



Securitization and the Power of Language

A Discourse Analysis of the Legitimatization of the
Assassination of Major General Soleimani

Sophie Amalie Eiholm Kjær
961103-T122

Faculty of Culture and Society
Department of Global Political Studies
Peace and Conflict Studies
Bachelor Dissertation, 12 credits
PACS III, Spring Semester 2020

Supervisor: Dr. Ane Kirkegaard

Word count: 12.433

Abstract

Language and discourse can create a space where political decision-making and action is accepted despite its untypical nature. The goal of the study is to understand how political discourse is constructed with the aim of legitimizing extraordinary action in relation to the framework of securitization. The study revolves around how and why President Trump discursively attempts to legitimize his order that led to the assassination of Iranian Major General Soleimani, on the 2nd of January 2020, by conducting a discourse analysis of two speeches delivered within the first week following the event. The study contributes with insight on the particular case, and shows how Maj. Gen. Soleimani is represented as an irrational terrorist, who posed imminent danger to the American people. The act attempted legitimized is presented as done in the name of 'security' which seeks to justify the notion of President Trump 'breaking free' of usual procedures. The main conclusions of the study are the presented legitimization strategies, including the linguistic constellation of an existential threat, the allusion of a hypothetical future and the exploitation of emotional trauma. Moreover, the findings uncover that a securitization move has taken place within the analyzed speeches.

Key words: securitization, the Copenhagen School, political speech, discourse analysis, legitimization, President Trump, Major General Soleimani

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Problem Statement	2
1.1	Aim and Research Question	2
1.2	Relevance within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies	3
1.3	Delimitations	3
1.4	Structure of Thesis	4
2	Background	5
2.1	Legitimatization in Political Speech	5
2.2	Iran, 9/11 and ‘War on Terror’	6
3	Methodology	9
3.1	Research Approach	9
3.2	Methodological Design	9
3.3	Selected Data	11
4	Analytical Framework	13
4.1	The Copenhagen School	13
4.1.1	Security	14
4.1.2	Securitization	14
4.2	Framework for Analysis	16
5	Analysis	19
5.1	Situating Securitization	20
5.1.1	The Assassination of Major General Soleimani	20
5.2	Designation of Existential Threat	22
5.3	Justification of Extraordinary Measures	24
6	Concluding Discussion	30
6.1	Academic Contribution and Future Research	33
7	Bibliography	34

1 Introduction

Throughout history, political leaders have sought to strengthen their position and justify decision-making through persuasive speeches aiming at establishing approval among an audience. According to western linguistic, sociopsychological and behavioral tradition, language and politics are two disciplines that are intimately and fundamentally linked. Today, scholars have moved beyond questioning the importance of language in politics. Instead, focus tends to turn towards the discussion of ‘how’ and ‘why’ language is significant in political matters (Fierke, 2002:331). Any singular instance of utterance, either through spoken or written words, is part of a larger social and political process (Holzscheiter, 2013:3). It can be argued that communication is a central practice of political action because politics, among other things, involve harmonizing and reconciling with an audience through discussion and persuasion. In political matters concerning security, politicians utilize linguistic strategies and discursive approaches to legitimize extraordinary actions. Consequently, a political issue evolves into a security problem through discursive politics (Balzacq, 2011). Political discourse is typically planned and therefore, it is often possible to identify an underlying intention within the presented statements. Legitimatization is a primary goal sought by politicians and implies an attempt to justify action or an ideological position on a particular issue (Reyes, 2011:783). In political matters concerning security, the discourse is somewhat often distinctive. In security discourses, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority. Thus, by classifying an issue as a question of security, a need and right for treating it by extraordinary means, can be claimed by a political actor (Buzan et. al, 1998). Hereby, the political actor ‘breaks free’ from rules and expectations that normally exist, and a political issue is hereby securitized. It is therefore interesting to explore how these discourses and political constellations emerge, as well as how political leaders attempt to achieve sufficient assent within the given society.

This study will focus on the political legitimatization of extraordinary action when dealing with issues presented as a concern to the referent object’s security. Specifically, two political speeches delivered by President Trump during the recent escalating tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be analysed according to the framework of securitization theory. The speeches were delivered in the beginning of 2020

after President Trump's order of a drone-strike assassinating Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani and following Iran's retaliatory attacks against Iraqi bases housing US forces. The case, which will be studied from a discourse-perspective, aims at identifying and examining linguistic legitimizing strategies present in the two speeches.

1.1 Problem Statement

The research problem in focus is that language and discourse can create a certain space where political action and decision-making is accepted despite its untypical nature. By transferring an issue to the agenda of 'panic politics' a political leader causes insecurity among its audience and speaks of protection in order to justify these extraordinary measures (Buzan et. al, 1998:34). Not only does it generate consent among a population for future political action, but it can also justify direct violence retrospectively, which is reflected in the case under scrutiny in this study. The discourse of securitization positions particular groups against each other by declaring the 'good we' and the 'evil other', which further demonstrates how language contributes to the escalation of a conflict.

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The goal of this study is to expand knowledge and enhance comprehension on the construction of political discourse with the aim of legitimizing extraordinary action. Specifically, the study will focus on President Trump's discursive attempt of legitimizing the assassination of Maj. Gen. Soleimani by securitizing the issue in his official speeches. As a foundation for this study the research question will be as follows:

How and why does President Trump legitimize the order of assassinating Major General Soleimani through his official remarks on the matter?

In order to answer the research question, the analysis will seek to uncover how the act was presented by the President in the attempt to understand how the extraordinary measures are linguistically legitimized. In doing so, the portrayal of the threat will be investigated along the

identification of the referent object. Moreover, the threat will be assessed along with the legitimization strategies aiming at establishing approval among the audience of the untypical means use.

1.2 Relevance within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies

This study is relevant within the field of peace and conflict studies because it highlights a particular aspect of the conflict between the US and Iran. The conflict which until this day has largely been defined as a ‘cold war’, expressed through e.g. economic sanctions and an exchange of verbal discontent, took a sharp turn when President Trump gave the order to assassinate Maj. Gen. Soleimani. Therefore, the chosen case for analysis, where securitization will be at focus in order to understand its process through the lens of the theory hereof, is highly relevant since a representation of a security issues is conveyed as existentially threatening. It is therefore particularly noteworthy to assess how powerful actors present security and threats to an audience in the effort of generating harmony towards the actions being taken. Discourses are relevant to examine because words are arguably not simply words but have a performative effect with the aim of influencing and persuading an audience (McDonald, 2013:72).

1.3 Delimitations

This study will be grounded solely on constructivist epistemology and therefore there will be no focus on positivistic data. Delimitations of this research will likewise apply to the amount and type of data. The two speeches chosen for this study will be analyzed in their written form, and will consequently not include an assessment of elements besides this e.g. body language, emphasis on specific words or way of articulation. These features cover over potential data loss resulting from the absence of especially visual cues. Moreover, the analysis will not seek to evaluate whether a securitization process has been successful or unsuccessful, but rather explore if indications of securitization is present within the particular speeches. Another delimitation of this study consists of excluding an assessment of the audience’s acceptance of

the securitization of the issue which is also related to the success of the legitimatization of the course of action.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

This study will firstly provide the reader with background knowledge on the issue being examined. A brief overview of relevant insight to political speech, including its strategies and goals, is offered in order to situate the reader and provide context. The following chapter will take the reader through the methodology of the study explaining the epistemological approach, presenting the collected data and outlining the design of the research. The theory chapter seeks to introduce the relevant concepts and provide a thorough description of the main theoretical framework. The analysis is the main part of this study, and in accordance to the operational procedure, it will be conducted based on the framework of securitization. Finally, the findings from the analysis will be discussed from various standpoints based on the theory chapter and the results will be outlined in the conclusion.

2 Background

The following chapter will provide background knowledge crucial for the reader's comprehension throughout this study. Significant historical events will be outlined, because in order to engage with present political speech and security discourses, one must, to some degree, understand the past since it contributes to the formation of these in present time.

