Analysis of South Africa's Response to COVID-19 through the Securitization Theory

by

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to analyse South Africa's response to COVID-19 and if it constituted a securitization act. To securitize means a securitizing actor elevates an issue beyond politics by treating it as an existential threat and adopt emergency and extra-ordinary measures to manage it. The study employed the securitization theory and its core elements to analyse President Cyril Ramaphosa's speeches in response to the COVID-19 outbreak to determine if specific words and phrases meet the securitization threshold. The study also explored the de-securitization concept, specifically, in relation to South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system as well as President Ramaphosa's speech to the nation delivered on 4 April 2022 which effectively terminated the national state of disaster and national lockdown. The study concludes that President Ramaphosa securitized COVID-19 to protect the people of South Africa and the economy against the existential threat caused by the virus. The main goal for securitizing COVID-19 was to flatten the curve to allow time for the health system to increase readiness, which was accomplished. The study further reveals that the alert level system created a de-securitization spectrum where the securitization levels were gradually relaxed towards a de-securitized spectrum. The president's speech on 4 April 2022 to terminate the national state of disaster and national lockdown marked a full de-securitization of COVID-19 and a return of the country to normalcy. The study provides a framework, which scholars can use to analyse non-traditional security issues, which may present existential threats to referent objects.

Keywords: securitization theory; de-securitization; securitizing actor; referent object; existential threat; extraordinary/ emergency/ exceptional measures; audience; functional actors; alert level system; health-security nexus.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BT	bioterrorism
BW	biological warfare
CoGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CS	Copenhagen School
DoH	Department of Health
EVD	Ebola virus disease
GTAC	Government Technical Advisory Centre
HIV/Aids	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IHR	International Health Regulations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAC	Ministerial Advisory Committee
NATJOINTS	National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure
NCC	National Command Centre
NCCC	National Coronavirus Command Council
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NICD	National Institute of Communicable Diseases
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SANDF	South African National Defence Force

SAPS   South African Police Service

SARS   severe acute respiratory syndrome

UN   United Nations

UNDP   United Nations Development Programme

UNSG   UN Secretary-General

US   United States

WHO   World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Identifying the research theme

The outbreak of COVID-19 on 31 December 2019 in Wuhan, China, brought the health-security nexus under broader scrutiny. Chinese authorities discovered COVID-19 on 7 January 2020 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020a). On 30 January 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 "a public health emergency of international concern" (WHO, 2020b). This labelling elevated COVID-19 onto the security agenda and triggered emergency measures in several countries (Dimari & Papadakis, 2022:2), encompassing lockdowns, border closures, travel limitations, quarantines, isolations, and medical surveillances.

COVID-19 explicitly demonstrated the health-security nexus where humans at the individual, family, society, and population levels emerged as the primary referent objects of security against the threat of mass infections and deaths. South Africa adopted the WHO primary norm articulation by acknowledging COVID-19 as a health crisis. This is evident in South Africa's classification of COVID-19 as a "national disaster" (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2020a), declaration of a national state of disaster (RSA, 2020b) and imposing and enforcing a nationwide lockdown. The study aimed to investigate South Africa's response to COVID-19 using the securitization framework. The significance of the study is to deepen knowledge and understanding of how to analyse non-traditional issues using the securitization framework.

1.2   Literature review

The literature indicates rich scholarly work on the health-security nexus. Traditionally, the security concept was associated with protecting the state against external aggression by other state actors. Military security enjoyed primacy as an instrument of statecraft to ensure security. This narrow conception designates the state as a referent object, external military aggression and war as the existential threats and the military as the ultimate institution to achieve and sustain security. Health issues were disregarded as part of the security agenda despite the existential threat they caused to human survival.

The end of the cold war heralded an era where non-traditional security issues were explored and considered under the rubric of security. These developments presented opportunities to consider security issues in five sectors, that is, military, political, socetal, economic, and environmental. Global pandemics, often severe and widespread, were framed in security terms fomenting the health-security nexus. Scholars, such as Kirk and McDonald (2021:2) posit that key global pandemics, which ascended the security agenda include HIV/AIDS (the 1980s onward), anthrax (bioterrorism) attacks in 2001, SARS in 2005, H1N1 in 2009, Ebola virus disease (EVD) in 2014, Zika in 2016, and recently COVID-19 in 2019.

The literature overview covers the evolution of security studies from the traditional approach to new security thinking. New security thinking includes the securitization theory. A detailed overview of the securitization theory and its components lays a foundation for the study. The de-securitization process—a side-by-side concept of securitization, is briefly analysed, reflecting on its development and challenges. Finally, the health-security nexus is revisited with a broad overview. It is narrowed down to focus on the response to COVID-19 at global and national (South Africa) levels.

(a) Security Studies: The concept of security was militaristic and state-centric during the cold war. The security goal was broadly concerned with protection against aggression, military force, and war as policy choice to achieve national interests and preserve national values. For example, Walt (1991:212) posits that security concerns the "phenomenon of war" because conflict among states has "far-reaching effects on states and societies". Security should explore conditions making the use of force more likely, involving how force affects individuals, states, and societies, and the specific policies states adopt to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war.

Lippmann (1943:5) contends that "a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war". Regarding value advancement, Trager and Simonie (1973:5) contend that security concerns the protection of vital values—those if eliminated or radically altered would change the character of the state

or the political systems in which it operates. According to Brown (1983:4), national security is "the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to protect its nature, institutions, and governance from disruption from outside; and to control its borders".

Within these traditional conceptualizations of security, humans or threats to their survival are subsidiary and subsumed under the rubric of state security. Buzan and Hansen (2009:9-12) emphasise this state-centric approach by expressing that "security concerns crucial political themes, such as the state, authority, legitimacy, politics and sovereignty". Issues such as food, natural resources, and *health (own emphasis),* are incorporated only to the extent to which they influence military security.

Examining the debates for and against broadening the security concept, Krause and Williams (1996:232) remark that the ideological claim of neorealist is the 'centrality of the state as the subject of security'. In this context, "the state is the primary locus of security, authority, and obligation. The security of 'citizens' is identified with and guaranteed by that of the state; and, by definition, those who stand outside it represent potential or actual threats" Krause and Williams (1996:232).

In this regard security studies during the cold war was concerned with military security. For example, Baldwin (1995:9) state that the neorealist conceptualization of security was predicated on the notion that "if military force was relevant to an issue, it was considered a security issue; and if military force was not relevant, that issue was consigned to the category of low politics."

Such conceptualization empowers political actors to justify suspension of civil liberties, engage in wars, and massively allocate resources to military apparatus above all else in the name of security (Baldwin, 1995:9). This narrow approach appeared undesirable evening during the thick of cold war to the extent that scholars like Wolfers (1952:481-483) warned that "anything done under the rubric of security should be subject to closer scrutiny, should have apparent specifications to reduce confusion and make it useful for 'sound political counsel or scientific usage can afford".

The post-cold war era heralded the expansion of the security agenda. Without prescribing who or what should be the focus of security, Williams (2008:7) remark that "without a referent object, there can be no threats nor discussion of security because the concept is meaningless without something to secure". Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2015:113) remark that the concept of security combines "existential threat to a referent object".

The expansion of the security concept beyond military security created a space where health issues could be considered under the rubric of security. The seminal work of Rushton and Youde (2015), "*Routledge Handbook of Global Health Security*", provides innovative research on this emerging field. The mortality rate and the global response to COVID-19 emphasised how health crises are emerging as security issues. According to the WHO (2022), over 6.2 million people were killed by COVID-19 as of 30 April 2022.

Although *security* has broadened and widened beyond *military security*, the realist paradigm, predicated on the principles of statism, self-help, and survival, continues to mould how security is conceptualized. In his work, '*Is Realism still relevant in the 21st century?*', Ngcayisa (2020:11) concluded that:

> "even though advancements in globalization have led to liberalism and the interdependence of states, states still act primarily on national interest before global issues. Realists provide an interpretation of world politics that allows us to acknowledge state interest and the lengths to which state will go in preserving their own interests".

(b) Securitization Theory: The new security thinking resulted to the Copenhagen School (CS) seminal work— "*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*," co-authored by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde (1998). This work broadened and deepened security studies beyond the state-centric militaristic to people-centred approach, categorising security into the military, political, economic, societal and environment sectors. The CS further developed the securitization theory.

According to Salter (2008:323), this theory provides "a ground-breaking, innovative and fruitful approach", which assists analysts to "'systematically determine, present, and explain how mundane occurrences are transformed into security issues" (Kaunert & Yakubov, 2017:30). Non-military issues analysed through the securitization theory include migration and asylum (Huysmans, 2006:45-62), drug trafficking (Silva & Pereira, 2019:209-233), the 2009 swine flu (Hanrieder & Kreuder-Sonnen, 2014:331-348), and COVID-19 (Molnar et al., 2020:1167-1182). Securitization occurs when a securitizing actor:

> … couch an issue through speech act as an existential threat to a referent object; and if the audience adopts the actor's interpretation that the threat is sufficiently dangerous; that it needs to be solved with extraordinary means; and the state, which after the issue has been accepted as a security issue, mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle the existential threat" (Buzan et al., 1998:21).

Drawing from this definition, securitization is underpinned by core elements which facilitates analysis of how a securitizing move is initiated and how to confirm successful securitization. These elements include securitizing actors, referent objects, existential threats, audiences, emergency measures, and functional actors. Securitization success depends on social power and facilitating conditions (Buzan et al., 1998:31-33), which according to Peoples and Vaughan-Williams (2015:116), include the speech act; grammar; disposition and authority of the securitizing actor to speak security; the value of the referent object; credible fixtures; historic danger; harmful connotations of the existential threat; the relationship between the securitizing actor and the audience; and the credibility of the extraordinary measures to handle the existential threat.

The literature overview further reveals scholarly scrutiny, critique, and enhancements of the securitization theory. The main critique pertains to overreliance on speech acts and their limitations in studying real-world situations.

McDonald (2008:564) criticize securitization on the narrowness of the *form, context* and *nature* through which security is constructed. He contends that:

1. "the *form* of act constructing security is defined narrowly, with the focus on the speech of dominant actors, usually political actors. This approach excludes other forms of representations and only focus on the speech acts or discursive interventions of political leaders institutionally and legitimately entrusted to speak security on behalf of the state;

2. Second, the *context* of the act is defined narrowly, with the focus only on the moment of intervention. This approach lacks foresight and long-term goal as the focus is on the moment of intervention, and not to construct security 'overtime through a range of incremental processes';

3. Finally, the framework of securitisation is narrow in the sense that the *nature* of the act is defined solely in terms of the designation of threats to security." In this regard, security is conceptualized as inherently negative and reactionary."

Scholars also emphasise the undervaluing of the audience. Roe (2008:616) contends that the audience is relegated to "agents without agency and passive receivers of security arguments". This undermines the fundamental tenets of securitization because successful securitization depends on the audience's acceptance of the value and legitimacy of the referent object and the "extraordinariness" of security measures (Roe, 2008).

To elevate the value of the audience, Côté (2016:541-558) contends that the securitization process should entail "a deliberative interaction between the securitizing actor(s) and audience(s) to mobilize multiple security discourses and contribute to shared perceptions of 'security' and mutual acceptance of emergency measures". Other scholars positively contributed to enrich securitization despite these criticisms.

Specifically, two comprehensive enrichments are provided by Caballero-Anthonny, Emmers and Acharya (2006:6-8) on their work *'An Introduction to Non-Traditional Security Studies'* and Balzacq (2011:8-15) "*Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve.*" Caballero-Anthonny *et al.* (2006:6-8) propose a comprehensive modified securitization framework, combining theoretical and empirical analysis of various concerns. The core of the framework comprises the following:

- **Issue area**—consensus on the existential threat regarding the referent object;
- **Securitizing actors**—who the securitizing actors are and whose interests they represent;
- **Security concept**—whose security (states, individuals, the international community, ethnic groups, women, etc.) and identifying their interactions;
- **Process**— how threats are identified or constructed;
- **Outcomes**—detailed analysis of the degree of securitization; and influence on the threat; and
- **Conditions affecting securitization**—may include the interplay of various concepts of security, linkages among security issues, the role of powerful actors, domestic political systems, and international norms.

Balzacq (2011:8-15) propose an alternative securitization framework, which must generate a coherent theory through theoretical assumptions about intersubjectivity, context, and practices. The three core assumptions underscoring the framework are:

- The centrality of the audience where an empowering audience must agree with the claims of the securitizing actor. The empowering audience has a direct causal connection with the issue and can enable the securitizing actor to adopt measures to tackle the threat.

- Co-dependency of agency and context implies that the semantic repertoire of security combines textual and cultural meaning. The performative dimension of security rests among semantic regularity and contextual circumstances.

- The *dispositif* and the structuring force of practices. This means securitization occurs in a field of struggle, comprising practices, instantiating intersubjective understandings framed by tools, and the habitus inherited from diverse social fields.

Léonard and Kaunert's (2010) support Balzacq framework, specifically the reconceptualization of the role of audience, remarking:

> Securitization is thus understood as a sustained strategic practice aimed at convincing a target audience to accept, based on what it knows about the world, the claim that a specific development (oral threat or event) is threatening enough to deserve an immediate policy to alleviate it (Léonard and Kaunert's 2010:61).

The research did not oppose or enhance observations as aforementioned but adopted the original securitization theory espoused by the CS. Contributions by other scholars are incorporated only to the extent where they enrich the study.

(c) De-securitization: Even if securitization "has helped to more systematically determine, present and explain how mundane occurrences are transformed into security issues" (Kaunert & Yakubov, 2017:30), security is a negative concept. Transforming issues into threats, and requiring security denotes the political system's failure. Buzan et al. (1998:29) contend that "ideally, politics should be able to unfold according to routine procedures without this extraordinary elevation of specific 'threats' to a pre-political immediacy".

The concept of de-securitization is advanced as the preferred method to achieve the aforementioned. De-securitizing an issue means "not to have issues phrased as 'threats against which we have countermeasures but to move them out of this threat-defence sequence and into the ordinary public sphere" (Buzan et al., 1998:29). What does this mean in practice? How should it be executed? The CS seem puzzled. This encouraged scholars to devise and propose own strategies and methods to overcome this failure. De-securitization is:

> The way a government seeks to 'normalise' the handling of a crisis by stepwise returning to a stance of 'politics as usual', for example, by ending an extensive lockdown in the case of a virus outbreak or gradually integrating immigrants through education, work, and civil rights" (Elander et al., 2021:4).

South Africa securitized COVID-19 by declaring a state of national disaster and imposing a national lockdown in March 2020. Conversely, by terminating the same state of national disaster and national lockdown in April 2022, South Africa de-

securitized the outbreak. Floyd (2007:330) contends that de-securitization is "under-theorised", therefore, vulnerable to varying interpretations. Nguyen (2020:12) contends that de-securitization must co-exist with and supplement securitization to explain and complete the latter. This means that when an issue is moved from securitization to the political level, it is being de-securitized.

De-securitization does not involve securitizing actor-audience interaction nor exploitation of facilitating conditions to move issues to a non-securitized state. As a result de-securitization patterns are difficult to trace in speech acts and discourses. De-securitization carries negative and positive connotations. Negative consequences emerge when a problematic issue eludes its urgency and priority. More optimistically, de-securitization overcomes exceptional politics which may be dangerous for democracy (Aradau, 2004:393). These dangers to democracy include a preference for security over liberty, abuse of political powers under the veil of security, the emergence of new and suspicious paradigms as part of normal political processes and justifying illiberal practices as necessities to maintain national security imperatives. This may include a harsh clamp down on peaceful protests in the guise of enforcing national lockdown rules and prohibiting gatherings.

(d) Health-security nexus – Covid -19: Pandemics entered security studies based on expanding security beyond the military and state-centric approach. Pandemics present severe and pervasive threats to the survival of humans collectively resulting to direct bearing on human security (Williams, 2008:282). Although the securitization theory postulates that threats should not be analysed objectively, COVID-19 has proved severe and pervasive from the onset. The speed with which COVID-19 travelled, the rate of infections, and the number of deaths indicate its disastrous effects and the response thereof had the hallmarks of securitization (Sears, 2020:1).

The UN Secretary-General (UNSG) and WHO director-general framed COVID-19 as an existential threat to humanity and called for extraordinary measures. Guterres (2020) describes COVID-19 as a "gravest test, a health crisis with devastating consequences, and a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and

security". The WHO director-general labelled COVID-19 a "common enemy—an enemy against humanity" (Duarte & Valença, 2021:237). These security-laden speeches established expression globally and propelled governments to implement an array of measures including lockdowns, border closures, contact tracing and surveillance, mask-wearing, quarantine, social distancing, and stay-at-home orders (Gozdecka, 2021). These exceptional measures curtailed civil liberties while creating war zone-like situations where military, police, and border control enforced the lockdowns (Haider et al., 2020:1-10). In other countries, these lockdown measures violated human rights and prioritised military and foreign policies over human health needs (Schnabel & Kickbusch, 2021:381)

In response to COVID-19, South Africa established an incident management team on 30 January 2020. South Africa recorded the first case of COVID-19 on 5 March 2020 (The National Institute for Communicable Diseases [NICD], 2020). During the same period, the NATJOINTS was tasked to repatriate citizens trapped in Wuhan, China. Between 15 and 26 March 2020, South Africa classified COVID-19 as a national disaster, declared a national state of disaster, established an NCCC, and declared a nationwide lockdown. The SAPS and SANDF were mobilized to enforce the lockdown measures.

1.3   Formulation and demarcation of the research problem

The framing of health issues in security terms affects how interventions and responses are coordinated and executed (Nunes, 2015:60). Health-security nexus is often enveloped with fear which facilitate invocation of exceptional measures and ultimately create a securitized environment. The primary research question to explore this problem is:

Did South Africa's response to COVID-19 create a securitized environment?

To respond to this question, the subsequent secondary questions are:

- To what extent do speech acts, public statements, and measures implemented by South Africa resemble securitization?

- How did South Africa's adjusted alert levels influence COVID-19 measures?
- How did South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system create a de-securitization framework.

In response to the main question, the primary assumption is that South Africa's response to COVID-19 had the hallmarks of securitization process. The assumption is ontological and does not provide a scientific answer to the research question. Instead, the study will confirm or disprove the assumption and answer the research question.

The primary study objective is:

To assess whether South Africa's response to COVID-19 created a securitized environment.

The secondary objectives are to:

- explore the pandemic-security nexus and the securitization of COVID-19;
- assess South Africa's response to COVID-19 against the elements of securitization;
- assess South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system as a potential de-securitization framework.

The study is demarcated into conceptual, temporal, and practical terms. Conceptually, the study explores the framing of COVID-19 as a security issue. The securitization theory is an analytical framework used to assess South Africa's response to contain COVID-19. The study was limited to South Africa and covered the period from 30 January 2020 to 4 April 2022, when the national state of disaster was terminated.

1.4   Research methodology

The study employed a holistic single-case study research method. A case study promotes added information because it entails an in-depth analysis of the selected case while retaining a holistic and real-world perspective (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012:713). The study adopted a desktop analysis of written content. A discourse analysis is used to analyse data to decipher the framing of securitization in texts,

contents and context. The CS has argued that securitization is studied through discourse and political constellations. This is done to establish how and whether a political argument transformed into a security discourse "achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed" (Buzan et al., 1998:25). Discourse analysis in this study was, therefore, appropriate.

Data were classified and themed against the securitization elements, indicating securitizing actors, referent objects, existential threats, audiences, emergency measures, and functional actors. South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system was also analysed to identify and explain patterns of potential de-securitization. Primary data were sourced from South Africa's *Disaster Management Regulations* and associated regulations issued to manage COVID-19, speeches by the president, ministers, and other prominent actors. Secondary data were sourced from books, journals, articles, reports, and studies. The study did not examine the securitization theory but used the framework and its core elements to analyse whether COVID-19 was securitized. No human subject or information not in the public domain were used, and as such there were no ethical implications.

1.5   Structure of the research

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The chapter establishes the foundation of the research by identifying the research theme, literature overview, demarcation, research problem, questions, study objectives, and research methodology while outlining the structure of the study.

Chapter 2 : SECURITY STUDIES—CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND HISTORIC EVOLUTION

This chapter provides an overview of the evolution in security studies from traditional to new security thinking. The aim is to reflect on the transition of the security concept from the realist paradigm to the expanded notion which encapsulate non-military sectors. The latter extends to the health-security nexus with the aim to explore how health crises and pandemics such as COVID-19 are drawn into the security domain.

Chapter 3: SECURITIZATION THEORY—THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter expands from chapter two and focuses on securitization as a framework of analysis used in the study. The core elements and conditions facilitating successful securitization are identified, analysed, and described. The related concept of de-securitization is explained to provide a balance view on how securitized issues are moved to a de-securitized state.

Chapter 4: SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND SECURITIZATION THEORY— AN ANALYSIS

This chapter analyses South Africa's response to COVID-19 regarding the conceptual-theoretical framework of securitization. As such and regarding COVID-19, the analysis includes securitizing speech acts; securitizing moves; designation of referent objects and their legitimate claim to survive; the existential threat characterized by credible fixtures; historic dangers; harmful connotations; presentation and persuasion of the audience by authoritative securitizing agents; and designation of functional actors. The chapter also analyses South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system regarding how it enabled de-securitization.

Chapter 5: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises and evaluates the research findings to assess the extent to which the research questions were answered and if the research objectives were fulfilled. Specifically the chapter assess: (a) how South Africa's response to COVID-19 created a securitized environment? (b) how the the alert level represents a gradual return to normalcy – a de-securitized state. The chapter concludes by suggesting recommendations and areas of future research.

CHAPTER 2: SECURITY STUDIES—CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION AND HISTORIC EVOLUTION

2.1   Introduction

This chapter explores the evolution in security studies from the traditional realist paradigm to expanded new security thinking. The aim is to reflect the diverse meanings and contestations of the security concept and its transition from the narrow conceptualization to the new security thinking, which expanded the concept beyond military security. Critical to such expansion is the health-security nexus, observing health-related issues and crises immersed into the security domain through the securitization process.

The chapter begins with an expanded literature overview covering the traditional approaches dominated by state-centric and military security. The chapter summarises the developing of new security thinking during the post-cold war era, which deepened and widened the concept. The chapter concludes by exploring the health-security nexus and its emergence into the security domain.

Two frameworks are provided to assist such exploration. The first framework designates and analyses two referent objects: (a) the state (dependent variable) and (b) population (intervening variable) affected by the pandemic (independent variable) designated as an existential threat. The second framework provides a risk-based approach to weigh specific health issues and determine whether they should ascend the security agenda. The framework adopts a human-centred approach where the population is designated as a primary referent object.

2.2   Traditional approaches to security

2.2.1 Diverse meanings of security

Security is a contested concept with an intensely political ideological core (Buzan, 1991:9). It has no universal definition; but is open to countless meanings depending on who speaks security, in what context, at what time, under what conditions, and for

what objective. As a concept it can "float free of concrete referents to be filled with meanings by their users while sheltering multiple agendas and providing room for manoeuvre and space for contestation" (Cornwall & Eade, 2010:5). It generates endless disputes about its meaning and application; hence Buzan (1991:3) label it an 'essentially contested concept'. Aspects compounding the conceptual challenge is the overlap between security and power and the opportunity to exploit such ambiguity by policymakers in the name of security.

Schultze (1973:529) warned that the security concept could not be defined neatly and precisely because "it deals with a wide variety of risks about whose probabilities we have little knowledge and of contingencies whose nature we can only dimly perceive".

