, many people were concerned to get infected as adequate treatment would not be guaranteed (Freie Universität Berlin 2020, 40).

Within the same study, the University examined the specific concern of the people regarding the health system. The results of this study show that around the presenting of the securitizing move, 78% of the people were concerned about the health system being overworked (Freie Universität Berlin 2020, 47). In comparison, only 26% of people believed that there would be a shortage of medication, while 35% believed the German health system would not be able to handle the pandemic at all (Freie Universität Berlin 2020, 47).

The survey reveals that the most significant concern of people was the health system being overworked. Merkel raised the same concern in her address to the nation. She mentioned that the rising infection numbers could threaten the healthcare system. This shows that Merkel was able to communicate a common referent object. Therefore the audience would accept the referent object as threatened. This would mean that the second factor of the securitizing move would also be accepted.

The section above has examined the audience reaction to the factors needed to complete the securitizing move. The first factor was the reaction to Merkel as a securitizing actor. In early March, 53% of Germans were satisfied with Merkel. This number increased to 64% in the April Survey. The positive trend hints towards Merkel being accepted as a securitizing actor. The second factor was related to the referent object. 78% of the people asked shared the same referent object as Merkel identified in her speech act. Therefore, the answer to how the audience reacted to the securitizing move is clear. The audience has responded positively to

the securitizing actor and agrees with the referent object. As the audience seemingly accepts both factors and both factors make up the securitizing move, it can be said that the audience has accepted the securitizing move. As the audience accepted the securitizing move, the government gained the legitimacy to implement extreme measures against COVID 19.

A comparative perspective

The securitization theory highlights how a government reacts to existential threats. It requires a series of factors that enable a politicized issue to be transformed into a securitized one. In the case of Germany and COVID 19, the head of state presents its citizens with the idea that rising infection rates threaten the health system, and therefore its reactions should be the implementation of measures outside of the political normality. In the context of international relations, it is therefore interesting if this is a pattern or remains an individual example. To do so, France, England and Austria will be briefly examined to see if similarities to Germany stand out. If these similarities do stand out, it hints towards the thesis being generalizable.

In France, these extreme measures were implemented on March 17th 2020 (France 24 2020). However, does France follow the pattern of securitization that has been identified in Germany? The first variable to examine is the securitizing actor. In Germany, this securitizing actor was the head of the government, Angela Merkel. Similar to Germany, France also used its head of state Emanuel Macron to present the securitizing move. Another similarity to Germany was the referent object that Macron identified as the French healthcare system (Macron 2020). Just as in Germany, the concern was the rising number of infections, which also reveals an identical perception of threat (Macron 2020). Finally, Macron used an address to the nation, which naturally makes the audience French citizens. All four factors that were identified in Germany also apply in France.

The securitization theory, therefore, could also help us understand the reaction of the French Government to COVID 19. However, not every detail in France was similar to Germany. For example, a few days prior to macrons speech on March 16th, Macron already used an address to the nation to close schools and universities (France 24 2020). Without a deeper investigation, it makes it challenging to identify which speech was Macrons vocalization of the securitizing move. Another interesting aspect is Macron's time between his

speech on the 16th and the lockdown on March 17th. There were four days for the audience in Germany to express its approval or disapproval (as much as that was possible). In France, the audience did not even have 24 hours to react. This once again brings up a question about the importance of the audience. However, as no more profound examination of France occurred, this thesis cannot judge if the timeline was too short for an audience to react. Nevertheless, the broad characteristics of the securitization theory can also be seen within the reactions of the French government.

Another country that was heavily affected by COVID 19 was England. Especially the development of a new variant that was more infectious was a threat to the country (CDC 2021). However, on March 26th, England implemented lockdown measures similar to the ones in Germany (The Guardian 2020). However, does England follow the characteristics of securitization identified in Germany? Indeed the securitizing actor once again was the head of state prime minister Boris Johnson. Johnson also used an address to the nation on March 23rd 2020, to present his securitizing move (Johnson 2020). He highlighted that it is necessary to protect the National Healthcare Service (NHS) against the rising number of infections (Johnson 2020). This also is similar to the pattern of the securitization theory in Germany. This shows that the securitization theory broadly helps us to understand the reaction of England as well.

The last comparison will be with Austria. The Ski area of Ischgl has become a topic of discussion in early 2020 as it was identified to have been a hotspot for COVID 19 infections to spread (Wüstenberg 2020). In Austria, the first lockdown was implemented on March 16th 2020 (Bundeskanzleramt 2020). On March 15th, Chancellor Sebastian Kurtz held a speech on national TV explaining the need for extreme measures. The securitization actor, as well as the audience, remains identical to the other examples. However, what is different to the other examples was the referent object. Kurtz does not mention the health system in Austria but instead focuses on the threat to human lives (ORF 2020). His argument was that an increasing number of infections would cost more lives, and therefore Austria must proceed into a lockdown (ORF 2020). While the referent object is different from the other examples, it still remains within the boundaries of health, making it a less significant outlier. However, even in Austria, the securitization theory is applicable.