2.1 Legitimatization in Political Speech

For the past couple of decades, academic scholars of international relations and conflict have shown an increasing interest in the language found in politics. Politics is largely a matter of words in form of negotiations, debates and speeches (Feldman, 1998:3). However, the language that deals with obvious political matters cannot be captured in isolation from everyday language, because depending on its use, all language can act as political language (Feldman, 1998:3). When dealing with issues within the field of international politics, rather than only examining the structure of the language, social and political effects that result from using a particular construction of words, should be studied (Holzscheiter, 2013:3).

According to Cap, legitimatization is a primary goal sought by political actors (2008:39). In origin, legitimatization means to make something legal, however the term in other spheres than legislation, often entails the semantics of 'justification'. Legitimatization refers to the process in which an agent, typically a political leader, accredits or license a type of social behavior, and therefore in essence, legitimatization is defined as the justification of a specific conduct. The process of legitimatization is enacted by argumentation in form of reasoning and through presented explanations seeking approval of social actions, ideas, thoughts and declarations (Reyes, 2011:782). The main goal of legitimatization is support and approval from the audience of whom the arguments are presented to. The audience is comprised of the particular group of people that the speaker addresses. This pursuit is commonly motivated by objectives such as obtaining or maintaining power, gaining popularity, or achieving social acceptance.

The critical part in political discourse is the favorable effort in creating meaning which is commonly pursued by political leaders. This involves the construction of shared beliefs about the significance of events, policies and problems (Reyes, 2011). The strategic aim in this political maneuver is to mobilize support and immobilize opposition (Edelman, 1985:10). It is the indication of meaning that supports the legitimization of politically chosen courses of action and evokes reassurance among the audience as to encourage them to remain supportive (Edelman, 1985:10).

Discourse constitute knowledge about the social world. Köhler notes, “knowledge is neither a neutral reflection of reality nor a simple expression of ideas” (2019:40). This production of knowledge is shaped by the power relation pervading the social world since they influence who can be heard and who can control the discourse. Hence, the powerful dominates the discourse and when they utter their ideas and beliefs through discourse, the knowledge generated will reflect their perception of the world. This move stabilizes their power position. Consequently, Foucault declares power and discourse to be mutually constitutive (Köhler, 2019:40).

It is the dominant discourses that shape understanding and knowledge of the world conditioned on it being socially accepted. Therefore, in the regard of Foucault, discourses constitute instruments of power, and also that there exists a continuing struggle to dominate them. Discourse is thus, both the means of power and an effect of it. This captures the political nature and interest of discourse (Köhler, 2019). Therefore, in studies of language and politics, language is usually considered a strategy of power, or as noted by Feldman, “the language of politics is the language of power” (1998:3). Power, however, is not merely a matter of language but represents one aspect of it.

2.2 Iran, 9/11 and ‘War on Terror’

The US and Iran has, in the former decades, had a relationship defined by both mutual interest and cooperation as well as opposition to their way of governance. During Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s, Iran’s former Shah, reign until 1979, Iran and the US perceived one another as strategic allies. The Shah’s government in Iran was especially considered important to the US in order to detain Soviet expansionism in the region during the Cold War (Leverett, 2013). However, after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in February 1979, the relations experienced a

set-back and consequently, the two states terminated their diplomatic relations. The relations faced multiple challenges, nevertheless, Iran continued to focus on identifying mutual interests between Tehran and Washington in order to establish significant cooperation. While denouncing certain US policies, Iranian political leaders have throughout the past 4 decades acknowledged possibilities of a normalization of relations with the US (Leverett, 2013:195). This attitude drastically changed on the morning of the September 11th attacks in 2001 (9/11).

The aftermath of 9/11, committed by Al-Qa'ida, came to establish the grounds for distinctive and infamous rhetorical remarks still debated to this day. President George W. Bush and his administration used a range of linguistic tactics to communicate to the American population and the world audience, that military intervention was justified and that these actions were undertaken on the basis of necessary protection of Americans and their allies, as well as eliminating all possibilities of 9/11 repeating itself in the future (Cap, 2008:29). Through the narration of the 9/11 attacks being an act of war and a violation of freedom, the militaristic response was naturalized while the enemy was ascribed inimical attributes. The notion of 'make no distinction between terrorists and those who harbor them' became a position that would come to define the grounds of American foreign policy response to the attacks (The Washington Post, 2002). The campaign, known as 'War on Terror', which was launched by President Bush, became the dominating influence of international relations in the first decade following 9/11. Several months after the attacks, at Bush's State of the Union Address on the 29th of January 2002, he spoke of the campaign and introduced the 'Axis of Evil' wherein North Korea, Iraq and Iran were specifically mentioned. Bush stated that, "states like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world" (The Washington Post, 2002). President Bush, thereby, specifically declared these states the enemy.

Especially the mentioning of Iran was salient due to the fact that they have a democratically elected president unlike Iraq and North Korea and the former Iranian President Khatami was one of the first foreign leaders to denounce Al-Qa'ida and the attacks (Leverett, 2013:209). After 9/11 Iran viewed itself as a new important geopolitical actor in the region in alliance with the US. In the following months, much pointed towards Iranian and American collaboration, however this was indeed challenged after the introduction of the 'Axis of Evil' (Leverett, 2013).

The attacks of 9/11 followed by 'War on Terror' established the basis for a conflict paradigm to emerge in which the terror phenomenon is perceived as a threat to the Western world. Through rhetorical means, President Bush evoked the notions of the good versus

the evil and in which he laid the foundation of his and his successors' future rhetoric by enforcing the evil enemy image (Steuter et al., 2009). The launch of 'War on Terror' became a point of reference in a global creation of meaning in terms of a Western 'us' in opposition to a non-Western 'them'. McChesney, quoted by Steuter and Wills, describe the media's depiction of 9/11 as, "a benevolent, democratic and peace-loving nation brutally attacked by insane evil terrorists who hate the United States for its freedoms" (Steuter et al., 2009). The aftercoming of this narrative, which involve the justification of military engagement in the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, show the potency of language and discourse which is presented in speeches and often intensified through media's portrayal. In essence, it demonstrates the power that language holds. Over time, a combination of (mis)information and discourse has worked to construct enemy images in the popular creation of meaning that has an important function in the maintenance of political power and support for decision-making through ideology (Merskins, 2009).

3 Methodology

This chapter intends to present and provide an explanatory overview of the chosen research approach, methodological design, position of the analyst and the selected data. Altogether, it seeks to introduce the approach of which the research problem of this study will be addressed.

3.1 Research Approach

This study will have an explanatory research approach in order to best possibly assess the research problem under investigation. An explanatory research seeks to use theories and concepts on a subject to further explore these, and thereby this study will lean on relevant theory to investigate the speeches delivered by President Trump. The purpose of the approach is not to establish conclusive evidence, but rather expand understanding on the research subject. Thus, this study aims to explain unexplored aspects of the discourses under scrutiny and establish comprehension about the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’. The design looks for causes and reasons, and can potentially provide suggestions to support an exhaustive explanation (Given, 2008:323).

In terms of micro-macro perspective, the study will depart from a micro approach by analyzing the presented discourse in detail, and finally apply the results in a broader context. The analysis will reach an in-depth assessment of the discourse and the framework of the study will assure a critical and systematic examination of the intricate case.

3.2 Methodological Design

“Discourse is the space where human beings make sense of the social world, where they attach meaning to the world and where representation of the world become manifest” (Holzscheiter, 2013:3). All political discourse is organized in order to make itself persuasive

and therefore an analysis of these should focus on the strategies of persuasion (Rose, 2016:193). The discourse presented in the selected speeches will be analyzed based on the theoretical framework of securitization; the process of claiming a matter as a security issue in order to justify political decision-making and actions that are otherwise recognized as unacceptable. The analysis will focus on two units in correlation with the concept of securitization; the threat and the justification of extraordinary measures (Buzan et. al, 1998).

Securitization is both recognized and utilized as theory and methodology. Methodologically wise it establishes in what way the analysis ought to be done i.e. what the analyst should look for in the form of words and content. The concept of securitization bases its methodology in the idea of speech acts and it offers a methodological procedure of which the analyst can observe and assess whether the speech acts meet the criteria for securitization. Striving to be unbiased and supporting the notion of repeatability, it provides a clear set of steps and standards to which the data can be analyzed. However, the method follows from the theoretical points of departure and is dependent on it. It is hence difficult to separate the two due to them being deeply interwoven. The approach and its apparatuses are outlined in the chapter 'Analytical Framework'.