Wolfers (1952:485) termed security an ambiguous concept, which, "in an object sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values and in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked". He further warned that to be helpful, the degree of security aspired, and the means to attain same in a given situation should be specified. While this sounds useful, prioritising values is equally ambiguous; it is more difficult to define the level of security, standards or means to protect them. This explains the realist paradigm, which prioritises war as an existential threat and military security as the primary instrument to maintain the state's survival.

Baldwin (1997:19-20) contend that security should be subjected to the marginal value approach, cognizant of resource scarcity and allocation therefore limited to the extent to which the marginal return is more significant for security than for other resource use. To argue security, relevance factors should be considered, and these include referent objects, threats, values, national interests, and their degrees of importance and severity if attacked. Ullman (1983:133) definition is helpful where he contends that:

> A threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state".

The above definition identifies and elevates two referent objects: inhabitants and the state. It skilfully leaves the existential threat open-ended, therefore, allowing for any threatening event meeting the definition threshold to be considered as a security issue. This enables non-traditional issues, such as health, to be considered under the rubric of security.

2.3   Realist paradigm

During the cold war era, security was dominated by the realist paradigm, which viewed the international environment as having no supreme political authority or central government and, therefore, prone to conflict. The security concept was based on the military as the means "to ensure the well-being of the state, relative power between states, the pursuit of national interests, and ultimately efforts by states to protect their borders from invasion" (Ban, 2003:19-20).

This conceptualization was supported by the anarchical nature of the international environment, the ever-present threat of interstate conflict, and the need to maintain own sovereignty. Underscoring state-centric security is the principle of statism, survival, and self-help. Statism designates states as pre-eminent actors in world politics, with state sovereignty signifying the existence of an independent political community—one with judicial authority over its territory (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014:110). In this regard, a state assumess the primary referent object because it embodies the framework of order and the highest source of governing authority (Buzan, 1991:22).

Survival denotes the primary goal of any state in international relations. In the absence of supreme international authority to ensure each state's security, political leaders prioritise security to advance and preserve supreme national interests (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014:110) and vital values on which the social, political, and physical existence of states are based (Trager & Simonie, 1973:38). Finally, the principle of self-help is based on the absence of supreme authority to guarantee own security and survival. States rely on their own national power determinants, which include natural (geography, resources, and population) and social (economic, political, military, psychological, informational) determinants (Ahmad, 2012:86) to protect their national

interests and their survival (Lynn-Jones, 2008:55). The concept of health security or pandemics bore relevancy only to the extent to which it influences the physical condition of military troops and their operational performance.

Despite the declining attention to military security in the post-cold war era, the centrality of states as primary actors in national security is still relevant. This is evident in how a state is constituted compared to other referent objects. A state is recognised as a:

> … legal territorial entity composed of a stable population and a government, which possesses a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; and its sovereignty is recognised by other states in the international system (Marume, *et al.*, 2016:24-28).

The core components of a state from which national values and interests are derived are embedded in the "ideology, institutional expressions, and physical base of the state" (Buzan, 1991:65). As a consequence, an existential threat to the territoriality, sovereignty, autonomy, ideology, institutional expression, or physical base of the state, constitute a security issue. States must identify, categorise, and respond to harm—traditional and non-traditional, triggered by "globalisation, technological advancements and a myriad of threats arising from transnational actors to natural disasters" (Sussex, Clarke, & Medcalf, 2017:474).

As key international relations players, states enter into multilateral and multidimensional security arrangements to deal with contemporary security threats. These security policy choices are influenced by global interconnectedness, interdependencies, and contemporary security threats, with the latter being asymmetric, arise from non-military sources, transcend actors, spaces, and time, transnational and cross-jurisdictional, liminal and defy unilateral remedies while requiring collective responses (Bueger, 2015:163; Caballero-Anthony, 2016:6).

Although the post-cold war era transformed security studies; however, the primary features of the realist paradigm were never discarded. The new security thinking expanded the concept to include non-traditional security concerns while retaining the primary features of the realist paradigm. For example, the state remains the primary

performer in world politics and each state egoistically prioritize, pursue and preserve its own interests. This was evident during COVID-19 when states-imposed lockdown measures, prevented the movement of people into their territories; and prioritized vaccine distribution to their own populations above all else.

2.4 Post-cold war security thinking

2.4.1 Expanding the security concept

The end of the cold war heralded a paradigm shift in security thinking; realism lost its utility as a mainstream security theory. The decline in military aggression and proliferation of non-military issues demonstrated the inadequacy of the nation-state security frameworks to effectively and efficiently manage these new threats (Puskás, 2019:96). War and the threat to use of force became a part of the security equation—not necessarily the most important. Buzan (1991) propose the expansion of the security concept beyond the military security. He contended that the state should not be the only referent object of security. Instead, security should involve protecting humans.

Second, threats are not limited to military aggression (military security) but can emerge from the:

- Political sector which pertains the organisational stability of states, systems of government, and ideologies, providing them legitimacy;
- Economic sector which pertains providing access to critical resources, finance, and markets;
- Societal sector with pertains the population's cultural identity; and
- Environmental sector which pertains the environment and planetary biosphere (Buzan, 1991:19-20).

Expanding the concept provide an opportunity to include security issues such as: political oppression, economic collapse, overpopulation, terrorism, ethnic rivalry, migration, poverty, extreme inequality, environmental degradation, poor governance and global pandemics as matters of security (Booth 1991:315).

This expansion also introduced the concept of human security, designating humans as referent objects whose security is linked to freedom from fear and want. This could be achieved through economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994:24-25).

2.5   Inquiry-based approach

Diverse academic proponents of the new security thinking advanced an inquiry-based approach to study and analyse the security concept. According to Buzan (1991:26), the inquiry-based approach should focus on "What is the referent object for security? and what are the necessary conditions for security?" However, he does not provide precise answers to this question; instead states that these questions are pursued across the political, economic, societal, environmental, and military sectors. In his work *"New patterns of global security in the twenty-first century"*, (Buzan, 1991:432) broadly conceptualize security as concerned with:

> "the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change which they see as hostile"

The above definition has multiple referent objects such as 'freedom', 'states', 'societies', 'identity'. What becomes the necessary conditions for each of these referent objects is unclear and may vary from one person to another depending on the nature of threat at hand.

Other scholars who adopted an inquiry-based approach include Baldwin (1997:13), who contends that security should be underscored by the questions: "Security for whom? And security for which values?" Mutimer (1999:82-83) states that security should be defined by answering the questions on:

- "Whose security (who is the referent object?)
- How should the referent object be secured?
- What should be the nature of security?"

Williams (2008:5) propose a four-question framework and contends that security studies should be aimed at understanding:

1. "What is security?
1. Whose security are we talking about?
2. What counts as a security issue?
3. How can security be achieved?"

In response to these questions, Baldwin (1997:13-17) proposes specifications, which should entail:

- "The actor whose values are to be secured
- The values concerned
- The degree of security
- The kind of threats
- The means for coping with such threats
- The costs of doing so and the relevant period"

Williams (2008:5) remark that the answer to the question: "what is security" means "alleviating threats to cherished values, especially those which, left unchecked, threaten the survival of a referent object in the future".

Answering the "whose security" question presuppose identification and designation of referent object, which create the base for security. This is relevant because without a referent object "there can be no threats nor discussion of security because the concept will be meaningless without something to secure" (Buzan, 1991:26; Williams, 2008:7).

The third question of —*What counts as a security issue?*

presupposes a threat construction process where a problem is identified and designated as an existential threat to a referent object. Although threat classification is a political choice, threat analysis entails identifying threat types and their intensity regarding proximity, probability of occurrence, specificity, consequences, and historical settings (Hough et al., 2008:1). To attain existential threat status, an issue should be

of profound gravity; which if not managed urgently, could cause severe or irreversible damage to referent objects. Buzan (1991:65) identifies three attributes of statehood as critical referent objects of security:

1. The idea of the state, which establishes legitimacy in the minds of the people. Constitutions establishes the unifying supreme ideology for a country.
2. The institutional expression of the state – these are institutions which govern the country, provide public services, establish and maintain sovereignty; thus give effect to the idea of the state.
3. The physical base of the state – includes the population and territory of the country; and are beneficiaries of public services as provided for in the idea of the state.

Threats to these attributes are multi-faced and include (a) hollowing out or damage to the state (unconstitutional change of political order) or threats to sovereignty; (b) degrading the functional integrity of state institutions; or (c) degrading the physical base by altering its independent identity and territorial integrity.

The fourth question—*How can security be achieved?*—means formulating and implementing a national security policy to reduce vulnerabilities and mitigate the severity of existential threats to referent objects.

Accordingly, studying security as a field of inquiry facilitates identifying issues to be included in the security agenda, against what threats and for what referent objects. The inquiry-based approach culminated in the seminal work "*Security: A New Framework of Analysis*" (Buzan et al., 1998). This work provides a comprehensive framework of analysis for security studies by "rejecting the traditionalist case for restricting security to the military sector and arguing that security is a particular type of politics applicable to a wide range of issues". Critically, it establishes the securitization theory broadly explored in Chapter 3.

2.6   Health-security nexus

2.6.1   The conception of health security

The health-security nexus emerged from expanding the security concept beyond the constricted military approach to include a range of risks constructed and perceived as existential threats to referent objects. Brower and Chalk (2003:3) contend that the state-centric approach is not designed to deal with health security issues transcending borders and affecting the global population. Like all security concepts, health security is contested; lacks a universal definition; has identifiable terms, each reflecting a perspective with its own narrative; and invokes contestations about its meaning and application

Security concepts used in the health domain include "national health security; international health security; global health security (Rushton 2011:781); public health emergency of international concern (WHO, 2007:xv); and, at times, interweaved with human security. Brower and Chalk (2003:7) remark that an infectious disease threatens human security; it affects the person and their ability to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. He continues that "the spread of disease weakens public confidence in government's ability to respond, has adverse economic influence, undermines states' social order, catalyses regional instability, and presents strategic threats through bioterrorism and/or bio-warfare".

Rushton (2011:781) contends that the definitional challenges associated with whether health issues should ascend the security agenda is unhelpful. He argues that there is a broad consensus over the core features of health security, which are:

- "types of health issue that constitute a threat;
- the types of response that are necessary; and
- the referent object" (Rushton, 2011:781)

To comprehensively explore the concept of health security, Rushton (2011:781) adopts an inquiry-based approach underscored by the subsequent questions:

- "Security for what?

- What type of response?
- Security for whom?"

Rushton and Youde (2015:2) propose that the concerns characterizing the health security agenda—which should be resolved, are four-fold:

1. The conceptualization, historical development, links between health and security, and the varying methods of framing health as a security issue;
2. The threat construction of health in security terms and to clearly outline the referent object and the degree of threat;
3. The security-driven responses and their effects on health, security, politics, society, and diplomacy; and
4. The debates and contestations on the securitization of health and the influence on fundamental human rights and justice, and the potential to distort health issues with politics and diplomacy.

2.6.2 Health security paradigms

Health security is an emerging concept, interconnecting traditional and contemporary security paradigms. Literature reveals that health security is strongly linked to state-centric and human security. Human security is primary because health issues directly affect and kill humans. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that over 6.5 million died owing to COVID-19. Unlike military wars often underscored by political objectives, COVID-19 is an "invisible enemy" manifesting naturally by directly infecting and affecting humans and resulting in deaths. Scholars contended that:

> COVID-19 is a non-traditional threat – an amorphous, evolving, and invisible adversary that proliferates without intention, bargaining or goals. While it can be scientifically understood and countered, its evolution is well outside the values, norms and behaviours ascribed to traditional adversaries (Faber, 2021:21).

Proponents of state-centric security contend that populations are part of the cardinal pillars of statehood, and, therefore, any development threatening the population

directly affects the state's security. A solid reciprocal relationship exists between the security of the population and that of the state because "the security of the state is dependent on the security of its individual citizens, and if they are not secure, the state is not secure" (Curley & Thomas, 2004:17). This conceptualization draws its lineage from statehood where the "population and territory are the primary physical elements necessary for the existence of the state" (Marume, *et al.*, 2016:25). Studies on health-security nexus align within human-centred and state-centric security approaches and are explored below.

2.6.3 Health security: a human-centred approach

The UNDP (1994) Human Development Report formulated the concept of human security as a significant contribution towards expanding the security concept. The main thrust of human security is to transition from a state-centric security to a human-centred approach where humans and individuals are elevated as primary referent objects of security. The broad goals of freedom from fear and freedom from want support the concept of human security. These goals should be pursued and achieved through a multi-sectoral approach consisting of the subsequent seven core elements:

1. **Economic security**—which requires that each individual be assured a basic income, usually from productive and remunerative work, to be protected against persistent poverty and unemployment;
2. **Food security**—where all people have physical and economic access to basic food and are free from hunger and famine. Lack of food directly affects the ability of people to continue to live;
3. **Health security**—relates to protection against infectious and parasitic diseases considered major killers and unsafe food, malnutrition, lack of primary health care;
4. **Environmental security**—which pertains to maintaining a healthy physical environment for the well-being of people, and protection against threats of environmental degradation, resources depletion, natural disasters, and pollution;

5. **Personal security**—which pertains to protecting people against sudden and unpredictable physical violence, which includes torture, war, ethnic tension, crime, street violence, rape and domestic violence, child abuse, suicide, or drug use;

6. **Community security**—which entails safety and security against inter-ethnic, religious, and other identity-based tensions;

7. **Political security**—which pertains to protection against political repression and human rights abuses.

From the aforementioned, human security locates health security within the multi-sectoral approach where health, specifically infectious diseases, are identified and framed as a security threat against individuals. Curley and Thomas (2004:18) contend that human security "is a classically liberal concept, where a state's security rests on the premise that its citizens must be secure". However, the expansiveness of the concept is problematic because it distorts its usefulness specifically regarding counselling policymakers in prioritisation of competing goals (Paris, 2001:88). For example, food security may overlap with health security, and this may be a challenge on what policymakers should prioritise: food security, health security or both?

While security deals with priority issues; the concept does not provide a measuring barometer to determine the threshold at which health threats should be dealt with as security issues or under the normal political-administration process of the state. For example, what is the threshold for food, health, or environmental concerns to become security issues?

The first broad goal of human security deals with protecting individuals against violence-related threats arising from external state actors or against the state itself or a group or individuals. The second goal pertains to protecting individuals against issues threatening their basic needs and economic, social, and environmental aspects of life and livelihoods. Critical to the achievement of the above goals is the role of the state as the custodian against fear and provider for wants. These duties arise from international law, which accords states sovereignty and territoriality.

The custodial role of the state is to provide for and guarantee freedom from fear and safeguard against threats that could lead to loss of life and physical harm, including fear from health threats. The provider role should create a conducive environment for individuals to prosper, enjoy their daily lives and attain freedom from want which can be threatened by health-related issues. Accordingly, health issues can be accommodated and managed under the umbrella of human security, although the latter is expansively vague and may provide little guidance on prioritising scarce resources.

2.6.4 Health security: state-centric approach

The character of states as primary actors in international relations affects how health crises are constructed and managed as security issues. Despite that health threats directly affect and kill humans, studies posit health security as primarily concerned with state security and the security of humans as secondary. Although it is logical to accept the primacy of the population as the primary referent object in the health-security nexus, such observations are masked by state-centric and realist paradigms.

This notion is based on the security of the population being infused into that of the state because the latter "acts as a c*ontainer* of security, ensuring the security of the people within its borders" (Mutimer, 1999:82). The state-centred security approach considers health security nexus in military terms, particulary its influence on the state's self-help principle, and the balance of power. In this context, health security is, therefore, a fulcrum of military strength, capacity, and operational performance of troops.

Maclean (2008:484) contends that pandemics threaten a country's economy or military strength, constitute issues of high politics and, therefore, directly affect national security. Threats with the potential to obliterate military capacity and the economy, "significantly narrow the range of policy choices" and present security risks to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state. Health issues directly influence a state's

national power, particularly hard power which is derived from the population, sovereignty, and territory.

In advancing the realist perspective, Price-Smith (2009:198) contends that pandemics "can kill a great proportion of the population, deplete state coffers, destabilise the polity, and weaken the state relative to its rivals, and present direct and indirect threats to a state's coherence, prosperity, and power".

Brower and Chalk (2003:7-10) contend that pandemics pose existential threats to human security and state security based on the following arguments and reasoning:

1. Pandemics and infectious diseases "seriously threaten both the individual and the quality of life that a person is able to attain".
2. The adverse economic effects undermine economic pillars paramount for the security of humans and the state. At a practical level, it is attributable to the loss of a stable and productive workforce.
3. Pandemics adversely influence social order, cohesion, and psyche—fundamentals for human life and state security. It is contended that pandemics and COVID-19, in this study, have the effect of changing the character of the state or the political system within which it operates (Trager & Simonie, 1973:38).
4. Because pandemics transcend borders and can easily transmit through the movement of people and goods, they catalyse regional and international instability. Critical security issues may include mass cross-border population flows, strict migration and international trade policies, and heightened political tensions among states.
5. Pandemics may be exploited as bio-warfare or bioterrorism instruments with devastation effects on the targeted or affected states.

From the aforementioned, it is apparent that concept of health security include both humans and the state as the main referent objects of security. In this regard, pandemics undermine public confidence in the state's capacity to protect its population and cast doubt on its governing ability, legitimacy, and authority.

Price-Smith (2009:1) contends that protecting the population against health issues and pandemics is critical to ensuring state security because they present prosperity and stability, consolidation, and projection of sovereign power. The criticality of the population as an instrument of state security and power is further illustrated by Buzan (1991:40) in his attributes of statehood, such as physical base, ideology, and state governing institutions. Threats against the physical base (population and territory) will negatively influence the governing institutions which control the physical base and the state's ideology—which establishes its authority in the minds of its people.

Health-related issues posing existential threats to a significant proportion of the population constitute a major threat to state security and its power base because it significantly narrow government policy choices, therefore, render it vulnerable to various security threats, which can range from entry-level/ subordinate to menacing and finally to apocalyptic issues, with the latter essentially constituting existential threats to the national interest (Bernhardt, 2016:16). Jegat (2015:1-6) and Rushton and Youde (2015:7-17) contend that pandemics affect national security at Domestic, Economic, and Military levels:

- **Domestic**—pandemics degrade the quality of life by fostering social inequalities, threaten family lives with the potential to trigger violent conflicts against the legitimacy and authority of the state;
- **Economic**—pandemics disrupt economic growth, cause job losses and unemployment, increase health expenditure, stimulate violent competition, and stifle foreign investments; and
- **Military**—high morbidity and mortality on military forces can render them vulnerable to attack by state and non-state actors, therefore, compromise the country's entire security

In prioritising state security, Price-Smith (2009:198) contends that "the state should maintain a state-centric view of security and protect its power base, which by extension entails protecting the health of its people from pandemics".

2.6.5 Analysis of health-security Issues

2.6.5.1   Theoretical construct on relations

The securitization framework establishes a process through which threatening issues are framed in security terms. However, other scholars have either enhanced the securitization process or developed other models to enhance the understanding of how non-traditional issues are raised onto the security agenda. To integrate health into the security agenda, Price-Smith (2009:17) formulated a 'theoretical construct on relations' to reflect the dynamics of state-population interaction in response to a debilitating health issue, how such interaction creates a security issue, and which indicators can be identified to explain the manifestation of such security issues.
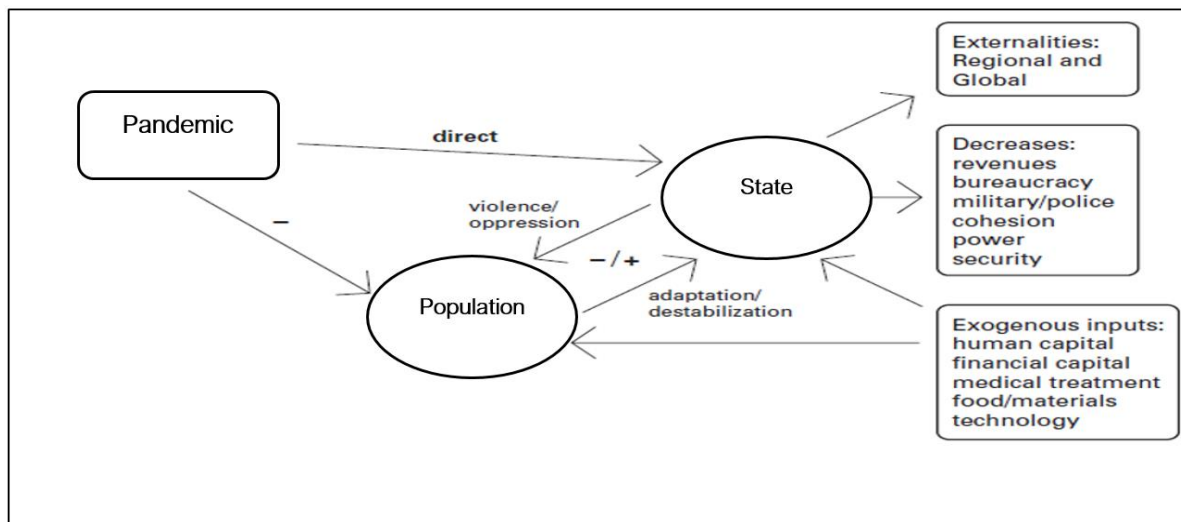
Figure 2.1: Theoretical construct of relations

(Adapted from Price-Smith, 2009:17)

The theoretical construct depicted in Figure 2.1 is premised on a state-centric approach and provides an analytical framework on how an existential threat (pandemic) affects referent objects (population and state). As for the population, the model explores how pandemics affect its psychological, economic, and social well-being and demographics. In the case of the state, the model illustrates the effects on the state's ability to fulfil its custodial and sovereignty responsibilities, which include its

authority, legitimacy, and resiliency. A pandemic is depicted as an independent variable with a direct bearing on the population and the state.

The population is an intervening variable that directly influences how the state responds to the pandemic. The state is the dependent variable whose ability to deal with the pandemic is dependent on the pandemic's severity, the state capacity, and how the population adapts or creates further destabilisation factors. Pandemics, as existential threats, can originate from anywhere worldwide, spread to various countries and reach global attention. Pandemics of global concern spread across borders and have a high rate of transmissibility, morbidity, and mortality within a brief time. COVID-19 is estimated to have caused over 6.2 million deaths as at 30 April 2022 (WHO: 2022) and caused debilitating damage to states social, economic, and political ideals. Scholars contended that:

> 'the argument that the transnational spread of disease represents a security challenge rest on the simple proposition that it presents a fundamental threat to both the stability of the international system and its component states as well as the quality of life that an individual is able to attain in a wider societal setting' (Caballero-Anthonny, et al., 2006:116).

Pandemics affect security at four levels, categorized as as international, domestic, societal and economic level. At international level, pandemics create exogenous shocks, which generate negative externalities and jeopardise the state relationship at regional and global levels (Price-Smith, 2009:208-219).

At a domestic level, pandemics affect the state's capacity and its endogenous capability "to satisfy its most important needs: survival, protection of its citizens from physical harm, economic prosperity and stability, effective governance, territorial integrity, power projection, and ideological projection" (Price-Smith, 2009:208-219). Although a state is immune from natural death, pandemic effects may weaken its fiscal resources, resilience, legitimacy, human capital, and coercive power if a proportion of the security forces suffer high levels of morbidity and mortality. The state's military power may be weakened, exposing it to military aggression by other states or non-

state actors or stirring up domestic instability. Caballero-Anthony, et al., (2006:116) contends that:

> If left to spread, pandemics, can further: (1) weaken public confidence in a government's ability to respond; (2) distort productive economic growth; (3) destroy the underlying fabric that holds a provided polity together; (4) promote regional tension and mistrust; and (5) strategically challenge the status-quo (if not extant ordering principles) of regional and international systems through the spectre of biological warfare (BW) and bioterrorism (BT).

