Master Thesis Religion, Conflict and Globalization

Navigating the securitized environment: the securitization of Islam in France and the Netherlands and the repercussions for Muslim civil society activism

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the ways in which the Islamic community, has been homogenously constructed as a security concern, in recent years in France and The Netherlands. Through the lens of the theory of securitization, I investigate various speech acts by right-wing politicians such as Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet in the Netherlands, found in their political manifestos and parliamentary appearances, as well the 'anti-separatism bill' outlined by French president Emmanuel Macron in the October 2020. Furthermore, discourse analysis reveals how these securitizing discourses have led to a polarity between 'true' citizens and those citizens they consider 'other', namely Muslims. The second part of my thesis is formulated with qualitative data from in-depth interviews conducted with human rights and Muslim civil society activists. These interviews inform how exactly this securitization has affected those who mobilize 'on the ground'. This thesis showcases that securitization has led to an increased acceptance of Islamophobia and impingement on the religious freedoms and human rights of Muslims. Civil society activism and trans-European mobilization is an important act of defiance in counteracting these human rights abuses and violations of religious freedoms.

Keywords: Islam, secularism, securitization, activism, civil society organisation, religious freedoms, laïcité, Islamophobia, Netherlands, France.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem analysis

'You're put on the suspect bench without an accusation, without anything concrete that you did wrong. Just because of who you are. At that moment, you feel a strange loneliness. Because this country is the only country I know as mine.' (van der Blom, 2020).

In 2020, practicing Dutch Muslim, Jacob van der Bloom was put under interrogation during the Parliamentary Interrogation Committee on Undesirable Influencing from Non-Free Countries (POCOB) hearings. These hearings inquired into the foreign funding of mosques and the potential radical messages that could be circulated within the mosque as a result of this. As Jacob notes, it was 'mainly the Muslims and the Islamic community who were being questioned' (van der Blom, 2020). These words were shared amongst a video entitled 'The state of the Dutch Muslim in 2020' by Muslim organisation Wij Blijven Hier. This exemplifies how Muslims, unlike any other religious minority, are continuously probed on the transparency and monitoring of their faith and faith houses.

Concomitantly in France in 2020, in the aftermath of the beheading of schoolteacher Samuel Paty, who had displayed caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, state sanctioned raids of mosques, homes, and Muslim organisations were justified under the fight against 'Islamic separatism' during the state of emergency. Interview respondent Umair, (pseudonym), spoke of how this state of emergency directly interrogated Muslim families:

'The state of emergency, you know the raids in November and December in 2015, began with Muslim homes and mosques and businesses. Ransacked homes, businesses, mosques… I saw families where the kids were dragged from their bed, by their ankles. And screaming to heaven that somebody might help them.' (Umair, 2021).

These anecdotes are few among a plethora of experiences which showcase the increased surveillance, vigilance, and scrutiny currently faced by many Muslims in Western Europe. Under this surveillance, Muslims are consistently homogenised as a monolith, each posited by the secular state as susceptible of radicalisation and violence. This discrimination begs the question, under what circumstances is this blatant impingement upon rights of religion and civil liberties, night-time home raids, vilifying interrogations, and policing of Muslim children justified and made acceptable? These measures have been justified under the guise of state security, where the perception of Muslims have been constructed to pose Islam as an existential threat to the liberal-

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secular Western order and has thus merited extraordinary measures to deal with this perceived threat (Cesari, 2012; 2009; Mavelli, 2013; Fox & Akbaba, 2015).

1.2 Aim of the thesis

In light of this increased securitization of Islam, this thesis will seek to evidence the increasingly securitized gaze which has been directed towards Muslim communities in recent years in two neighbouring countries. This thesis will utilise the theory of securitization formulated by Buzan et al. (1998) to do so, to showcase how Muslims have been constructed as an existential threat to French and Dutch society. Furthermore, this empirical will be complemented with qualitative data from in-depth interviews with human rights activists and Muslim civil society activists to understand how exactly this securitization affected their own activism network, their sense of self, and their activist capabilities.