Discourse analysis is perchance the most common approach when dealing with securitization, since securitization was originally developed as a constructivist operational method to scrutinize discourses (Buzan et. al, 1998). Discourse analysis sets out to examine what is achieved by using a particular discursive vocabulary and linguistic strategies. When dealing with securitization, discourse analysis is the obvious method due to the interest of when and how something is established as a security threat and by whom. Wæver, who penned the theory of securitization, was inspired by Foucault's approach to discourse (McDonald, 2013). Central to Foucault's approach to discourse is that discourses are tied up to power. Foucault dismisses that power *just* has the purpose of controlling, preventing, repressing and censoring (Foucault, 1969). He does not reject these ideas as features of power, but rather in addition to these, he talks of the discursive power which produces meaning and reality in which agents interact. Discourse therefore produce ways that restrict behavior but also enables behavior by producing or shaping domains, or what he notes as 'rituals of truth', through which certain conduct can happen (Foucault, 1969). Power, according to Foucault, is thus the producer of reality through discourse. A Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis focuses on discourse structures and explicitly on power in-, and politics behind those discourses. It provides a critical approach to the examination of political speech (Foucault, 52:1969).

Discourse analysis is a popular method however, it is not the exclusive method for dealing with securitization (Buzan et. al, 1998:177). Foucault's archeology and genealogy examines the role of discourse and acknowledges the presence of power within, but does not have the agenda of assessing the use and misuse of power, which is fundamental to securitization. Another method that can be utilized in correlation with securitization is content analysis, however this method concentrates on the analyzed material as an independent entity and does not, like discourse analysis, focus on the situated and social aspects (Balzacq, 2011:51).

Discourse analysis is favorable in this particular study, in the light of securitization, because it provides a method to help map the emergence and evolution of patterns of given representations which comprise a particular threat perception. In short, as explained by Balzacq, the design of threat images is generally captured by mapping meaning through analysis of discourse (2011:40) A critical approach to discourse analysis is therefore strong in capturing 'power tectonics' (Balzacq, 2011:40).

This study will be based on constructivist epistemology since constructs of reality will be examined. Constructivism revolves around different interpretations of experiences and is therefore suitable for examining a given version of the truth presented in the delivered speeches. The study seeks to address these rather than define one factual reality (Walliman, 2011:22). In this endeavor interpretation cannot be avoided. According to Fairclough's understanding, interpretation emerges from a combination of what is to be found in the text as well as in the interpreter (1989). In this sense, the analyst draws upon theory in order to gauge interpretations, and clarify as well as establish understanding of the decoded discourses.

It is vital in any research to establish trustworthiness, and therefore the analysis will conduct an explanatory account for the case under scrutiny by using securitization theory as a frame to facilitate the analysis rather than as a tool to be directly applied. In doing so securitization is not merely reconstructed by matching evidence to support the theoretical model.

3.3 Selected Data

A discourse analysis centered around securitization utilizes a selection of data to investigate threat images and offer a thick description of these in the analysis. As the research question commands the selection of the collected data, the two speeches held by President Trump fol-

lowing the assassination of Maj. Gen. Soleimani was selected. The main selected data therefore constitutes of (1) the remarks of President Trump on the assassination of Qassem Soleimani delivered at his Mar-a-Lago residency in Florida on the 3rd of January 2020, and (2) President Trump's address from the White House on the 8th of January 2020 after Iran's retaliatory attacks against Iraqi bases housing US forces. The two speeches are both respectively transcribed and published on the White House's official website. Since the study is interested in the legitimatization strategies and power found within political speech, the two speeches will be the main focus of the analysis. The two speeches have been chosen since the patterns of representations are captured in different ways, and therefore in order to gauge both the breadth and depth of the aspects of securitization theory, the analyst should focus on more than one single text (Buzan et. al, 1998:77). Consequently, the analysis will not be comparative, but will instead embrace the two speeches as correlating and assess the emerging rhetorical patterns within them. As argued by Yazan, multiple sources induce more evident findings in the analysis (2015:142). However, the analysis will center around official speeches, and will therefore not analyze other types of sources, but will instead utilize them as support in the attempt to explain the analytical results.

Throughout the undertaking of the analysis, the particular words presented in the speeches will be marked with double quotation marks. This will be in order to indicate that these are words used by the speaker and worth emphasizing and exploring further by the analyst.

4 Analytical Framework

Political speech has come to be an interest of many scholars and have been broadly analyzed across various fields of study for a long time. Likewise, the process of securitization has been studied within a range of contexts such as immigration policies, environmental issues or nuclear concerns. Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan are among those scholars who have conducted research on similar actions, as well as investigated whether other situations alike could be understood through securitization theory. However, due to the contemporaneity of the case under scrutiny and the contracted focus on political speech in connection to this, currently, not much exploration has been done on the particular action in relation to the specific speeches of concern. Little research has likewise been done on the use and function of the securitization framework on political discourse *after* the action, which is sought justified by the speaker, has been decided upon and conducted.

Below is presented the theory of securitization along with the appurtenant theoretical framework which will act as the basis for the analysis. Key concepts and ideas will be presented in order to facilitate the reader with crucial comprehension of the framework to understand the unfolding of the analysis.

4.1 The Copenhagen School

The Copenhagen School is the name under which various academics from the former Copenhagen Peace Research Institute in Denmark collectively undertake research centered around the work of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (McDonald, 2013:71). The core theme within the Copenhagen School is the idea of security. Specifically, the concern revolves around how security is constructed and how it works in world politics (McDonald, 2013:72). The central contribution of the Copenhagen School is the concept of securitization. Collectively, the Copenhagen School developed insights and influenced the understanding of security. In 1998, this work culminated in the published text ‘Security: A New Framework for Analysis’ authored by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, which extensively develops upon the conceptual understanding of securitization and the practical usage of such. (McDonald,

2013:71). The text offers a new approach to the study of security and the process of securitization.

4.1.1 Security

The Copenhagen School recognizes that security needs to be defined in order to grasp it. In the text from 1998 a chapter is devoted to outlining and providing a definition of security. Leaning on traditional military-political understanding, the Copenhagen School argues that security in an international context is about survival. They write, “it is when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object [...]. The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them” (Buzan et. al, 1998:21) The mentioning of security has traditionally legitimized the use of force and furthermore granted the state the possibility of taking action, and special powers into use, to handle the threat. In the act of uttering ‘security’ the political leader declares an emergence condition, and as a consequence, claims a right to whatever needed means in order to tackle the threat’s development (Buzan et. al, 1998:21). In essence, security is defined as the opposing character of ‘normal politics’ (McDonald, 2013:74).

4.1.2 Securitization

‘Securitization’ as a concept was first defined by Ole Wæver in 1995 in reference to the discursive construction of threats. Since language constitutes the social world, this also includes security and its features (Köhler, 2019:42). Securitization, as explained by the Copenhagen School, is the discursive process in which, “an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labelling it as security an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means” (Buzan et. al, 1998:26). Wæver argues, that security and threats are not an objective matter. Instead, security discourse is characterized by the endeavor of which actors construct issues as threats to security, and granting an issue utmost priority. In essence, the issue is a verbal construction and presented as an existential threat. A prerequisite is that the issue of concern has to be accepted by a relevant audience in order for political leaders to be suspended from normal politics and enabled to take the emergency measures needed. Following this notion, security is a form of negotiation between speaker and audience, though significantly conditioned by the extent to which the speaker holds a position of authority within a particular group (McDonald, 2013:72). According to Wæver, a successful

securitization tends to involve the articulation of threat, “only from the specific place, in an institutional voice, by elites” (Wæver, 1995:57).

