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The role of the securitisation of China in the British Huawei ban

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Abstract

The United Kingdom (UK)'s 2020 decision to prohibit the Chinese company Huawei from participating in the development of Britain's 5G networks, also known as the Huawei ban, raised many questions. The ban represented a stark policy shift, as the UK had earlier granted Huawei the right to participate in 5G development to a limited extent. Amid political pressure that came from the United States (US) and the United Kingdom itself, the UK government reversed course. The rhetoric used by the political actors pressuring the UK government as well as by the government itself in its announcement of the ban contained characterisations of Huawei and China as threatening. This suggests the securitisation of China played a role in the UK's decision. Therefore, this study posed the following research question: "What role did the securitisation of China in the West play in the UK's decision to prohibit Huawei from participating in the development of British 5G networks?" This is a relevant question as it is concerned with how British foreign policy towards China takes shape and how securitisation takes place and influences consequential policy decisions. Critical discourse analysis with special attention to the context of discourse production and making use of Amin's (2019) three-step conceptualisation of securitisation theory found that the securitisation of China and Huawei played a key role in the UK government's decision to ban the company. The securitisation of China by US political actors influenced US and British pressure on the UK government to reverse its earlier decision. Ultimately the UK government backtracked and implemented the Huawei ban securitising China and Huawei in the process in an effort to regain lost credibility and win support for its newly adopted policy.

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Keeping track of politics and British politics in particular is one of my strongest interests. This is why my master's thesis, albeit with some twists and turns, landed on the UK government's new policy towards Huawei; enabling me to study domestic British politics within the larger frame of international relations. Although I can hardly believe this is now over, I am very grateful for all the help and support I got from my family and friends along the way. I am especially grateful to my supervisor Dr. David for nearly making my head explode, in a good sense, during our meetings and for her from time to time tough criticism that forced me to push my limits when writing and thinking critically. I also want to thank Beyoncé for releasing her best album to date at the right moment, providing an adequate soundtrack for my writing sessions that took place at many different locations in both Leiden and Amsterdam.

George Hintzen

Amsterdam, December 2022

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"The best way to secure our networks is for operators to stop using new affected Huawei equipment to build the UK's future 5G networks." By voicing these words in Parliament in July 2020, the United Kingdom (UK) government reversed its previous position and arrived at a definitive decision after years of debate: the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei was to be banned from participating in the development of the UK's 5G networks. Although announced through this clear-cut statement, this move raised many more questions than it answered.

At first glance, the decision to ban Huawei does not seem to fit with recent developments in the UK-China relationship. Was the post-Brexit "Global Britain" strategy not supposed to usher in a period of strengthening of economic ties between China and the UK as it turned away from the European Union (EU)'s single market? And did Theresa May not declare a "new phase" in the so-called Golden Era ofBritish relations with China (Turner 2018)? The decision fits with neither. What then lies at the root of this hardline approach and shift in policy? Coming about suddenly, it is of great importance to take timing into account when attempting to trace the causes of this policy decision. Several background developments that took place in 2020 may have influenced this shift.

As COVID-19 spread globally and infected millions around the world, negative sentiment towards China among Western countries increased (Silver, Devlin and Huang 2020). Simultaneously, the world stood by as severe violations of human rights were inflicted upon ethnic Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang province and pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong faced a harsh response at the hands of the Chinese state. In response, the UK launched a new

visa scheme offering residency and eventual citizenship to all Hong Kongers who wished to leave their city that was handed back to China in 1997 and relocate to Britain (Hughes 2020).

However dramatic they may be, these events alone cannot explain the UK government's policy reversal. Several long-term background developments have to be taken into consideration if one wants to begin to understand this decision. Amidst the fuzziness, one thing is clear: the so called "rise of China", whatever may be meant by it, plays a role. Since the open-door policy of the 1970s, China's economy has grown rapidly. Felt globally, China's rise most recently has taken shape through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Responses to China's economic rise range from United States (US) President Trump's trade war with China to the EU's investment deal with China pushed by German Chancellor Merkel (Von der Burchard 2020). In the West, some decry China's economic rise as economically threatening whilst others have argued it mainly brings opportunities (Lardy 2003). Others point to other developments accompanying China's economic rise: increasing efforts to undermine democracies around the world (Walker 2016), as well as a more assertive foreign policy in the South China Sea and towards Taiwan (Turcsányi 2018).

Simultaneously, Western rhetoric depicting China as threatening has become a more common phenomenon (Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020). This rhetoric has been voiced by the most high-profile of politicians over the last couple of years. For instance, in 2019, US President Trump called China "a threat to the world" (Rappeport 2019), as the EU labelled China a "systemic rival" (Von der Burchard 2019). Earlier, FBI Director Wray called China a "whole-of-society threat" (Kranz 2018). Scholars (Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020) describe this as securitisation: anything Chinese is seen through the lens of security and threat. The notion that the Chinese

company Huawei's involvement in Western telecommunications networks poses a threat to Western democracies' security fits into this line of thought.

Taking these long-term background developments into consideration firstly begs the question of why the UK government allowed Huawei to be involved in the development of British 5G networks in January 2020 in the first place. Secondly, it brings back the question as to what lies at the root of the UK's hardline policy position taken in July 2020, if not these developments. How can this change be accounted for?

In 2019 and 2020, the United States exerted pressure on allies such as the UK, Germany and Poland to harden their stance and block Huawei from participating in the development of their 5G networks (Sanger 2019). The UK eventually did so; the British government revealing a ban on Huawei in a parliamentary announcement. Infused with rhetoric depicting both Huawei and China as threatening, the US pressure and the UK government's announcement seem to be related to the securitisation of China. The role of the securitisation of China in informing this pressure and in the eventual British policy shift on Huawei deserves closer attention. Therefore, this study poses the following research question:

"What role did the securitisation of China in the West play in the UK's decision to prohibit Huawei from participating in the development of British 5G networks?"

Asking this question is of great importance as by moving to ban Huawei the UK effectively picked sides in the ongoing strife between the US and China. Finding out what role the securitisation of China plays in US pressure on the UK and in the British policy shift sheds

light on changing views of China in the West, how the securitisation of China takes place and how foreign policy takes shape in post-Brexit Britain.

The literature review in the next chapter discusses the viewpoints of those claiming China has been securitised in the West and those pointing to Chinese efforts to undermine Western democracies. The following chapter on research design sets out the method of critical discourse analysis used in this study. The next two chapters are analytical: one focusing on the context of discourse production, the other discussing to what extent the UK government's announcement of the Huawei ban in Parliament in July 2020 resembles a securitising move.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings of the study aiming to contribute to literature discussing the securitisation of China in the West. This work represents an original contribution to said literature, applying the method of critical discourse analysis to US and British rhetoric on China and Huawei over a period spanning more than a decade and focusing in particular upon the UK government's July 2020 announcement of the British Huawei ban in Parliament. Furthermore, the conclusion answers the research question and places the findings into the larger context of international politics.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This literature review analyses the bodies of literature relevant to the research question. Before discussing securitisation theory, it briefly discusses the underlying grand theory of constructivism. Next, it examines literature dealing with the securitisation of China in the West as well as another body of literature that by contrast focuses on China's efforts at undermining Western democracies. Lastly, it connects these two bodies of literature to the case of the British Huawei ban.

Constructivism

Securitisation theory belongs to the constructivist approach in the study of international relations. Constructivism stresses the importance of socially constructed realities. The key notion is that actors shape and give meaning to the world they are part of. Emerging after the end of the Cold War, constructivism sees the entire world, and what we can know about this world, as socially constructed (Theys 2018).

The assigned meaning of a physical object trumps the actual characteristics of this object in importance (Wendt 1995). For example, five North Korean nuclear weapons are deemed more threatening to the United States than 500 British nuclear weapons. Not the actual characteristics, the "material structure" of these weapons are what makes them threatening. Rather, it is the shared understanding and expectations of these weapons and their owners prevalent in the US that make them so, the "ideational structure".