At a societal level, pandemics threaten human security because they "directly impinge on human health and wellbeing" (Caballero-Anthonny, et al., 2006:117), degrade quality of life and threaten human security, particularly freedom from fear and want. Pandemics can trigger mass migration, where populations may feel threatened in their own country and attempt to seek protection elsewhere, creating a societal threat to the receiving country. In this process, other challenges may emerge, such as psychological effects, family disintegration, threats to societal cohesion and identity and even trigger violence among ethnic groups and societal classes.

At economic level, a pandemic may debilitate human capital and erode the economic base and capacity of the state, which could result in a contraction of productivity and a decrease in revenues. Owing to a lack of pandemic forewarnings, states often embark on haphazard responses by imposing undemocratic and draconian rules entailing curtailment of civil liberties, and which may add more psychological frustration to the population. The population may revolt against the state, embark of violent protests, challenge the state's legitimacy and authority, and fuel further destabilisation.

Economically, national lockdown measures entail movement restrictions, border closures, and restrictions on businesses. All these stifle economic growth and international trade, threatening financial security. Whilst Price-Smith (2009:17) theoretical construct (Figure 2.1.) designates a pandemic as an existential threat to the state (state-centred paradigm) and population (human-centred approach), these

referent objects do not exist independently but enjoy mutual relations. If a pandemic threatens one directly; it directly affects the other. Similarly, the ability to mutually and positively respond to the pandemic has reciprocal benefits because recovery by the population means stability for the country. The influence of pandemics has socio-political and economic effects on society:

> Disease has been recognised as an issue that impacts across all categories of security identified by the CS – military, environmental, political, economic, and societal – and one whose effects manifest a quality that is inherently detrimental to a wide variety of given referent objects (Caballero-Anthonny, et al., 2006:117).

2.6.5.2   Health security analysis: a risk-based approach

Security is about managing risk threatening an object of value. However, designating a referent object and existential threat is not an objective and undeviating exercise. Ban (2003:22) argues that to obtain greater analytical clarity, the health-security nexus should be analysed in terms of degrees of risk. He contends that a "risk-based approach weeds out low-risk health challenges falling outside security lenses and clarifies the hard security issues in light of the high-risk health challenges that directly impact security". Feldbaum and Lee (2004:7) adopt an inquiry-based approach and contend that a model to analyse health security issues should answer these questions:

- Whom or what is to be protected through practising global health security?
- Which health issues are legitimate security issues, and which are not, and how do we decide?
- How should health, foreign, and security policies interrelate?

Flowing from the afore-mentioned questions, Feldbaum and Lee (2004:55) developed the framework "*Current Thinking within Public Health on Global Health Security*" (Figure 2.2) as a model to identify health issues falling under the ambit of security.
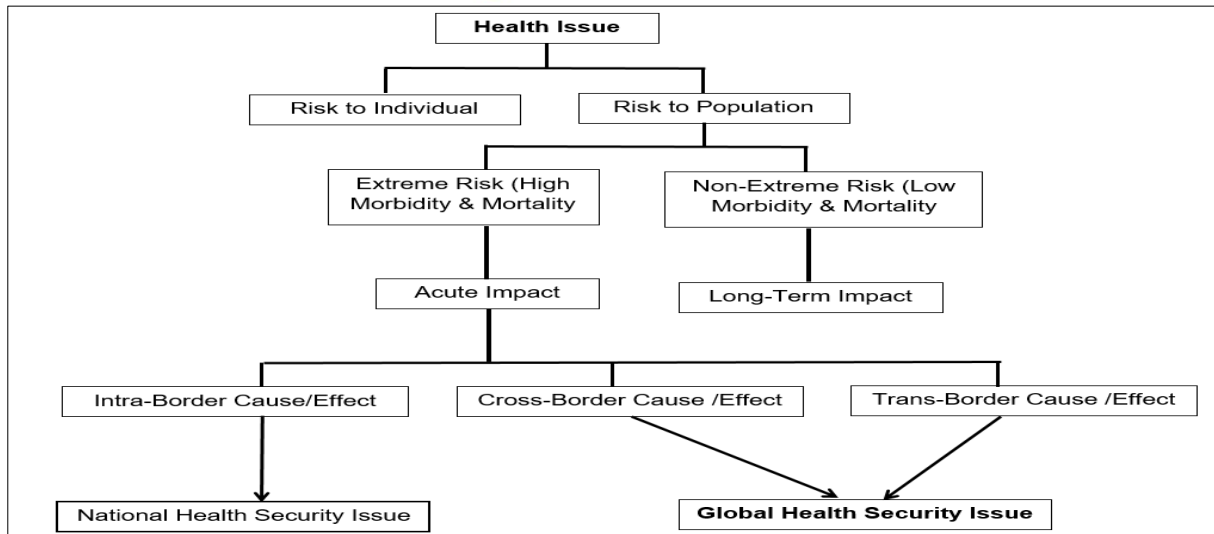
Figure 2.2: Current rationale within public health on global health security

(Adapted from Feldbaum & Lee, 2004:55)

While the framework adopts a risk-based approach, it is rooted in the securitization theory developed by the CS. First, a health issue is designated. At this stage, its severity to ascend a security agenda has not been established until it is assessed against a set criterion. Crucially, not all health issue present a security concern. A mere disease outbreak does not equate such an illness to a health security issue. It can still be managed within the regular health administration, public policy, or political domains.

The second criterion pertains the degree of risk or political effects the health issue has on the population and the state. The threshold is that the matter should present an existential threat of a substantial degree to the population beyond individuals; and extreme effects on the state's capacity to function. Because the threat is a health issue, the features of such threat may include high levels of morbidity and mortality, acute influence, substantial degradation in quality of life within a brief time, and worse, potential extermination. The criteria conspicuously elevate the population and the state as primary referent objects. The extreme and acute nature of the threat should invoke urgent, extraordinary, and emergency measures. If the issue is not managed urgently, all else will be irrelevant because "we will not exist to remedy our failure" (Buzan et al., 1998:26).

The model distinguishes between national and international health security issues. If the problem is confined within borders, it constitutes a national health security issue. If its effects are cross-border or trans-border, it fits the label of a global health security concern. The difference between a national and international threat is paramount because it assists in defining who securitizes and on what basis. Because populations are the main referent objects affected by health issues as inhabitants of specific territories under the sovereign of individual states; the latter assume the securitizing actor status.

The above-mentioned model is indistinct on the actors (securitizing actor, audience, functional actors, etc.) and the associated discursive and intersubjective interactions. It however introduces a cross-border/trans-border factor as a critical criterion to distinguish between a national and global health security threat. This innovation surpasses the original securitization process because it affects international actors as essential participants designating global security threats, although securitization can only occur at sovereign state level.

2.6.5.3 International norms and global health security

Other scholars applied a norms model to analyse the construction of global health security. Sjöstedt (2007:238) states that norms are socially constructed through discourse and interactions by actors; they are constitutive because they give birth to 'commonly recognized practices that clarify the collective identity of actors and create their collective interests by altering their understanding of what issues are important; and they are also regulative in a sense that they create intersubjective "standard[s] of appropriate behaviour by actors."

The revision of the IHR resulted to emergence of a new package of norms that underpins contemporary global health security regime. To clarify this, Kaunert et al. (2022:1-19); Davies, Kamradt-Scott, Rushton (2015:13-15), utilize a three-stage norm model – comprising of norm emergence, norm cascade and norm internalisation. 'During norm emergence, global primary norm entrepreneurs use international platforms to designate a new norm.' In health-related issues, the WHO is the primary

norm entrepreneur who advocated for the revision of the IHR as a global health regime (norm) to manage public health emergency of international concern. Davies, Kamradt-Scott, & Rushton (2015:13) remark that "once a critical mass of states adopts the new norm it reaches a tipping point, following which a norm cascade begins (stage 2), during which more and more states come to adopt the new norm." The IHR was adopted by several states, including South Africa, thus binding themselves to comply with its provisions. During COVID-19 the WHO constantly guided member states on how to manage the pandemic in line with the IHR. Norm internalisation pertains to individual member state's adopting the norm and operationalizing them through domestic political arrangements, and regulatory frameworks.

Contextualized within the securitization theory, the norm cycle model epitomizes macro-securitization where 'threats of global reach and spread simultaneously affects all individual states' (Buzan & Wæver, 2009:257). The WHO, as the custodian of IHR, symbolizes a securitizing actor (primary entrepreneur), whilst individual states represent significant audience. By adopting the IHR, each individual states agree to the threat (public health issue) and the prescribed measures to deal with same. The IHR symbolizes institutionalized measures, the implementation of which can vary from one state to another depending on domestic socio-political and economic conditions, and how they perceive the health security issue – securitize or not.

The three frameworks were employed in the study to briefly illustrate how they are used to analyse the health-security nexus. The securitization theory remains the core framework of analysis for the study because it seeks to discover what Buzan et al. (1998:32) term "…precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful)".

2.6.5.4 Health security controversies and contestations

The extensiveness of the health security concept drew several controversies, debates, contestations, and discontents. Theoretically, the concept is delineated in a human-centric approach, drawing its roots from human security and a state-centric paradigm

where the state is the custodian of freedom from fear and a provider of freedom from want. Critically, the state-centric approach further advances the notion that health crises undermines the security of the state. Health security draw controversies when used to advance or reflect political, foreign, and economic policy preference at the expense of 'others', specifically underprivileged countries. Scholars have written broadly against the politicization of health as a part of foreign policy or issues of national interest.

Rushton (2011:780) contends that the health security agenda is politically driven by "the Western developed countries against threats of infectious diseases predominantly originating from the Global South". Kamradt-Scott, (2015:151) contends that the Western approach and discourse on health security egoistically reflects and fosters the neo-colonial tendencies aimed at protecting the interest of the Western, high-income countries against 'the rest'. Such predisposition is calculated to "manipulate and control the less powerful and replicate a form of governmentality and authority over the body politic" (Kamradt-Scott, 2015:152).

A typical example is the politicisation of COVID-19, where China, France, Germany, the European Union, and the United States hoarded supplies of respirators, surgical masks, and gloves for their own hospital workers while prohibiting exports thereof (Bollyky & Bown, 2020:100). Stevenson and Moran (2015:329) contend that securitizing health distorts funding priorities—specifically where resources are directed to enforce the securitized state; leaving several countries were hapless owing to a lack of capacity and resources to safeguard their populations. The manufacturing, controlling, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines was commercialised, and exportation was restricted to other countries as part of foreign economic policies.

Conversely, the above arguments do not appreciate the principle of sovereignty where each state govern and provide for its own population; therefore "free of responsibility to any higher authority and/ or interference from outside in its internal affairs" (Collins, 2022:462). The principles of statism, survival, and self-help underscore the extent to which each state responded to COVID-19. Rightfully, each state assumed the primary

role (statism) of harnessing own resources (self-help) to provide for and ensure the survival of its own population above all else.

At a domestic level, securitization measures, such as lockdowns, border closures, travel restrictions, surveillances, quarantines, isolations, and security forces deployment, were criticised; they were construed as undemocratic and infringements on civil liberties. In South Africa, over 400 000 people were arrested for breaking COVID-19-related lockdown rules between March 2020 and 2021. These people are at risk of having criminal records, which can negatively affect their lives (Staff Writer, 2021).

It is debatable whether these actions constitute human rights violations or are justifiable in the name of security. Proponents of health securitization contend that elevating health to the security agenda enforces the broadened security agenda; prioritises health issues; resource allocation; actively addresses human security, and broadly implements the WHO goal of health security – that is "to minimise vulnerability to acute public health events that endanger the collective health of populations living across geographical regions and international boundaries" (WHO, 2007:ix).

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter summarises the security concept and presents a conceptual context for assessing health-related security threats. Security evolution was traditionally centred on the realist theory, characterizing national security as concerned with military threats and the state as the primary referent object. However, the new security thinking broadened and deepened the concept; contending that military security is not the only dimension, but security issues may arise from other non-traditional domains; and that the primary referent object should transcend the state and include humans.

The chapter reflects on security conceptualization. Ullman's (1983:133) open-ended definition of security is useful because it captures the traditional and expanded security version. Ullman (1983:133) characterizes a threat to national security as "any action or sequence of events that have the potential to degrade the quality of life of inhabitants

(human-centric approach); or threaten to significantly narrow government policy choices (state-centric view)". Other scholars propose an inquiry-based approach to analyse the conditions under which issues are elevated onto the security agenda. Such approaches align with the securitization process, which outlines core elements and threshold that explains successful securitization.

The health-security nexus was also explored; revealed that it interweaves with the state-centric and human-centred approaches. Two frameworks espouse how a health issue ascends the security agenda. The first framework adopts a theoretical construct of relations among three variables, indicating the pandemic (independent variable), the state (dependent variable), and the population (intervening variable). The framework analyses the interactions among these variables and explores how they produce diverse outcomes, which collectively represent security issues against the state or may assist the state in ameliorating the threat. The second framework adopts a risk-based approach and evaluates several factors to determine if an identified health issue should ascend the security agenda. The criteria include assessing:

- whether the health issue threatens an individual or population;
- the level of morbidity and mortality;
- acute versus long-term influence; and
- transmission regarding intra-border vs cross-border/ trans-border.

A three-stage norm model was used to briefly analyse how global health security is constructed through norm entrepreneurship and its relationship with macro-securitization. Through the norm model, the WHO is designated the primary norm entrepreneur and the IHR as the measures to manage health-related security issues. Member states go through norm cascade and norm internalization and ultimately implement the IHR (norm) in line with their domestic settings.

The chapter concludes by emphasising health securitization controversies, contestations, and discontent. Securitization antagonists contend that securitizing health issues advance political, foreign, and economic policy preference at the expense of others— specifically underprivileged countries. At a foreign policy level,

Kamradt-Scott (2015:152) contends particularly against the Western approach and discourse, which sought to foster neo-colonialism by manipulating and controlling the less powerful and replicating a form of governmentality and authority over the body politic in the name of health security

A counter argument lies on state sovereignty which accord individual states the responsibility to govern, provide for, and protect its own population first before considering assisting others. At a domestic level, emergency measures to manage health crisis are often undemocratic and include arbitrary curtailment of civil liberties with little public oversight and accountability. However, health security proponents contend that securitization elevates health issues to its rightful position as a matter of high politics, and ultimate prioritise allocation of resources to improve human security.

CHAPTER 3: SECURITIZATION THEORY—THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

3.1   Introduction

The demise of the cold war bipolar structure changed the security concept while necessitating innovative reasoning about other threats beyond the military realities. Snyder (1999:2) contends that while military security remains relevant on nuclear strategy and deterrence, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the future nature of war; critical issues requiring attention during the post-cold war era include political, economic, and social aspects. The expanded notion of security resulted to several theories to explain the concept better. Such evolution introduced the securitization theory by the CS (Buzan et al., 1998) in the book "*Security: A New Framework of Analysis*". The framework broadened security beyond the military to include political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors. It further deepened referent objects beyond the state to incorporate human individuals, groups, institutions, and the biosphere (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015:20).

This chapter focuses on the securitization theory as a framework of analysis as employed in this study. It explores the theoretical and conceptualization of the framework, identifies, and analyses the core elements and conditions which facilitate successful securitization. The chapter concludes by exploring de-securitization—a concept favoured to keep issues in the political domain. The chapter disregards criticisms and enhancements by other scholars but incorporates positive contributions, enriching the study—specifically on audience, functional actors and de-securitization.

3.1.1 Securitization: a conceptual clarification

The securitization framework emerged from the necessity to expand the security concept beyond the military orthodox. The CS contends that security is a political process; security issues can emerge from other sectors beyond the military sector. The securitization process was developed to provide a framework to analyze how issues are transformed from a non-politicised, through politicised, to a securitized state. This transformation is unconstrained by military threats but incorporates a gamut of

menaces deserving of security attention. Securitization systematically determines, presents, and explains how potentially dangerous situations are transformed into security issues (Kaunert & Yakubov, 2017:30).

At a conceptual level, securitization is a process in which an actor through, a speech act, declares a particular issue, dynamic or actor to be an 'existential threat' to a referent object; if accepted as such by a relevant audience, this enables the suspension of normal politics and using emergency measures to contain the perceived crisis. In this regard, security constitutes a site of negotiation between speakers and audiences, although one conditioned significantly by the extent to which the speaker enjoys a position of authority within a group.

Securitization is not an impartial approach like the mainstream realism theories. Instead, it interweaves neorealism, post-structuralism, constructivism, and other critical security theories and attempts to reconcile contestations on the security concept. Booth (1991:164) contends that securitization attempts to reconcile and fuse issues, such as:

> The supremacy of political power; symbolism of the word 'security'; appreciation of resources and other implications of taking issues outside 'ordinary politics' onto the security agenda; understanding of security as an intersubjective concept; a commitment to the desirability of trying to avoid militarising issues; and finally the search to resolve security issues without violence.

Kaunert and Yakubov (2017:31-32) add that securitization synthesises social constructivism and realism. It attempts to reconcile their divergent views and embrace materialist conceptions of international politics, international relations, and security. More dimensions and values exist in security studies than just material factors.

Filimon (2016:51) expanded Booth's argument while positing that securitization remains a tributary to the traditional security debate by partly adopting neorealism and reaffirming realist ideas regarding conflict, war, survival, and zero-sum. On

poststructuralist ideologies, the author contends that the same is reflected in the preferred object of analysis underscored by discourse and discursive structures.

McDonald (2008:72) remarks that constructivist ideologies are evident in the debate on how security is constructed and functions in world politics. Strands of social constructivism are embedded in the construction and designation of referent objects, and threats through intersubjective manner. Furthermore securitization infuse the interaction of actors and audiences, and legitimation of emergency measures "through dialogue and discourse between individuals and groups" (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015:20).

The CS acknowledge the vagueness of securitization as a theory by remarking that "security is a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue— not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat" (Buzan et al., 1998:24). Despite its theoretical weaknesses, scholars used securitization to analyse diverse non-traditional security concerns.

3.1.2 Securitization spectrum

Security is a political process; therefore, securitization is also rooted in the politicisation theory—specifically on how issues transfer through a spectrum, from a non-politicised, through politicised to a securitized state (Figure 3.1). An issue is plotted at the securitized end of the spectrum if designated as presenting a threat to a referent object, which enjoys legitimacy to survive. Such a referent object, therefore, deserves protection through extraordinary security practices beyond established states' standard political procedures to manage the threat (Emmers, 2019:175). At a non-politicised level, an issue does not reach the public policy stage of government (Cloete et al., 2006:106) but is kept outside the political domain and "is not open to public debate and decision" (Buzan et al., 1998:23).
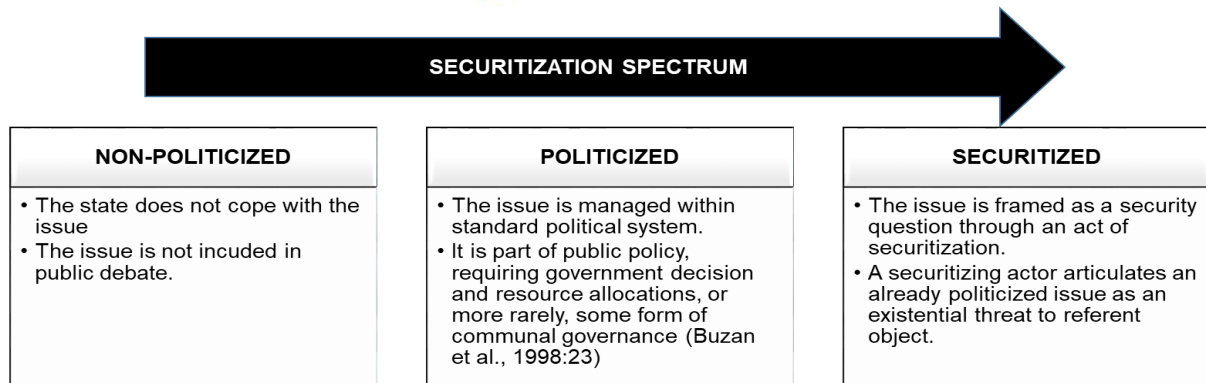
SECURITIZATION SPECTRUM

NON-POLITICIZED	POLITICIZED	SECURITIZED
• The state does not cope with the issue • The issue is not incuded in public debate.	• The issue is managed within standard political system. • It is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations, or more rarely, some form of communal governance (Buzan et al., 1998:23)	• The issue is framed as a security question through an act of securitization. • A securitizing actor articulates an already politicized issue as an existential threat to referent object.

Figure 3.1: Securitization spectrum

(Adapted from Ralf Emmers, 2019:175)

At a politicised level, the issue is part of public policy and enjoys a "deliberate planning process through which policy issues are identified, problems defined and prioritised, support mobilized, and decision-makers lobbied to take appropriate action" (Cloete et al., 2006:105). At this level, the issue is "managed within the standard political system" (Emmers, 2019:175) and is "part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some form of communal governance" (Buzan et al., 1998:23). An issue is plotted at the securitized end of the spectrum when it has "successfully been presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan et al., 1998:24). At this level, an issue attains a security status. It is moved beyond established rules of the political game and framed either as an extraordinary politics (Buzan et al., 1998:23) or "above politics and warrant urgency and further attention" (Özcan, 2013:6). Securitization hinges on the core elements explored below.

3.1.3   Securitization elements

Applying the securitization framework is undertaken when certain elements and conditions are present. These elements include the securitizing actor, speech act, referent object, existential threat, audience, extraordinary/ emergency measures, functional actors, and facilitating conditions. Scholars differ on which core elements they consider critical in the securitization process. The CS posit "existential threats;

emergency action and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules" (Buzan et al., 1998:26). Kaunert and Yakubov (2017:32) posit:

> The (1) securitizing actor who sets off securitization through a securitizing move; (2) an issue that is shifted to the level of existential threat via 'speech acts'; (3) a referent object, such as an entity threatened and requiring urgent protection with extraordinary means and measures; and (4) a relevant audience for the 'speech acts' whose assent is sought by a securitizing actor for the implementation of extraordinary measures.