The catalyst for this thesis topic stemmed from my interest in the anti-separatism bill announced by French president, Emmanuel Macron in October 2020. Tracing this bill over several months, I believed this was a direct reflection of the theory of securitization, vis-à-vis, securitization of Islam. Furthermore, my impetus to include the Netherlands in this study stemmed from the questioning of whether similar measures of securitization of Islam, existed in this neighbouring country of France. In conjunction with this, I sought to advance the socio-legal field by investigating not only the intersection of religion and law, but Islam, security, and governance more specifically. Accordingly, to the best of my knowledge, no study has been done thus far to investigate the ramifications of this bill on activist networks, on their phenomenological experiences and identities under the atmosphere of this increased securitization.

1.3 The Muslim presence in Europe

The current presence of Islam in Europe is a direct consequence of the paths of immigration established in the early 1960's, leading from former European colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean (Cesari & McLoughlin, 2005, p. 1). Fernando (2014) argues that Muslims are increasingly perceived in racialized terms, and that the term *Muslims* has come to identify, pejoratively, a population of North and West African descent, whose members a few decades earlier were referred to either as immigrants and foreigners, or with terms that marked their ethnicity or national origin (Fernando, 2014, p. 17). As early as the 1970s, Islam was categorised as alien and Muslims as outsiders who needed to be integrated and posed a potential risk to social cohesion (De Koning, 2020). As the Muslim presence within Europe grew, the 9/11 terrorist attacks led to a resurfacing of the 'clash of civilizations' thesis (Huntington, 1993), demonstrating

the continuing hold of ideas which posit an irreconcilable schism between European (generally Christian) civilization and the 'East' (generally Islam) (Edmunds, 2011, p. 71). The idea of Muslims as Europe's 'other' is not a new phenomenon. This 'clash of civilisations' thesis also reduces the identity of a Muslim to that of a homogenous monolith.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the Madrid train bombings of 11 March 2004, the assassination of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh in November that same year, and the London train bombings of 7 July 2005, have layered a security dimension on top of pre-existing concerns about Muslim integration in liberal democracies (Bleich, 2009). It is important to note, however, as Bleich (2009, p.355) argues, that 9/11 is merely one highly symbolic turning point among many in this broad trajectory in which the Muslim presence in Europe has become increasingly securitized. 9/11 saw the justification of new state security and counter-terror measures, which increasingly targeted Muslim groups. Instances of ethnic profiling, restricted immigration from Muslim majority countries, naturalisation changes, limitations on religious dress and religious symbols, have disproportionately affected the Muslim population in Western Europe and has contributed to the perception of Muslims as a threat to national cohesion and security (Fox & Akbaba, 2015; Ajala, 2014; Awan, 2012; Cesari, 2009). Islam has become a topic of national debates in many European countries, with dangers associated with radicalisation, and perceived inability to adapt to secular societies, rising to the top of many political agendas. Furthermore, several scholars note how this increasingly securitized environment has led to Muslims being defined by their religious identity and being forced not only to guarantee their citizenship and stand up for their civil and religious rights and freedoms, but also to defy religious extremism and counteract negative portrayals of the Muslim community (De Koning, 2020; van Es & van den Brandt, 2020; van Es, 2019; Ajala, 2014; Edmunds, 2011; Amiraux; 2006; Salvatore, 2004).

1.4 Theory of securitization

Securitization, in its broad and encompassing definition, refers to the powers introduced by a securitizing actor to deal with existential threat to a referent object (Buzan, et al., 1998). This thesis aims to broaden the theory of securitization past its narrow military and political definition and encompass religion as a category which has been posited as a security threat. Today, understandings of security are more expansive than their original definition, such that the 'public' must be secured from a variety of threats caused by radical ideology, which it is hoped can be countered by security remits and intelligence-led operations (Brown, 2008). The conditions that have allowed this securitization to prosper has been both the post 9/11 security era, and the European state viewing Muslim groups as a threat to its survival, fearing the fostering of

radicalisation, and taking measures to reassure citizens that it will not allow the incubation of terrorism (Cesari, 2009). Amin-Khan (2012) also views securitization as a racially embedded process, in which the process of securitization permits Western politicians and many mainstream media to target not only Muslims, but also criminalise migrants and refugees. How Muslims have been constructed and racialized as the 'securitized other' (Downing, 2019) is a key focal point of this analysis and use of this theory.