Another important aspect of constructivism is the notion that agency and structures are mutually constituted. Agency denotes the capacity of actors to act. Structures define the ideas and physical elements in the international arena that actors give meaning to. Agency and

structures are deemed to be in a dialectical relationship: they both influence each other. This means state behaviour (agency) is determined by a state's beliefs and ideas (structures). Identity is another key element in constructivist thought. Denoting the understanding of an actor of who they are, identity is deemed decisive in indicating an actor's behaviour. An actor's identity is understood to be socially constructed, meaning it is shaped by interaction with others. Actors can have multiple identities, each giving shape to actors' interests.

Finally, social norms, "a standard for appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity" (Katzenstein 1996, 5), are an important part of constructivist thought. An actor is expected to comply with the social norms associated with the identity they are conforming to. This is also known as the "logic of appropriateness", a process in which actors behave in a way they deem appropriate for their given identity (March and Olsen 1995). Constructivists often refer to social norms as cultural or political standards. The concepts of agency, structure, identity and social norms discussed above all play an important role in securitisation theory, which is the focus of the next section.

Securitisation theory

The notion of securitisation and securitisation theory are important concepts in security and conflict studies. Built upon Austin's constructivist speech act theory (1962), Danish academics Buzan, Wæver and others, collectively known as the Copenhagen School, developed the framework of securitisation theory in the 1990s (Buzan and Wæver 1993, 1998; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). Austin (1962) held that in some instances saying something is equivalent to doing something. From this flows the belief that speech, as any other form of action, can alter social reality. The Copenhagen School connected this notion with their ideas about the

concept of security in the political realm to arrive at securitisation theory (Buzan and Wæver 1993, 1998).

The central idea is that by "saying security" a securitising actor can turn any "normal" political issue into an issue of security politics. This can be anything from a development to an actor or a state. If saying security, or the "securitising move" is executed successfully the issue has been "securitised", meaning that the audience relevant to the matter accepts the issue to pose an existential threat to what the securitising actor argues it threatens. Subsequently, this justifies a response to this threat. As this threat is deemed a security rather than a political issue, exceptional measures are widely accepted to combat the threat (Vaughan-Williams 2015; Hagmann 2014). It is the audience that ultimately decides if the attempt at securitisation, the securitising move, is successful, depending on audience participation and response (Bengtsson and Rhinard 2019, 357). The crucial assumption underlying securitisation theory is that a clear line of demarcation exists between the realms of "normal" political issues and security issues. Securitisation theorists regard the politics of security as unique and something beyond "normal politics" (Gad and Petersen 2011, 316).

The key concepts in securitisation theory are the following: the securitising actor, the securitising move, the audience, the issue claimed to be an existential threat to an object and the exceptional measures proposed in response. The following is an example of a securitising: a politician (securitising actor) speaks to parliament (audience) about labour migration (threatening subject), claiming it is a threat to job security and therefore people's livelihoods (object under threat). Proposing a complete ban on labour migration in violation of international treaties (exceptional measure) the politician attempts to take labour migration from the realm of "normal" politics to the realm of security politics justifying extraordinary

measures. If parliament accepts this to be the case, the securitising move has been successful and labour migration has been securitised, if not labour migration remains an issue of normal politics.

Several so-called felicity conditions increase a securitising move's chances of success. It helps if the securitising actor is in a position of authority, speaking to a relevant audience. Also following the conventional plot of securitisation as described above increases the chance of success. Furthermore, it helps if the issue claimed to be threatening has historical connotations of threat, danger, harm or hostility. This, however, does not mean that following the conventional steps always leads to success, nor that is it impossible to securitise an issue not sticking to the script (Vaughan-Williams 2015, 96).

The framing of an issue as an existential threat by a securitising actor is both revealing and powerful (Hagmann 2014). It reveals the securitising actor's understanding of who causes the threat, whom the threat affects and how. Also, it has the power to reshape the international arena. By claiming a state is threatening, the securitising actor positions themselves and the audience in relation to this threat. Hagmann describes the securitising actor's and audience's state as "home nation". A successful securitising move carves out a certain place in the international arena for this home nation in relation to the threatening state and others considered co-victims (Hagmann 2014, 22, 185). This reasoning ascribes a powerful role to securitisation theory and differs greatly from other accounts of how the international realm is shaped. If believed to be the case this makes applying securitisation theory to world politics more insightful by a great deal.

Securitisation theory has received its share of criticism. Critics point to several weaknesses in the assumptions securitisation theory makes. Hagmann (2014, 19) for instance laments that the theoretical framework fails to distinguish between who produces the narrative of threat on the one hand and how perhaps someone else makes use of this narrative on the other. Securitisation theory analyses these two phenomena as if they were a single one. Others (Diez, Von Lucke and Wellmann 2016, 13) question the clear demarcation between the realms of "normal" and security politics as they argue that security is inherently political. Yet another group of critics (Christou and Adamides 2013, 510; Stritzel 2007) decry the lack of examination of the role of the audience and the consequential ambiguity of who the audience comprises. This is particularly problematic as successful securitisation according to securitisation theory itself is dependent on audience participation and response (Bengtsson and Rhinard 2019, 357).

Gad and Petersen (2011) differentiate between three strands of criticism. The strand most relevant to this study includes scholars (Stritzel 2007) who criticise securitisation theory for its lack of methodology. The other strands focus on the normative implications of the theory and the problematic emphasis on threat formulation by state elites neglecting the role of bureaucracies (Gad and Petersen 2011, 317). To remedy securitisation theory's lack of methodology Stritzel (2007) proposes an alternative conceptuality. This is deemed necessary as the absence of methodology leads to contradictory empirical applications of the theory impeding valuable comparisons between studies as well as generalisations (Stritzel 2007, 358). The alternative conceptuality takes shape in both a framework and a comprehensive theory. Relevant to this study is the framework that identifies three units of analysis: texts constructing an issue as a security issue, their relationship with other texts and the securitising actor (Stritzel 2007, 371). In this framework, the first step of the systematic study of securitisation politics is the examination of the first unit of analysis: text. Similar to this first step of examining texts

are Wæver's earlier postmodern accounts of securitisation theory focussing on speech act events, regarding rhetoric marked by survival, priority of action and urgency as the defining textual features of securitisation (Wæver 2003, 10). Crucially, Stritzel points out that these accounts share many similarities with critical discourse analysis (2007, 359, 368). This bridges the gap between securitisation theory and the analytical method of critical discourse analysis and suggests the latter is an appropriate method to study the former.

Both securitisation theory and critical discourse analysis have postmodernist credentials. Securitisation theory holds that words have the power to alter social reality and influence actual policy decisions. In postmodernist fashion, facts are believed to play a subordinate role to speech in the process of securitisation. A securitised issue is intersubjectively regarded a threat, stemming from its discursive construction. Critical discourse analysis is postmodernist at its core. Stritzel and Wæver suggest focussing on text and using critical discourse analysis to study securitisation is an appropriate way to proceed. This forms the theoretical foundation of this study. The next chapter on research design deals with this in more detail. Before that, however, this chapter discusses literature on the securitisation of China in the West.

China is being securitised

The first group of authors studying the securitisation of China (Campion 2020; Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020; Song 2015; Yee and Storey 2002), point to the so-called "China threat" discourse in the Western world. This discourse involves media, academics, state officials, members of the public and others increasingly discussing China using a narrative of threat.

According to Rogelja and Tsimonis (2020), the "China threat" discourse has recently gained ground and is now widespread throughout Europe. Having originated in the United States in

the 1980s, the notion of a "China threat" discourse is however much older (2020, 104). Accounts of the "China threat" discourse encompass a wide array of views on what about China is deemed threatening to Western societies (Campion 2020; Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020; Song 2015; Yee and Storey 2002).

Studying Chinese economic activity in Europe, Rogelja and Tsimonis (2020) find evidence of the "China threat" discourse in contemporary Europe in speech employed by academics, members of the public, state officials, media and think tanks (2020, 103). They label this speech as "securitising", introducing securitisation theory into their argument. Regrettably, they do not weigh in on the question of whether China has been successfully securitised or not, labelling it "ongoing" (2020, 110). Think tanks are deemed the main securitising actors in Europe and the first to articulate the speech described as "securitising". This differs from conventional securitisation theory, in which securitising actors are typically more high-profile figures such as politicians (Diez, Von Lucke and Wellmann 2016, 25). According to Rogelja and Tsimonis' analysis, however, politicians, and also the media, merely echo the speech that originates in think tanks. This contributes to its spread across society (Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020, 109, 111). The analysis identifies several political consequences of the presence of the "China threat" discourse. For instance, the 2019 EU Investment Screening Mechanism (ISM) which allows member states to block foreign direct investment (FDI), is recognised to be specifically targetting Chinese FDI (Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020, 109; Hanemann and Huotari 2018, 23).