These articulations of threats come in the form of ‘speech acts’, which is a term borrowed from language theorist John Austin (Buzan et. al, 1998). Speech acts are, “conceived as forms of representation that do not simply depict a preference or view of an external reality but also have a performative effect” (McDonald, 2013:72). Speech act theory puts emphasis on the function of language and focuses on the performance of words, sentences and symbols (Balzacq, 2011:4). In other words, the act of speaking is rule-guided action that possesses reality-making powers, and therefore, stating is a performative act (Köhler, 2019:44). In this sense, security is what the Copenhagen School notes as a ‘self-referential practice’, because by presenting an issue as a security matter, it becomes one (Buzan et. al, 1998:24). Originally, the speech act in itself was regarded as the process of securitization but due to conceptual development, an issue is only successfully securitized if and when the audience accepts it (McDonald, 2013:73). The audience’s acceptance is dependent on the form of speech acts, the position of the securitizing actor and features that are historically associated with the threat. These components of the speech acts work under what is referred to as internal and external *facilitating conditions* (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). The three facilitating conditions are (1) the demand internal to the speech act of following the grammatical plot of designating an existential threat and arguing for urgent untypical action, (2) the social conditions regarding the position of authority for the securitizing actor (the relation between the securitizing actor and the audience) and, (3) features of the alleged threats that either facilitate or impede securitization (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). That is to say, the first facilitating condition is concerned with the ‘grammar of security’ which lays the ground for a discursive plan that involves: an existential threat, point of no return and a possible way out. Secondly, a condition involves the social capital of the securitizing actor, who must be in a position of authority. Since the audience is not necessarily fully informed, it often relies on the discourses of state officials since they are the site of constitutional legitimacy and therefore, must have ‘good reason’ to declare an issue as a threat to the state’s survival. Therefore, it is typically, in a sense, easier for actors who hold influential positions in the security sector based on their political capital to successfully securitize an issue. Lastly, the condition relating to the threat involves the usage of objects that are generally understood as threatening in order to more successfully produce the idea of an existential threat. In sum, the theory of securitization has two central concepts which are the three components of securitization - the speech act, the securitizing actor and the audience -, and the three facilitating conditions outlined above. In a

sense, the Copenhagen School looks at what security is by looking at what it does (Rychnovská, 2014:10).

For the Copenhagen Scholars, the nature of present security issues is deeply related to the politicizing of issues. Security politics, are in their regard, not only about emphasizing the pre-existing threats, but also about the performative activity that makes certain issues visible as threats (Coskun, 2011:12) Securitization is a further intensification of politicization, however in another perspective politicization of issues presents them as a matter of choice and decision while the process of securitization present an issue as urgent and existential and therefore should be dealt with accordingly by political leaders (Buzan et. al, 1998:29). So, politicized issues are regarded as the body of everyday politics involving debates and decision-making, while a securitized issue is placed ‘above’ normal politics. Security is thus perceived as a negative by the Copenhagen School, since it concerns a failure to deal with issues as normal politics (Buzan et. al, 1998:29). Central is the fact that actors and their audiences securitize certain issues as a specific form of political act (Buzan et. al, 1998:33).

4.2 Framework for Analysis

The theory of securitization provides a framework for analyzing matters of security and the process of securitization. What the framework of securitization can bring to an analysis is the means to identify something as a securitization move or as the maintenance of a security discourse. An analysis within the framework of securitization therefore, does not set out to assess some objective threat, but to understand the process of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat. Securitization is studied by assessing the discourse and political constellations presented. That is done by studying when and how an argument with the particular rhetorical structure achieves sufficient effect that make an audience tolerate violations of established rules (Buzan et. al, 1998).

A successful securitization is reliant on the features and quality of the security speech acts. The analyst is interested in the construction of the existential threat, since securitization can never be imposed and therefore requires the speaker to argue the case. The Copenhagen Scholars state that, “the existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return, and necessity” (Buzan et. al, 1998:25). The representation of

the existential threat is thus central to the analysis of the securitization process. Therefore, as formerly touched upon, threats are not just threats by nature, but have to be constructed through language by the speaker. Specified by Wæver, “a threat argument must perform to justify extraordinary measures: it must establish (1) that there is a threat; (2) that the threat is potentially existential; and (3) the possibility and relative advantages of security handling compared to non-securitized handling” (Wæver, 2011:473). The designation of a threat is closely related to the framing of such. To frame is, “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient” (Entman 1993:53) The understanding of framing is a specific type of discursive practice which come close to and is often present in securitization. The exploration of threat framing offers an insight to what traits and features are emphasized in order to construct the idea of an existential threat. Typically, the speaker seeks to generate a ‘we-feeling’ and to create an ‘us’ which the audience can identify with. The construction of the ‘other’ or ‘they’ is an automatic reflection of the ‘us’ and as explained by Harle, “one cannot comprehend oneself fully if one has no appreciation of who and what one is not” (2000:15). From a securitization perspective the interest lies within the attributions of security problems rather than the actual origins of these. Often the speaker will attempt to ‘actorize’ the ‘other’, meaning that “the other [is] a willful chooser rather than a chain in a series of events” (Buzan et. al, 1998:44). When the ‘other’, who is responsible for the perceived threat, is viewed as a strategic actor able to make decisions, the threat perception is strengthened and thereby enables the issue to be put onto the security agenda. This perception holds that the ‘other’, as a decisive actor, “has the potential of outwitting us, of having intentions, or of bending or suppressing our will to replace it with its own” (Buzan et. al, 1998:44).

Aside from the threat perception constructed, the urgency of the security issue is a central layer in securitization studies. Legitimatization of political action often connects the past, present and future creating a timeline. The present is portrayed by political actors as a time where critical decisions have to be made and vital action has to be taken. These actions are often related to a cause, which happened in the past, and a consequence, which might happen in the future. In political discourse, actors present a projection of the future according to the actions taken in the present (Reyes, 2011:793). Therefore, only according to the performance of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat, where the speaker has managed to break free of ordinary rules that the actor would have been bound by, the securitization of an issue has successfully occurred (Buzan et. al, 1998:25). Moreover, throughout the analysis specific words and phrases alluding to feelings, interests and needs will be scrutinized. An exploration will be done on the adjectives and verbs used to describe

features and actions of the ‘self’ and the threat, pursuing to strengthen the threat perception. Likewise, metaphors along with linguistic tactics that seek to attract and engage the audience will be studied.

The outline of the process of securitization and its framework show that securitization theory is not a political statement called on by the analyst but that it rather is a tool for analysis with which the analyst can trace incidences of securitization. Therefore, it is important to recognize that it is the speaker, and not the analyst who chooses, whether something is to be presented and handled as an existential threat. In all instances, however, the analyst is obliged to question the intended achievements of the securitizing speech acts (Buzan et. al, 1998:42). The goal of the study of securitization is summed up accordingly: “based on a clear idea of the nature of security, securitization studies aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results and, not least, under what conditions” (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). The Copenhagen School thereby seeks, with the securitization framework, to provide a means to investigate both the rules of ‘speaking security’ and how the power of ‘spoken security’ unfolds (Köhler, 2019:43). Securitization theory thus seeks to answer the question: what does security do?

5 Analysis

The aim of the analysis is to explore threats to referent objects, and the securitization of those threats (Buzan et. al, 1998:5). The following chapter seeks to investigate the legitimization strategies used within the two speeches under scrutiny. This will be done leaning on the framework of securitization as presented above and specifically by examining the speeches in accordance with the elements of the process. The analysis will focus on and be structured around two interconnected units: the representation of an existential threat and the promotion of extraordinary measures. This will provide a logical structure of the analysis in accordance with the presented framework, nevertheless it is important to recognize that these two units are deeply intertwined and cannot be addressed isolated from one another. The analysis will moreover explore the facilitating conditions and primarily focus on the speech acts which constitute the discourse in the speeches. The aim of the analysis is to thoroughly provide an answer to the posed research question; how and why does President Trump legitimize the order of assassinating Major General Soleimani through his official remarks on the matter?

The analysis will examine two speeches. The first speech from the 3rd of January was delivered the day after the ordered drone strike had happened, while the second speech was held after the retaliatory attack from Iran against Iraqi bases housing US forces on the 8th of January. Even though the second speech's main focus is to provide a statement from President Trump on the Iranian retaliatory attack, the President addressed the assassination of Maj. Gen. Soleimani. Therefore, the analysis will assess the two speeches, but solely focus on the discourse in connection with Maj. Gen. Soleimani. The speeches will be analyzed concurrently, and therefore not sequentially, and an examination of these will be done in order to consider whether they provide indication of a securitization process as being present within.