Filimon (2016:63) remarks that the core tenets are "speech act; referent object; existential threat; and application of extraordinary measures". A detailed literature review reveals that the core elements of securitization surpass the aforementioned. The author includes the securitizing actor, referent object, existential threat, audience, extraordinary/ emergency measures, functional actors, and facilitating conditions enabling successful securitization (Figure 3.2).
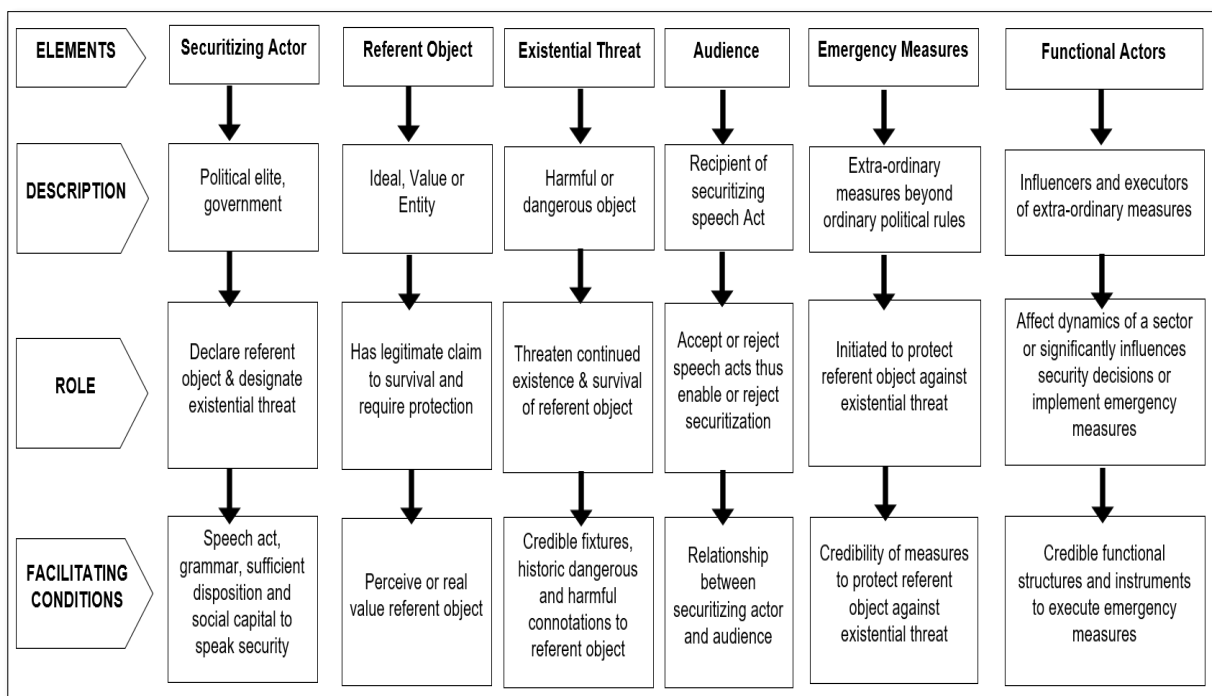

Figure 3.2: Comprehensive elements of securitization

(Adapted from Buzan et al., 1998:21-43)

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3.1.3.1   Securitizing actor

A securitizing actor initiates a securitizing move through "a 'speech act' by designating an issue as an existential threat to a referent object" (Emmers, 2019:174). A securitizing actor may be "political leaders, policymakers, bureaucracies, government, lobbyists, pressure groups, transnational actors and individuals" (Buzan et al., 1998:36). By speaking security, the securitizing actor moves the issue out of regular politics and into the security sphere, by that, legitimise using extraordinary measures to manage the threat. The securitizing actor is critical in securitization, without which a securitizing move cannot be initiated or completed. The dynamics, sectors, interactions, and levels of analysis in securitization complicate the identification of securitizing actors.

This is easy in the military and political sectors owing to the state-centric national security orientation concerned with territorial protection, integrity, and sovereignty. It has been contended that in these sectors, "The state (usually) has explicit rules regarding who can speak on its behalf, so when a government official says, 'we have to defend our national security', it has the right to act on behalf of the state" (Buzan et al., 1998:41).

Securitizing actors in the environmental, economic, and societal sectors are not easily discernible because they are often non-state actors who lack state power to speak security nor to suspend normal political procedures and implement extraordinary measures. Actors in these sectors are often lobbyists, pressure groups, transnational actors, media, and individuals who can only initiate and influence securitizing moves. Issues raised by such actors can only be securitized once adopted and elevated by a state representative. The latter is legally vested with social capital, have sufficient disposition and authority to speak security, and to initiate emergency measures.

3.1.3.2   Referent object

Security is valueless without anthing to protect. A referent object is a key ingredient of any security thinking because it answers the questions: What to protect? What is its value? A referent object is an ideal, value or entity holding a legitimate claim to survive, therefore, in need of protection (Buzan et al., 1998:36). Under realist thinking, the primary referent object is the state, and security is the means to protect its statehood characterized by population, territoriality, sovereignty, and government.

Broadening security beyond the state uncover other referent objects with a legitimate claim to survival. Humans are primary referent objects in the human security paradigm. They have a legitimate claim to survival against several threats. Buzan et al. (1998:8) five sectors of security designate sovereignty, organisational stability, and ideology of social order as key referent objects in the political sector; state, populace, territory, military capacity in the military sector; biosphere, species and natural environment in the environmental sector; markets, finance and resources in the economic sector; and collective identity, language and culture in the societal sector.

Health issues entered the security agenda owing to the perceived danger pandemics present to the survival of populations and, by extension, the state. The privilege accorded to securitizing actors (state actors) to designate referent objects inherently favours the realist approach. Such privilege emphasises the historic entitlement of the state as guardians and providers of security despite referent objects possibly emerging from other sectors. Issues such as violence, crime, pandemics, HIV/Aids, and hunger directly threaten humans. Until designated as security issues by the state, they remain non-politicised or politicised, but never reach the securitized spectrum. Non-state actors can dramatize issues as 'referent objects'; unless designated as such by state actors, such 'referent objects' remain on the periphery of the security agenda.

3.1.3.3   Existential threat

An existential threat is a critical component of any security discourse, without which a referent object will have no legitimate claim to be protected. To qualify, a securitizing actor must stage the issue as presenting potential harm to a referent object. Based on such appreciation, the securitizing actor generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind (Nyman, 2013:52). This means "if the issue is not handled now, it will be too late and the securitizing actor and relevant audience will not exist to remedy their failures" (Buzan et al., 1998:26).

A security discourse is, therefore, about existential threats which present extreme challenges to the securitizing actor's capacity to manage them. Huysmans (1998:491) contends that if the securitizing actors do not neutralise the threats, they risk losing their political character, legitimacy, authority, and capacity to rule. The magnitude and eminency of existential threats necessitate priority over other questions that enter the political sphere as urgent issues. Existential threats, primarily military actions, can strain, damage and dismember the physical base; distort or destruct state institutions; and repress, subvert, or obliterate the state (Buzan, 1991:75). In 2003, the United States of America's former President George Bush designated Iraq as an existential threat owing to their 'weapons of mass destruction' which could be used directly against the USA (Roe, 2008:623).

The issue was immediately escalated and resulted in armed forces invading Iraq in March 2003 (Copson, 2003:1-51). Designating existential threats is not an objective assessment; security threats are inter-subjectively and socially constructed and determined between securitizing actors and influential audiences. Factors such as threat intensity, proximity, probability of occurrence, specificity, consequences, and historical settings (Hough, Du Plessis, & Kruys, 2008:1) are disregarded. Political actors need only to perceive the issue and designate it as an existential threat to a referent object. However, the perceptions should be underscored by credible fixtures, historically dangerous and harmful connotations of the threat to the referent object (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015:116).

3.1.3.4   Audience

To the extent that securitization follows an intersubjective interaction between the securitizing actor and the audience, the latter is critical in the security discourse because it determines the failure or success of securitizing moves. Roe (2008:185) contends that securitization succeeds when the audience is convinced and accepts the referent object's legitimate claim to survive and the necessity for extraordinary or emergency measures to ensure such survival. Côté (2016: 541-558) contends that the process takes a form of deliberative interactions between the securitizing actor(s) and audience(s) where multiple security discourses are mobilized, which enable securitizing actors and audiences to contribute shared perceptions of 'security' and mutual acceptance of emergency measures.

The audience is capable of internalising the securitizing move staged by the actor and supporting or endorsing the security practices proposed to manage the threat (Floyd, 2020:5). Notwithstanding the value of audience in securitization, the CS only term it 'significant audience' (Buzan et al., 1998:27) with other scholars terming it 'target' or 'relevant audience' (Caballero-Anthony, 2016:4 & 67) without clarifying who constitute it. The theoretical conceptualization take the audience as submissive to the security arguments, worst, "as agents devoid of agency" (Côté, 2016:551). Other scholars label the 'audience' as undervalued (Roe, 2008:616), under-theorised, underdeveloped, and marginalised (Léonard & Kaunert, 2010:58), evasive, inconsistent, and nonexistent (Côté, 2016, 542-3).

The challenge is to identify the relevant audience, specifically considering that security is socially constructed within a state made up of a diverse population whose unifying factor is only the territory they inhabit, the sovereignty governing such territory and applicable political rules giving effect to the collective political unit. The myriad of issues encountering securitizing actors are issue-dependent, vary in intensity and immediacy, and may require engagement with multiple audiences. To resolve the audience conceptual challenge, scholars such as Salter (2008:322) categorise the audience into "popular, elite, technocratic, and scientific settings". The popular audience is made up

of the general populace. The elite audience typically consist political or governing elite, which in the context of South Africa, could be cabinet. The technocratic audience consist of technical experts and professional such as military apparatus if dealing with perceived military threats. The scientific audience consists of experts and academics in specific scientific field who mobilise scientific facts and lay claim to objective and autonomous knowledge. The actor-audience interaction in each of the categories is influenced by the knowledge and political power each commands, the environment where the discourse occurs, and whether the discussion of security ever arises; and if yes, the implications and prospect of successful securitization. The delineation of the audience into four settings facilitates and enriches the security discourse because the securitizing actor adapts the securitizing articulations to the "particular local 'regime of truth' (Salter, 2008:322).

Léonard and Kaunert (2010:65-68) propose a three-dimensional set of audience, namely: 'problem,' 'policy,' and 'politics.' The problem stream pertains problem formulation where the securitizing actor use indicators or events to strategically construct a 'security' problem acceptable to decision-makers. The policy stream is concerned with policy formulation process and policy alternatives. The audience consists of technocrats and specialists whose assent to the issue (to securitize) is preceded by arguments based upon knowledge, rationality, and efficiency. This type of audience aligns with Salter (2008:322) technocratic and scientific audience. In the politics stream the critical elements are political mood, bargaining and coalitions. The audience consist of decision-makers involved in decision making pertaining the issue at hand as well as the general public.

Léonard and Kaunert (2010:65-68) audience model is not helpful to the securitization process. It is best suited for public policy formulation process where issues are placed on the policy agenda, thoroughly investigated, options weighed against each, bargaining, coalitions and the most suitable policy option canvased through public policy participation.

Securitization is a process that flies above the political-administrative process and is managed with urgency, priority, and emergency/extraordinary actions. Another

invention came from Roe (2008:620), who conceptualized the audience and its roles in two stages. First is the stage of identification consisting of the public who internalise the security discourse, consent to the value of the referent object and the harmful effects directed by the existential threat and offer 'moral support'. Second is the stage of mobilization consisting of policymakers or political elites who internalise and agree with the security discourse and formally support the emergency or extraordinary measures to handle the threatening development. The latter comprises institutionalised structures, such as Parliament or political elites who formally endorse emergency measures.

Wertman and Kaunert (2022:74-76) present the latest audience conceptualization, concluding that securitization has two audiences (legal and political).

- "The legal audience has legislative powers and authority bestowed by applicable laws, which same accord them the authority to endorse or reject securitization.
- The political audience is an entity whose support for (or lack of objection to) securitization is not required according to state rules yet is perceived by the securitizing actor and/or audience as an essential condition for successfully performing a securitization" (Wertman & Kaunert, 2022:74-76).

Despite the type or category of audience, the success or failure of securitizing moves is influenced by the audience's appreciation of the referent object, the nature of the existential threat and the conviction that if no action is taken, the survival of the referent object will be compromised (Vaughn, 2009:266). The securitizing actor discourse rationalises, legitimates, and garners support from the audience to declare a state of exception characterized by emergency measures to neutralise the perceived threat.

3.1.3.5 Extraordinary measures

In military terms, extraordinary measures may mean a military strategy to defeat an enemy and win a war. In securitization, extraordinary measures has a similar meaning but differs concerning the enemy, who may not be a state actor nor a juristic person. By expanding the security concept beyond military security, extraordinary measures

mean urgent and emergency steps beyond standard political rules, which may include declaring a state of exception. By staging an existential threat to a referent object, the securitizing actor 'lift the issue above politics' (Buzan et al., 1998:26), canvass and generates endorsement of emergency actions beyond the state's standard political procedures' (Collins, 2022:175), and 'claims a right to extraordinary measures to ensure the referent object's survival' (Taureck, 2006:55).

Security is naturally urgent because it deals with threatening situations. To the extent that uttering 'security' invoke urgency, securitization succeeds only when extraordinary measures are adopted to manage existential threats (Floyd, 2016:3). Any securitizing move not invoking emergency or extraordinary measures may only be debated within the ordinary political platforms where issues attain public policy agenda, enjoy the deliberate planning process and are "managed within the standard political system" (Collins, 2022:175).

While existential threats may manifest in various forms, their common features of rhetorical structure underscored by urgency, survival, and priority action provide the basis for emergency/ extraordinary measures. The varying nature of existential threats may dictate whether the extraordinary measures should be ad hoc or institutionalised. Military security is formally institutionalised in all countries based on the ever-present threat of war and the need to protect their territorial integrity and sovereignty. The rise in migration has brought sharp attention to the societal sector, where countries promulgate policies and set up institutional structures to handle migration as a matter of national security.

Health issues attained the security agenda through international norm entrepreneurship by the WHO because of its global platform to declare "health issues of international concern" and to institutionalise response through the International Health Regulations (Kamradt-Scott, 2010:76-77). Although emergency measures may be construed as the "suspension of normal politics or breaking free of democratic rules" (Buzan et al., 1998:22-26) or "suspension of laws altogether" (Floyd, 2016:7), it is not

always the case. Extraordinary measures may include additional state instruments or powers to manage a crisis, including legislation, which can provide such capability.

Floyd (2016:2) outlines extraordinary measures into three categories. First, it entails passing new laws to manage the threatening development. Second, it grants new emergency powers to govern the insecurity/crisis. These powers are permissible only in the context of the prevailing threat. The third refers to when a state's existing security apparatus and emergency legislation are employed to manage issues that are either new or issues not dealt with previously. Because emergency measures are declared for specific threatening developments and settings, the grammatical rhetoric of the actor should emphasise priority and urgency on the survival of the referent object (Nyman, 2013:54). Clothed with these conditions, a securitizing move stands an excellent chance to galvanise support and acceptance of the extraordinary measures.

Last, extraordinary measures intrinsically should be characterized by credible features and capabilities to protect the referent object and be proportionate to the crisis. This means securitization should "justifies the breaking of established rules and regulations in an effort to ensure the referent object's survival" (Floyd, 2011:432).

3.1.3.6   Functional actors

The CS did not expand the concept of functional actors. As a result, several scholars exclude it as a critical component of securitization. Originally, functional actors are only conceptualized as "neither referent objects nor securitizing actors, who affect the dynamics of a sector or significantly influence security decisions" (Buzan et al., 1998:36). The role of functional actors in the military sector often entail agencies of force, such defence bureaucracies, armies, or providers of the instruments of force (Buzan et al., 1998:56). In the environmental sector, functional actors include entities whose activities directly affect the quality of the environment or ecosystem, but with no intention to politicise or securitize such activities. Glaringly, there is little literature to articulate functional actors in the political, societal, and economic sectors (Buzan et al., 1998:76).

Floyd (2020:1-17) in "*Securitization and the Function of Functional Actors*", concludes that functional actors "are individuals and groups that seek to influence the trajectory of securitization positively by endorsing securitization or negatively by vetoing securitization, while equally not seeking to initiate or pre-empt securitization, instead they comment on existing securitization processes". In dealing with non-traditional security issues, such as pandemics, functional actors assume various prominent roles in affecting the dynamics of the securitization process by dominating the administrative process that translates securitizing moves to extraordinary policies. In the health-security interface, medical and public health professionals become the leading functional actors in security negotiations and play a more significant role in the analysis, formulation, and execution of health-security policy to manage prevailing health-related existential threats (Elbe, 2011:853).

Functional actors' roles and effects on the dynamics of securitization are three-fold and entail the prior, during and after securitization stages. First, securitization follows a public policy process where issues are problematised, articulated, placed on the agenda, discussed, legitimised and policy interventions adopted (Cloete et al., 2006:106 - 107). In securitization, the securitizing actors (state actors) are alerted of a threatening development and the referent object thereof by various stakeholders, who could be the media, non-governmental organisations, or members of society. At this level, political actors will pronounce on the security nature of the issue and then entrust bureaucracies or experts to make sense of the development by identifying, crystalising and articulating the issue, therefore, enabling the securitizing actor to place it on the public policy agenda (politicisation) or securitize it (securitization).

During this phase, the functional actor's role is to assist the securitizing actor with threat construction, identification and designation of existential threat and referent objects. Rubin and Erik (2009:322) distinguish the role of the securitizing and functional actors by arguing that "once senior leaders have delivered the securitizing speech act, the process of developing the extraordinary means for responding to securitized issues moves into specific policy enactment and implementation led by experts". The functional actor endorses or enable securitization by convincing the securitizing actor

of the need to securitize (Floyd, 2016:9). The expert-functional actors conduct an assessment regarding the referent object and the threatening development to enable informed decision-making by the securitizing actor.

In the military sector, this function is entrusted to the intelligence and security sectors who "construct rigorous pictures of the strategic environment, identify major risks, threats and opportunities related to national interest or referent objects" (Dinu, 2014:62). This process enables securitizing actors to endorse emergency measures to deal with the existential threat. The outputs of the functional actor empower and facilitate the securitizing actor to refine the internal logic of the security speech act; to eloquent couch, stage, and dramatize the referent object, existential threat and concomitant extraordinary measures; to re-adjust their position and authority to elicit sufficient social and political capital to speak security and convince the audience of the existential threat; and finally to articulate credible features of the existential threat drawing from historic dangerous and harmful connotations to referent objects (Buzan et al., 1998:33; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015:116).

The final role of the functional actor is that of executor, and implementation of emergency measures. Silva and Pereira (2019:223) articulate a prominent role of functional actors as executors of emergency measures when Brazil securitized drug trafficking from 2011 to 2016. The armed forces advocated the necessity for special security operations based on the Brazilian porous and fragile border (before securitization), actively participated in the formulation of the strategic border management plan (during securitization) and implemented the emergency measures under "*Operation Agata*" (after securitization).

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic globally was primarily led by the health sector as functional actors. Their role is to scientifically inform and guide state officials on how to respond to the pandemic and to develop and implement health response plans and systems. In their work "*Expert-led Securitization: The Case of the 2009 Pandemic in Denmark and Sweden*", Rubin and Erik (2009:319-330) outline three

stages where experts operate as functional actors and influence securitization in health-related concerns:

1. Initiation—where a security actor socially constructs and pronounces an issue as an existential threat;
2. The process where experts are tasked to dissect the issue using expert and scientific knowledge, expert judgements, and experience to establish the best course of action, whether to manage the problem through ordinary or extraordinary means;
3. The last stage flows from the second stage, where the experts formulate the policy response.

The process and policy stages are critical in deciding whether to securitize. Although under-theorised in literature, functional actors, specifically experts in a scientific field, significantly affect securitization dynamics and are vital in influencing policy in individual states, where one state may respond differently from another. Using policy-expert entrepreneurship is beneficial in complex issues such as pandemics because "policy entrepreneurs champion attention to specific problems, match them with possible solutions, and launch the resulting policies into the political approval process when there is a window of opportunity for doing so" (Rubin & Erik, 2009:322). Depending on the issues other consideration, the expert-policy analysis may arrive at a decision that denounces securitization; instead provide a more effective policy option to manage the issue within the normal political landscape.

3.1.3.7 Facilitating conditions

Facilitating conditions are defined as "the conditions under which the speech act works to gain acceptance from the audience" (Buzan et al., 1998:32). These conditions work in two-fold. First is the "internal, linguistic-grammatical—to follow the rules of the act, and (2) the external, contextual and social—to hold a position from which the act can be made." Facilitating conditions do not form part of the elements of securitization notwithstanding their value in determining the failure or success of securitization. In this study, facilitating conditions are infused and critical examined in each element of

securitization. Securitization in security discourse constitutes a site of contestation, dialogue, or bargaining among human subjects—securitizing actor and audience; facilitating conditions are therefore critical. The scales are unequal and often conditioned significantly by the extent to which the speaker enjoys a position of authority within a particular group (Buzan et al., 1998:33).

According to Salter (2011:117), securitization is a sociological and political process—manifested in language, underscored by the complex effect of power, interest, inter-subjectivity, bureaucratic position, and process. Figure 3.2 presents the facilitating conditions across the securitization elements. The conditions associated with the securitizing actor include the ability to eloquently articulate the value of the referent object according to the audience and elicit credibility on its legitimacy and claim to survival. To enhance credibility, the securitizing actor should possess and command social capital, disposition, and authority to speak security. A securitizing move should better be initiated by someone authorised or delegated the symbolic power to designate threats (Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008:24). During the invasion of Iraq by the United States and allies in 2003, President Bush assumed the securitizing actor's role with the power to talk security by being the head of state (Copson, 2003).

The facilitating conditions pertinent to a referent object are its features which entail value, legitimate claim to survival and the extent to which they bear directly to the continuous existence and well-being of the audience. According to (Williams, 2008:6), cherished values are critical elements which can affect the survival of the referent object, therefore, deserve priority security. In the case of Iraq, Bush alleged that Iraq was harbouring weapons of mass destruction, which could be unleashed against the US population (referent object) or threaten the US oil supplies—a cherished value which can affect the survival of the referent object (Copson, 2003:1-51). Facilitating conditions pertaining to existential threats include credible features of its harm to the referent object. This is often supported by credible historic manifestations and dangers associated with the threat and the perceived imminence and potency to cause irreversible damage.

Although not widely prominent in literature, the emergency measures and functional actors should elicit credibility and capacity to manage the existential threat. Otherwise, initiating a securitizing move, whereas the concomitant measures are political, symbolises securitization failure. Securitization of HIV/Aids (Vieira, 2007:137-181) was not followed by emergency measures, at least in South Africa. It was managed through normal health administrative processes. Rubin and Erik (2009:319-330) provide a classic case of Denmark and Sweden dealing with the 2009 pandemic flu. Both countries initiated securitizing moves; however, "Sweden adopted extraordinary measures by pushing to vaccinate its whole population, while Denmark offered a once-off vaccination to twenty per cent of its people" Rubin and Erik (2009:319-330). Denmark's securitizing move failed because the measures undertaken were not extraordinary.

Facilitating conditions about functional actors involve the securitizing actor's credible capacity to manage the threatening development. Functional actors, in this context, are executors of emergency or extraordinary measures. A securitizing move is inconsequential if the securitizing actor does not pronounce the type and capacity of the functional actors to execute or enforce the extraordinary measures. Functional actors designated to enforce extraordinary measures should have and demonstrate legitimacy, authority, and credibility to the audience because securitization entails breaking free of democratic rules.

3.1.4 De-securitization

Studying securitization is incomplete without exploring the related concept of de-securitization. To securitize is to elevate an issue beyond politics to a securitized state, whilst to de-securitize is to reinstate an issue previously securitized back to normal politics where is subjected to negotiations and democratic rules (Nguyen, 2020:11). De-securitization as a concept is not well established in the literature. The CS prefers de-securitization over securitization but do not provide a theoretical framework on how to move issues to the political domain. Unlike securitization, de-securitization does not have an iterative process involving actors, speech acts, security discourses, facilitating

conditions, emergency measures, and acceptance or rejection by the audience. There is no clear account of the movement of issues from a securitized to a de-securitized state. Hansen (2012:533) contends that "de-securitization is not a linguistic or political two-step procedure where first 'we have to agree that X is no longer threatening and then, 'we' agree to stop speaking security". Salter (2008:325) disagrees with Hansen's assertion; instead, contends that securitization studies should account for the movement of issues into and out of the security sector. He cautioned that:

> Otherwise, an issue that has faded from the public view may rest within the security frame or enjoy a kind of 'entropy' where the audience assume that exceptional security measures have lapsed, in the face of a threat that no longer seems pressing or relevant (Salter, 2008:325).

Second, issues may remain securitized in pursuance of other political objectives. This may be pertinent in regime-governed states where civil rights and peaceful protests may be securitized to provide security exclusively for the elite at the expense of the population (Collins, 2022:207-2011).