Rogelja and Tsimonis reject the idea that China is a threat to Europe. They consider the European view of Chinese companies such as Huawei as long arms of the Chinese state they describe a distortion, calling for a re-evaluation of Chinese economic activities in Europe. They

also claim the securitising language practised by think tanks is based on a distorted representation of information (2020, 131). Contemporary European rhetoric and views should be replaced by a fact-based debate on Chinese economic activities in Europe, characterised by analytical depth, informed evaluation and a case-to-case approach (2020, 105, 132).

Similarly, Campion (2020) discusses the securitisation of Huawei and the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) in the United States, arguing that both are successfully securitised. This account regards political elites as the main securitising actors, falling in line with the conventional theory. By contrast, this account differs from the conventional theory on the interpretation of securitisation: Campion describes securitisation as a cumulative and incremental process, whereas the original theory takes a binary view: an issue is either securitised or not. Campion's account opens the door to the possibility that an issue is either in the process of being securitised or partly securitised, as Rogelja and Tsimonis pointed out about Chinese economic activity in Europe.

Yee and Storey (2002) focus on the origins of the "China threat" discourse and identify five factors as its driving forces: historical interaction with China, economic matters, geographical location, the assessment of Chinese military power and domestic political issues (Yee and Storey 2002, 17). Consequentially they regard the "China threat" discourse not to be an exclusively Western phenomenon, but also one present in China's neighbours. They signal three additional current developments that shape Western interpretations of Chinese activities: China's increasing military capacity, China's economic development since the 1970s and China's authoritarian socialist political system that withstood the 1990s fall of communism (Yee and Storey 2002, 3).

Yee and Storey, in their 20-year-old analysis, believe China does not pose a threat to others (2002, 17). An economically and militarily strong China does not pose a threat to world peace by default. Although they do recognise that this could be subject to change, so far it is exclusively the observing party's perception of the realities of Chinese behaviour and development that has led to an image of a threatening China. As the perception of Chinese activities is different for each observing party there is no uniform image of a threatening China (Yee and Storey 2002, 17). An interesting point the authors make is that "[perception] reveals more about the position of the observers than about the object being observed." (Yee and Storey 2002, 115).

Rogelja and Tsimonis (2020) imply a factual debate on Chinese economic activities would lead to the recognition that China is not threatening the West. The next group of authors by contrast do not.

China is a threat, exerting "sharp power"

This next group (Carminati 2020; Shen 2020; Walker 2016, 2018; Walker, Kalathil and Ludwig 2020) points out that authoritarian states such as China exploit globalisation by hijacking soft power to actively undermine Western democratic states (Walker 2016). These authoritarian states employ "sharp" power to boost their influence abroad.

The concept of soft power denotes the ability of a state to "get others to want what it wants" (1990, 166), as opposed to hard power which is "ordering others to do what it wants". Nye identifies cultural attraction, ideology and international institutions as sources of soft power. Nye (2005) points to the significant rise of Chinese soft power, at the expense of that of the United States. Many nowadays argue China's soft power strategy has partially turned into

something less harmless: sharp power (Carminati 2020, Walker 2016, Walker, Kalathil and Ludwig 2020).

Sharp power denotes the activities of authoritarian states to weaken the position and credibility of democratic regimes. It involves attempts at censorship and manipulation of culture, education systems and the media in target states. When wielding sharp power, authoritarian regimes take advantage of the asymmetries between free democratic and their own illiberal systems. On the one hand, they aim to limit free expression, influence public opinion and distort political systems in target democracies, exploiting liberal democracies' openness to outside influences. On the other, authoritarian states can successfully ward off such outside influence as they maintain tight control over their own education systems and cultural life (Shen 2020). The absence of free speech and press freedom also helps. Recent examples of sharp power efforts include Russian election interference in several Western democracies and China's infiltration into the politics of Australia and New Zealand, involving attempts at gaining access to highly sensitive information (Walker 2018). China's controversial Confucius Institutes and the spread of fake news also serve as good examples of sharp power. Relevant to this study, some consider Huawei's practices in liberal democracies a Chinese sharp power effort (Hoffman 2021).

Generally, scholars take an evidence-based approach when studying sharp power. Some sharp power efforts however are hard to identify or measure, complicating such an approach. Examples include efforts at influencing public opinion or limiting free expression. Another example would be academics practising self-censorship wishing to avoid any problems with Chinese students or risk future visits to the country (Woolcock 2022). Consequentially, this

partially pushes the argument towards the realm of speculation, which does not speak in its favour.

Zooming out, both Rogelja and Tsimonis (2020) and Yee and Storey (2002) bring the "China threat" discourse to attention. The former call for a fact-based debate and regard the discourse as the product of wilful securitisation, whereas the latter point to Chinese activities and Western perceptions of these activities as its root cause, leaving intentionality out of it. Crucially, both argue China is unfairly regarded as threatening. The sharp power authors (Carminati 2020; Shen 2020; Walker 2016, 2018; Walker, Kalathil and Ludwig 2020) heed Rogelja and Tsimonis' call for a fact-based debate but find results that would surprise their peers: China is rightly seen as threatening in the West with Chinese activities to blame, not the observer's perception of those activities or both. All three accounts have their merits. The role of perception cannot be denied. However, not taking intention into account seems naive. It seems likely that it suits Western actors' agendas to intentionally securitise China. It also seems likely that China wields sharp power in the West to undermine liberal democracies. These notions are not mutually exclusive and can coexist, even though they originate in different theoretical lenses. The next section briefly applies these notions to the British Huawei ban.

On Huawei

The starting point of this study is the notion that the securitisation of China plays a role in the British decision to ban Huawei. As stated in the introduction, US pressure on the UK to ban Huawei and the UK government's announcement of the Huawei ban are both characterised by the presence of language depicting Huawei and China as threatening. This literature review found a body of literature highlighting the securitisation of China and the presence of a "China threat" discourse in the West. Additionally, it identified roles for intentionality and perception

in the development of this discourse. This suggests that the intentional securitisation of China and Huawei should be considered, as well as the possibility that actors' securitising rhetoric is the result of perception. To arrive at a complete picture, the viewpoint that Huawei's presence in the UK is part of a Chinese sharp power effort must also be acknowledged. It firstly offers an alternative explanation for why the UK chose to ban Huawei and secondly, more important for this study, it can influence the securitisation of China functioning as a felicity condition enlarging the chance of success of a securitising move. The following chapter lays out the methods used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter deals with the research methods used in this study. Introducing the methods of discourse analysis and in particular critical discourse analysis, this chapter discusses their theoretical backgrounds, their strengths and weaknesses and explains why these methods make a suitable fit for this study. A description of the implementation of the method follows, outlining the next two analytical chapters whilst paying attention to source selection.

Discourse analysis

In politics, language is of paramount importance as it is central to both practising and studying politics. Building upon a rich history, many modern-day studies in international relations research involve discourse as a key theoretical concept (Milliken 1999). As language use in politics can generate highly interesting insights, this research follows in the footsteps of the long tradition of studying language in politics.

Encompassing a wide array of approaches, discourse analysis has its roots in the 20th century. Reflecting the diversity of the field, the definition of discourse is not agreed upon by all. Most scholars would however agree "discourse" covers all forms of communication. A postmodernist approach, discourse analysis assumes truths and facts not simply to be objectively present in the outside world waiting to be uncovered. Rather, they are constructed through interactions. This echoes the line of reasoning of constructivism discussed in the previous chapter. Discourse analysis thus holds that communication shapes the world as we know it. Changes in language use are linked to wider social and cultural processes (Fairclough 1992, 1). This makes studying communication interesting, as it essentially enables the study of social and cultural change.