This thesis will focus specifically on two countries, France and The Netherlands, who have both harboured post-colonial migration and present a relatively liberal citizenship policy. By focusing more specifically on these two countries, with characteristically different forms of state secularism, this thesis will investigate how the securitization measures introduced here in recent years, have had disproportionate effects on the civil liberties and negative portrayal of the Muslim population residing in these countries.

1.5 Personal motivation

This securitization of Islam has stretched beyond the remits of those who identify as Muslims, as seen in the recent crackdown on 'Islamo-Gauchisme' in France, in which the Minister of Education announced she was launching an investigation into the influences of 'Islamo-leftism' in academia – a perceived alliance between the left and Islamic culture (Rosman, 2021). The concept explicitly lumps Islamist extremists with left-leaning intellectuals and activists (Tharoor, 2021). This weaponization of laïcité in France and McCarthyism-like crackdown on academics and scholars seeking to explore research related to Islam, heightened the immediate need with which I felt I needed to conduct this research.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis will begin by giving an in-depth look into the theory of securitization and the methodological framework implored, before departing into the evidence of securitization in the Netherlands and France, through a discourse analysis of speeches. Following that I will discuss the in-depth analysis of interviews with civil society and Muslim activists.

The central research questions implored throughout this thesis are:

In what ways has the securitization of Islam been evidenced in both France and The Netherlands in recent years?

In what ways has this securitization disproportionately affected Muslim communities and led to an acceptance of Islamophobia?

In what ways has this securitization affected activists who actively campaign against Islamophobia and the criminalization of Muslims?

The research that I will present aspires to answer these questions and will suggest that Muslims have not only been disproportionately affected by securitization measures, but that this increased securitization has led to an accepted air of Islamophobia and has had detrimental consequences for their religious freedoms and civil liberties.

2. Literature Review: The relationship between state, securitization and Islam in Europe

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will set the foundation of the area of study, argument, and research question of my thesis. This research takes a socio-legal approach, which investigates the relationship between securitization policies and discourses and its intended securitized subjects. Scholars such as Cesari (2012, 2009), Mavelli (2013), Booth (2007) and Van Es (2020, 2018) will be critically assessed to evaluate what research of theirs has served to heighten and inform my study. The relationship between state securitization of Islam and Muslim civil society organisations and activists is investigated through the October 2020 anti-separatism bill in France, and in the rhetoric of Dutch politicians such as Geert Wilders of the Parij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), founder and leader of Forum for Democracy (FVD) Thierry Baudet, and MP Bente Becker of the Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). Selby and Beaman (2016, p. 8) recognise that mobilizing stark, threatening and Islamophobic characterizations of Muslims has served as an expeditious 'wedge' political tool for some Western governments. This expeditious 'wedge' is currently at play in France and The Netherlands, in the polarization between state, security and secularism on one hand and Islam and Muslim communities on the other. Gianni, (2016, p. 24) postulates that the politicization and securitization of the Muslim threat performed by Western states has had significant consequences. It is these consequences, that beg further inquiry and investigation. The impact of this bill and speech acts on activists and Muslim civil society actors has yet to be fully addressed.