Scholars developed strategies and methods that can explain how to de-securitize an issue. The CS's own initiative is to frame security as a negative concept stemming from political actors' failure to manage issues as normal politics. They contend that "ideally, politics should be able to unfold according to routine procedures without this extraordinary elevation of specific 'threats' to a pre-political immediacy" (Buzan et al., 1998:29). This suggests two potential forms of de-securitization.

First, not constructing, designating, or speaking issues as threats against which there should be emergency measures. Second, and if inevitable to securitize an issue, take active steps to move the securitize issue to a normal political process. Politics is theoretically a good and preferred method because it allows actors to engage in political discourse through diplomacy, bargaining or negotiation to keep issues out of exceptional politics or the purview of security. In this context, de-securitization appears to be a stabilising factor allowing politics to endure and prevent issues from escalating to a securitized state (Figure 3.1: Securitization spectrum).

Dealing with health-related issues may not easily lend itself to the political bargaining process applicable in reconciling or reconstituting friend-enemy or amity-enmity differences, because:

> COVID-19 is a non-traditional threat—an amorphous, evolving, and invisible adversary that proliferates without intention, bargaining or goals. While it can be scientifically understood and countered, its evolution is well outside the values, norms and behaviours ascribed to traditional adversaries (Faber, 2021:21).

COVID-19, as an invisible 'adversary or aggressor', lacks the capacity to engage in political bargaining, diplomacy, or negotiation to change its behaviour, which cause the existential threat. Instead, the securitizing actor engages and persuade the referent object (people) to alter their own behaviour to reduce the effects and severity of the threat presented by the adversary. President Ramaphosa emphasised this point by stating that "we reiterate that the most effective way to prevent infection is through basic changes in individual behaviour and hygiene" (Ramaphosa, 2020a).

Huysmans (1995:65-67) in his work on the securitization/de-securitization of migration, proposes three de-securitization strategies, indicating: objectivist, constructivist, and de-constructivist:

1. The objectivist strategy adopts an objective analysis and explores whether migrants are a real threat to the identity of the receiving country;
2. The constructivist strategy adopts a broader exploration, understanding and awareness of how migrants are constructed as threats in the securitization processes to undercut the potency of securitizing moves; and
3. The de-constructivist strategy proposes an inclusionary discourse where securitizing actors attempts to listen to the voices and experiences of migrants as means of breaking down exclusionary notions of 'us' and 'them'.

Wæver (2006) proposes three strategies of de-securitization, indicating: "not speaking about an issue as a threat at all; managing a securitization so that it does not spiral; and moving the securitized issue back into normal politics" Wæver (2006:253). Hansen

(2012:538) proposes four methods of de-securitization, contending that each triggers distinct appreciation and comprehension of the environment with which they are applied and have a different outcome on the "amity-enmity distinction". These methods are:

> "(a) change through stabilisation which implies a slow move out of an explicit security discourse, which facilitates a less militaristic, less violent and; therefore, more genuinely political form of engagement; (b) replacement where de-securitization is theorised as a combination of one issue moving out of security whereas another is simultaneously securitized; (c) re-articulation which entail "removing an issue from the securitized state by actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers, and grievances in question; (d) silencing which occurs when an issue disappears or fails to register in security discourse".

De-securitization could assimilate the same process followed in securitization, although in reverse. For example, a speaker who securitized an issue can follow the same process to de-securitize it. This means "the speaker proposes that there is not a threat, or at least not a threat existential, and that the problem can be comprehended or managed within the rubric of normal politics" Salter (2008:324).

The above strategies demonstrate how issues can be managed without securitizing them, while others display how to move those issues already securitized back into the stage and frame of politics. The under-development of de-securitization to the same level of securitization has contended as a 'source of continuing intellectual ferment' (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015:124), which this study attempted to explore specifically regarding South Africa's COVID-19 securitization and de-securitization processes.

An analysis of de-securitization, in this study, adopted Wæver's (2006:253) third strategy and Hansen's (2012:542) 're-articulation strategy' because both pertain to reinstating securitized issues back into normal politics. This is relevant because the study approached an already securitized issue (COVID-19) and attempted to demonstrate how it was later de-securitized. To demonstrate how such reversal

occurs, the study adopted Salter's (2008) proposal, which holds that "the speaker proposes that there is not a threat, or at least not a threat that is existential, and that the problem can be comprehended or managed within the rubric of normal politics" Salter (2008:324).

3.2   Conclusion

Chapter three focuses on the securitization theory and how issues are securitized. The securitization framework emerged out of the necessity to expand the security concept beyond the military orthodox. The CS contended that security is a political process and security issues can emerge from various sectors beyond the military sector. The framework was developed to account for the movement of issues from a non-politicised to a securitized state. The process follows a speech act where a securitizing actor labels a specific development as posing an existential threat to a referent object, therefore, claims the right to use emergency to protect the referent object.

Securitization is however not a standalone theory. It infuses various theories, including neorealism, constructivism, post-structuralism, and various critical security theories, and attempts to reconcile various contestations on the security concept (Booth 1991:164). It is valuable to systematically determines, presents, and explains how potentially dangerous situations are transformed into security issues (Kaunert & Yakubov 2017:30) without making every menace a security issue.

The chapter explored the elements and conditions facilitating or impeding successful securitization. The core elements are securitizing actor; existential threat; referent object; audience; emergency or extraordinary measures; functional actors; and facilitating conditions, which intersect the aforementioned elements. A securitizing actor initiates securitizing move through a speech act by declaring a specific issue as an existential threat to a referent object. The speech act is made to an audience, who, upon agreeing with the declaration, endorse emergency or extraordinary measures to neutralise the existential threat. For the securitizing actor, the requirements include the eloquence of the speech act, disposition, social capital, and authority to speak security.

The referent object should be characterized by a legitimate claim of survival and be valuable to the securitizing actor and audience. The existential threat should exhibit credible and imminent danger to the referent object's survival. The audience should be convinced of the security speech, the value of the referent object and credibility of the existential threat. Although not defined in literature, extraordinary measures should be credible and adequate to ward-off the perceived existential threat. Functional actors were explored as enablers and executors of emergency measures. Although under-theorised, functional actors are categorised into expert, formulators and executors of emergency measures. The expert role pertains assessing threats, and their effects on the referent object; the formulators design response plans; and executors implement the emergency measures. The functional actors affect the security dynamics from the securitizing move through to the formulation and execution of emergency measures. The facilitation conditions applies across the securitization value-chain as enablers or impediments to successful securitization. This is critical because unless such conditions are demonstrable, the chances of successful securitization become limited. For example, if the securitizing actor does not command social capital to speak security or the legitimacy of the referent object is not eloquently articulated, the higher the likelihood that the audience will reject the securitizing move. Last, the concept of de-securitization was explored, and its under-theorisation reflected upon.

CHAPTER 4: SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND SECURITIZATION THEORY— AN ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

This chapter assesses if South Africa's response to COVID-19 constitutes securitization. The assessment is conducted by applying the securitization theory and its elements. Critically, the analysis explores securitizing actor/s, their securitizing speech acts, and securitizing moves as they relate to the designation of referent objects and legitimacy to survival; designation of existential threats and their characterizations; intersubjective discourse between securitizing actors and audience; emergency measures undertaken and the role of functional actors. The concept of de-securitization is also analyzed within the context of South Africa's COVID-19-adjusted alert levels.

4.2   Macro-securitization and COVID-19 security norm emergence

Pandemics have global coverage; hence, the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic by the WHO. A security threat of global reach lends itself to macro-securitization because the existential threat simultaneously affects all individual states in the international system (Buzan & Wæver, 2009:257). Colloquially, this means one enemy against the world. Global actors have no sovereignty over individual states; they cannot securitize. They can only initiate a securitizing move, which individual states could adopt. Their alternative is to set international standards and guidelines for managing global health crises. Such standards translates into international norms, firstly because they are socially constructed through discourse and interactions by actors; second, they are constitutive because they give birth to 'commonly recognized practices that clarify the collective identity of actors and create their collective interests by altering their understanding of what issues are important; and finally they are regulative in a sense that they create intersubjective ''standard[s] of appropriate behaviour by actors" (Sjöstedt, 2007:238). In the context of international health issues, the WHO canvassed for the revision of the IHR which was adopted in 2005.

The purpose and scope of the IHR (2005) are "to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade" (WHO, 2005:1). The IHR create the international health regime (norms), including: "state party obligations to develop certain minimum core public health capacities; (c) obligations on states parties to notify WHO of events that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern according to defined criteria; (e) procedures for the determination by the Director-General of a "public health emergency of international concern" and issuance of corresponding temporary recommendations" (WHO, 2005:1) These sets of international health regime (norms) are operationalized at member states level through appropriate legislative and policy provisions and form part of daily practices.

Contextualized within the securitization framework, scholars such as Kamradt-Scott (2010), Davies, Kamradt-Scott, & Rushton (2015), and Kaunert, Leonard, & Wertman (2022) remarked that the WHO and its IHR constitute securitization of health issues - an "institutionalized securitization" (Buzan et al., 1998:27). Institutionalized securitization is based on potential for recurrence of the existential threat. The IHR is institutionalized owing to the probability of "emergence or re-emergence of international disease threats and other public health risks….' (WHO, 2005:1).

Using the norm cycle model (norm emergence, norm cascade and norm internalization), Kaunert et al. (2022:2) have argued that the WHO is an international norm entrepreneur. In his work - Securitization of COVID-19 as a Security Norm: WHO Norm Entrepreneurship and Norm Cascading - he provides a "framework for understanding the securitization of the COVID-19 epidemic as an international norm defined and promoted by the WHO as a norm entrepreneur, and cascaded down to the level of member states." Individual states functioned as secondary norm entrepreneurs by accepting, interpreting, and implementing the primary norm in their sovereign states. Kaunert et al. (2022:265-266) summarise the international primary norm formulation by the WHO and how it translates into a securitizing move.

The WHO designated COVID-19 a "public health emergency of international concern" (WHO, 2020a). This speech act constitutes securitizing move directed at the international community as the audience and the latter's populations as referent objects whose survival is existentially threatened by COVID-19.

A brief sequence of events, as outlined by Kaunert et al. (2022:8-10) pertaining to the WHO framing of COVID-19 as a security issue, are briefly covered:

- **5 January 2020**—the WHO issued a warning regarding the COVID-19 outbreak;
- **7 January 2020**—the WHO briefed the United States public health officials and other governments;
- **9 January 2020**—the WHO issued guidelines to member states on how to manage COVID-19;
- **23 January 2020**—the WHO confirmed human-to-human transmission and warned that the global risk was high;
- **30 January 2020**—the WHO declared COVID-19 "a public health emergency of international concern";
- **25 February 2020**—the WHO warned the world to implement plans to prepare for a spread;
- **28 February 2020**—the WHO officials raised the COVID-19 threat assessment at a global level from "high" to "very high";
- **11 March 2020**—the WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. This declaration institutionalised the securitizing move where COVID-19 was framed and adopted at the WHO level as a global security norm, therefore, an existential threat to the international community.

This series of events socialised the primary norm among sovereign states by "creating a shared understanding of the security threat" (Kaunert et al., 2022:5). Concerning macro-securitization, the WHO primary norm entrepreneurship sought to construct a shared understanding that COVID-19 was an existential threat and ought to be considered and collectively responded to as such. Because the WHO have no

jurisdiction over sovereign states; it could only initiate a securitizing move, which amount to alert, awareness, or advisory service.

As an alternative, the WHO's role can be expressed meaningfully by applying the international norm emergence process. In this method, the WHO's role entails formulating, cascading, and socialising the international norm globally; and leaving it to individual states to internalise, adopt and implement the norm as secondary norm entrepreneurs. Most individual states accepted the international norm entrepreneurship, but developed and implemented measures of varying proportions to contain the pandemic (Kaunert et al., 2022:15). South Africa adopted the global norm and developed its own plan to manage COVID-19. In line with the study objectives, the subsequent sections explore South Africa's response to the pandemic and how such response led to securitization of COVID-19.

4.3 COVID-19 primary norm adoption, politicisation, and securitization

The WHO set the primary norm and initiated a securitizing move by declaring COVID-19 a public health emergency of global concern. Because the WHO cannot securitize, it only has the social capital and authority to designate health-related issues as existential threats among its member states. This authority stems from the International Health Regulations (2005), specifically Article 12, which accord the WHO director-general the authority to determine a public health emergency of international concern (WHO, 2005:14). In terms of the IHR, a public health emergency of international concern is:

> an extraordinary event which is determined (i) to constitute a public health
> risk to other States through the international spread of disease; and (ii) to
> potentially require a coordinated international response (WHO, 2005:9).

South Africa acted as a secondary norm entrepreneur by internalising and accepting COVID-19 as a public health emergency of international concern. South Africa did not immediately securitize COVID-19; instead, COVID-19 was initially overseen within the normal political and bureaucratic processes and later escalated into 'emergency politics' where a lockdown, characterized by emergency and extraordinary measures,

was adopted, and implemented. South Africa's response to COVID-19 was initially politicised, then securitized and finally de-securitized.

4.4   COVID-19 securitization—core tenets

Securitization follows a linguistic process where a securitizing actor couch an issue as a security threat "not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat" (Buzan et al., 1998:24). Securitization succeeds if the core elements are met, which entail a securitizing actor, through a speech act, designate an existential threat and dramatizing its harmful dangers to a referent object, and set a stage to take extraordinary measures to manage it. South Africa's response to COVID-19 is explored against the elements of securitization. In this study, analysis was conducted on President Ramaphosa's speeches delivered to the public through live broadcast:

- Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on measures to combat the COVID-19 epidemic delivered on 15 March 2020;
- Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa and leaders of political parties represented in Parliament on the coronavirus outbreak, De Tuynhuys, Cape Town, delivered on 18 March 2020;
- Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on the escalation of measures to combat the COVID-19 epidemic, Union Buildings, Tshwane, delivered on 24 March 2020;
- Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on the termination of the national state of disaster in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first three statements constitute the securitizing move and successful securitization. These statements are relevant to the study because they provide rich information pertaining to the securitization process the president embarked on. They provide the fundamental basis for the study as they assist in assessing what Buzan et al. (1998:32) term "… an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent object), why, with what results, and not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization of successful)".

The fourth statement was delivered on 4 April 2022 to terminate the national state of disaster and nationwide lockdown (securitized state). This statement is most relevant in assessing the de-securitization process, specifically the movement from a securitized state to the normal political sphere, a state of normalcy. Other statements by the president, ministers and regulations issued under the national state of disaster are assessed and referenced only to the extent to which they contribute to the analysis of the study. It is beyond the study to explore all statements, regulations, rules, and plans in response to COVID-19

4.4.1 Securitizing actors and speech acts

A securitizing actor uses a speech act to securitize an issue perceived to be presenting an existential threat to a referent object. Securitizing actors could be political leaders, policymakers, bureaucracies, government, lobbyists, pressure groups, transnational actors, and individuals (Buzan et al., 1998:36). In South Africa, COVID-19 speech acts were articulated by the government, with the main speaker being President Ramaphosa, the minister of health, and the minister of CoGTA. The speeches were mainy political statements, legislation, regulations, plans, and rules.

The speech acts started as part of the normal political-administrative process when South Africa learnt of COVID-19 and its potential dangers. The minister of health was in the forefront of the narration of COVID-19 as a potential threat to the health of citizens. To that extent, he initiated active steps on 10 January 2020 by directing the Department of Health (DoH) to develop "plans including measures to strengthen the capacity of provincial health departments to manage possible outbreaks" (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:33).

This was followed by activating the Emergency Operations Centre on 31 January 2020 to coordinate the health response plan. This was augmented with a preparedness and response plan developed in February 2020 (SAnews, 2020). The first case of COVID-19 was detected on 05 March 2020 and was managed according to established preparedness and response plan protocols.

During these preliminary stages, the minister of health continuously used speech acts to inform the public of the dangers associated with COVID-19, such as "pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death" (SAnews, 2020). Reporting on the first case of COVID-19, the minister of health continued with the security rhetoric, using words such as "*the case has been isolated, application of containment measures as well as monitoring of contacts*". In the context, the minister's speech attempted to invoke the harmful effects and connotations of COVID-19, a precursor for securitizing move. However, the issue remained unsecuritized and was managed within the normal political and administrative processes.

The escalation of COVID-19 onto the security agenda took a tipping point from 15 March 2020 onwards. Speech acts and regulations marking a point of no return were widely articulated and effected. President Ramaphosa led the security discourse. On the same day, a special Cabinet meeting was convened where a resolution was taken to initiate "urgent and drastic measures to handle the pandemic" (Ramaphosa, 2020a). As the head of state, with the executive authority of the republic vested in him, he was obliged to take all reasonable and necessary actions to protect the republic and its inhabitants. By such stature, the president assumed the role of securitizing actor, convened the legal audience (Cabinet), articulated the existential threat (COVID-19) to the survival and continuous existence of the referent object (people and economy), and proposed urgent and emergency measures to manage the existential threat.

By declaring, "we have decided to take urgent and drastic measures" (Ramaphosa, 2020a), the president elevated COVID-19 above normal politics and claimed the right to use extraordinary measures to manage it. In this regard, securitization was institutionalised through the *Disaster Management Act* which was used as the legal instrument to classify COVID-19 as a national disaster and to declare a national state of disaster. A national disaster is:

> A progressive or sudden, widespread or localized natural or human-caused occurrence which – (a) causes or threatens to cause (i) death, injury or disease; (ii) damage to property, infrastructure or the environment; or (iii) disruption of the life of a community; and (b) is of a magnitude that exceeds

the ability of those affected by the disaster to cope with its effects using only their own resources" (RSA, 2003:6).

By announcing "I hereby declare a national state of disaster" (RSA, 2020b:4), the Minister of CoGTA repeated the same security rhetoric of President Ramaphosa. This declaration is a speech act, as it conveys an emergency and a claim for a right to use the *Disaster Management Act* to manage COVID-19. The performative nature of the speech act pertains to the Minister of CoGTA's right to "issue directives or regulations to assist and protect the public, provide relief to the public, protect property, prevent or combat disruption; or manage the destructive and other effects of the disaster" (RSA, 2020b).

On the same day, 15 March 2020, President Ramaphosa escalated the securitizing move by establishing the NCCC and the National Command Centre as a high-level structures to play an advisory role on how government should respond and manage COVID-19 (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:7). He also activated the NATJOINTS—a national security structure responsible for monitoring threats to the safety, security, and stability in the country and to coordinate operational response through the joint deployment of police and military forces (Duncan, 2014:86). The president's actions communicated his clear intentions to manage COVID-19 in military terms by employing the services of the security and military apparatus—an action taken in case of imminent military threats.

The utilization of security forces with inherent predisposition to law enforcement and coercive power to manage a health-related crisis later proved controversial. Some contended that the security forces strayed beyond their security mandate and commanded health-related issues which are outside their security purview (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:34 & 54). On the evening of the same day, 15 March 2020, President Ramaphosa addressed the nation on measures to combat COVID-19.

His statement had the hallmarks of securitization because he framed COVID-19 as an existential threat to the people and economy of South Africa (referent object), and the audience (Cabinet already consulted) accepted it as such. Articulating a point of no

return, he remarked that "we have decided to take urgent and drastic measures to manage the disease, protect the people of our country and reduce the impact of the virus on our society and on our economy" (Ramaphosa, 2020a). The words "urgent and drastic measures" convey a sense of urgency and a need for extraordinary measures, which, if not taken immediately ", everything else will be irrelevant because we will not exist to remedy our failure" (Buzan et al., 1998:26).

On 18 March 2020, the Minister of CoGTA published the *National State of Disaster Regulations*, which came into effect immediately. The extraordinary measures imposed by the regulations included:

> "prevention and prohibition of gatherings; enforcing medical examination, isolation, and quarantine in case a person has contracted or is suspected to have contracted COVID-19 or was in contact with person who had contracted COVID-19; closure of schools and partial care facilities; suspension of visits to correctional and detention facilities; and limitation in sale of alcohol" (RSA, 2020c:4-11).

On 23 March 2020, key activities were undertaken as part of the securitization process. This included a meeting with scientists and clinicians as part of engagement with the health sector to use their expertise, scientific and professional knowledge and advice on what course of action should be taken to manage COVID-19. This resulted in the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:35). On 24 March 2020, the president announced a "nation-wide lockdown for 21 days which would take effect from midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020" (Ramaphosa, 2020b). He characterized the lockdown as a "decisive measure to save millions of South Africans from infection and save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people" (Ramaphosa, 2020b).

The law enforcement agencies under the auspices of the NATJOINTS were entrusted with the responsibility to play a critical role in enforcing the lockdown regulations. To augment the enforcement, on 25 March 2020, the president issued *President's Minute 78 of 2020*, "authorising SANDF to support other state departments in ensuring law

and order and compliance with the lockdown regulations (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:133).

The 26th of March 2020 marked a total securitization which saw the national lockdown implemented in full swing and the SAPS, SANDF and peace officers fully deployed to enforce the national lockdown measures. The health and medical sector was seized with health-related issues. President Ramaphosa, as the securitizing actor, continued briefing the nation on the measures to combat COVID-19 and adjustments on the alert levels. All the speeches emphasised the securitized environment by reflecting on the dangers of COVID-19; how the lockdown measures were assisting in preventing transmissions; and how the health system was coping.

4.4.2 Designation of referent objects

The security concept is meaningless with nothing to protect. To securitize is to take active steps to preserve something of value against a threat that threatens its existence and survival. A referent object is a critical ingredient in any security thinking because it answers the questions:

What to protect? What is its value? Embodying any securitizing move is a security discourse that identifies and designates a referent object and its concomitant characteristics of value and legitimacy to survival.

Existential threats in the military sector strain, damage, and dismember the physical base; distort or destruct state institutions; and repress, subvert, or obliterate the state (Buzan, 1991:75). COVID-19 has similar effects on people, and their lives, and livelihoods. COVID-19 was "one of the gravest crises that humanity has experienced since the end of World War II in terms of the number of people infected and died, but also in terms of the economic consequences" (Kaunert et al., 2022:1).

In South Africa, President Ramaphosa followed the same argument of designating people, their lives, and livelihoods as the primary referent object. In his statement, he repeatedly emphasised the value of people, the danger they were encountering and the need for extraordinary measures to protect them. During the statement presented

on 15 March 2020, he remarked, "I am addressing you this evening on a matter of great national importance" (*Ramaphosa, 2020a),* which according to (Herbert, 2013:661), is a "matter of national life and death, which the nation cannot afford to let slip".

The president used various words and characteristics to describe the referent object and the associated cherished value, including the following:

> "We have decided to take urgent and drastic measures to manage the disease, protect the *people of our country* and reduce the impact of the virus on *our society* and on *our economy"; "*Our priority must be to safeguard the *health and well-being of all South Africans*"; In addition to the impact that this pandemic will have on *health and wellbeing of our people*, and the impact it will have on the *day-to-day life of our society*, COVID-19 will also have a significant and potentially lasting impact on *our economy"* (Ramaphosa, 2020a).

During the statement presented on 18 March 2020, after meeting political parties represented in Parliament, the president re-emphasized the value of people as a referent object by remarking:

> "All leaders agree that the COVID-19 outbreak poses a grave and real threat
> to the *lives*, *livelihoods* and *prosperity* of our *people*" (Ramaphosa, 2020b).

These characterizations of the referent objects draw various security paradigms together, such as military, political, economic, and human security. In the realist paradigm, 'the country' symbolise territoriality, and 'people' and 'nation' as part of sovereignty. These attributes further constitute the physical base of the state (Buzan, 1991:40) and elements of statehood (Marume, *et al.*, 2016:24)—the main focus areas of military security. Considering Ullman's (1983:133) definition of security, highly contagious pandemics, such as COVID-19 with high mortality rates, caused physical and psychological effects on people and drastically degraded the quality of their lives.