Communication shapes the world in the following way. It is carried out through statements that either challenge or reinforce assumptions people have. Discourse analysis considers these assumptions the "shared truth". This intersubjective conception of "truth" is in line with postmodernist thought. From the wide array of approaches within discourse analysis, the particular method selected for this study is critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis builds upon critical theory and Foucauldian discourse analysis. Postpositivist in nature, CDA rejects positivism's view of science as an objective search for objective truth and knowledge. Instead, it holds the postpositivist view that science cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which it is carried out and therefore cannot claim to be objective. Influenced by ideas and identity, the researcher's positionality has effects on the research itself. The starting point for any postpositivist analysis is the recognition of bias and subjectivity, as postpositivism does in fact strive to find objective answers whilst acknowledging that objectivity is impossible (McGlinchey 2022). Taking this into account, this study, whilst using a creative and eclectic approach, relies on multiple operationalisations and conceptualisations of securitisation theory that have proven useful in other studies and have solid theoretical underpinnings. The same applies to the implementation of the method, which incorporates several analytical methods enabling structured analysis of qualitative data.

Many different approaches exist within CDA. This study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional model of analysis. This model is text-oriented, echoing Wæver's approach and Stritzel's operationalisation both focussing on text discussed in the previous chapter. It is an appropriate model to study securitisation politics as both are constructivist and concerned with

how language shapes social reality. Securitisation is produced through discourse and from the inception of the Copenhagen School discourse analysis has been a tool to analyse securitisation politics (Poutanen 2015, 2, 16).

Fairclough's model in particular and CDA in general have both received their share of criticism (Wang 2016, 2769; Jones & Collins 2006, 29). Critics point to the absence of political neutrality in CDA as it aims to expose domination and rectify injustices and inequality in societies (Chilton 2004, 45). CDA however neither claims nor aspires to be politically neutral (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 5). Moreover, CDA's emphasis on power relations and structures of domination makes its application to the analysis of political discourse especially relevant and interesting. Fairclough's model is not particularly geared towards studying political discourse, but by doing so this study follows in the footsteps of others (Sharififar and Rahimi 2015; Carreon and Svetanant 2017) whilst responding to the call to include CDA in political studies (Farrelly 2010, 98). Using Fairclough's model to study political discourse can provide new insights into the model's applicability to political discourse and its strengths and weaknesses in general.

Implementation of the method

The first step when carrying out any discourse analysis is defining the scope of the research. This study analyses the UK government's discourse on the British Huawei ban and highlights several key discursive moments that ultimately pave the way for the UK government's announcement.

The following steps are outlined by Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which unites the three traditions of textual linguistic, micro-social and macro-social analysis. Reflecting these

three traditions, the model considers every instance of language use a communicative event

consisting of three dimensions: that of text, that of discursive practice and that of social practice

(Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 8). This makes for an expansive multidisciplinary and multilevel

approach (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 6). For feasibility reasons this study mainly focuses on

the first tradition of textual linguistic analysis and the accompanying dimension of text. Both

putting text centre stage, Wæver's approach and Stritzel's operationalisation discussed in

the previous chapter theoretically underpin the choice to mainly focus on the

textual layer.

At the heart of this study is the UK government's discourse on the Huawei ban, a policy

decision revealed in July 2020. In a statement to Parliament (U.K. Department for Digital,

Culture, Media and Sport 2020) the ban is announced, detailed and defended and the UK

government's discourse is on full display. It is this text, the "Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Secretary's statement on telecoms", from now on just "the statement", that will be subject to

critical discourse analysis. Attention is also paid to the National Cyber Security Centre

(NCSC)'s advice to the UK government (U.K. NCSC 2020b), as the announcement draws

heavily from that text.

Before doing so, however, the context is worthy of attention. The context in which discourse

is embedded is of paramount importance. As Fairclough (1992) explains, no text exists in

isolation; this particularly comes to the fore in his second dimension of the discursive practice

in which intertextuality, the relationships between texts, lies at the centre. Intertextuality

involves one text linking to another by either explicitly or implicitly referring to it or by

incorporating certain elements of the other text (Farrelly 2019). Context of language use is

central in analysing discourse (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). It influences the character and

position of the securitising actor, shapes the identities, attitudes and values of the audience and affects the socio-political and historical situation of the issue at hand. Ultimately, the securitising discourse can in its turn change the context.

Context is of such importance that the first of two analytical chapters deals with it exclusively. In this chapter, source selection is guided by the principle of intertextuality and carried out in reverse chronological order. Taking the secretary's statement to Parliament as starting point, earlier texts with similar discursive elements to those found in the secretary's speech are identified, as well as texts specifically addressing, pressuring or giving advice to the UK government. Presented in a chronological storytelling format, this first analytical chapter describes the context of discourse production in detail.

The second analytical chapter deals with the discourse analysis of the secretary's statement to Parliament. Methodologically, it is guided by Amin's (2019) critical discourse analysis of US newspapers' reporting on the Iran nuclear deal. Inspired by Fairclough's first dimension of textual linguistic analysis, Amin uses critical discourse analysis methods to study securitisation politics. With the help of Balzacq's (2011) five concepts for securitisation theory, he breaks down the process of securitisation into three chronological steps. These steps are in their turn each accompanied by an analytical method rooted in critical discourse analysis. These five concepts, three steps and three analytical methods tie into each other as follows. Amin's first step of securitisation "constructing the images of a threatening subject and a threatened object" focuses on Balzacq's concepts of the referent subject and the referent object. The analysis is supported by Van Leeuwen's (2008) model of social actor representation. The second step, "constructing the authority of the securitising actor and reaching the audience" focuses on Balzacq's concepts of the securitising actor and the audience. Here, the analysis is supported

by Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse markers. Finally, the third step "claiming that the subject is an existential threat to the object and that extraordinary measures should be taken" again focuses on the referent subject and referent object as well as on Balzacq's fifth concept of the extraordinary measures. In this case, the analysis is supported by Walton's (1996) argumentation schemes. The second analytical chapter discusses these steps, concepts and methods in more detail as the discourse analysis is being conducted. Next is the first analytical chapter dealing with the context of discourse production.

Chapter 4: Analytical 1: Context of Discourse Production

This chapter deals with the discursive events leading up to the UK government's announcement to fully ban Huawei from participating in the development of the UK's 5G networks. The focus is on the origins of the discourse the government eventually adopts as well as on the actors pressuring the government to outlaw Huawei completely. The key concept is "securitising rhetoric": elements of discourse that constitute the building blocks for a securitising move. This ties into Rogelja and Tsimonis (2020)'s notion of "securitising" rhetoric they consider the building block of the "China threat" discourse. Guided by Amin's (2019) conceptualisation of securitisation into a three-step process this chapter specifically looks for representations of Huawei or China as threatening, representations of critical infrastructure, 5G networks or national security as threatened, claims that these are threatened by Huawei and claims that a ban on Huawei should be implemented. Finally, representations of Huawei as part of the Chinese state are sought after.

In contrast to the reverse chronological source selection, this chapter deals with the matter chronologically. The next section separately analyses US and UK texts from the era before the UK government's announcement in January 2020. It is, however, not an attempt to provide a comprehensive account of growing concerns around Huawei and China in both the UK and the US. Rather, this chapter highlights several key discursive moments that ultimately pave the way for the UK government's announcements in January and June of 2020. The same applies to the pressure the UK government faces from many actors, only the most relevant of which are pointed out.

Part one: pre-January 2020 announcement

United States

It did not take long before concerns surrounding Huawei started to spread after the company entered the US market in 2003, after China joined the WTO in 2001. At that time concerns about a China threatening were already present in the US, as the "China threat" discourse originated there in the 1980s (Rogelja and Tsimonis 2020, 104). 2007 marks the first time concerns over the company rise to political prominence when Representative Ros-Lehtinen sponsors a resolution in the House of Representatives. The bipartisan resolution calls upon the House Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) and President Bush to block the planned minority acquisition of 3Com by Huawei (U.S. H. Res. 730, 2007). President Bush ultimately moves to block the acquisition, marking the first time political action is taken against the company. In terms of discourse, the resolution represents Huawei as threatening and both critical infrastructure and national security as threatened. Portraying Huawei's activities as "foreign government action" the US Representative represents Huawei and the Chinese government as the same. The claim that China, through Huawei threatens national security is also made:

> "the preponderance of publicly available evidence clearly suggests that as currently structured, the proposed transaction involving Huawei threatens the national security of the United States and should not be approved by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States." (U.S. H. Res. 730, 2007).