2.2 Islam in Europe

The increased presence of Islam in European societies since the 1990s has brought with it increased attention both politically and academically, in debates on migration, diversity, integration and secularism. Religion, during the last fifteen years, has emerged as the main fault line along which people are divided (Traindafyllidou, 2017). The division is evident politically, with the debate polarising between those who seek to limit the visibility of religion in the public sphere and those who call for a more multicultural and integrative approach to increased religious diversity. Populist parties, such as the PVV in the Netherlands, UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) and Front National (France) have sought to crack down on an increased 'Islamisation' of European states and promote a return to secular liberal values. In Europe, the pressure caused by increasing immigrant populations and the erosion of national boundaries through the transnational force of

the European Union has led to a rising of nationalist rhetoric and an essentialist approach to identity, that has been marked by rising anti-immigrant sentiments in extreme right-wing parties (Cesari, 2009, p.4). This rise in right wing parties has had consequences for migrant communities, immigrants, and Muslim communities, those often at the periphery of society whom right wing parties seek to expel and stigmatize further.

Academically, scholars within the social sciences have sought to provide a more nuanced debate regarding the place of Islam within Europe, differing in perspectives which seek to understand the growing visibility of Islam and its sociological, political, and anthropological ramifications. Scholars such as Triandafyllidou (2017) have looked at the growing re-emergence of nationalism, and increased diffidence towards Muslims and Islam that has stemmed from their presence. Some have tried to understand a particular individualised 'Euro-Islam' that may emerge from the increased presence of Islam in the West. Salvatore (2004) views this argument of a 'European' Islam as relying upon a negative conception of religious tradition which legitimises only particular models of Islam which are oriented towards an enlightened 'European system of values' that work within secular constitutions. Socio-legal scholars such as Cesari (2012; 2010; 2009), Koning (2020) and Mavelli (2013) have argued that in the post 9/11 environment, the increased presence of Islam in Europe has led to an increased securitization of Islam. This securitized environment is the key focal point of the interaction between Europe and Islam that is investigated in this research.

2.3 Securitization of Islam

Consequentially, the increased presence of Islam in the West, and post 9/11 fears of terrorism and heightened state security, has witnessed a growing securitization of Islam across Western states such as the UK, France, Germany and The Netherlands, and has manifested in limitations on religious dress, increased surveillance around Islamic actors and surveillance of mosques and Muslim organisations. Cesari (2012) defines this securitization as being grounded in subtle changes of mainstream policies, rise of anti-Islamic discourse and limitations placed on Islamic religious practices. According to Brown (2008, p. 476) the expanding nature of understandings of security, posits that the 'public' must be secured from a variety of threats caused by radical ideology. Kaya (2010, p. 48) recognises that security concerns no longer just relate to the protection of the state against military threats, they relate to issues such as immigration, ethnic revival, religious revival (Islam) and identity claims. Furthermore, this trend of securitization cannot be detached from secularism. As Mavelli (2013) notes, securitization in secular states is

instrumental for the reproduction of secular forms of subjectivity, within a historical process of securitization of religion whereby religion is increasingly confined to the private sphere

Scholars of the social sciences are in agreeance that Islam has been evidenced as the religion which is most disproportionately affected by policies of securitization (O'Toole, et al., 2016; Fox & Akbaba, 2015; Mavelli, 2013; Cesari 2012, 2009; Awan 2012; Brown, 2008). With the emergence of new counter-terror measures which aim to protect the security of the secular state, this topic is under need for review. Furthermore, the implications of these specific measures on activists who actively campaign to protect the religious freedoms and civil liberties of Muslims has yet to be investigated and stipulates further research.