The process of securitization is usually studied in cases where the securitizing actor attempts to justify extraordinary measures prior to this action being taken. In this way, the securitizing actor legitimizes the political decision-making before taking the desired untypical means to use. Hereby, the securitizing actor can gauge the approval and consent from a particular audience. This analysis will examine a case where the securitizing actor, that being President Trump, seeks to legitimize the actions retrospectively. In other words, unlike

numerous other instances, the analysis will examine the strategies of legitimatization and investigate whether elements of the securitization process can be identified in the speeches *after* the event has taken place.

5.1 Situating Securitization

Little can be said about security as an isolated object, and thus, it must be studied in a wider context (Buzan et. al, 1998:11). In the light of securitization, security is always conceptually linked to survival. Securitization is contextually enabled and constrained since threats arise out of, and through the work of, specific contexts. It is vital for a comprehensive study of securitization to have a thorough understanding of the context of which the analytical immersion takes place in order to situate the analysis and explain relationships (Balzacq, 2011). In order to capture the meaning of discourse, it is consequently necessary to situate it socially and historically (Balzacq, 2011:36). Therefore, this section will start out by providing the necessary context and explain the political situation that constituted the setting under which the tense events played out. It is in the context where principles of legitimacy and valuation exist, and where interpretations of events are constructed (Buzan et. al, 1998:37).

5.1.1 The Assassination of Major General Soleimani

On the 2nd of January 2020, American time, a vehicle carrying Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani was hit by a drone strike near Baghdad International Airport in Iraq. The strike killed the General together with several military commanders including Iraqi Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and was shortly after confirmed by the Pentagon to have been a United States drone strike (US Dept. of Defense, 2020). The broader audience might not have known the General's name prior to his death, however Hillary Mann Leverett, who is a former White House National Security official and has negotiated for the US government with Iranian officials, noted that the assassination of Maj. Gen. Soleimani is equivalent to an Iranian assassination of the US defence secretary, or the commander of the US Central Command (Al Jazeera, 2020b). Maj. Gen. Soleimani has since 1997 been the commander of the Quds Force, within the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which specializes in unconventional warfare and military intelligence operations. The organization which has, since April 2019,

been declared a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the USA, had the main responsibility to carry out operations in support of Iran's allies. Maj. Gen. Soleimani's assassination sharply and certainly escalated tensions between the USA and Iran, and fueled fears of a military conflict.

Prior to the drone strike that resulted in the death of Maj. Gen. Soleimani, the USA has had an assertive foreign policy toward Iran for several decades (Leverett, 2013). President Trump introduced the US' New Strategy on Iran on the 13th of October 2017. The New Strategy was conducted as a revision of former approaches to the nation. In the words of The White House it is, "the culmination of nine months of deliberation with Congress and our allies on how to best protect American security" (The White House, 2017). The core objectives highlighted herein are what the President note as systematic change in Iran's "hostile and destabilizing actions" which includes blocking all paths to the possibility of obtaining a nuclear weapon or what he calls "export of terrorism" (The White House, 2017). In general, the goal has been to limit Iranian influence in the region and while seeking these goals the administration adheres to the bipartisan consensus on US-Iranian policy that has prevailed for the past couple of decades. The New Strategy revolves around the campaign, known as 'Maximum Pressure', which involves the imposition of economic sanctions on Iran. This is the result of the USA leaving the multilateral nuclear deal, Joint Comprehensive Plan for Action, in 2018 which President Trump regarded as "the worst deal ever", and while doing so, sought to forcefully persuade the Iranian government to negotiate a new deal (The White House, 2018)

The study of securitization in a particular case starts from an important prerequisite which is how to sort out the issue referred to as a security problem. The two operational criteria are that (1) it should be a focus of public attention or debate, and (2) the issue should be target for activities related to public opinion or legal and/or political action (Balzacq, 2011:32). Relating to the first criterion, the gathered information of the drone strike of Maj. Gen. Soleimani was shortly after its occurrence reported as breaking news all over the globe. The events unquestionably stirred up countless reactions across the world both in favor of and against the ordered drone strike. Noam Chomsky, who is a widely recognized linguist of geopolitical matters, commented on the episode to The Hindustan Times accordingly: "[Maj. Gen. Soleimani's assassination] is at least international terrorism, arguably worse" (The Hindustan Times, 2020). US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, backed President Trump by stating, "it was the right decision. We got it right" (CNBC, 2020). United Kingdom's prime minister, Boris Johnson, stated that Maj. Gen. Soleimani had posed a, "threat to all our interests

and was responsible for a pattern of disruptive, destabilizing behavior in the region” and declared that the UK will not lament his death while urging for de-escalation (The Herald, 2020). Iranian neighboring countries, like Iraq and Israel, have likewise commented on the events. Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, stated that, “just as Israel has the right of self-defense, the United States has exactly the same right”, while Iraq’s Prime Minister, Abdul Mahdi, condemned the attack, calling it an "aggression" on Iraq that would "spark a devastating war” (Al Jazeera, 2020a). In relation to the second criterion, the cited issue has been revolved in political action since President Trump took decisive action to assassinate the General. The cited security problem is moreover linked to the production of an approving public opinion, since securitization is conditioned by the acceptance of the audience.

5.2 Designation of Existential Threat

According to the Copenhagen School, the existential threat can only be understood in relation to the particular character of the valued referent object in question. The referent object refers to things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival (Balzacq, 2011:35). Therefore, the analysis will depart from the investigation of the perceived threat in relation to the designated referent object. The referent object in the two speeches is the American population with particular emphasis on Americans who are on diplomatic or military missions outside of US borders. President Trump identifies the referent object by stating, “we will always protect our diplomats, service members, all Americans [...]” (Trump, 2020a).

As the designated existential threat is central to the theory of securitization, it is vital to study the construction of the perceived threat through linguistic strategies in political speech. The existential threat to the referent object is in a broad sense terrorism, however clearly specified as Maj. Gen. Soleimani, who by President Trump is referenced as the “number-one terrorist anywhere in the world” (Trump, 2020a). The threat thus takes human form and possesses features. Humanizing the threat and allowing it an identity causes a space where a notion of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, or a ‘we’ and ‘they’ emerge. Securitization is to a large extent a discourse of identity, since a relation between identity formation and security discourse can be identified (Köhler, 2019:58). The discourse makes use of labels and adjectives which are categorized into oversimplified binary oppositions. These two categories

broadly embrace the moral distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, where the referent object reflects the good while the threat represents the evil (Harle, 2000:12). The referent object is appealed to as a united collective with shared values which revolves around the reference ‘we’. In the mentioned speeches President Trump utilizes words such as ‘we’ and ‘our’ to generate feelings of togetherness, sympathy and attachment among the audience. For instance, phrases like “our nation”, “our diplomats” and “our allies” are being used (Trump, 2020a; Trump, 2020b). This linguistic tactic also supports President Trump’s adaption and connection to the audience in the attempt to establish the speaker as a recognized part of the referent object. Within the speeches, America and its population are described as “pursuing the interests of good people”, “seeking peace, harmony, and friendship with all of the nations of the world”, and are claimed to be in possession of “the best military by far [and] the best intelligence” (Trump, 2020a). Hereby, the speaker claims a predominance. Words such as “peace” and “harmony” are used to describe a value-system which the audience will be more prone to identify with and approve of. The ‘we’ is further strengthened through the description of the evil antagonist as an opposition to “our people” (Trump, 2020b). The ‘we’ and ‘they’ are mutually dependent since the self is that which the other is not (Köhler, 2019:59). Contrarily, Maj. Gen. Soleimani is portrayed as a person who “made the death of innocent people his sick passion” and has been “perpetrating acts of terror to destabilize the Middle East”. President Trump claims that, “under Soleimani’s leadership [the Quds Force] has targeted, injured, and murdered hundreds of American civilians and servicemen” (Trump, 2020a). Maj. Gen. Soleimani is thereby also actorized as a decisive agent through active verbs which linguistically seek to strengthen the threat perception. In essence, he possesses the ability to make decisions, and is therefore not simply a static threat. The words chosen to describe the General supports President Trump’s attempt to portray him as a ruthless threatening actor. By stating that, Maj. Gen. Soleimani was “personally responsible for some of the absolutely worst atrocities” and using the metaphor that his hands “were drenched in [...] American blood” enforces the creation of meaning of the General as possessing the features of an existential threat (Trump, 2020b). The portrayal of Maj. Gen. Soleimani is moreover supported by the facilitating condition, defined by the Copenhagen School, related to the usage of objects that are generally taken to be threatening. He is accused of the “planting of roadside bombs” and “lunching terrorist strikes against civilian targets” (Trump, 2020b). Road side bombs and terrorist strikes are typically associated with guerilla tactics, and therefore support the construction of the perceived threat alluding to the irrationality of the actor as well as indicating severe harm. Linguistically, President Trump uses the word “murdered” when speaking of killings

Maj. Gen. Soleimani is accused of orchestrating while words such as “terminated”, “stopped” and “removing” is being utilized when referring to the ordered drone strike that targeted and assassinated the General (Trump, 2020b). Evidently, the language used to describe the President’s own launched strike is less cruel and has an unremarkable or ‘ordinary’ connotation attached compared to the wording ascribed to Maj. Gen. Soleimani. “Murder” is a word that describes the unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought, and is associated with irrationality and harm.