This resolution from a markedly different political era, contains all sorts of "securitising rhetoric" conceptualised above. The blocking of the acquisition by Huawei the resolution calls for even shares some similarities with the 2020 UK ban.

The next time the US political arena pays significant attention to Huawei is in 2012 when the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence publishes its report (U.S. H. Committee on Intelligence 2012) after completing a year-long investigation into the company. Again, the committee concludes Huawei attempted to steal trade secrets from US companies and claims that Huawei is too close to the Chinese government and is a potential threat to US national security. Huawei is represented as the tool of a threatening Chinese state:

> "China has the means, opportunity, and motive to use telecommunications companies for malicious purposes." (U.S. H. Committee on Intelligence 2012).

In terms of securitising rhetoric, the 2012 report resembles the 2007 resolution. Huawei is represented as threatening, by associating the company with the most quintessential of threats to the US: Iran. Similarly, the 2007 resolution listed the Taliban and pre-invasion Iraq as business partners with Huawei. Calling Huawei a national security threat, the 2012 report calls upon both the executive and legislative branches of power to take action to curb the threat the company poses. Following the report's publication and widespread media attention, President Obama bans the Chinese firm from bidding for government contracts.

In the early 2010s, concerns over Huawei and China posing a potential security threat to the US are widespread among politicians across the political spectrum. In the 2012 presidential election, the year in which Huawei becomes the world's largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer, both Romney and Obama take strong stances against China with the former calling its trade policies "abusive" (Heavey and Mason 2012). Things shift with the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the start of a new all-out trade war with China. The discourse around

Huawei and China intensifies. Trump does not shy away from outright demonising China, painting a picture of a hostile adversary using rhetoric reminiscent of the Cold War (Swaine 2018). This appears to be a case of intentional securitisation.

In a 2018 Senate hearing on worldwide threats (U.S. S. Committee on Intelligence 2018), multiple Senators and six heads of the US intelligence community voice their concern over Huawei. Republican Senators claim that China poses a major national security threat to the US through Huawei which they depict as an integral part of the Chinese state. By contrast, the six heads of the intelligence community speak of a potential risk and are less keen to call Huawei by its name, opting for more generalised rhetoric:

> "... we're deeply concerned about the risks of allowing any company or entity that is beholden to foreign governments that don't share our values to gain positions of power inside our telecommunications networks that provides the capacity to exert pressure or control over our telecommunications infrastructure. It provides the capacity to maliciously modify or steal information, and it provides the capacity to conduct undetected espionage." (U.S. S. Committee on Intelligence 2018).

However, as the hearing only deals with Huawei and the single other Chinese telecommunications company ZTE, it is clear that this quote refers to Huawei and China, implying that Huawei is not independent of the Chinese state.

These examples show that by 2018, securitising rhetoric is present, albeit in slightly varying degrees of intensity, throughout the US political arena. In this context President Trump places Huawei on the so-called Entity List in May 2019, effectively prohibiting any company within the US from doing business with Huawei, whilst blocking Huawei from using US technology in their products. This move is also known as the (US) Huawei ban (Kang and Sanger 2019).

As the UK government is about to decide on Huawei's participation in the development of the UK's 5G networks, several US actors weigh in on the matter, as their securitising rhetoric translates into pressure on the UK government to ban Huawei. When the preliminary decision by the UK's National Security Council (NSC), part of the UK government, to allow Huawei a limited role in the UK's 5G networks leaks to the press in 2019, the White House publicly declares it will exert pressure on the UK government to not allow Huawei any role at all. Additionally, a delegation including representatives of the State Department visiting London in mid-January 2020 aims to persuade the UK government to ban Huawei completely, arguing the UK cannot effectively mitigate the security risks going ahead with Huawei would present. Tying Huawei to both the PLA and Uyghur "re-education camps", the high-level delegation claims that allowing Huawei any role would be "nothing short of madness" and will put US-UK intelligence sharing commitments at risk (Asher Hamilton 2020). Before looking at the UK government's response to this pressure, the next section focuses on the British concerns surrounding Huawei and China.

United Kingdom

In the UK, a similar debate concerning Huawei unfolds. Huawei enters the British market in 2003. Initially, the company is welcomed as it offers lower prices than any of its competitors. However, in 2010 the climate has shifted as the UK government moves to establish the Cyber

Security Evaluation Centre after concerns regarding the security of foreign vendors, among them Huawei, are raised by British intelligence agencies. The centre, tasked with assessing Huawei equipment against potential security flaws and later renamed Huawei Cyber Security Evaluation Centre (HCSEC) is a unique institution worldwide as it is jointly funded by the Home Office and Huawei (Garside 2016). This move early on drives a wedge between the UK and the US approach to Huawei.

The first time the British political arena pays significant attention to Huawei is in 2013 when the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee publishes its investigative report (U.K. HoC Intelligence and Security Committee 2013). This report raises concerns about the company's close ties to the Chinese government and directly quotes the 2012 US House investigative report's conclusion that the inclusion of Huawei equipment in US critical infrastructure would pose a serious risk to US national security. This shows the US and UK debates are not isolated from each other. However, compared to the US House report the UK report strikes a more moderate tone concerning the links between Huawei and the Chinese government speaking of "perceived" and "alleged" links between the two that "generate suspicion" (U.K. HoC Intelligence and Security Committee 2013). Ultimately, the report does not contain any securitising rhetoric.

In 2019, the arrival of 5G technology reinvigorates the debate surrounding the role of Huawei in UK telecommunications infrastructure. In terms of rhetoric, one group of actors echo the sentiment of 2013. In a statement (U.K. HoC Intelligence and Security committee 2019) and a letter (Lamb 2019) respectively, the Intelligence and Security and the Science and Technology committees of the UK Parliament stay away from any securitising rhetoric. Rather, both committees refer to the at that time most recent National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)'s

advice stating that the security of the UK's networks is primarily about the robustness of those networks to either inside or outside meddling and not about the involvement of a single company in the development of said networks (U.K. HoC Intelligence and Security committee 2019). Similarly, the annual report delivering insights into HCSEC's activities does not ring the alarm bell (HCSEC Oversight Board 2020). It acknowledges risks and shortcomings but ultimately expresses confidence in the British approach.

On the other hand, other voices in the British political arena do employ securitising rhetoric and advocate for more restrictions on Huawei's involvement in British telecommunication infrastructure or even a total ban on the company. In a parliamentary speech (U.K. HC Deb 27 January 2020), chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) Tom Tugendhat calls for no Huawei involvement in British networks whatsoever, equating Huawei with the Chinese government. Speaking of "aggressive moves" he represents both as threatening. Furthermore, he states allowing Huawei any role in UK networks is akin to "nesting [a] dragon", with 'dragon' serving as a metaphor for an expansive and aggressive China.

The foreign policy think tank Henry Jackson Society similarly expresses this sentiment. Their 2019 report "Defending our data: Huawei, 5G and the Five Eyes" (Seely, Varnish Obe and Hemmings 2019) contains many cases of securitising rhetoric. The report includes a foreword by the former head of MI6 Sir Richard Dearlove, is endorsed by the head of the UK Parliament Defence Committee Julian Lewis and is authored by, among others, Bob Seely, member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. The report concludes that Huawei is too close to the Chinese state, the UK cannot credibly mitigate the risks of allowing Huawei even a limited role in its 5G networks, the UK government's as well as the NCSC's current course of action is insufficient

and can potentially damage both the Five Eyes Alliance and the UK's credibility among Western allies. The report discusses the more hardline US approach to Huawei in great detail citing it as an example worth following. This suggests the origins of its securitising rhetoric likely lie across the Atlantic.

In 2019, the UK political arena is divided on the issue of allowing Huawei a role in the country's yet-to-build 5G networks. Roughly, one camp advocates a cautious approach allowing Huawei restricted involvement and another takes a hardline approach calling for an outright ban. The UK government's stance leaks: Huawei is to be granted a limited role (Schofield and Johnstone 2019). This leak, the US Huawei ban of May 2019 causing insecurity around the company and a fresh leadership election within the Conservative party all push the final governmental decision on Huawei far into the future. Only after the 2019 election the UK government finally announces its decision on Huawei's participation on January 28, 2020.