2.4 Security and religion

This thesis will contribute, through the assessing of securitization policies and their consequences for civil society organisations, to the area of inquiry which looks at the correlation between security, law and religion. Gutkowski (2012, p. 127) recognises that the concepts 'religion' and 'security' are both essentially contested; there is no scholarly consensus about the meaning of either. Rather, a series of loosely agreed-upon settlements and highly disputed boundaries prevail (Gutkowski, 2012, p.127). Furthermore, Gutkowski (2012, p.125) recognises that the relationship between religion and security is complex, begging careful theorization, and it is this interaction that merits further exploration in this thesis. This relationship between religion and security, is one that, Mavelli (2013) highlights Ken Booth (2007) views as remaining largely 'under-researched' in that the field of international relations has deemed religion either irrelevant or marginal to its inquiry. Thus, this relationship between religion and security will be revisited, in investigating how policies of securitization impinge upon Muslim civil society groups. The theoretical framework of securitization posited by Buzan, Wæver and Wilde under the Copenhagen School (1998) will serve as the foundation from which to understand these policies of securitization, and further, the relationship between religion and security. This theory has been drawn on by other scholars in the field of religion and law (Cesari, 2012; 2009; Mavelli, 2013; Awan, 2012) and will be influential in understanding the growing securitization of Islam post 9/11. The epistemological, ontological and theoretical foundations of this theory will be further explored in the proceeding chapter.

2.5 Why is securitization occurring and how does it construct Muslims?

When investigating the theoretical and phenomenological ramifications of securitizing discourses and laws, the question as to *why* this is occurring, and *what* it constructs is also a theme which permeates my research. Much of the post 9/11 'War on Terror' contributed to the

questioning of the status of Islam within European public spaces, especially in the restriction of religious activities and practices (Cesari, 2012). Mavelli (2013) argues that securitization can also account for the ways in which Islam is represented as the 'other' which is a threat to the liberal-secular order in Europe. Several scholars have built upon this and recognised how this 'other' is constructed in opposition to Western liberal secular orders. Questions of citizenship, belonging, and nationality undergird this 'othering', with Edmunds (2011) arguing that the social cost of being a European Muslim has increased, with governments seeing citizens as Muslims first, citizens second, with an implied difference between trustful and distrustful Muslims, contributing to the construction of Muslims as the 'other' in public discourses.

Van Es (2016, p. 1) furthers these parallels between 'othering' and nation-state values, by arguing that Muslims are constructed as the 'other' against which the national self is defined. Similarly, Ajala (2014) argues that the reinforcement of the securitizing perspective, that assumes a homogeneity of European Muslims and impacts the way Muslims are viewed with disloyalty, only serves to construct European Muslims as 'other'. These themes of 'otherness' are the product of historical narratives informed by orientalist and colonial contents and assumptions (Gianni, 2016, p.24). Salvatore (2004, p.1021) also views this from a neo-colonialist perspective, arguing that the history and experience of colonialism has been the main agent of the view of Islam as an essentially inferior civilisation. This postcolonial framing and stereotyping still abounds in much securitization discourse.

2.6 Muslim civil society activism

The relationship between nation-state securitization and civil society members, is examined through interviews with Muslim activists in this thesis. This relationship begs further investigation as the research on this relationship thus far is minimal. Van Es's (2018) study stands alone in academic contributions to this area of inquiry. Her study recognized the ways in which the securitization of Islam affects Muslim communities in the Dutch context, both in self-representation and public participation and found that the labelling of Muslims as 'others' and 'security threats' showcases that the very fact that Muslims are asked to demonstrate their peacefulness, reveals that they are seen to be a specific group of people who cannot be fully trusted (van Es, 2018). The theme of state securitization and Muslim civil society activism was furthered by Edmunds (2011), however, this empirical research and case study lacked qualitative data from Muslims affected in this context. She argues that a new generation of European Muslims have rebelled against the curtailment of their rights and hard and soft forms of securitization by increasingly asserting their rights (Edmunds, 2011, p. 78). I aim to contribute to this body of

research by investigating how civil society activists navigate the securitized environment and how being labelled as a 'security threat' affects their ability to do so.

Activists are the social group I have chosen to conduct in-depth interviews with. King (2004) argues activists have the potential to be social actors par excellence; they can provide insights into how identities are managed in order to create social change. Bayat (2005, p. 893) recognises 'activism' as something that uses extra-ordinary, practices which aims, collectively or individually, institutionally or informally, to cause social change. However, in discussions of Muslim activism in Britain, Khan (2000) notes how the religious and social mobilization of Muslims does not necessarily manifest an Islamic homogeneity at all levels of their collective existence.