The events of 9/11 set the stage and defined the terms of conflict that shaped the discourse henceforth. Specifically, this has been the war between the American empire and terrorism (Keen, 1991:v). Along with terrorism’s journey up the list of priorities, on especially the Western security agenda, the discourse concerning terrorism has become distinctive. The label ‘terrorist’ possesses historical collective meaning to the American population and broader Western world and is grounded in a common understanding of the expression. Most political concepts, terms and images are grounded in a certain conflict and are related to a concrete situation. ‘Terrorist’ is the word that came to define the threatening enemy post 9/11 and is associated with all evil and immoral (Reyes, 2011).

Since security is, according to the Copenhagen School, linked to survival, the portrayal of Maj. Gen. Soleimani as an irrational terrorist who was responsible for the death of many civilians and American personnel supports the transfer of the issue onto the security agenda and likewise grants it foremost importance. Throughout both speeches, President Trump does not mention the word ‘security’ once. Instead the issue becomes a security matter by presenting it as such through the performative functions of words and symbols and thereby, in essence, performing a speech act.

5.3 Justification of Extraordinary Measures

The success of the securitization process concerning the justification of extraordinary measures, is highly dependent on the speaker’s ability to identify and make use of the audience’s needs, interests and feelings (Balzacq, 2011:9). Political leaders appeal to emotions in order to create and support certain constructions of reality. 9/11 is arguably the most emotionally exploited event in the endeavor of legitimization of political action. As stated earlier, the mention of ‘terrorist’ evokes a range of feelings which are emotionally linked to previous experiences. Since the attacks of 9/11, any allusion to the events activates emotions that were

related to that specific day and which have been reinforced and shaped in the following years. 9/11 is the source of various negative emotions related to the attacks and these emotions are often manipulated and exploited by political leaders to achieve certain goals. In order to achieve persuasive effect, the speaker has to moderate the spoken language according to the audience's experiences (Balzacq, 2011:9). The audience in the particular case is not directly pointed out, besides President Trump addressing "everybody", but in relation to the context, arguably the audience is primarily the American population (Trump, 2020a). However, as leader of USA, the President speaks to all nations of the world. The collective memory and the constructed shared belief have since 2001 been used in order to trigger the audience's emotions when seeking to legitimize untypical political action. In essence, 9/11 constitutes a main emotional source of justification for aggressive political action.

Fear is perhaps the most effective emotion when seeking to achieve a supportive response from the audience. The language triggering fear is often deployed in political speech through the demonization of the threatening enemy. The rhetoric of the word 'terrorism' or 'terrorist', as used by President Trump in the two speeches, is arguably a political tactic with the aim of frightening people for political advantage. It seeks to bring the audience's attention to particular kinds of harm to civilian life and supports the creation of meaning of the existential threat. Emotions, and particularly fear, are therefore used in the two speeches to nudge the audience towards accepting and supporting the extraordinary action taken by President Trump. Usually emotions are a key element in the process of legitimating political action because they set the stage for and prepares the audience to the presented future course of action. However, in the analyzed case this legitimizing strategy seeks to justify actions that have already been taken. This is due to the fact, that the action of assassinating Maj. Gen. Soleimani was not publicly debated prior to its execution and thereby the President uses emotions to allude to a frightening scenario.

One of the most significant outcomes of 9/11 was the transformation in priorities concerning security matters in many Western countries. Rapidly, terrorism became the single most important security issue. President Trump states, "in recent days [Maj. Gen. Soleimani] was planning new attacks on Americans targets". In this statement he argues the urgency of the political decision he was 'forced' to make in order to protect the possible victims that are claimed to be at target (Trump, 2020b). This statement is in accordance to the distinguishing feature of securitization which, by the Copenhagen School, is perceived to be the specific rhetorical structure concerning security and priority of action. The securitizing actor thus argues in the form of, 'if the problem is not handled now, it will be too late' or as in the

case under examination, ‘if nothing had been done, Americans would have lost their lives’ (Buzan et. al, 1998:26). To elaborate, the legitimatization process of extraordinary action in political discourse is often presented in relation to the past and the future. The strategy involves the imposition of a threat in the future that requires urgent action. Usually two alternative depictions are presented by the securitizing actor (Reyes, 2011:794). The first, involves the idea, ‘if no action is taken, the past will repeat itself’. President Trump states, “we took action last night to stop a war” arguing the necessity of assassinating Maj. Gen. Soleimani in order to prevent any possible further violent and hostile behavior committed by the General (Trump, 2020a). In this statement President Trump warns the audience of a war, which has been stopped due to his decision-making. It also indicates, that President Trump acknowledges the audience’s assumed objection of starting a war. The other depiction typically presented in political speech, is ‘if we do act according to the speaker’s proposal, we will have security and enjoy cherished values’. Again, in the case under scrutiny, this portrayal is presented as, ‘because of the actions taken, safety and security are now preserved’. President Trump declares that, “the world is a safer place without these monsters”, using the metaphor “monsters” to refer to ISIS, the “terrorist leader known as al-Baghdadi” and Maj. Gen. Soleimani (Trump, 2020a). Political leaders often attempt to reach political goals by legitimizing their decision-making through the presentation of these hypothetical futures. In order to do so, specific linguistic choices are made which include the use of words such as ‘could’ and ‘would’ (Reyes, 2011:794). President Trump uses this rhetorical means to argue the capacity and imminence of Maj. Gen. Soleimani as the threat. He claims, “a lot of lives would have been saved” had the General been assassinated even earlier and “he should have been terminated long ago” (Trump, 2020a; Trump, 2020b). In general, the emphasis on an unsafe future allows politicians to distract the attention of the audience away from the present situation and helps the speaker avoid the questioning of the decision making (Reyes, 2011:794).

Since the audience has to give consent in order for a securitization process to have been successful, the position of the securitizing actor is important. The argument presented by the speaker is supported by the speaker’s social capital and credibility. The Copenhagen School writes, “the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked” (Buzan et. al, 1998:32). If a speaker holds a position of authority this constitutes a facilitating condition to the securitizing actor’s speech acts. Therefore, the securitizing actor that holds a position which is relevant to the issue being securitized, is more likely to convince the audience to abide and support the speaker’s argumentation. As the president of the United States, President Trump is certainly