Defying US and domestic pressure, the newly-elected Johnson government reveals its position, which is fully in line with a newly published NCSC advice (U.K. NCSC 2020a)**,** through a statement to Parliament (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020): Huawei is to be granted a limited role in British 5G networks capped at 35%. Notably, both the statement and the report contain securitising rhetoric claiming Huawei poses a national security risk, but neither advocates a full ban. The core notion is that the risks associated with Huawei's participation can and should be mitigated rather than eliminated. The UK government acknowledges its approach sets the UK apart from the US, justifying the decision by pointing to Britain's unique supervision of Huawei through HCSEC and claiming it does not jeopardise US-UK intelligence-sharing commitments, a position supported by MI5 (Cordon 2020).

Part two: from a cap at 35% to a full ban

This section discusses the rhetoric and increased pressure placed on the UK government by both US and UK actors after the initial decision to opt for limited engagement with Huawei was announced. Next, it briefly touches upon China and Huawei's responses to that decision before dealing with the developments immediately preceding the UK government's policy reversal and announcement of a complete ban in July 2020.

United States: "our special relationship is less special now"

US pressure on the UK government turns into threats and blackmail. Pressure and threats mainly come from the executive and legislative branches of government. Firstly, the Trump administration comes out strongly against the British government's decision. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stresses the US will never share intelligence information on networks they do not have confidence in, referring to networks built by Huawei and implying both the longstanding intelligence-sharing agreement between Britain and the US and the Five Eyes Alliance are in peril. Intensifying his securitising rhetoric, he calls the Chinese Communist Party "the central threat of our times" claiming they have "front-door" access to Huawei's technology (Staff 2020). In a phone call with Prime Minister Johnson President Trump echoes this sentiment (Payne and Mason 2020). Defence Secretary Mark Esper, not exclusively addressing the UK, states that alliances such as NATO are in jeopardy if a country includes Huawei equipment in their 5G networks (Wintour 2020). This shows US actors want the UK government to believe that the stakes are high.

Secondly, Members of Congress weigh in. In an uncommon move, a group of senators join forces and write a letter to their counterparts in the House of Commons hoping to impel the UK to revisit its decision on Huawei (Arnholz 2020). This letter represents a bipartisan effort,

showcasing the US political arena is united in its opposition to Huawei. Making use of securitising rhetoric the letter speaks of "...significant security, privacy, and economic threats posed by Huawei" (Sasse et al. 2020). The following quote by Senator Sasse best captures the prevailing attitude: "our special relationship is less special now" (Kharpal 2020).

United Kingdom: a Conservative rebellion

In the UK, an intraparty Conservative debate on Huawei had already unfolded as the UK government took its decision in January 2020, with proponents of a full ban labelling Huawei a risk to national security. The December 2019 UK general election, fought nearly exclusively over Brexit, hands the Conservative party an 80-seat majority in Parliament (Gye 2019). In the aftermath of the January 2020 decision, Conservative opposition solidifies and takes up steam. In a show of strength, Conservative MPs critical of the government's policy table an amendment demanding the Prime Minister set out a timetable for the exclusion of Huawei from future 5G networks (Sabbagh 2020b). Ultimately defeated, the amendment nevertheless again lays bare the Conservative party's internal division on the matter. Moreover, many of the MPs elected in 2019 turn out to be sensitive to the issue of Huawei and China, fuelled by the COVID-19 outbreak, and vote against the government (Sabbagh 2020a). An influential voice is that of former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith who in the following quote equates Huawei with the Chinese government:

> "Ultimately, it [Huawei] is essentially almost completely owned by
> Chinese trade unions, and they, of course, are completely locked into
> the Chinese Government. This an organisation wholly owned by
> China." (U.K. HC Deb 10 March 2020a).

The Conservative backbench rebellion makes two distinct points. On the one hand, the rebels criticise both the government's handling of the issue and the NCSC's January 2020 advice to the government; especially its notions that 5G networks have a distinct core and periphery and that there are too few alternative suppliers to Huawei (U.K. HC Deb 10 March 2020). On the other, the rebels, letting go of the premise that Huawei is a threat to national security, attack the government's decision on geopolitical grounds. In a nod to US pressure, the rebels argue that allowing Huawei a limited role in the UK's networks is not worth it if this puts the UK's intelligence-sharing relationship with the US at risk. Moreover, they insist that for the UK, falling in line with its allies is of such importance that they must do so even if allies may be wrong in their assessment. This quote by Conservative MP John Redwood shows the rebels to be sensitive to US threats:

> "I happen to think they are right, but even if they are wrong, sometimes
>
> we have to go along with wrong thoughts by our allies and friends (...)
>
> in order to make things work." (U.K. HC Deb 10 March 2020).

Final developments

Next, three events with far-reaching consequences occur. Firstly on May 15, 2020, the Trump administration tightens the sanctions introduced in 2019 targetting Huawei, a move widely anticipated by both China and the US ("Trump administration increases pressure" 2020).

Secondly, British media outlets report that the UK government is planning to backtrack on its January 2020 decision granting Huawei a limited role in Britain's 5G networks, and is now set to instigate a full ban on the company along with a removal of all existing Huawei equipment from British networks. Due to the delayed decision, Britain had started to build its 5G networks,

with Huawei equipment, in 2019. Media reports speculate as to what has triggered this change of heart, with the right-leaning The Telegraph (Tominey 2020) suggesting links with the COVID-19 outbreak, an upcoming G7 visit to Washington, the Conservative parliamentary backlash as well as US pressure. Left-leaning The Guardian (Sabbagh 2020a) reports, striking a more resolute tone, that the prime minister has caved into anti-China backbench pressure, which has grown considerably due to the COVID-19 outbreak, especially among the 2019 intake of Conservative MPs. Stating that the decision will delight the White House, the Guardian however does not pinpoint US pressure as a factor behind the policy change. No media outlets report any link with the tightening of US sanctions against Huawei. Former MI6 head Sir John Sawers, by contrast, says that the UK has "sound technical reasons" to ban the company, referring to the tightened US sanctions targetting Huawei (Sparrow 2020). This shows there is no uniform understanding of the reasons behind the policy reversal.

Thirdly, it is reported that besides the government also the NCSC has changed its mind about Huawei (Parker 2020). On July 14, 2020, the government and NCSC publicly declare their standpoints. The government announces its new Huawei policy in Parliament, adopting the modified NCSC advice (U.K. NCSC 2020b) in its entirety: Huawei is to be completely banned from participating in the development of British 5G networks and all existing Huawei equipment is to be removed by the date of 2023 (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020).

This chapter found evidence of a "China threat" discourse in both the US and the UK, characterised by the use of securitising rhetoric surrounding Huawei and China. It showed how rhetoric travelled from actor to actor through time and translated into pressure. Perception of Huawei's activities seemed to contribute to the "China threat" discourse, as concerns started to

emerge about the company. Intentional securitisation of China and Huawei however played a more decisive role. Despite pressure, the UK government, in a statement containing securitising rhetoric, nevertheless opted to allow Huawei a limited role in January 2020. Another push was needed to compel the UK government to harden its stance. As other factors played a background role, this push mainly came in the form of heightened pressure from the Conservative rebels and US threats, both decisively shaped by the intentional securitisation of China by the US executive, suiting its agenda in the trade war against China. The next chapter deals with the discourse analysis of the modified NCSC advice and the UK government's statement in Parliament setting out the Huawei ban, both published in July 2020.

Chapter 5: Analytical 2: Discourse Analysis of UK government statement

As the previous chapter set out the context of discourse production, this second analytical chapter deals with the critical discourse analysis of the UK government's statement to Parliament in July 2020 revealing new policy towards Huawei. As explained in the chapter on research design, Amin's (2019) approach to critical discourse analysis breaking securitisation down into a three-step process guides the analysis in this chapter which is accordingly divided into three sections.