The lack of a medical cure or vaccine exacerbated the situation and narrowed government policy options; therefore, South Africa and other countries resorted to lockdown measures.

The economy, as a matter of national security, concerns "access to resources, finance, and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power" (Buzan et al., 1998:8). Each state depends on viable national industrial infrastructure, and international trade, a stable and growing economy to provide jobs for its people, creating and distribute wealth and leverage profits (Ronis, 2011:15). President Ramaphosa re-emphasised the value of the economy as a referent object affected by COVID-19. He remarked that:

> "COVID-19 will have a significant and potentially lasting influence on our economy" (Ramaphosa, 2020a); "Our country finds itself confronted … by the prospects of a very deep economic recession that will cause businesses to close and many people to lose their jobs" (Ramaphosa, 2020b).

The *economy* is a critical ingredient of national security because it enables the state "to preserve its nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to protect its nature, institutions, and governance from disruption by outsider forces; and to control its borders" (Brown, 1983:4).

Human security pertains to freedom from fear and want. COVID-19 threatened both of these freedoms. Illness and deaths created fear, whereas the economic downturn created want. The lockdown of economic activities affected the quality of life and had the potential to disintegrate society and lead to strife on various levels. The main objective of the lockdown was to save the people of South Africa by flattening the curve and to enable the health system to improve its level of preparedness to manage potential surges in transmissions and ensure freedom from fear. Freedom from want entailed balancing lockdown measures and the preservation of the economy. In the case of the latter, a raft of social and economic initiatives were initiated, which included:

- Temporary employee/employer relief scheme

- Employment tax incentives

- Increase in social grants

- Distress funds for small and medium enterprises (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

From a political security perspective, COVID-19 had the potential to undermine public confidence in South Africa's capacity to protect its citizens. This would have cast doubt on the state's ability to govern, legitimacy, and authority. Rebello et al. (2021:6) contend that responses to protest actions during national lockdown were characterized by an increase in state violence owing to securitization and militarisation.

This brought sharp public scrutiny on the legitimacy of the enforcement powers accorded to the police and the legitimacy of the government that enacted such powers. Some powers established under the national state of disaster were challenged in court, where it was ruled that "the legislature and executive are constrained by the principle that they may exercise no power and perform no function beyond that conferred upon them by law" (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:74). Such judgement delegitimised certain political decisions by the president, therefore, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the executive to govern the country politically. It is contended that such political and legal contestation is expected in a securitized environment, thus gave credence to the view that security is a negative concept.

Although articulating the referent object is a critical composite of securitization, it is not the end in itself. Establishing the concept of security through securitization occurs and adapts to specific settings and contexts where the securitizing agent identifies and presents existential threats and solicit support and endorsement from the audience to undertake extraordinary measures. The subsequent sub-sections explore how President Ramaphosa articulated these factors in his speeches delivered to the public.

4.4.3 Articulation of existential threat

Existential threat is the baseline for security, without which any security discourse is valueless despite the sector under consideration. A precursor for any security discourse is the value of the referent object and its legitimate claim to survival. Such value should face a threatening development or event, which in the security lexicon is termed an 'existential threat'. A securitizing actor should, therefore, discursively, and socially construct such a threat and elevate it onto the security agenda.

The CS posit that to securitize an issue, the securitizing actor must present and argue the existential threat only enough to attain resonance for "a platform to be made to legitimise emergency measures or extraordinary measures that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threat, point of no return and necessity" (Buzan et al., 1998:25). Only when an issue is successfully presented as an existential threat, will exceptional political measures be legitimised to manage it. These measures are two-dimensional; therefore, the word 'exceptional'.

First, urgency, where the threatening development takes priority over other issues and is elevated above politics. Second, extraordinary measures—where authorities "claim powers that they would not otherwise have or curtail rights and liberties that might otherwise apply" (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2015:113).

In South Africa, President Ramaphosa set the platform through speech acts (statements) and comprehensively articulated the referent objects as broadly explored above. Similar linguistic rhetoric was adopted where COVID-19 was discursively and socially constructed as an existential threat. President Ramaphosa three statements delivered on 15 March 2020, 18 March 2020, and 24 March 2020, respectively provided a detailed account of how COVID-19 was framed with security language and how such security discourse cultivated a fertile ground to set off the emergency measures that followed.

Foremost, President Ramaphosa did not codename COVID-19 as an existential threat. Instead, he adopted the WHO language of declaring COVID-19 a "public health

emergency of international concern" (WHO, 2020b). As indicated elsewhere, a public health emergency of international concern is

> "an extraordinary event which constitutes a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and which requires a coordinated international response" (WHO, 2005:9).

In line with this framing, President Ramaphosa functioned as a secondary norm, accepting COVID-19 as an existential threat. Kaunert et al. (2022:2) eloquently articulates the WHO as the primary norm entrepreneurship because it defines primary international norms, the content, scope, and modality of the security threat and the manner to manage it. He further contend that within the norm life cycle, the primary norm move to a tipping point and cascades to secondary norm entrepreneurs at the individual state level.

The final stage is internalisation, where individual states accept, socialise, and implement the primary norm measures in their sovereign states. South Africa internalised, accepted, and socialised the international norm (COVID-19) as presenting an existential threat to her domestic soil. Such norm acceptance is acknowledged in the declaration of a national state of disaster where the Minister of CoGTA stated that she considered "the magnitude and severity of the COVID-19 outbreak, which was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation" (RSA, 2020b).

President Ramaphosa acknowledged the norm when he affirmed that "The WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic" (Ramaphosa, 2020a). Notwithstanding the WHO international norm, President Ramaphosa, as a head of state, has a constitutional obligation to protect the citizens of South Africa against various security threats, including pandemics, such as COVID-19. Security threats, despite the sector of origin, are ambiguous and cannot be neatly and precisely defined. Such ambiguity is occasioned by their "diverse nature, varying range, intensity, and multiple risks, which cannot be assessed accurately, and the probabilities of which cannot be measured" (Buzan, 1991:89).

For a health crisis, such as COVID-19, to fit the requirement of existential threat, it should meet a specific threshold. It must be "a contagion characterized by fast-moving transmission, with little scientific knowledge of the disease, no known treatment or cure, or has high mortality or morbidity, or is associated with a particular visceral fear of pain or suffering" (Wenham, 2019:1094-1095).

Articulating the features of COVID-19 as an existential threat, President Ramaphosa invoked several fear-laden concepts to construct "a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat" (Stritzel, 2007:363). Words used include characterizing COVID-19 as:

> 'common threat', 'national emergency', 'grave emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'grave and real threat', 'great threat', 'global crisis" (Ramaphosa, 2020b); 'grave public health emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

These expressions convey a state of security and are synonymous with military threats where one state may be labelled as presenting a "grave emergency or grave and real threat" to the security of another state. In 2003, George Bush characterized Saddam Hussein and Iraq as presenting a "grave potential threat to the United States and peace and security" (Copson, 2003:5). This was based on allegations that Iraq was harbouring stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. Huysmans (1998:491) contends that if the securitizing actor does not neutralise the threats, they risk losing their political character, legitimacy, authority, and capacity to rule. The magnitude and eminency of existential threats necessitate priority over other questions that enter the political sphere as urgent concerns.

In his statement, President Ramaphosa used not only security idioms and jargons to characterize COVID-19, but he used his speech eloquently to exhibit and accentuate the dangerous connotations, harmful effects, and real-time occurrences associated with COVID-19 by occasionally pronouncing infection and mortality rates globally and in South Africa. He labelled COVID-19 as characterized by:

'severe impact', 'severe situation', 'fear and panic', 'significant and potentially lasting impact', 'negative effects' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'extremely dangerous' (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

Concluding his speech on 15 March 2020, he emphasised the need for a collective and common response by emphasising that "but if we act together, if we act now, and if we act decisively, we will overcome it". He repeated this 'common cause' on 18 March 2020 by stating that "If we act now, and if we act together, we can change the course of this epidemic…". Using these phrases also cultivates national will - "the degree of resolve that can be mobilized among citizens of a nation in support of governmental decisions about internal good governance, foreign policy and defence" (Kruys, 2007:2), According to Morgenthau (1963:134), national will "tends to manifest most clearly during a national crisis, particularly when the existence of the nation is at stake, or an issue of fundamental importance must be decided".

To cultivate national will and fertile ground for the legitimation of extraordinary measures, President Ramaphosa used phrases such as "We are responding as a united nation to a common threat; this national emergency demands cooperation, collaboration and common action; but if we act together, if we act now, and if we act decisively, we will overcome it" (Ramaphosa, 2020a). The subsection analyses the securitizing actor-audience discourse.

4.4.4 Audience engagement

In securitization, the framing of issues occurs through a security discourse where a securitization actor attempt to convince a substantial audience of the legitimacy of a referent object to survive against a threatening development,which should be managed through extraordinary or emergency measures (Roe, 2008:185). An issue is successfully securitized only when an audience accedes to the securitizing actor's claim that the issue is an existential threat to a referent object and supports the

securitizing actor's claim to use extraordinary measures to confront the threat (Buzan at el., 1998:25).

It is contended that the transformation of issues into the security agenda occurs through a discursive process characterized by "deliberative interactions between the securitizing actor(s) and audience(s) in which multiple security discourses are mobilized which enable securitizing actors and audiences to contribute shared perceptions of 'security' and mutual acceptance of emergency measures" (Côté 2016: 541-558). In this context, the audience internalise the securitizing move and legitimise using security practices to manage the threatening development (Floyd, 2020:5).

The success of securitization hinges on the audience's appreciation and acceptance that the referent object is worth saving and that failure to act will endanger its survival (Vaughn, 2009:266). The failure of the CS to comprehensively develop the concept and role of the audience created a divergence in the securitization process. Salter (2008:322) proposed a four-dimensional setting comprising popular, elite, technocrat, and scientific audiences).

Roe (2008:620) proposed a two-stage process, which he termed: the stage of identification (rhetoric securitization), which entails engagement with the public and the stage of mobilization (active securitization), which entail engagement with formal institutions, such as Parliament. Léonard and Kaunert (2010:65-68) proposed a three-dimensional audience setting comprising a 'problem stream', 'policy stream', and 'politics stream'. Wertman and Kaunert (2022:73-76) suggested a two-dimensional approach, including legal and political audiences.

President Ramaphosa engaged multiple audiences to ensure inclusivity and broad-based support by all stakeholder groups before the national lockdown (Ramaphosa, 2020b). Because COVID-19 was presented as a health crisis, President Ramaphosa firstly engaged the health fraternity to obtain health and medical-related scientific counsel to guide his political direction. This was necessary to ensure that any securitizing move undertaken is subjected to closer health and medical scrutiny and has clear specifications to reduce confusion (Wolfers, 1952:481-483).

It is contended that for COVID-19, the health fraternity constituted a 'scientific audience' based on the fundamental rules governing the health and medical field and the knowledge base (who can speak health), the social context regarding what can be expressed (health-security discourse), and success regarding what the securitizing actor heard (is there sufficient gravity to warrant securitization? (Salter, 2008:322). To situate the securitizing move in a local 'regime of truth' Salter's (2008:322), President Ramaphosa convened and engaged "about 50 scientists and clinicians to solicit advice on the pandemic" (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:35). The engagements led to the establishment of the MAC which was tasked to advise and collaborate with the government on managing the pandemic.

Owing to the significance of the MAC as a scientific audience, it was later subdivided into committees, collectively tasked to provide comprehensive scientific and evidence-based counsel to the president and the executive through the NCCC (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:163). The securitizing actor-scientific audience discourse enhanced the president's speech acts and empowered him to confidently articulate COVID-19 as an existential threat; therefore, generate fertile ground for acceptance of the extraordinary measures by the public and associated stakeholder formations.

To successfully securitize a health issue, the securitizing rhetoric should provide the population with evidence-based information, which they should not only trust but also trust the authorities, the source of the information and the decision-making process (Singh, 2020:1). Based on the scientific guidance, President Ramaphosa confidently shaped his securitization rhetoric (stage of identification) by labelling COVID-19 a "grave and real threat" (Ramaphosa, 2020b), and, therefore, drastically embarked on active securitization (stage of mobilization) by resorting to "taking urgent and drastic measures" (Ramaphosa, 2020b).

The scientific audience supports Rubin and Erik's (2009:321) "expert-led securitization model", which posits that securitization is influenced and dominated by experts who, through their knowledge, shape the security discourse, frame issues as security or

non-security and determine commensurate public policy choices (administrative or extraordinary).

In constitutional democracies, public policy formulation and execution, including national security, is the function of the executive. In South Africa, Cabinet is an influential legal audience whose actions and powers are guided by legal rules (Wertman & Kaunert, 2022:74) and has the authority to legitimise and execute extraordinary and emergency measures (Roe, 2008:615; Léonard & Kaunert, 2010:62).

Cognizant of these legislative provisions, President Ramaphosa engaged the 'legal audience' in the form of a special Cabinet meeting on 15 March 2020, where provincial premiers were also consulted (Ramaphosa, 2020a). The special Cabinet meeting was dominated by multiple security discourses on the necessity to legitimate and execute extraordinary measures—a point of no return. Judging by the announcement, the legal audience accepted the securitizing move and the extraordinary measures. During the statement delivered on 15 March 2020, the president pronocunced to the public that:

> "We have decided to take urgent and drastic measures to manage the disease, protect the people of our country and reduce the impact of the virus on our society and on our economy. We have now declared a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act. This will enable us to have an integrated and coordinated disaster management mechanism that will focus on preventing and reducing the outbreak of this virus. We will also be able to set up emergency, rapid and effective response systems to mitigate the severity of its impact" (Ramaphosa, 2020a).

By stating that "*we have decided….,*" indicates that Cabinet was not relegated to "passive receiver of security arguments and agents without agency" (Côté, 2016:551). But Cabinet engaged the president within mutually constituted social, bureaucratic, and linguistic circumstances where independent actions were agreed upon in the form of declaration of a national state of disaster and nationwide lockdown. Cabinet, as an audience, had a direct causal connection with the issue, therefore, enriched the

security discourse (whether to securitize or not); and enabled securitization based on their ability to adopt measures to tackle the threat.

The outcome of such discourse is tangible security effects, such as the classification of COVID-19 as a national disaster (RSA, 2020a) and the declaration of a national state of disaster (RSA, 2020b), which institutionalised emergency and extraordinary measures. The *Disaster Management Act* became an empowering legislative instrument which enabled Cabinet members "to issue and vary directives, as required, within their mandates, to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19, from time to time as may be required" (RSA, 2020c:3, 9-10). Cabinet functioned as a source of political power which took COVID-19 above politics and framed it as "an issue of supreme priority" (Buzan et al., 1998:26).

This transformation accords with the notion that security is a political and power-laden concept that privileges the state as the primary security actor. This is further based on the historical powers accorded to state actors to deal with security tasks despite the issue in question. Beyond Cabinet, Côté (2016:547) remarks that "other multiple audiences may exist within a single securitization process, and such audiences may possess differential powers and influence, leading to differing effects on securitization outcomes". Furthermore, extraordinary measures have effects on inter-unit relations, such as the curtailment of civil liberties, and may constrain successful securitization because specific significant audiences may agree with the existential threat but disapprove of the extraordinary measures.

The securitizing actor may require the concurrence of such multiple audiences to achieve the legitimacy to elevate issues to a security domain. In line with the preceding, President Ramaphosa extended the security discourse to the NEDLAC, a juristic body that broadly represents organised business, organised labour, organised community and development interest, and the state (RSA, 1994:20). NEDLAC concurred that:

> The pandemic was a health, economic, and social crisis of unprecedented scale,' 'that the public health response to the pandemic should be intensified; that priority should be given to measures to contain the spread of the virus

and to minimise loss of life and that NEDLAC partners expressed their appreciation of government's position that lifting the nationwide lockdown too abruptly could result in dire consequences (Ramaphosa, 2020d).

These statements demonstrate that NEDLAC internalised and appreciated the intensity of the threat, endorsed the extraordinary measures based on such appreciation, and committed their members to tolerate and abide by the national lockdown measures.

On 18 March 2020, President Ramaphosa engaged leaders of political parties represented in Parliament. The purpose was to explain the lockdown measures and solicit their support, including that of their membership and constituencies. This is critical because such measures had direct impact and effects on people's behaviour and day-to-day lives. Delivering the outcome of the meeting, President Ramaphosa stated that:

> 'All leaders agree that the COVID-19 outbreak presents a grave and real threat to the lives, livelihoods, and prosperity of our people', 'the severity of the COVID-19 threat requires an exceptional response that draws on all the resources and capabilities of our nation; that this response needs to be immediate and that it needs to be sustained. We therefore support the measures that government has announced' (Ramaphosa, 2020b).

The audience did not blindly endorse the emergency measures. Instead, declaring "support for the measures that government has announced" implies complete understanding and appreciation of what these measures entailed and bound their political parties and members to the common cause initiated by the government.

It is contended that "securitizing agents always strive to convince as broad an audience as possible because they need to maintain a social relationship with the target individual group" (Balzacq, 2011:9). This is necessary to ensure cordial relationships and to avoid breaking social-political relationship which is vital specifically when dealing with threatening issues affecting the whole country. To sustain such social

relations, President Ramaphosa took the security discourse to leaders of religious formations on 19 March 2020 and traditional leaders on 24 March 2020, respectively.

The relevancy and significance of these audiences stem from the constituencies they represent across religious, faith-based, and traditional beliefs. They form part of broader stakeholders who should be consulted "to ensure that the national effort to combat and contain the virus is inclusive and enjoys the support of all stakeholder groups" (Presidency, 2020). These entities are custodians and foundations of religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs and value systems, which society endears and cherishes. A lack of support from such audience could invite rejection of the extraordinary measures, with potential mass defiance and violent protest actions. Last, the president engaged the whole nation through live television broadcasts where he articulated the existential threat and its possible effects on the referent object and the need to undertake urgent, drastic, and extraordinary measures.

4.4.5 Functional actors and their roles

The concept of functional actors is not well established in the literature. The CS define functional actors as "actors who affect the dynamics of a sector. "Without being the referent object or the actor calling for security on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security" (Buzan et al.*,* 1998:36). They used the military sector to exemplify functional actors as "agencies of force, such as defence bureaucracies, armies, or providers of the instruments of force" (Buzan et al.*,* 1998:56).

Second-generation scholars define functional actors as "actors who seek to influence the trajectory of securitization positively by endorsing securitization or negatively by vetoing securitization, while equally not seeking to initiate or pre-empt securitization; instead, they comment on existing securitization processes" (Floyd, 2020:1-17). Mass media is also a critical functional actor because it influences what is alleged and heard and can easily repeat and emphasise a position or issue, therefore, affecting the manner the securitizing actor or audience interprets and react to the issue (Dolinec, 2011:29).

It is contended that mass media can also motivate an alternative narrative that weakens the social position and security speech act of the securitizing actor, therefore, persuade the audience to reject the security threat and proposed security measures. In health-related security issues, Elbe (2011:853) posits medical and public health professionals as functional actors based on their expert knowledge, which plays a critical role in the analysis, formulation, and execution of policy intervention to handle the prevailing health-related existential threat.

Rubin and Erik (2009:319-330) expand on the value of expert knowledge through their work "Expert-led Securitization" which locates experts in the centre of securitization as the main drivers of policy contents to manage issues perceived and framed by securitizing actors as threats. Securitizing actors defer their opinions and perceptions to expert judgements, empowering the latter to apply their specialist knowledge to determine if a threatening development should be managed with extraordinary or standard policy mechanisms. Theoretically, the policy choices arrived at by experts represent "a particular local regime of truth" (Salter, 2008:322) based on the scientific setting where it was produced.

Experts are critical actors in political and security discourses because "they possess specialised knowledge acquired through academic training in a specific field and further developed through professional practice" (Christensen, 2023:603). In security discourse, such knowledge shapes the security speech act of the securitizing actor whether to securitize or not. Expert knowledge is considered incontrovertible and "an important source of policy preferences since it gives rise to specific worldviews, beliefs about cause-and-effect relationships and ideas about appropriate policy solutions" (Christensen, 2023:604). South Africa had two main functional actors who influenced the dynamics of COVID-19 securitization. These are the health sector under the MAC and the security sector under the NATJOINTS. The media influenced the dynamics of COVID-19 securitization, although they operated outside the institutional structure established by the securitizing actor.

4.4.5.1   Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC)

The Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) was established on 23 March 2020 after the president convened a team of scientists and clinicians to solicit advice on the pandemic. The MAC further established sub-committees of pathologists and laboratories; clinicians; research; public health; and vaccine committees (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:163). These sub-committees comprised several health and medical experts tasked to provide comprehensive scientific and evidence-based advice to the NCCC, chaired by the president. The MAC played dual roles. First, as a significant audience (Section 4.4.4: Audience engagement); second, as a functional actor, influencing the dynamics of COVID-19 securitization through core health and medical rules, authority, and knowledge and management of the health system.

The MAC occupied high stakes in the security table and significantly influenced the security discourse by transforming the health issue into a security issue, therefore, creating a compelling case for securitization. Among its work which influenced the trajectory of the national lockdown, the MAC tracked "the epidemiological trends of COVID-19 infections; continuously assessed the health system capacity to respond to the disease burden; and determined any other factor that would influence the level of infection, hospitalisation and mortality" (DoH, 2020b:4-5).

The MAC expert judgements shaped and influenced the dynamics of the national lockdown by advising the NCCC chaired by the president—which adjusted-risk level to implement, when and for how long? Cowan (2020:1) remarked that before announcing the stringent lockdown measures, the MAC presented President Ramaphosa with epidemiological projections, which indicated that a delay in the government's response could result in fatalities ranging between 87 900 and 351 000, and overwhelm the health system. Breaking down the scenarios, the MAC estimated that an infection rate of 10% will result in 87 900 deaths; at 20%, 176 000 people could die; and at 40%, 351 000 people could die (Cowan, 2020). Framing the COVID-19 narrative in this fashion does not only paints a picture of threat scenarios but also assert the epistemological certainty that these threats will manifest and, therefore, should be acted upon. The

state of fear enveloping the epidemiological analysis and the dangerous connotations to the referent object (people) "catapulted severe state action" (Cowan, 2020:1). Affirming the MAC as a functional actor, Ramaphosa stated that the MAC epidemiological modelling demonstrated that "immediate, swift and extraordinary action is required if we are to prevent a human catastrophe of enormous proportions in our country" (Ramaphosa, 2020d).

The phenomenon of health and medical experts influencing the security discourse demonstrate how future pandemics can be managed by infusing similar structures, such as the MAC, to influence security decisions. Finally, it emphasises how the security concept can broaden beyond the military conceptualization and be influenced by non-security actors based on their specialised, expert, and professional knowledge. To their credit, the MAC was characterized as possessing an incontrovertible pedigree (Singh, 2020:439), which, through their work, guided South Africa to adopt a proactive, coherent, consistent, expert-led, and adaptable strategy which fostered a synergy between government and the private sector (Presidency, 2020:52).

4.4.5.2   National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS)

Although the CS under-theorised the concept of functional actors, its expansion in this study is based on the notion that securitization is not complete without the practical application of emergency measures. Extraordinary measures should be physically applied to have effects on the people or audience. For example, pronouncing and enacting regulations for border closures is inconsequential unless practical steps are taken to close them physically. The aim of securitization is not only to securitize an issue but also to remove the threatening development affecting the referent object. In this context, the security sector is a functional actor and the securitizing actor's instrument to govern danger and implement emergency measures through using state coercive power. In the execution of their functions, the security sector develops its own plans and determine the course of execution.