With the exception of van Es and van den Brandt's (2020;2018) contributions, research thus far has focused on, what Selby and Beaman (2016) highlight, the significant discrimination experiences by Muslims. The gap in this scholarship, as they note, tends to obscure or absent Muslim voices in these conversations. It is this absence I intend to fill, by reinserting Muslim activist voices into academic nuances to chronicle how exactly securitization policies affect activist's ability to mobilize, instances of Islamophobia, belonging and identity.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review has mapped the field of securitization of Islam in the West thus far and exposed the evidenced gaps in these contributions. Literature thus far has clearly evidenced this securitization, and the reproduction of homogenous labels of Muslims as 'others' and 'security concerns' as a result. This has, not only directly vindicated and discriminated Muslims, but is situated within a wider theme of secular conformity and the relegation of religion to the private sphere. A more systematic and theoretical analysis into the effects of securitization on Muslim civil society actors operating within these spheres is needed. A critical open question as to whether securitization affects those labelled as 'security threats' and 'others', in their relationship with their state, their religion, their activism, their experiences of discrimination, and collective and individual beliefs, remains to be answered. A new approach is therefore needed, to examine the phenomenological consequences of an increasingly securitized environment in secular states, which increasingly delegitimizes religious claims. My thesis, therefore, will impel from this approach to fill this evidenced gap within research.

3. Theoretical Framework – The theory of securitization

3.1 Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, security agendas and security studies in Europe have sought to expand beyond narrow security questions which only focuses on military relations between states (Huysmans, 1998). This chapter will focus on the main theoretical framework that has grown out of this expansion in security studies. Namely, the theory of securitization articulated by Buzan, Waever and Wilde (1998), founded under the umbrella of the Copenhagen School. Securitization is a conceptual move, a framework for analysis, an empirical theory and a political theory of security (Guzzini, 2011). This chapter will outline the defining features of this theory of securitization and the ways in which this conceptual framework will be utilised throughout the thesis in support of the argument. This chapter will address how securitization theory will be used as a framework to understand the increased securitization of Islam in the West.

3.2 The Copenhagen School

The Copenhagen School is a European school of security studies, anchored in European security dynamics that theorizes specific European security experiences and/or questions (Huysmans, 1998, p. 481). The most formative contribution of the Copenhagen School to the field of security studies is evident in their 1998 book, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. This book's primary focus was to expand beyond traditional military and political views of security and construct a more radical view of security studies by exploring threats to referent objects, and the securitization of those threats that are non-military and military (Buzan, et al., 1998). They incorporate the process of presenting certain subjective issues as security concerns, rather than only objective threats (Sheikh, 2014). The book sought to understand how security complex theory could be blended with the wider agenda of security studies, which covered not only the traditional military and political sectors but also the economic, societal and environmental ones (Buzan, et al., 1998). Blending the wider agenda of security studies with religion, is a focal point of this research.

3.3 Securitization theory

Securitization theory developed by Buzan et al. in 1998 builds on their 1991 classical security complex theory. Their revised theory opened security complex theory to sectors other than the military-political and to actors other than states (Buzan, et al., 1998). They argue that security dynamics of Europe can be understood as a constellation of security fears and interactions among nations, states and the EU (Buzan, et al., 1998). Therefore, it is relevant to study both the French and the Dutch state, in their treatment of security concerns related to Islam.

Securitization seeks to understand these global, regional and local trends in treatment of security issues, in a two-fold approach. Firstly, the cause-effect nature of the issues around which securitization takes place, i.e., the 'facilitating conditions', and secondly, the process of securitization itself. In this regard, the facilitating conditions for the rise of securitization of Islam can be traced back to post 9/11 fears, when European states intensified security regimes to deal more harshly with potential threats they associated with Muslim citizens or immigrants (Cesari, 2012). Secondly the process of securitization itself is articulated through a successful speech act. Through a successful speech act, an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and conceptual measures to deal with the threat (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). A securitising act is not defined by uttering the words security, but rather, the designation of an existential threat requiring emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 27). With the speech-act approach, the focus is on the security argument, and it will be with reference to securing sovereignty for the securitizing state (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 151). A successful speech-act encompasses three units implicit in security analysis.