The document under scrutiny (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020) is the "Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary's statement on telecoms" delivered orally by Oliver Dowden to the House of Commons on July 14, 2020, on behalf of the UK government. It sets out the government's fresh policy towards Huawei overhauling the approach adopted in January of the same year: Huawei is to be banned from providing any equipment for the rollout of the UK's 5G networks. The sole reason cited for the ban is the tightening of US sanctions targetting Huawei in May of 2020 discussed in the previous chapter. Additionally, existing Huawei equipment is to be removed from British 5G networks by 2027. For the removal again a sole reason is cited: some Conservative Members of Parliament have requested this. The statement refers to two other texts: the updated NCSC advice (U.K. NCSC 2020b) and the Telecoms Supply Chain Review Report (U.K. Department for Digital, Culutre, Media and Sport 2019) that provide background information. In the spirit of intertextuality and to draw a more complete picture of the UK government's discourse, this analysis occasionally sidesteps to these two documents whenever necessary, as well as to the government's January 2020 statement on Huawei enabling comparison. The July statement however remains the primary focus.

Subjecting the UK government's July 2020 statement to Parliament, from now on just "the statement", to critical discourse analysis uncovers to what extent the statement resembles a securitising move. The previous chapter on context enables the identification of the origins of the UK government's use of securitising rhetoric in the statement. Furthermore, it reveals whose wishes the government's fresh Huawei policy is in line with and what it diverges from. In contrast to the previous chapter's analysis highlighting instances of securitising rhetoric use, this chapter puts the three-step process of securitisation centre stage, judging to what extent the statement follows this framework and where it fails to do so.

Step One: Representing social actors

The first step of a securitising move consists of representing the referent subject as threatening and the referent object as threatened. Concerning the representational discursive strategy, two of the five key concepts identified by Balzacq (2011) are relevant here: the referent object of British 5G networks and the referent subject of Huawei. Van Leeuwen's (2008) method of social actor representation gives additional insights into how the subject and object are represented. This analysis finds that in the statement the UK government creates images of a threatening Huawei and threatened 5G networks.

In the statement, the government represents Huawei as threatening firstly by stating Huawei poses risks and secondly by connecting the company to the Chinese state. With regards to the former, Huawei is denoted as "high risk" or as a "high risk vendor" numerous times. In making this assessment, the statement refers to the NCSC advice which lists several grounds upon which Huawei is considered high-risk. These include its large market share giving the company strategic significance, the low quality of its cyber security and engineering, "technical issues" and the tightened US sanctions targetting Huawei. Importantly, all but the latter of these

grounds also featured in the January 2020 NCSC advice which informed the previous government decision on Huawei to allow the company a limited role in building 5G networks. This leaves the tightened US sanctions, which were widely anticipated by both the US and China, as the sole reason for the change in the risk assessment, at least according to the government.

Secondly, the UK government represents Huawei as threatening by connecting the company to the Chinese state. Calling the company "Chinese-owned" and opting to discuss its policy towards Huawei "in the context of the UK's wider relationship with China", the government makes clear it does not regard Huawei as an independent entity. In Van Leeuwen's (2008) theory, this is a case of spatialisation, the representation of an actor by naming a place closely associated with it (Bernard 2018, 87). This is understood to be done intentionally; by comparison in the Telecoms Supply Chain Review Report, authored by the UK government, Ericsson and Nokia are never referred to as Swedish or Finnish respectively. The NCSC advice also makes the explicit link with China and crucially then goes on to argue that China itself is threatening to the UK. It reads that under China's 2017 National Intelligence Law, Huawei may be ordered to harm the UK's interests and that the Chinese state has in the past and will in the future carry out cyber attacks against the UK.

UK 5G networks are represented as threatened. Straightforwardly the government speaks of a "range of threats" to 5G networks in the statement and a "range of risks" to 5G networks in the NCSC advice. Crucially for securitisation theory, these threats to 5G networks are additionally considered to be a risk to national security and the economy. In other words, the UK government suggests Huawei's presence in British 5G networks poses a risk to national security

and economic prosperity. Broadening and deepening the scope of what is under threat raises the importance of taking action which will be dealt with in more detail in the third step.

The previous chapter on context demonstrates that the UK government does not break new ground by creating images of a threatening Huawei and threatened 5G networks. In fact, they already did so themselves in the January 2020 statement and many other actors did so much earlier. However, on national security, the government claimed in January 2020 that even though they considered Huawei a national security threat, allowing the company a limited role would not harm national security. It is this assessment that has changed.

Step Two: Establishing authority and forming a shared identity

The second step of a securitising move consists of constructing the securitising actor's authority and reaching the audience through establishing a shared identity and identifying with their values. Concerning the dialogical discursive strategy, two of the five key concepts identified by Balzacq (2011) are relevant here: the UK government fulfils the role of the securitising actor, Parliament that of the audience. Employing Hyland's (2019) method of analysing metadiscourse markers, this analysis finds that in the statement the UK government seeks to establish its authority on the matter of Huawei and reach the audience.

Before the July statement, the UK government's authority on the issue of Huawei is seriously damaged by public pressure and criticism mainly coming from the United States and the Conservative party's ranks. Unsurprisingly, the UK government makes a serious attempt to restore its credibility and authority on the matter. It does so in two ways.

Firstly, the UK government aims to appear both confident and competent. This discourse is pervaded by the metadiscourse markers of self-mention and boosters. As Hyland (2019, 62) explains, self-mention refers to the use of terms such as "I" or "we" or in this case "the (UK) government" to highlight one's authorial voice. Boosters, on the other hand, words such as "clearly" or "obviously", signal confidence and certainty. The following quote is an example:

> "But the government [self-mention] needs to look to the future. That means developing world class, next generation digital technology through 5G for mobile and gigabit-capable full fibre. It is only [booster] by doing this that we will remain at the forefront of the technology revolution." (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020).

Secondly, the government aims to appear cautious and considerate in the way it approaches the issue in multiple instances. Hyland (2019) explains coming across as careful can aid authority construction. The following quote shows this aspect of the discourse:

> "We have not taken this decision lightly. And I must be frank that this decision will have consequences for every constituency in the country." (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020).

On the second matter of reaching the audience, the government, having alienated a significant portion of its MPs with its earlier Huawei policy, hopes to win back the support of dissenting MPs as it depends on their support to govern effectively. Forging party unity furthermore aids authority construction. Amin's (2019) framework and Hyland's (2019) theory explain that a

securitising actor aims to establish a shared identity and cultivate common values with the audience by making use of the metadiscourse markers of engagement markers: words that actively address the audience, and self-mention.

In its attempt to reach the audience, the UK government frequently actively addresses the audience in four ways. These include listing common concerns held by both the government and Parliament, claiming to stand in solidarity with MPs, aiming to appear to be listening to MPs' wishes and underlining that all involved find themselves in similar positions. Especially engagement markers pervade this discourse, as well as self-mention. The following quote is a representative example:

> "But I [self-mention] know that Honourable Members [engagement marker] have sought a commitment from the government [self-mention] to remove Huawei equipment from our 5G network altogether." (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020).

By comparison, the pre-rebellion statement in January merely contains a single engagement marker and no discourse tapping into concerns of MPs or claims of a shared identity between the government and Parliament. This shows the UK government is sensitive to the concerns expressed by rebel MPs.

Step Three: Pointing to an existential threat and arguing for extraordinary measures
The third step of a securitising move consists of claiming that the subject poses an existential

threat to the object and that extraordinary measures should be taken. Concerning the argumentative discursive strategy, three of the five concepts identified by Balzacq (2011) are relevant with a focus again on British 5G networks and Huawei, this time joined by the two extraordinary measures: the ban on new Huawei equipment in 5G networks as well as the removal of existing Huawei equipment from those networks. Three types of claims are central to the third step (Amin 2019). These are firstly the claim that Huawei poses an existential threat to UK 5G networks and secondly the claim that extraordinary measures should be taken. Walton's argumentation schemes are applied to this second type of claim to gain a deeper understanding of the government's reasoning. The third type of claims are those of urgency and importance. Wæver (2003, 10) considers rhetoric marked by survival, priority of action and urgency as the defining textual feature of securitisation. These claims are crucial as they lay the groundwork for the government to argue extraordinary measures should be taken, enlarge the reason why such measures are necessary and potentially increase the audience's willingness to accept such measures.