in a power position of dealing with security issues. According to the Constitution of the United States, the President is granted the role as commander in chief of both the Army and Navy of the US (Legal Information Institute, 1992). He states in the opening of his first speech, “as President, my highest and most solemn duty is the defense of our nation and its citizens” (Trump, 2020a). Here, President Trump declares his position and main concern. The usage of the word ‘defense’ also falls in line with his argumentation concerning Maj. Gen. Soleimani as posing an imminent threat to the American people. Because of this threat, President Trump argues the chosen course of action, that being a defense-strategy, based on the protection of Americans from an anticipated attack launched by Maj. Gen. Soleimani. In the first speech, it is likewise declared by the President that, “if Americans anywhere are threatened, we have all of those targets already fully identified, and I am ready and prepared to take whatever action is necessary” (Trump, 2020a). In this statement, President Trump stresses his responsibility to protect the American population. President Trump continues to make use of his position of authority as a facilitating condition throughout the speeches. He states, “under my leadership America’s policy is unambiguous” (Trump, 2020a). This indicates the power position of President Trump as a leader of the American people. He likewise states, “we took a decisive action to stop a ruthless terrorist from threatening American lives” and “at my direction, the United States military eliminated the world’s top terrorist, Qassem Soleimani” (Trump, 2020b). This statement supports the notion that the securitizing actor has more knowledge and information on the situation concerning the perceived threat and therefore knows ‘what is best’ to do in the given situation. Thereby, the President’s influence through discourse is usually magnified because of the assumed access to expert knowledge or restricted information. Since the audience is usually not fully aware of the threat and its scope, or does not possess the means to verify statements, the wording that expresses power, determination and knowledge, supports the speaker in obtaining the requested consent and acceptance from the audience. The announcement is presented in a way that also indicates it as a rational and evaluated decision. Therefore, the President typically have special powers to dominate and shape a discourse (Köhler, 2019:66). However, President Trump does not rest his argumentation on voices of expertise. Politicians often justify their actions based on recommendations by- and discussions with experts on the specific issues, which will hereby often be mentioned in political speeches as a legitimatization strategy (Reyes, 2011:800). This is not the case with either of the speeches presented by President Trump since none of his statement are presented as being directly backed by experts supporting his chosen means of action with their knowledgeable statements.

President Trump recalls the strike that caused the death of Maj. Gen. Soleimani in his speeches and states that the United States' military, "successfully executed a flawless precision strike" that assassinated the General (Trump, 2020a). The President uses positive words like "successful" and "flawless" in order to activate encouraging resonance within the audience. The statement likewise indicates that only the designated targets were killed and that no civilians were hurt. The precision of the strike is an important notion made by President Trump when seeking the consent from the audience, because it is universally perceived to be immoral to kill civilians. Since Maj. Gen. Soleimani was the main target it would have been close to impossible to justify the killing of civilians and the arguments would most likely have been presented differently. President Trump speaks of the Iranian population stating that, "the future belongs to the people of Iran", emphasizing that this concerns those who, "seek peaceful coexistence and cooperation [and] not the terrorist warlords who plunder their nation to finance bloodshed abroad" (Trump, 2020a) Here President Trump again stresses the perceived destabilizing behavior of terrorists while showing respect and sympathy for the Iranian population. This supports the construction of the self-image of President Trump as a strong and reasonable leader, and that the threat is recognized to be on a state-level.

In the effort of legitimizing the chosen means, President Trump attempts to create an illusion or reality that reflects victory over Maj. Gen. Soleimani who constituted the existential threat. President Trump states, "we take comfort in knowing that his reign of terror is over", indicating that the American population is safe from the General's supposed evil intentions (Trump, 2020a). In order to mobilize approval and obtain consent among the audience the speaker portrays the course of action as a success. President Trump likewise argues that besides from eliminating an imminent threat now, the risk of another threat with a similar nature will less likely emerge, since the President has now proven that he will not hesitate to act preemptively. It is argued that, "by removing Soleimani, we have sent a powerful message to terrorists: If you value your life, you will not threaten the lives of our people" (Trump, 2020b). Through his speech, President Trump articulates an explicit threat, declaring that, "if Americans anywhere are threatened, we have all of those targets already fully identified, and I am ready and prepared to take whatever action is necessary" (Trump, 2020a).

Overall, as in accordance with the 'grammar of security' as presented by the Copenhagen School, Maj. Gen. Soleimani is presented as an existential threat to the American people who was "plotting imminent and sinister attacks on American diplomats and military personnel" but was stopped, or "terminated" as noted by President Trump, in due time

(Trump, 2020a). This encapsulating outline captures the existential threat, point of no return and the chosen course of action which is presented as the solution to the security issue. It moreover, emphasizes the urgency of the threat, which seeks to legitimize the extraordinary measures.

6 Concluding Discussion

This study set out to establish an understanding of why and how President Trump sought to legitimize his command that gave the green light to assassinate Major General Soleimani, a prominent commander and head of the Quds Force in The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, on the 2nd of January 2020. Through an exhaustive investigation of the two speeches delivered by the US President, within the first week following the drone strike, the language and discursive practices used in the attempt to legitimize the assassination, has been explored. The study has established that discourse can act as a powerful mechanism in the political sphere and particularly when it concerns security issues. This is based on the notion that language does not construct reality but rather shapes people's perception of it. In essence, the constructivist assumption, concerning security, rests upon the belief that security is a social construction. It is viewed as a space of negotiation and contestation in which actors compete to define the values and identity of a given audience, as well as the power to declare something a threat (McDonald, 2009:71).

Understanding 'how' President Trump legitimizes the ordered drone strike is closely linked to the understanding of 'why' the linguistic attempt to legitimize the act is made. The very fact that the President delivers a speech with the presented rhetorical structure, could arguably indicate that he is aware of the possible effect of his actions. The reason why President Trump seeks to legitimize the assassination is, according to securitization theory, because the nature of the actions hold an untypical and extraordinary nature.

The framework of securitization has effectively demonstrated the significance of linguistic constellations of a threat. Throughout the two speeches delivered by the President, he does not mention the word 'security' once. Instead the security issue, involving the perceived threatening Maj. Gen. Soleimani, becomes one, through the portrayal of him as such by using the means of specifically chosen words and phrases. The analysis demonstrates that President Trump identifies the referent object as being the population of the USA and declares their right to security and need for protection. The constellation of the 'self' and the 'other', acting as a key element of a securitizing move, is present within the discourse presented by President Trump. Broadly, Maj. Gen. Soleimani is argued to comprise all evil and is depicted

as a mad and irrational actor. Since the threat construction is, as established, a relational process, the self-image of the speaker and the referent object is constituted against the perception of the threatening 'other'. According to the statements of President Trump, the 'we' is presented as peaceful and friendly, and most importantly possesses a right to survival.

It is noteworthy, that President Trump provides no factual evidence to back his declarations. A common phrase says that, 'facts speak for themselves', however this does not apply to this case of argumentation. Nor does President Trump back his statements by introducing a supplementary voice of expertise. Since this neither is present in the speeches, he has to completely rely on his argumentation in order to mobilize support. While the President does not mention any voice of expertise in terms of making the decision, he does however allude to the skill and capacity of the military in relation to the execution. A reason for this might be that these experts are part of the opposing establishment which he sees himself battling in the endeavor to legitimize the assassination.

The theory of securitization is, as argued throughout, based on the idea that the existence of issues as security problems, and the management of these, do not necessarily depend on entirely objective or material conditions. These speech acts function to support the construction of the threat among the audience. In essence, the speaker socially creates and gives character to threats by 'speaking security'. In doing so, they can be considered intentional, strategic actions aimed at giving a discourse a specific direction. Language says a great deal about the ideas it contains and how these have been shaped. President Trump repeats the word "terrorist" multiple times throughout his speeches and uses it as a label for Maj. Gen. Soleimani to portray him as a threat (Trump, 2020a). Legitimatization is pursued by appealing to emotions. As argued in the analysis, 9/11 acts as a main emotional source exploited by President Trump in order to justify his chosen course of action and strengthen the audience's support hereof. Every audience has experienced some form of trauma, which the speaker can effectively exploit through reminiscence so as to obtain persuasive influence (Reyes, 2011). Especially the emotion of fear is evoked among the audience and fear is the most overplayed sentiment in securitization. Fear is likewise present in the case analyzed. This is because when fear is present, the audience acts less rationally and are more probable to support the use of extraordinary means in order for the securitizing actor to be able to guarantee the referent object's security. In a sense, the audience is brought onto an emotional roller-coaster where the speaker attaches the positive emotions and adjectives to the referent object while inciting the feeling of fear when mentioning the perceived threat. Moreover, the linguistic strategy of presenting a hypothetical future, such as attacks on American targets, unlikely to suit the audi-

ence, supports the justification of extraordinary measures. Consequently, the analysis evidently demonstrates that a securitizing move has been made by President Trump. The President attempts to defend the strike as an act of self-defense, claiming that Maj. Gen. Soleimani was engaged in a continuing campaign of terror that placed U.S. interests at "imminent" risk at the moment he was assassinated in Baghdad (Trump, 2020a). Although, the Copenhagen School's main focus is the theory of securitization the goal, in the eyes of the Scholars, is for issues to remain in the realm of 'normal' politics to prevent the escalation of conflict. Accordingly, security is not regarded as an absolutely positive notion sought maximized, because when done so, potentially more useful ways of conceptualizing the addressed issues are eliminated.