Firstly, a referent object must be presented as being existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival (nation-state, national identity, borders, state security) (Buzan, et al., 1998). Secondly, a securitizing actor; a single actor, or a group, who is in power, performs the security speech act, and declares a referent object is existentially threatened. This can include political leaders, heads of state, bureaucracies, governments, lobby groups. For example, in the Dutch general election of 2017, Geert Wilders argued Islam constitutes an 'existential threat. To our [Dutch] identity, our freedom. Everything' (den Hartog & van Soest, 2016, p. 1). In this case, not only has Wilders posited a stark polarization between who is truly Dutch and who is not, but Islam is constructed as a threat which must be contained. And lastly, there are functional actors. These are actors who affect the dynamics of a sector, without being the referent object or the actor calling for security (Buzan, et al., 1998). In this case, Muslims are staged as existential threats, to a referent object (the state, social cohesion, the nation) by securitizing actors who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures (anti-separatism bill, anti-Islamic political discourse) beyond rules that would otherwise bind (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 5). In this sense, securitization is inescapably intrenched within power relations, between the securitiz*ers* and securitiz*ees*.

The authors recognise that 'security' is a self-referential practice, an issue becomes a security issue because it is presented as such a threat, not necessarily because a real existential threat exists (Buzan, et al., 1998). Moreover, the potential danger can still be substantive, but the objective

accuracy of the threat is not the priority (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Therefore, the threat does not necessarily need to be proven, rather, the perception of the threat can be constructed once the securitizing actor has presented the threat as such. This will later be reflected in the self-referential security speech acts of Dutch politician Geert Wilders, and secondly in the anti-separatism bill speech of Emmanuel Macron, who have both claimed that Islam presents a threat to the security of the state.

Security dynamics of Europe can perhaps be best understood as a constellation of security fears and interactions among nations, states and the EU, where existential threats are traditionally defined in terms of the constituting principle – sovereignty – but sometimes also the ideology of the state (Buzan, et al., 1998, p.21). This constellation of security fears manifests in the threat Islam is constructed to pose to national sovereignty and ideology of the state.

3.4 Securitization and religion

The initial theory of securitization formalized by Buzan et. al (1998) gave little or no weight to the place of religion within securitization theory. Waever, one of the founding fathers of this theory, revisited the place of religion within securitization theory in a later article (2000) with Bagge Laustsen. In this article, Waever and Bagge Laustsen recognize that international security is now increasingly concerned with the threat of religious fundamentalism (Bagge Laustsen & Waever, 2000). They challenge international relations theory to open itself to encompassing religion as *religion* and to acknowledge religion as a separate sector within securitization theory (Bagge Laustsen & Waever, 2000). However, they claim that *faith* is the referent object, and that *being* is the criterion of survival (Bagge Laustsen & Waever, 2000, p. 717). Their analysis of religion and securitization contrasts to my argument whereby I propose that religion is posed as an *existential threat,* rather than the referent object. Their argumentation is limited in that the confine their analysis to religious fundamentalism, in arguing, often secular states are attacked by religious groups (Bagge Laustsen & Waever, 2000, p. 720). My argumentation showcases how each aspect of the Islamic faith, not just religious extremists, have been posited as a threat to the secular state.

3.5 Justification of usage of securitization theory

Scholars who have previously investigated the increased securitization of Islam in the West (Cesari, 2012; 2009; Mavelli, 2013) have drawn on the Copenhagen School's theory of securitization to validate their argument, therefore proving its justification for use in this case and thesis argument. Further, Guzzini (2011, p.330) recognises how securitization theory has 'sociologized' the analysis of security, in that it looks at how the meaning is socially produced.