As for the first type of claim, the statement does not contain the outright claim that Huawei poses an existential threat to British 5G networks or national security. However, as mentioned in the first step, the government suggests that Huawei's presence in British 5G networks poses a threat to national security and economic prosperity.

The government claims two extraordinary measures should be taken: the ban on new Huawei equipment in British 5G networks and the removal of existing equipment. The first claim is supported by what in Walton's theory is described as an argument from expert opinion:

"The government agrees with the National Cyber Security Centre's

advice: the best way to secure our networks is for operators to stop using

new affected Huawei equipment to build the UK's future 5G networks."

(U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 2020).

The NCSC is however part of the UK government. The statement speaks of "the world-leading expertise of the NCSC" cultivating an image of an independent advisory expert body rather than an institution integrally part of the UK government. According to Walton (1996, 64) an expert's opinion "generally has a weight of presumption in its favor". This is a possible explanation of why the UK government opts to present the NCSC advice as the ground for the ban. From the chapter on context, however, it is clear that the NCSC is very late to the game calling for a full ban only in July 2020, with many British and US political actors already doing so in 2019.

Alternatively, the claim existing Huawei equipment from British 5G networks by 2027 should be removed is underpinned by what Walton describes as an argument from popular opinion:

"But I know that Honourable Members have sought a commitment from

the government to remove Huawei equipment from our 5G network

altogether. This is why we have concluded that it is necessary and

prudent to commit to a timetable for the removal of Huawei equipment

from our 5G network by 2027. " (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture,

Media and Sport 2020).

Specifically, this is an argument of the subtype "majority preferences in matters of public policy" (Walton 1996, 83). In Walton's theory, such an argument is neither inductively strong nor deductively valid. This leaves the reasoning supporting the removal less convincing than the reasoning supporting the ban. In contrast to the ban, the government cites the actors originally calling for the removal, Conservative MPs, as its motivation to do so. This again shows the UK government is sensitive to rebel MP's wishes.

The third type of claims, those of urgency and importance, are present throughout the statement. Mainly these are about the importance of having a reliable connection in which 5G plays an important role and the importance of not falling behind others on this matter. The importance of the security of 5G networks is also stressed repeatedly. This rhetoric adds to the sense that something, possibly far-reaching, needs to be done urgently. The following quote is a quintessential example:

> "The security and resilience of our telecoms networks is of paramount
> importance." (U.K. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
> 2020).

Thus, strictly speaking, the first type of claim is absent, whereas the other two are present. In terms of context, even though the UK government actively addresses hardline Conservative MPs who agree with the claims and are in favour of the policy shift, it seems the government is aware many others are listening in as well. Language stressing urgency and importance justifying the new measures which represent a major policy shift is likely targeted at other members of the audience who are less supportive of the government's course of action. These are primarily Conservative MPs who are not convinced both the ban and removal are necessary

but on whose support the government depends. Additionally, after facing pressure and criticism from many sides, the government likely aims to win back credibility and support for its policy shift from a wide range of actors including the general public. Securitisation of Huawei and China then serves as a means to an end rather than that it is a goal in itself.

All in all, the government's statement to Parliament setting out the British Huawei ban and removal fits Amin's (2019) three-step model of securitisation well. However, as the chapter on the context of discourse production strongly suggested and the findings of this chapter confirm, the statement, even though it bears many characteristics of a securitising move, appears a product of securitisation by other actors rather than a securitising move single-handedly initiated by the UK government itself. The next chapter, the conclusion, revisits this matter and answers the research question definitively.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter begins by summarising the findings of the two analytical chapters. It connects these findings to the literature on securitisation theory discussed in the literature review, revisiting the discussion of the origins of the "China threat" discourse as well as the criticisms of the theory. It then moves on to deliver a definitive answer to the research question, before ending by briefly touching upon what the findings suggest about international politics and UK foreign policy.

The second analytical chapter's critical discourse analysis reveals the UK government executed a near textbook example of a securitising move, as conceptualised in Amin's (2019) three-step framework. The goal of the UK government's intentional securitisation is understood to be regaining credibility and winning support for its newly adopted policy after it succumbed to external pressure. It notably meets the felicity conditions increasing the chance of success of a securitising move (Vaughan-Williams 2015): the securitising actor is in a position of authority, the audience is relevant, the conventional plot of securitisation is followed and hostile sentiments towards the object, China and Huawei, exist, in which COVID-19 plays a role.

The first analytical chapter, however, showed that taking context into account prevents the conclusion that the UK government independently intentionally securitised China and Huawei. Through the lens of intertextuality, it showed that the roots of the securitising rhetoric around Huawei employed by the UK government can be traced back to the US political arena of the Bush era. This rhetoric, part of the "China threat" discourse that emerged in the 1980s, intensified in the US over the 2010s, President Trump's apparent intentional securitisation playing a key role, which not coincidentally fits the agenda of his trade war against China. This rhetoric found its way into the British political arena, especially on the right of the Conservative

party, the US debate on Huawei influencing its British counterpart. As the UK nevertheless planned to go ahead with Huawei, a push was needed for the UK government to change course. US threats and the Conservative rebellion partially shaped by these threats, against the backdrop of COVID-19, ultimately achieved their goal.

Connecting the findings and the literature on securitisation theory, this study found evidence of the "China threat" discourse. Rogelja and Tsimonis (2020) claimed this discourse was the result of wilful securitisation, which was found in the intentional securitisation of China and Huawei by President Trump in his trade war with China and in the intentional securitisation of China and Huawei by the UK government to regain support and restore credibility. Conversely, Yee and Storey (2002) argued the "China threat" discourse was the result of both perceptions and realities. The debates in the UK and the US were found to be for a part shaped by perceptions of Huawei's activities, which some would describe as sharp power efforts. This is of relevance to securitisation theory as they serve as felicity conditions.

The findings tie into many of the criticisms of securitisation theory dealt with in the literature review. Firstly, they reinforce Hagmann's (2014) point that securitisation theory should distinguish between who produces the narrative of threat and who makes use of this narrative. In its July 2020 rhetoric, the UK government makes use of the threat narrative produced by others. This was only revealed by extensively paying attention to context. Even though evidence was found of the existence of separate realms of "normal" and security politics, it proved hard to identify a demarcation line. The findings rather fall in line with Campion's (2020) interpretation of securitisation as a cumulative and incremental process that takes place over a longer period at multiple locations. In the UK, exceptional measures were advocated by different actors from different points in time.

The findings furthermore show that context is truly of paramount importance as Fairclough (1992) proclaimed. The second analytical chapter shows that merely analysing the UK government's July 2020 discourse would lead to the distorted conclusion that that announcement represents a stand-alone case of a comprehensive securitising move. Paying attention to context and intertextuality revealed a very different picture: the UK government was one of the last actors to call for a ban and removal of Huawei equipment.

In the introduction, I posed the following research question: what role did the securitisation of China in the West play in the British decision to ban Huawei from participating in the development of the UK's 5G networks? The definitive answer to this question is multi-faceted; taking timing into account proved crucial. Approaching the matter in reverse chronological order, the UK government securitised China and Huawei to sell their policy reversal to the British public. This move represented a policy reversal that was firstly the result of US pressure on the UK government, shaped by the intentional securitisation of China and Huawei by the US executive. It secondly was the result of domestic pressure coming from the right of the Conservative party, shaped by the context of COVID-19 and more importantly by US threats and thus ultimately by the US securitisation of China and Huawei. In short, it boils down to a twofold answer: US securitisation of China and Huawei was the decisive factor behind the UK Huawei ban. This ban was defended by the UK government by securitising China and Huawei.

Taking a step back and viewing these developments from the perspective of international politics, the British Huawei ban carves out a place for the "home nation" of the UK in the international arena, as Hagmann (2014) explained securitisation can achieve. The British Huawei ban ends the longstanding discrepancy between the US and UK approaches to Huawei and places the UK firmly into the US anti-China camp. Amid the rise of China challenging US

hegemony, the UK is pushed to definitively side with the US by both domestic and US actors. The story of the Huawei ban shows how the UK flirted with a China strategy distinct from that of the US but ended up becoming fully aligned with the United States instead, suggesting the UK in this case could not shape its foreign policy independently.

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