Following the drone strike, the US embassy called on its citizens in Iraq to leave the country immediately and likewise, many states around the world followed suit and called on their citizens to travel home from the region signifying a worry for further attacks. Attacking Maj. Gen. Soleimani reflects a new course of action aiming directly at Iranian activities. It is certain that the four-decade long tensions between Iran and the USA has entered a new phase due to the recent escalations. The analysis argues that consent and support can be achieved through linguistic means, and that the speech acts are conditioned by the power position of which the speaker holds. Likewise, power and affirmation can be obtained or strengthened through effective argumentation and when a popular supportive opinion is reached. Though, the aftermath of the events of January the 2nd demonstrate that just as power can be gained, it can also be weakened if the legitimatization process has not proven persuasive enough.

Only on the day after the assassination of Maj. Gen Soleimani, the White House officially notified Congress about the fatal drone strike. In February, The US House of Representatives passed a War Power resolution that would limit the President's ability to take military action against Iran without approval from Congress. The resolution directs President Trump to end the use of military force against Iran unless authorized by Congress. However, it does not prevent the US from defending itself against an imminent threat. The resolution is a clear rebuke of the President over his order to assassinate Maj. Gen. Soleimani, and thereby also escalating tensions with Iran, but also fueling instability and uncertainty into the region. A couple of months later in May, President Trump vetoed the resolution and portrayed the measures as an encroachment on his presidential powers and as causing damage to his ability to protect the US as well as a personal insult and political attack from his opponents (The White House, 2020).

6.1 Academic Contribution and Future Research

By conducting an analysis of the discourse presented by President Trump in the endeavor of legitimizing the assassination of Maj. Gen. Soleimani, this study hopes to be of value in primarily the field of International Relations and Peace and Conflict Studies. Moreover, this research seeks to contribute to the scholarly debate concerning the power of language amid security concerns. The main goal for the Copenhagen School is to encourage researchers to broaden the scope of instances of securitization through the identification of securitizing moves under various circumstances and in different spheres. Therefore, the paper also hopes to be acknowledged as a contribution to the wider comprehension and usage of the framework of securitization by exploring the identified elements in the particular case. The social and political implications of this study include the breaking down of the given political discourse investigated in this study and scrutinize the purpose of the used words. In essence, the study and its method has revealed taken-for-granted and hidden aspects of political discourse. Therefore, the paper impacts identification of the possibilities of the misuse of power as well as inspection of political language, and overall, seeks to raise the consciousness of the reader. The study thereby brings about social implications by drawing attention to the underlying intentions, production of knowledge, shaping of meaning and the power of political speech. Ethically, the analyst engages with discourses and is aware of the part taken in the construction of knowledge as well as the possibility of reproducing discourses, and the reflexivity that is thus requires.

The findings of this study show how words, metaphors and linguistic compositions can support a speaker in constructing collective meaning, in order to generate approval among an audience, of untypical means, to eliminate the designated threat. In addition to the conclusions made in this study, it would be interesting to investigate whether the securitization process present in this case, has been successful and to what extent. It would likewise be interesting to further explore legitimatization strategies utilized by former American presidents. This could be done by assessing former rhetorical attempts to justify transnational assassinations of perceived threatening actors and investigate whether patterns can be identified through comparisons of these.

7 Bibliography

- Bahgat, G (2009) *United States-Iranian Relations: The Terrorism Challenge*. Gawda Bahgat.
- Balzacq, T (2011) *Securitization Theory: how Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*. Routledge.
- Buzan, B & Wæver, O & De Wilde, J (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Coskun, B (2011) *Analyzing Desecuritization: The Case of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Education and Water Management*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Edelman, M (1985) *Political Language and Political Reality*. Volume 18. Number 1. American Political Science Association.
- Entman, R (1998) *Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*. Journal of Communication.
- Feldman, O & De Landtsheer, C (1998) *Politically Speaking: A Worldwide Examination of Language Used in the Public Sphere*. Praeger Publishers.
- Fierke, K (2002) *Links Across the Abyss: Language and Logic in International Relations*. International Studies Quarterly 46: 331–354.
- Foucault, M (1969) *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Routledge Classics.
- Given, L (2008) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Vol. 2. SAGE Publications
- Harle, V (2000) *The Enemy with a Thousand Faces: the tradition of the other in Western political thought and history*. Praeger Publishers.
- Holzsheiter, A (2013) *Between Communicative Interaction and Structures of Signification: Discourse Theory and Analysis in International Relations*. International Studies Perspectives.
- Jarvis, L (2009) *Times of Terror: Discourse, Temporality and the War on Terror*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Keen, S (1991) *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination*. MacMillan.
- Köhler, I (2019) *Framing the Threat: How Politicians justify their Policies*. De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

- Leverett, F & Leverett, H (2013) *Going to Tehran: Why the United States Must Come to Terms with the Islamic Republic*. Metropolitan Books.
- McDonald, M (2013) *Constructivisms* in Williams, P (ed.) *Security Studies: An Introduction*. 2. edition. Routledge.
- Merskins, D (2009) *The Construction of Arabs as Enemies: Post-September 11 Discourse of George W. Bush*. Mass Communication and Society.
- Reyes, A (2011) *Strategies of Legitimatization in Political Discourse: From Words to Action*. Discourse and Society. Sage Publications.
- Rose, G (2016) *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with visual Materials*. Sage Publications. 4th edition.
- Rychnovská, D (2014) *Securitization and the Power of Threat Framing*. *Institute of International Relations. Perspectives. Volume 22*
- Steuter, E & Wills, D (2009) *Discourses of Dehumanization: Enemy Construction and Canadian Media Complicity in the Framing of the War on Terror*. *Global Media Journal. Volume 1. Issue 2*.
- Walliman, N (2011) *Research Methods: The Basics*. London, New York: Routledge
- Wæver, O (2011) *Politics, Security, Theory*. *Security Dialogue. Special issue on The Politics of Securitization*.
- Yazan, B (2015) *Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake*. *The Qualitative Report 2015 Vol. 20, Number 2, Teaching and Learning Article 1*
- Al Jazeera (2020a) World Reacts to the US killing of Iran's Qassem Soleimani in Iraq
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/world-reacts-killing-iran-qassem-soleimani-iraq-200103072643596.html>
- Al Jazeera (2020b) Iran's Qassem Soleimani killed in US air raid at Baghdad airport
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/iraq-3-katyusha-rockets-fired-baghdad-airport-200102232817666.html>
- Legal Information Institute (1992) U.S Constitution
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution>

The Herald (2020) Boris Johnson supports Donald Trump's air strike, saying UK 'won't lament' Qasem Soleimani's death

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18139067.boris-johnson-supports-donald-trumps-drone-strike-saying-uk-wont-lament-qasem-soleimanis-death/>

The Hindustan Times (2020) Soleimani's killing an act of terrorism, says Noam Chomsky

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/soleimani-s-killing-an-act-of-terrorism-says-noam-chomsky/story-Qx3HqxKnxeaUMyGXAMcqoJ.html>

The Washington Post (2002) Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>

The White House (2017) President Donald J. Trump's New Strategy on Iran

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-new-strategy-iran/>

The White House (2018) President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-ending-united-states-participation-unacceptable-iran-deal/>

The White House (2020) Statement from the President Regarding Veto of S.J. Res. 68

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-regarding-veto-s-j-res-68/>

Trump, D (2020a) Remarks by President Trump on the Killing of Qasem Soleimani

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-killing-qasem-soleimani/>

Trump, D (2020b) Remarks by President Trump on Iran

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-iran/>

US Department of Defense (2020) Statement by the Department of Defense

<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2049534/statement-by-the-department-of-defense/>