Having briefly examined three other countries, it is possible to say that the securitization theory is generalizable to other examples. The theory helps understand a variety

of different governments reactions to COVID 19, which share similarities to the case study of Germany. However, England, France and Austria are democratic states within Europe. All examples share political characteristics with Germany, which makes them relatively easy to compare on a superficial level. It remains to be seen if the patterns of the theory can also be reflected by nations in other regions or with other governmental structures.

Conclusion

Having examined all the factors required for successful securitization, one has to examine the answer to the research question; How does the securitization theory help us understand the German government's reaction to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19?

The securitization theory helps us understand the essence of how a government reacts to security issues. It highlights the aspects that are important to shift a topic from politicized to securitized. The theory emphasizes a securitizing actor, a threat, a referent object and an audience. These four factors are the key for any issue to be deemed securitized. Focusing on these four key factors makes it possible to understand how a government manages to break free from political boundaries to preserve an existential referent object.

This thesis aims to examine how the securitization theory helps us understand the German government's reaction to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19. This was done by examining each factor of the theory and applying it to the case study of Germany. When applying the theory to Germany, one can view Angela Merkel as securitizing actor. As chancellor Merkel leads and speaks on behalf of the government. This gives her authority, relevance and a relationship with the audience. The securitization theory views these three parameters as essential when identifying a securitizing actor.

Another factor was to identify a threatened referent object. This was done using a close reading strategy applied to Merkel's address to the nation on March 18th 2020. Within this speech, Merkel uses repetition, analogies and individual examples to portray the German health care system as threatened. For securitization to be possible, the audience would have to accept the securitizing move. This was done by looking at individual surveys regarding the factors. The first set of surveys examined the acceptance of Angela Merkel. Prior to the speech act, Merkel held a 53% satisfaction rate, which increased to 64% after the speech act. One limitation of the April survey was the time that passed between the speech act and the surveying (almost two

weeks). This makes it challenging to examine the specific reaction of the audience towards the securitizing actor. It is possible that different factors also contributed to Merckel's increase in acceptance. Nonetheless, the generally positive trend hints towards the audience accepting Merckel as a securitizing actor. Another factor the audience had to accept was the threatened referent object. Merckel presented the referent object to be the German health care system. The health care system was threatened by rising numbers of infection which could have led to the system being overworked. The audience mirrored this concern, as was shown in a survey from the Freie Universität Berlin. Over 75% of people surveyed agreed with the referent object presented by Merckel. As the audience accepted both securitizing actor and threatened referent object, consequently legitimizing securitization to occur.

The goal of the securitization theory is to explain how a politicized issue transfers to a securitized one. It helps make sense of how emergency measures can be implemented outside the usual political norm. It does not attempt to explain why these specific measures were implemented but rather explain how they can be implemented. The theory helped us understand the characteristics and importance of a securitizing actor. It explained why Merckel was vital for the implementation of prevention measures. Furthermore, the securitization theory helps understand the significance of the address to the nation. It gave increased importance to Merckel's speech act and helped us understand why she chose to address the nation. Lastly, the securitization theory helps us understand the importance of the audience. Germany was able to implement prevention measures – which restricted constitutional rights – by audience approval. The audience legitimized the government's reaction to COVID 19.

The securitization theory helps us understand the German government's reaction to the complex and exceptional health/political crisis that emerged from COVID 19 by highlighting factors required to implement extreme measures rightfully.

The German case study also provides interesting information that could be of use for future research. The securitization theory uses four factors to examine how an issue is securitized. The most important factor is the audience which determines the success or failure of a securitizing move. It would be interesting to examine how the securitization theory would apply to authoritarian states, which often place less value on audience perspectives. Does the audience maintain the same weight for the theory in democratic states as it does in authoritarian ones? Investigating the power dynamic between actor and audience would reveal interesting insights into the theory's applicability.

This thesis contributions to the wider study of securitization go beyond the reveal of further research abilities. It has contributed to the wider debate by addressing shortcomings identified in the literature review. The literature review highlighted that scholars were still indecisive about whether a health security issue has ever been securitized or even observed from a securitized perspective. Scholars such as Wishnick argue that health issues should instead be placed in the context of risk rather than security (Wishnick 2010, 456). However, this thesis shows that health issues can be seen as a security risk and have a possibility of being securitized. When examining the case study results, one can say that according to the securitization theory, COVID 19 has been fully securitized by Germany. It shows that a health issue can be securitized with the same theoretical structure as military, political, economic, environmental or social security issues. Furthermore, the literature review showed that the main focus of studying securitization is placed on the extreme measures. This thesis uses the securitization theory to examine how securitization occurs rather than what it yields. Focusing on how securitization can be achieved outside the basic theoretical frameworks sectors gives other scholars the ability to do the same. This could increase the scope of the securitization theory making it increasingly relevant for understanding future security threats.

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