These plans influence the dynamics of securitization if they can alter the securitizing actor's mindset to escalate or de-escalate depending on the effects on the existential

threat. In South Africa, the NATJOINTS took an active role in influencing the dynamics of COVID-19 by acting as the executors of lockdown measures. NATJOINTS is a security structure responsible for monitoring threats to safety, security, and stability in the country and coordinating operational response through the joint deployment of police and military forces (Duncan, 2014:86).

In this study, NATJOINTS' functional role is theoretically established as executors of extraordinary measures. This is based on their predisposition towards law and order, monopoly over the use of force, and the extent of enforcing the national lockdown measures. The NATJOINTS' role as executors of securitization is outlined in the *Disaster Management Regulations* and includes:

> 'Prevention and prohibition of gatherings; enforcing medical examination, isolation or quarantine in case a person has contracted or is suspected to have contracted COVID-19 or was in contact with a person who had contracted COVID-19; closure of schools and partial care facilities; suspension of visits to correctional and detention facilities; and limitation in the sale of alcohol' (RSA, 2020c:4-11).

Outlining its functional role, the president remarked that "I have accordingly directed the SANDF to be deployed to support the South African Police Service in ensuring that the measures we are announcing are implemented" (Ramaphosa, 2020c). Broadly, the security cluster's role was to implement security practices established to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Security practices operationalize securitization because, like in South Africa, the lockdown measures influenced the behaviours of the people while allowing certain activities to remain operational to reduce the threat (e.g. travel restrictions), prohibiting certain types of political and social activities, such as gatherings, promoting certain perceptions and activities, such as wearing of face masks or social distancing to prevent person-to-person transmission. Conceptualizing the security cluster role as a functional actor enriches the securitization process by transcending the security discourse and exploring the security practices it generates. These practices enable a security analyst to determine whether an issue has been securitized (Trombetta, 2011:139).

4.4.5.3   Media

The transmission of information across the length and breadth of the globe has reached unprecedented proportions. The media possesses the power to shape the public perception and knowledge on various issues, including the manner COVID-19 was presented; the plans developed and implemented to contain it and the havoc it caused to society. The manner in which issues are portrayed and spoken, and the language used to include photographic representation have practical effects on the social fabric of society. As a functional actor in this study, media is used based on its power to affect the dynamics of the security discourse by influencing the public's perception on specific issues pertaining to COVID-19.

The portrayal of COVID-19 as a deadly and grave threat which kills people, influenced public perception and behaviour specifically to accept the security speech act (threat construction) and to comply with the rules (extraordinary measures) voluntarily. In South Africa, President Ramaphosa, as the leading securitizing actor, used broadcast media as a stage to communicate Covid-related issues. Digital media created sustained daily programmes where statistics of infections, deaths, and recoveries were broadcasted to the public without fail.

Print media equally ran headlines and detailed analyses of how COVID-19 was manifesting, which areas were labelled as hotspots, what were the potential drivers of transmission and the tracking of "dangerous events" and "sites of infection". Media can over-emphasise the consequences of the pandemic, such as human life but neglect the aspects of its recovery and survival with the same frequency and manner (Ebrahim, 2022:2). Sensationalism of morbidities and mortalities may overshadow positive developments, such as high chances of survival.

Subjectivity aside, the role of media is to communicate facts purposefully, therefore, direct the public to contain the outbreak, shape attitudes and induce behavioural changes to reduce transmissions and mortality (Sell et al., 2018). However, the sensational words and messages enveloping media coverages and headlines "focusing on the spectacle and damage COVID-19 has caused to contemporary life

and the alarming tone of these media evoke fear and anxiety in its audiences" (Ebrahim, 2022:6). As a functional actor, the media's influence on the securitization of COVID-19 was four-fold:

1. Threat construction where the media facilitates the securitizing actor speech by repeating and sustaining dangers associated with COVID-19.
2. Emergency measures articulation where the media cultivates fertile ground for the introduction and endorsement of emergency measures. For example, on 19 March 2020, News 24 ran the headlines "The terrifying coronavirus projections that pushed govt into lockdown" (Cowan, 2020). The article projected deaths of between 87 900 and 351 000 if a national lockdown is not implemented. These figures sent shockwaves to the public and influenced voluntary compliance in fear of being counted as part of the statistics;
3. Emergency measures endorsement where the media dissects and communicates the lockdown measures. For example, on 31 March 2020, the Daily Maverick ran headlines, "Fighting COVID-19: Will South Africa's lockdown work (and what does that mean)?" (Sulcas, 2020:1). The article concluded that "one thing South Africans can still do – by respecting and mutually enforcing our lockdown – is buy time. The ultimate test of our lockdown's success … will be our collective ability to enforce it. Or not" (Sulcas, 2020:1).
4. Emergency measures impact where the media assisted in assessing and communicate the influence of the national lockdown, particularly successes, public defiance, and over-handedness by the security sector. For example, on 20 April 2020, the BBC ran the headline "South Africa's ruthlessly efficient fight against coronavirus" (Harding, 2020:1). The journalist praised President Ramaphosa as a formidable leader and the Minister of Health for his "no-nonsense, energetic performance, sober and deeply knowledgeable daily briefings". In the same article, he reflected on the non-compromising approach by the security cluster framing them as 'brutal' in enforcing the lockdown measures and acting with "thuggish by humiliating, beating, and even shooting civilians" (Harding, 2020:1)

4.4.6 Emergency measures

The concept of extraordinary, emergency, or exceptional measures is under-theorised in the securitization framework. The CS contextualise successful securitization as a three-stage process comprising "existential threats, emergency action and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules" (Buzan et al., 1998:26). This is problematic as it limits security to a speech act and does not engage with the actual manifestation of security to handle the threat. Political-cum-security speeches are often shouted with hype and urgency with no concomitant emergency, exceptional or extraordinary measures. Statements like "We declare war on corruption" or "We declare war on poverty" are often followed by a normal political and administrative process without invoking emergency measures. If "security is about survival" (Buzan et al., 1998:21), rationally, anything said or conducted under 'security' should have practical actions to manage the identified threat.

Buzan et al. (1998:21) assert that "invoking security is key to legitimising the use of force, mobilizing resources, or taking special powers; there is a difference between obtaining endorsement for emergency measures and active implementation of such measures. The latter completes the process of securitization. By the statement, "I declare a national lockdown", President Ramaphosa claimed the right to use the *Disaster Management Regulations* to manage COVID-19. Had his speeches not followed with practical measures, the address would have counted as a securitizing move and not successful securitization.

The assertion that "securitization can be studied directly; it does not need indicators", according to Buzan et al. (1998:26), is problematic. Indicators can be formulated to measure priority actions and the extraordinariness of measures. Such indicators can vary depending on the issue under consideration and the associated emergency measures. By this, it does not mean the success of securitization should be measured against the success of the measures implemented to manage the threat or *vice versa*. Emergency measures can be assessed by "comparing and contrasting what a securitizing actor says about a particular threat (securitizing move) with what they do

in response to that threat (security practice)" (Floyd, 2011:433). The outcome should demonstrate a match between the securitizing move and security practices. Below is an assessment of how indicators for the securitization of COVID-19 in South Africa can be tracked, particularly on the concepts of supreme priority and extraordinariness of measures.

4.4.6.1 Supreme priority

An issue of supreme priority or urgency is a matter of survival, requiring priority action; which "if not handled now, everything else will be history because the securitizing actor will not exist to remedy his failure to act" (Buzan et al., 1998:26). Articulating the need for immediate action, President Ramaphosa stated that "the human cost of delaying this action would be far, far greater; we cannot take action today that we will deeply regret tomorrow" (Ramaphosa, 2020b & 2020c). President Ramaphosa used words such as 'urgent', 'swift', 'immediate', priority to communicate the supreme priority of taking action to manage COVID-19. This supreme priority was occasioned by the nature of the threat, broadly described as:

> 'common threat', 'national emergency', 'grave emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'grave and real threat', 'great threat', 'global crisis" (Ramaphosa, 2020b); 'grave public health emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

The specific dangers of COVID-19 associated with the above labelling are transmission and mortality. Owing to the uncontrollable transmissibility of the virus and the existential threat it posed to the referent object, the Government of South Africa declared a state of national disaster under the *Disaster Management Act* and issued a host of regulations. The legislative framework defines a national disaster as "a progressive or sudden, widespread or localised natural or human-caused occurrence which:

> (a) causes or threatens to cause (i) death, injury or disease; (ii) damage to property, infrastructure or the environment; or (iii) disruption of the life of a community; and (b) is of a magnitude that exceeds the ability of those

affected by the disaster to cope with its effects using only their own resources" (RSA, 2003:6).

The threat intensity and severity indicate that had the national lockdown not been undertaken, the people of South Africa are likely to have died in masses, and the president would not have had a second chance to manage COVID-19 differently. Emphasising the need for priority action, President Ramaphosa stated that:

'Our priority must be to safeguard the health and well-being of all South Africans, to minimise the number of infections and to ensure all those infected get proper treatment' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'we will prioritise the lives and livelihoods of our people above all else, and will use all of the measures that are within our power to protect them from the economic consequences of this pandemic' (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

Specific indicators can be formulated from these statements to measure the extent to which particular issues were prioritised. For example, an indicator on the number of infections minimised; number of people who got proper treatment; estimated economic loss per sector. These indicators would point out the extent of priority afforded to each activity. For example, as of 20 April 2020, South Africa had tested over 47 000 people and forecasted to test 30 000 people daily (Harding, 2020:1). The speed with which the tests were conducted demonstrates supreme priority. Whether the tests reduced transmission and mortality is immaterial.

It is important to demonstrate that the tests were accorded supreme priority to save people's lives. Roe (2008:620) characterize 'priority action' as a stage of identification where security rhetoric establishing priority is presented and argued. Second, is the stage of mobilization, where active securitization (extraordinary, exceptional, or emergency measures) are contended, endorsed, and subsequently operationalised. Meaning the securitizing actor does what he promised to do. These aspects are dealt with below.

4.4.6.2 Extraordinary measures

In security studies, security measures mean the instruments employed to deal with a threat. In the military sector, this could mean mobilizing and deploying military forces. In the societal sector, it could mean aggressive deportation of undocumented immigrants. In securitization, such measures are termed extraordinary, emergency, or exceptional and entail:

> Declaring an emergency condition in which the securitizing actor is legitimised to use force, or to mobilize or to take special powers, to handle existential threats, and which such powers may entail breaking free of procedures or rules that would otherwise bind (Buzan et al., 1998:21).

The CS, however, did not explore the practical application of extraordinary measures. The barometer is that the emergency measures should break free of democratic rules. These rules can be measured only if they are physically executed, not just said. Floyd (2011:433) proposed two ways to translate emergency measures into security practices:

1. Justifiability to break established rules and regulations; specifically by exercising proportionality on the emergency measures in relation to the capacity of the aggressor;
2. Morality and sincerity of the securitizing actor to deal with the threat, but not to pursue own agenda in the name of security.

Security practices have elements of regulatory instruments and capacity tools (Balzacq, 2011:17); the application of which "allow us to decide whether an issue has been securitized or not" (Trombetta, 2011:139). South Africa's approach was underscored by the appreciation that COVID-19 constitute an 'extremely dangerous' and a 'grave and real threat' (Ramaphosa, 2020a), which required priority action. Its intensity was projected to cause between 87 900 and 351 000 deaths if no action was taken (Cowan, 2020:1).

Subsequently, South Africa initiated the lockdown measures to ensure the survival of the referent object identified as the 'people' and 'their lives, livelihoods, health and well-being' (Ramaphosa, 2020a; 2020b & 2020c). Due to the lack of cure or vaccines for COVID-19, the national lockdown aimed at flattening the curve by reducing transmission to enable greater preparedness by the health system. This accords with Floyd's (2011:433) second requirement that emergency measures "must genuinely aim at addressing the threat". Characterizing the measures, the president stated:

> "this situation calls for an extraordinary response; there can be no half measures"; "we have decided to take urgent and drastic measures to manage the disease, protect the people of our country" (Ramaphosa, 2020a); "swift and extraordinary action is required if we are to prevent a human catastrophe of enormous proportions in our country" (Ramaphosa, 2020c). "we are in a situation that demands swift action and exceptional methods"; "as a nation we have been forced to take aggressive action against an invisible enemy" (Ramaphosa, 2020d).

The *Disaster Management Act* was the basis for the national lockdown and formed part of the government national response instrument. Several security practices were promulgated under the disaster regulations, with enforcement thereof assigned to the security cluster - enforcement officers (RSA, 2020c:4) and the health sector to provide "rapid and effective response systems to mitigate the severity of its impact". (Ramaphosa, 2020a). The security cluster operating under the NATJOINTS employed military-like tactics and strategies, which entailed:

> Conducting roadblocks, and vehicle check points to ensure compliance to inter-provincial travel; checking and verifying permits issued under the regulations; enforcing closure of borders and monitoring cargo movement; issuing fines and arresting offenders for non-compliance, checking compliance during routine patrols; and conducting high visibility and patrols and visiting identified areas (Government Technical Advisory Centre [GTAC], 2021:15-16).

These security practices provided practical manifestation to the securitized environment and marked successful securitization. Challenges experienced during the implementation, such as over-handedness and brutality by the security cluster (GTAC, 2021:11), can be construed as unlawful acts and unintended consequences. They cannot be a yardstick to measure the success or failure of the securitization of COVID-19.

Notwithstanding these negative sentiments, "South Africa was strongly praised by WHO Officials for the decisiveness to implement the national lockdown which was deemed one of the most effective worldwide" (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:224). This can be credited to the security cluster for the security practices and tactics they employed. While the security cluster was responsible for enforcement duties, the health sector aggressively implemented the preparedness and response plan, which summarised the goals, objectives, institutional structures, and specific activities needed to manage the pandemic, accompanied by a comprehensive set of indicators to track performance.

In the main, the plan entailed screening, testing, contact tracing and medical data and case management (DoH, 2020a:3). As of 20 April 2020, the health sector was reported to have tested over 47000 people, deployed 67 mobile testing units, introduced drive-through testing centres, and forecasted that soon South Africa would test 30 000 people daily (Harding, 2020:1). The health sector also developed a five-level risk alert system to guide the level of lockdown required at each level. The extraordinariness of the lockdown measures can be traced through various measurements and indicators which are outside the scope of the study.

For example, performance could be tracked on the number of people arrested for contravening the lockdown measures; the number of liquor outlets inspected; gatherings (funerals) monitored, people confined into quarantine and isolations as well rules established by businesses to enforce social distances, mask-wearing, and sanitising. These security practices enriched the value of emergency and extraordinary measures beyond the theoretical construct by CS. The five-level alert system provides

an innovative framework, which through its gradual de-escalation, fits perfectly with de-securitization, a concept under-theorised by the CS and expounded below.

4.5   De-securitization

On 4 April 2022, South Africa terminated the COVID-19 national state of disaster, and a national lockdown. Was this a process of de-securitization? If yes, how is it accounted for within the CS securitization/de-securitization process? This section attempts to explore this phenomenon. While securitization takes a form of a securitizing actor who socially constructs an existential threat against a referent object and campaigns such security rhetoric to a significant audience to obtain endorsement for emergency measures, there is no clarity on the process of de-securitization. Securitization elevates issues beyond politics to a securitized state; de-securitization reinstates them "back to normal politics where they are subjected to negotiations and democratic rules" (Nguyen, 2020:11). Theoretically, and empirically, de-securitization is least developed on how the reversal from securitized state to a political sphere occurs.

Hansen (2012:533) contends that de-securitization "is not a linguistic or political two-step procedure where first "we have to agree that X is no longer threatening and then, "we agree to stop speaking security". De-securitization does not provide for the iterative processes of actors, existential threats, elements, and conditions involved in securitization. The patterns of speech acts, security discourse and acceptance or rejection by the audience cannot be traced and analysed. Salter (2008:325) differs from Hansen (2012) and contend that a transparent accountability process should exist for de-securitization; otherwise, securitized issues may fade from the public view but remain in the security agenda or enjoy unjustifiable priorities or be maintained in pursuance of egoistic political agendas.

Scholars developed strategies and methods on how de-securitization should occur. Huysmans (1995:65-67) proposes three de-securitization strategies, indicating the Objectivist, Constructivist, and De-constructivist:

- **Objectivist**—an objective analysis is conducted to exposit if the issue constitutes a real threat. This means no securitization occurs before the objectivist analysis is conducted;
- **Constructivist**—a broader exploration is undertaken to understand how an issue is constructed as a threat. This is aimed at reducing the potential for securitizing moves;
- **De-constructivist**—an inclusionary discourse is undertaken where the securitizing actor listens to the 'aggressors' to understand their objectives and needs to break down exclusionary notions, such as friend-enemy or amity-enmity differences.

Wæver (2006:253) proposes three de-securitization methods, indicating:

> Not speaking about a threat at all; managing securitization so that it does not spiral; or move securitized issues back into normal politics.

Hansen (2012:538:542) proposes four forms of de-securitization, indicating:

> (a) change through stabilisation which implies a slow move out of an explicit security discourse; (b) replacement in which de-securitization is theorized as combination of one issue moving out of security while another is simultaneously securitized; (c) re-articulation which entail removing an issue from the securitized state by actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers, and grievances in question; and (d) silencing which occurs when an issue disappears or fails to register in security discourse (Hansen, 2012:538:542).

According to Salter (2008:324), de-securitization should follow the reverse process of securitization. In this regard, "the securitizing actor should pronounce that there is no longer a threat, or at least not a threat that is existential, and that the problem is moved to be managed within the domain of normal politics" Salter (2008:324).

The study adopted and proceeded with Wæver's (2006:253) third strategy and Hansen's (2012:542) re-articulation strategy, representing the reversal of securitized issues back to normal politics by "actively offering political solutions to the threats,

dangers, and grievances in question" (Hansen, 2012:538:42). The process of de-securitizing proposed by Salter (2008:324) was also adopted. Empirically, according to Salter's proposal, President Ramaphosa (securitizing actor), while terminating the national state of disaster, informed the public (referent object and audience) that the threat (COVID-19) still exists but is no longer existential; and it will be managed within the rubric of normal politics under DoH.

Securitizing and de-securitizing a health-related issue, such as COVID-19, is a challenge. The CS leans towards the realist paradigm, where security issues are conceptualized as constituted by friend-enemy or amity-enmity differences. According to Faber (2021:21), a pandemic is "an amorphous, evolving, and an invisible adversary that proliferates without intention, bargaining or goals; and evolves outside the values, norms and behaviours ascribed to traditional adversaries". The emergency measures require more active steps from the people than the 'invisible enemy'.

De-securitization of COVID-19 in South Africa had two stages. The first stage was linked to the alert level system, and the second stage pertained to the termination of the national state of disaster and lockdown on 4 April 2022. In the first stage, the alert level system institutionalised a basic framework through which a de-securitization spectrum could be constructed and tracked. This means the gradual relaxation of the lockdown measures implied movement towards a de-securitized state (Figure 4.1).
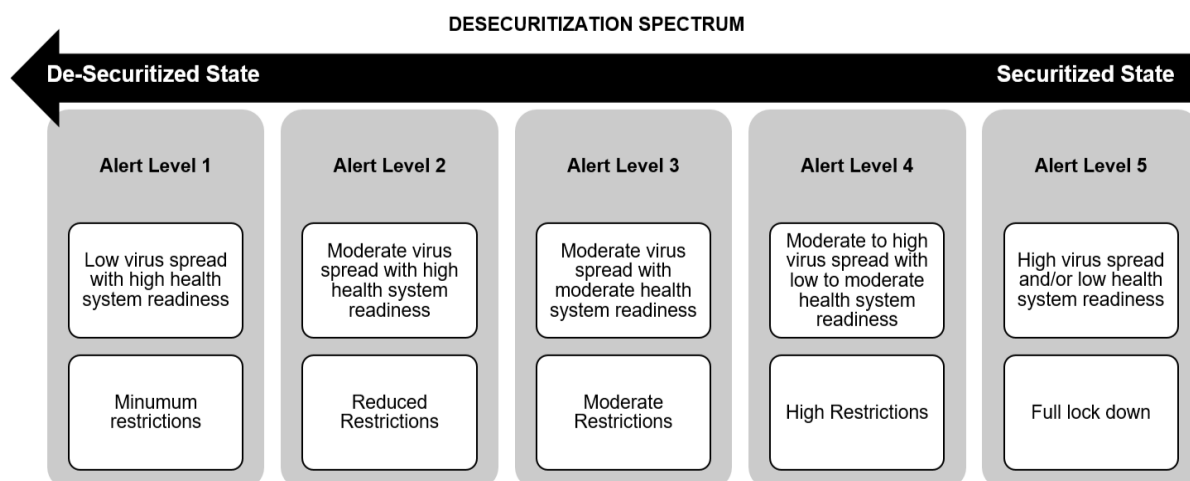
Figure 4.1: De-securitization spectrum

(Adapted from DoH, 2020b:2-5)

The alert system comprises five levels, each measured against the rate of transmission/spread and readiness of the health system. The severity of lockdown measures is relaxed as the rate of transmission decrease, and the health system readiness improves, and *vice versa*. The alert level system indicates how securitization would be gradually lowered through the spectrum to reach a de-securitized state. The lockdown measures per alert level are summarised:

- Alert Level 5: full lockdown with severe measures;
- Alert Level 4: high restrictions and comprise extreme precautionary measures;
- Alert Level 3: moderate restrictions on numerous activities;
- Alert Level 2: reduced restrictions, which required physical distancing measures and restrictions on leisure activities to be implemented to prevent a COVID-19 resurgence;
- Alert Level 1: minimum restrictions where most activities can resume with precautionary measures in place and health guidelines followed (DoH, 2020b:3-5).

The alert levels were within the securitized spectrum with varying degrees of severity. Ragardless of which alert level is in force, the health sector continued monitoring epidemiological trends, which included the number of tests conducted, people screened, positive cases, recoveries, and the demographic profile of positive cases. The security sector would relax lockdown measures according to the declared alert level. Because security deals with two critical issues: referent object and existential threat; de-securitization as per the alert levels did not reduce the the value or legitimacy of the referent object, nor does it implies conquering the threat. Instead, it means the virus spread, and mortalities have minimised (flattened the curve), and the health system had improved, but the danger of the threat remained unaltered.

President Ramaphosa implemented the second stage of de-securitization on 4 April 2022 when he terminated the national state of disaster. This stage is considered the

second and final because it adopted Wæver's (2006:253) de-securitization strategy, which pertains to "moving the securitized issue back into normal politics," and Hansen's (2012:538) "re-articulation strategy", which entail "removing an issue from the securitized state by actively offering a political solution to the threat, danger, and grievances in question".

The method adopted by President Ramaphosa also concurs with Salter's (2008:324) subsidiary proposal, where he holds that:

> The conditions for securitization appear to work in reverse for the process of de-securitization to the extent that the speaker should pronounce that there is not a threat, or at least not a threat existential, and that the problem can be comprehended or managed within the rubric of normal politics.

In order to explore the securitization and de-securitization processes, a brief assessment and comparison was conducted on President Ramaphosa's statements delivered to the public on 15 March 2020, 18 March 2020, 23 March 2020 and 4 April 2022 as per (

Error! **Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**) These speeches are contrasted to reveal crucial words, messages and aspects that can account for the securitization and de-securitization of COVID-19, respectively.

Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.: Comparative analysis of securitization and de-securitization process

Elements	Key Speeches, Messages, Actions and Factors	
	Securitization	De-securitization
Key Speech Act	"We have now declared a national state of disaster' (Ramaphosa, 2020a)	Cabinet has decided to terminate the National State of Disaster with effect from midnight tonight
Securitizing Actor	President Ramaphosa, Head of State. Has executive authority to speak security, take steps to protect the country and its citizens	President Ramaphosa, Head of State. Has executive authority to speak security, take steps to protect the country and its citizens
Social and political capital	Head of State, executive authority of the Republic vested in him, including taking issues from political to security arena.	Head of State, executive authority of the Republic vested in him, including taking issues from security back to political sphere
Speech Act and stage	Written speech, verbally presented live on national broadcasters	Written speech, verbally presented live on national broadcasters
Speech characterization	Securitization – imbued with security idioms, jargons, emergency, priority, existential threats – presented as acts of immediate priority and action	De-securitization – imbued with security idioms, jargons, emergency, priority, existential threats – lacking urgency and presented as a reflection.
Referent Object	People, livelihoods, well-being and the economy – requiring urgent protection	People, livelihoods, well-being and the economy. Reflection on how securitization protected referent object. Lack urgency
Existential threat	Covid-19 and its virus transmission – presented as war-like threats (common threat, national emergency, grave and real threat, global crisis, extremely dangerous). Potential 'human catastrophe of enormous proportions'	Covid-19 and its virus transmission – presented its dangers as a reflection. No more existential danger to referent object the pandemic is not over, and… the virus remains among us'
Emergency measures	High priority, drastic, extreme, decisive, swift, no half measures, rapid and effective response. National state of disaster declare and national lockdown introduced.	Reflection on emergency measures as necessary response. 'conditions no longer require National State of Disaster.' 'pandemic will be managed in terms of the National Health Act. National state of disaster aspects of national lockdown terminated
Audience	Cabinet: legal audience (legitimate emergency measures); Health sector – scientific audience provide scientific-based information to securitize or not Political parties, NEDLAC, religious and traditional leaders and population – engaged to cultivate support and endorsement of emergency measures	Cabinet: legal audience (legitimate termination of emergency measures) Health sector – scientific audience provide scientific-based information to de-securitize; Political parties, NEDLAC, religious and traditional leaders and population – passive receivers of de-securitizing speech act
Functional actors	Health Sector – rapid and effective and response (epistemological monitoring, screening, testing, contact tracing, medical data and case management). Urgent preparedness of health system Security Sector – drastic enforcement of lock down measures, gradual adjusted as per alert levels	Health Sector – normal health and medical services. Security Sector – termination of all enforcement powers and removal of all lockdown measures

(Adapted from President Ramaphosa Speeches, Ramaphosa, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c, 2020d; Ramaphosa, 2022)

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter analyses South Africa's response to COVID-19 concerning the conceptual-theoretical framework of securitization. The purpose was to assess whether South Africa securitized COVID-19 to contain its spread. The assessment was conducted through the securitization theory and its core elements. The latter was evaluated individually to identify specific speech acts, messages, and actions that can account for particular requirements. Because COVID-19 was a global pandemic, the study commenced with the assessment of the macro environment termed macro-securitization and international norm entrepreneurship.

The study indicates that COVID-19 was framed as an existential threat according to macro-securitization, with the securitizing actor being the WHO; however, owing to a lack of sovereignty, the WHO could not securitize at the individual state level. Instead, the WHO's speech act translated into a primary international norm and provided guidance in terms of the International Health Regulations. South Africa, however, adopted the WHO primary norm. Acting as a secondary norm entrepreneurship, South Africa, under the minister of health, initiated plans to manage the pandemic within the normal administration-political sphere. This included formulating a preparedness and response plan and activation of the Emergency Operations Centre to coordinate the health response plan. With the increase in infection rate in South Africa and globally, South Africa under President Ramaphosa escalated the response to COVID-19. This marked an aggressive securitizing move from a politicised domain into a securitized stage where South Africa declared a national lockdown on 15 March 2020 and entered a nationwide lockdown on the evening of 26 March 2020.

An analysis of securitization elements indicates that President Ramaphosa was the main securitizing actor who led the response to COVID-19, although he collaborated with the executive and social partners, most notably the health and medical fraternity. A careful analysis of his speeches before the national lockdown indicates a war-like language to characterize the referent object, existential threat, priority, emergency, and

extraordinary measures. President Ramaphosa identified, defined, and designated the referent object as the people of South Africa, their lives, livelihoods, well-being, and the economy. He reiterated his priority to protect them and urged everyone to do their part to "flatten the curve" by reducing transmission.

President Ramaphosa further identified and designated COVID-19 as the existential threat to the referent object. He sketched its dangerous and harmful effects and connotations by referring to global transmissions and mortality rates. He labelled COVID-19 with military and war-laden words, such as:

> 'common threat', 'national emergency', 'grave emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'grave and real threat', 'great threat', 'global crisis" (Ramaphosa, 2020b); 'grave public health emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

President Ramaphosa described the potential dangers associated with COVID-19 as "human catastrophe of enormous proportions" perpetrated by an invisible enemy" (Ramaphosa, 2020d). The president used a similar military language to describe the measures to combat the invisible enemy. This includes utterances such as:

> 'extra-ordinary response; there can be no half measures'; 'urgent and drastic measures'; (Ramaphosa, 2020a), 'immediate, swift and extraordinary' (Ramaphosa, 2020c); 'swift action and exceptional methods' (Ramaphosa, 2020d).

All these measures were clothed with urgency, emergency, supreme priority, and extraordinariness—apparent characteristics of a security speech act, for example:

> The human cost of delaying this action would be far, far greater; we cannot take action today that we will deeply regret tomorrow (Ramaphosa, 2020b & 2020c).

The securitization criteria also require that the securitizing actor engage a significant audience to obtain endorsement for the extraordinary and exceptional measures. The president engaged diverse audiences, ranging from the health fraternity, Cabinet, leaders of political parties represented in Parliament, NEDLAC, traditional leaders,

religious formations, and the general public. In the study, cabinet assumed the legal audience status, endorsing the extraordinary measures through *The Disaster Management Act and Regulations*.

The health sector assumed the role of experts or scientific audience, and its role was to produce scientific-driven information regarding the rate of transmissions and mortalities and the readiness of the health system; and to advise government on the appropriate course of action. The health sector played dual roles of being an expert/ scientific audience and a functional actor. Other audience categories were engaged to solicit support for the "drastic and urgent measures" the country was about to undertake. Such broad engagement was also meant "to convince as broad an audience as possible in order to maintain social relationships, and to prevent breaking social relations and ruining his credibility" (Balzacq, 2011:9).

The study also explored the concept of functional actors—"actors who affect the dynamics of a sector or who significantly influence decisions in the field of security" (Buzan et al.*,* 1998:36). Because COVID-19 was a health-related emergency, the health sector had a noteworthy influence on the decisions and response plans taken by government. This was because of the specialised, expert, and professional health and medical knowledge and experience they possess. This further resulted in the establishment of the MAC to advise the government on the pandemic. Their influence came in various ways and included:

- Responsibility for epidemiological analysis and modelling regarding transmission and mortality rates and advising government
- Provide effective and rapid health response regarding testing, surveillance, contact tracing and case management
- Capacitate the health system and heighten its preparedness for a potential surge in infections and mortalities and develop and monitor the alert level system to assist government decision-making regarding adjusting the lockdown measures.

The second critical functional actor was the security sector, with extra powers accorded by the *Disaster Management Regulations*, to enforce the lockdown measures. These

functional actor conducted roadblocks, enforced curfews, and inspected businesses that needed to remain closed—specifically liquor outlets, monitored, and closed unlawful gatherings; and conducted several other activities symbolising war zones. On 25 March 2020, President Ramaphosa, through the *President's Minute 78 of 2020*, mobilized and authorised SANDF to support enforcing the lockdown regulations (Presidency of South Africa, 2021:133).

Activities undertaken by President Ramaphosa contain the hallmarks of securitization. The study assessed each element of securitization to ascertain whether their original conceptualization were evident. Despite limited literature on de-securitization, the concept was explored through a two-pronged approach to account for its practical application.

The first approach entailed adopting and adapting the COVID-19 alert level system to innovatively design a de-securitization spectrum – (Figure 4.1). The spectrum provides valuable indicators on how South Africa government gradually moved the COVID-19 pandemic from a securitized to a de-securitized state. For example, at alert Level 5, a full lockdown was imposed with severe measures. At alert Level 1, minimum restrictions were applied, and most normal activities resumed.

The second approach adopted Wæver (2006:253) and Hansen's (2012:542) de-securitization strategies—specifically those on the reversal of securitized issues to normal politics. To demonstrate how President Ramaphosa de-securitized COVID-19, Salter's (2008:324) proposal was used. The process holds that: "the securitizing actor should pronounce that there is no longer a threat, or at least not a threat that is existential, and that the problem is moved to be managed within the domain of normal politics" (Salter, 2008:324). This was conducted by contrasting President Ramaphosa pre-lockdown statement against the "lockdown termination" statement delivered on 4 April 2022 as depicted in

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The study demonstrated that de-securitization follows the same process of securitization. The security analyst should pay attention to each element of securitization/ de-securitization to arrive at a logical conclusion on how to de-securitize an issue using the same process of securitization.

CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed To assess whether South Africa's response to COVID-19 created a securitized environment.

The secondary objectives were to:

- explore the pandemic-security nexus and the securitization of COVID-19;
- assess South Africa's response to COVID-19 against the elements of securitization;
- assess South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system as a potential de-securitization framework.

The primary assumption supporting the study is that South Africa's response to COVID-19 had the hallmarks of a securitization process was confirmed. This is based on the activities and measures South Africa undertook to manage COVID-19, where such measures included a declaration of a national state of disaster and nationwide lockdown.

The study explored the historical perspective and evolution of security studies from the traditional realist paradigm to the new security thinking. The latter broadens and deepens the concept to include other sectors of security and referent objects. This was necessary to lay a foundation to explore the securitization of COVID-19—a non-military issue. It was revealed that the security concept is conceptually and theoretically complex and cannot be neatly and precisely defined owing to its diverse meanings. The helpful definition relevant to the study is that of Ullman (1983:133), remarking that:

> A threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that threatens
> drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of
> life for the inhabitants of a state, or threatens significantly to narrow the range
> of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private,
> nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state.

This definition is helpful in multiple ways. First, the concept of security expands security beyond the military sector and is flexible to include any issue carrying similar effects of existential threats. A pandemic, such as COVID-19, is accommodated in the definition because its effects drastically degrade the quality of life and detrimentally narrows the policy options of a state. South Africa's policy options were restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic owing to a lack of cure and vaccine. The only available policy option was to declare a national state of disaster.

Second, the definition deepens the referent object because it elevates people and the state as the primary referent objects whose security is threatened by the same security issue with different effects. In the case of the people, it degrades the quality of life; and in the case of the government, it is narrow policy choices.

Chapter two of the study explored the health-security nexus. Three frameworks were used to briefly show how health issues ascend the national security agenda. The expansion of security allows non-military issues to be considered under the rubric of security if they presented existential threats. This expansion allow for issues, such as migration, terrorism, drugs, or crime to be considered as security concerns. Health issues, particularly pandemics, have been accommodated under the umbrella of national and international security. This is because, as the study has shown, pandemics are transmissible beyond borders, and difficult to control mainly if there is no cure or vaccine.

Pandemics are driven into the security sector if they meet specific threshold, namely: if the contagion is foreign or new to the health and medical fraternity with little or no scientific knowledge; it has no existing cure or medical treatment; has high morbidity

and mortality rate; and it induces psychological effect to the population in the form of instinctive fear of pain and suffering.

The study demonstrated that pandemics affect national security in various ways; therefore, their elevation onto the security agenda. Highly contagious pandemics carry the risk of debilitating public confidence in state institutions' ability and capacity to respond and effectively fulfil their custodial duties; disrupt economic growth; maintenance of economic prosperity, welfare and stability; hollow out the socio-political fabric that holds a provided polity together; destabilise the international system and associated states; aggravate regional tensions; create mistrust; instigate forced migration; and trigger aggressive border closures.

In South Africa, COVID-19 posed a threat of mass infections and mortality, with the potential of overwhelming the health system. The country will take a long time to recover economically from the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns. The health-security nexus also revealed controversies where those opposed to health securitization contend that at an international level, securitization of health is discouraged; it advances political, foreign, and economic policies at the expense of underprivileged countries; it manipulates and controls the less powerful while replicating a form of governmentality and authority over the body politic.

At a domestic level, health securitization encourages undemocratic tendencies, which curtail political oversight; facilitate corruption in the name of emergency; and infringe civil liberties specifically as it relates to lockdown measures and the enforcement thereof by law enforcement agencies; it distorts funding priorities where resources are directed to the security sector to enforce and sustain the securitized state. Proponents of health securitization encourage securitizing health issues because it prioritises and attracts resource allocations; and address the broader goals of health security—a key and fundamental component of human survival and well-being.

Chapter 4focused on the securitization process as the critical theoretical framework for the study and its elements and concludes by exploring de-securitization, a concept that holds a preference for issues to remain in the political sphere. The study reveals that

securitization is not a standalone approach but interweaves several theories, such as neorealism, post-structuralism, constructivism, and other critical security theories, while attempting to reconcile contestations arising therefrom onto a single framework. Several criticisms of the CS are acknowledged and accepted; however, securitization is a fruitful approach because it enables the security analyst to methodically scrutinise and arrive at a credible understanding of how threatening developments are transformed into the security domain. Assessment of the associated core elements revealed various discrepancies or under-theorisation of certain concepts, notably the speech act, audience, emergency measures and functional actors.

Scholars contend that confining securitization to speech act is limited and does not assist when studying real-world concerns. The overreliance on speech act by the CS stems from the notion that security is part of politics and, therefore, speaking security equates to doing it. This is a fallacious remark because security is a practical practice that should be implemented, and not to be relegated to linguistic rhetoric only. Concerning the audience, the study revealed that various significant audiences might be identified depending on the issue at hand.

In dealing with COVID-19 in South Africa, the first significant audience engaged is the health sector, conceptualized as the scientific audience based on its confinement to the health sector. Their value in the securitization process stems from their specialities, expertise, and scientific core knowledge and experience relevant to the industry where the threatening development emerge from. Second is the legal audience, an entity with the authority to legitimate or endorse extraordinary measures. In the main, such audience can be parliamentarians or members of the executive with legislative powers to enact legislation or approve policies aimed at managing an existential threat. In South Africa, the executive, represented by cabinet, legitimised the declaration of a national state of disaster and the initiation of urgent and drastic measures.

Third is the political audience which represented various social groups, such as political parties, religious formations, and traditional leaders. This audience was widely consulted in South Africa through the respective constituting structures to solicit

support, convince them of the need for the national lockdown and to maintain social relationships and credibility of the securitizing actor.

Last is the public audience, who should be informed of what the securitizing actor intends to do and why it is important. This audience is relevant to the extent that acts of securitization should be conducive to human well-being and be geared to satisfy freedom from fear and freedom from want. Any securitization the outcomes of which are detrimental to or not addressing human needs have the potential of rejection.

Because securitization entails the endorsement of extraordinary or emergency measures, the study revealed that this concept is limited to speech acts. It attempts to locate successful securitization as the endorsement from a significant audience. The study addressed this shortcoming and revealed that securitization is considered successful once extraordinary measures are put into practice. Similarly, the study discovered there is no established literature pertaining to functional actors and their roles in a practical setting. The study engaged with this scholarly gap by scrutinizing, and outlining the role of functional actors. Beyond affecting the dynamics of a sector, in the case of South Africa, the study revealed that functional actors could function as experts to diagnose issues and develop policy responses. Once the securitizing actor adopts the policy, the self-same functional actor can assume the role of implementing the policy. These functional actors, based on their expert knowledge, can influence the response whether to securitize or not. If the issue has been securitized, they can control when to terminate it based on their expert judgements.

The second functional actor is the security and military force who implement the security plans on the ground. In the case of COVID-19 in South Africa, the security sector was deployed to implement lockdown measures. The role of the security sector as functional actors is mutually constituted with emergency measures. This means none can function in the absence of the other. A comprehensive element of the securitization framework (Figure 3.2) was developed to summarise the description, role, and facilitating conditions of each element.

Turning to the core questions of the study; the primary research question is: Did South Africa's response to COVID-19 create a securitized environment?

Chapter 4explored this question extensively. The study revealed that securitization is not complete until all the requirements are met. For example, one cannot securitize unless the referent object or existential threat is identified. In tackling the question, analysis was undertaken by scrutinising the core elements of securitization against actions taken by South Africa to respond to COVID-19. The findings to the main question are that South Africa initially politicised COVID-19 by managing it through normal health administrative protocols, which included activating the Emergency Operations Centre on 31 January 2020, and implementing of preparedness and response plan during February 2020. The actual securitizing move was initiated on 15 March 2020 when President Ramaphosa announced the declaration of a national state of disaster. Total securitization came into effect at midnight on 26 March 2020 when a 21-day nationwide lockdown was implemented.

The first secondary question is:

To what extent do speech acts, public statements, and measures implemented by South Africa resemble securitization?

This question was explored by analysing the speech act presented by President Ramaphosa and subsequent actions undertaken. The study focused on the core elements of securitization and related factors. The findings are summarised as follows:

- **Securitizing Actor and Speech Act—**President Ramaphosa remained the leading securitizing actor. As the head of state, he has sufficient social capital and disposition to speak security. He used written speeches (speech acts) to designate the referent object and existential threat life on national broadcasters (platform or stage). His speeches were aimed at the entire population (audience).
- **Referent object—**President Ramaphosa designated the referent object as the 'people' of South Africa, their lives, livelihoods, well-being, and the economy. These

referent objects are not perceived but are real, and have a legitimate claim to survive, therefore, require protection. Articulating the value of the referent objects, President Ramaphosa used phrases, such as:

> "We have decided to take urgent and drastic measures to manage the disease, protect the people of our country and reduce the impact of the virus on our society and on our economy;' and 'We will prioritise the lives and livelihoods of our people above all else, and will use all of the measures that are within our power to protect them from the economic consequences of this pandemic" (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

- **Articulation of existential threat—**The president used various military-laden words to describe the harmful effects and dangers of COVID-19 as an existential threat to the survival of the referent object. These words are:

> 'common threat', 'national emergency', 'grave emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'grave and real threat', 'great threat', 'global crisis" (Ramaphosa, 2020b); 'grave public health emergency' (Ramaphosa, 2020c).

Drawing on the perceived credible fixtures, dangerous, and harmful connotations of COVID-19, the President Ramaphosa further stated that we must 'prevent a human catastrophe of enormous proportions in our country' (Ramaphosa, 2020d). This means COVID-19 carried the potential to cause human catastrophe.

- **Audience engagement—**Securitization was inter-subjectively established during a consultation with multiple audiences which included Cabinet, the MAC, leaders of political parties represented in Parliament, NEDLAC, traditional leaders, and religious formations. Leading the security discourse was the health/medical audience, who, through their modelling, advised that "immediate, swift and extraordinary action is required if we are to prevent a human catastrophe of enormous proportions in our country" (Ramaphosa, 2020d). Announcing the measures to combat COVID-19, President Ramaphosa stated that the "Cabinet resolved that urgent and drastic measures should be taken by declaring a national state of disaster in terms of the *Disaster Management Act*" (Ramaphosa, 2020a).

The study also reveals that beyond the MAC and Cabinet, all other audiences who were engaged endorsed the emergency measures.

- **Emergency measures—**The study reveals that emergency measures entailed a national state of disaster and a nationwide lockdown. The measures were extraordinary and beyond ordinary political and administrative rules. The main goal was to "flatten the curve" to enable greater preparedness by the health system. The measures appeared credible to reduce the impact of the existential threat and to protect the people. President Ramaphosa used war-laden words to convey a state of priority and extraordinary action – a critical ingredient of securitization. The terms include:

  'extraordinary response; there can be no half measures'; 'urgent and drastic measures' (Ramaphosa, 2020a); 'swift and extraordinary action' (Ramaphosa, 2020c); 'aggressive action against an invisible enemy' (Ramaphosa, 2020d).

- **Functional actors—**The study identified two categories of functional actors. First is the MAC, whose responsibility was to manage the health system, conduct epistemological analysis and monitoring, and advice the government on the appropriate alert level to be implemented. The second functional actor is the security sector, whose role was to enforce emergency measures. Both functional actors diligently executed the emergency measures to the extent that they drew praise from the WHO for their decisiveness in implementing the lockdown measures, considered one of the most effective globally.

The second secondary question is: How did South Africa's adjusted alert levels influence COVID-19 measures?

In answering the above question, the study explored the South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system and how it guided government to gradually relax the lockdown measures based on the epistemological trends and preparedness of the health system. The study found that the severity of lockdown measures were relaxed communserate with the

decrease in transmission rate, and the readiness of the health system, and *vice versa*. The alert level system was adapted into a de-securitized spectrum to indicate how securitization will be gradually lowered through the spectrum to reach a de-securitized state. The spectrum provides a transparent and predictable instrument regarding how South Africa moved from an extreme to a less restrictive securitized state. The spectrum provides a framework that other scholars can use to analyse how issues are gradually moved from a highly securitized, through a less securitized, and ultimately a de-securitized state.

The third secondary question is:

- How did South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system create a de-securitization framework.

In answering the above question, the study uncovered an innovative, practical approach through which an issue previously securitized can be moved back to the political domain through de-securitization. The study was conducted by contrasting and comparing the securitization and de-securitization processes (

Error! **Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). The outcome demonstrates that a securitized issue can be de-securitized by following the same method of securitization. The security analyst should pay attention to each element of securitization to arrive at a logical conclusion that the issue is de-securitized by following the same process of securitization. What is significantly distinct is the speech act which is more political in nature when de-securitizing, whilst it is characterized by strong security language and urgency when securitizing.

Reflecting on the stated study's objectives, it is concluded that the primary objective of assessing whether South Africa's response to COVID-19 created a securitized environment, was achieved. The study proved that South Africa securitized COVID-19 by declaring a state of national disaster and implementing a national lockdown.

The first secondary objective is:

- to explore the pandemic-security nexus and the securitization of COVID-19.

This objective was achieved to the extent to which a detailed exploration was conducted on the health-security nexus. In this regard, the study revealed a growing awareness that pandemics directly influence multiple facets of national security. This is occasioned by their transmissibility across borders, high rate of morbidity and mortality and the destabilising effects they cause in a state body politic.

The second secondary objective was:

- ;
- assess South Africa's response to COVID-19 against the elements of securitization.

The fore-going objective was achieved through a detailed analysis of the COVID-19 related statements delivered by President Ramaphosa to the nation. The exploration process entailed analysing the statements against each element of securitization. The outcome of such analysis confirmed the existence of all the securitization elements. The study went beyond the original securitization framework and explored the

emergency measures, specifically as it relates to practical implementation and what indicators could be drawn therefrom.

- The third secondary objective is: to ;
- assess South Africa's COVID-19 alert level system as a potential de-securitization framework.

The study indicates that the alert system provided a predictable framework to guide the gradual relaxation of the lockdown measures as the rate of transmission decreased and the preparedness of the health system increased. The alert system was innovatively adapted into a de-securitizing spectrum to track movements from an extreme to a less restrictive securitized environment. The analysis covered in the study, specifically on securitization, can be applied by other scholars to research similar securitized issues.

Future case studies which could be explored by scholars using the study include South Africa's Energy Crisis which saw government introducing an array of measures and deployment of military personnel at ESKOM power stations. Another interesting case study associated with electricity supply could be the unprecedented theft of copper cables and related equipment, and which have proved to be a challenge in the electricity, water, transporation and communication sector. Can the declaration of these crimes as essential infrastructure crimes in terms of the Criminal Matters Amendment Act (Act 18 of 2015) represent a case of securitization?

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