McSweeney (1996) also celebrates the work of Buzan, one of the founding fathers of the Copenhagen School, arguing that Buzan's work has established itself as the canon and indispensable reference point for students of security. In this thesis, securitization theory is useful in analysing recent laws (anti-separatism bill in France, financial control of mosques in France and The Netherlands) and anti-Islamic discourse which has contributed to the tightening of control and securitization of Islam in Western Europe.

3.6 Criticism of securitization theory

The theory of securitization, now over twenty years old, has drawn significant criticisms from other scholars working within the field of security studies. Husymans (1996) argues that a danger of the phrases *securitization* and *speech act* is that too much focus can be placed on the acting side, thus privileging the powerful while marginalizing those who are the audience and judge of the act. Some, have argued that securitization is unable to grasp the everyday formation and development of new security issues and politics expressed in the practices of bureaucracies (Gad & Petersen, 2011, p. 317). Other scholars have criticised securitization as relying solely on speech act. Karyotis (2007) argues that limiting the construction and designation of something as solely a verbal act, is not enough to explain the whole process of securitization and that other factors are to be considered as well. In this line of criticism, a speech act is far too reductive of an approach to analyse the many complex intersubjective meanings of security. In more recent publications, Waever (2011) has revisited the securitization theory and offered a possible way forward for security theory based on first clarifying the concept of theory, then specifying more clearly the place of political theory and causal mechanisms in different parts of the analysis. I recognise the limitations and criticisms of this theory; however it is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully delve into these criticisms and offer alternative avenues of researching security.

3.7 Secularism

Secularism, although not part of a theoretical framework *per se,* is a vital component of the regime of the two societies I have studied. Securitization measures and the limitation of religious freedoms in the public sphere have been justified under state secularism. I recognise secularism, as, to use Asad's (2003) definition, a discursive formation that, in a political sense, refers to the state's prerogative to determine the separation between public and private, religious and secular, and the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable modes of religion. Secularism, as in France and elsewhere, is generally understood to entail three overlapping phenomena: the political and juridical separation of church and state; the retreat of religion to the private sphere; and the increasingly insignificant role of religion in people's daily lives (Fernando, 2014, p. 19). The secular,

as understood by Bracke (2013, p.210), is viewed as a set of institutions, ideas, and affective orientations that are part of the formations of modernity and through which religion is regulated. In the context of this thesis, secular states are defined as those states which articulate a strict separation of church and state, and neutrality of the state with regard to religion. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the epistemological definitions of secularism and the relationship between Islam and secularism. Critical analysis of these subjects, however, can be found in Bangstad (2009) Asad (2006; 2003) and Bruce (2002).

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, securitization theory will be formative in understanding the increased securitization of Islam, and Muslim subjects in post 9/11 Western societies. This chapter has set the foundational theoretical framework which will be of use in the forthcoming chapters, in understanding how speech acts articulated by securitizing actors in positions of power, fall in line with the theory of securitization in that they have constructed Islam as an existential threat to their society and their values. Furthermore, having exposed the criticisms and appraisals of this theory, this thesis has recognised the shortcomings and limitations of this framework. However, a theory such as this is instrumental in understanding how state security regimes have expanded beyond narrow military and political definitions, and this thesis will make the argument for the inclusion of religion within this security remit.

4. Methodological Framework

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline and justify the methodological approach taken in the collection of primary and secondary data during the research process. In-depth interviews and critical discourse analysis have been chosen as the best research methods from which to analyse my key research questions. This research follows a qualitative approach, pertaining to the approach that allows you to examine people's experiences in detail, by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews (Hennink, 2010, p. 9). Qualitative research is useful in gaining an in-depth understanding of the research issues that embraces the perspectives of the study population and the context in which they live (Hennink, 2010). This research also follows the interpretive paradigm, which will seek to understand people's lived experience from the perspective of people themselves (Hennink, 2010). This research adopts the fieldwork approach of qualitative research, combining in-depth interviews and critical discourse analysis. Moreover, the aim of this research lies in understanding the relationship these securitizing speech acts have on the intended securitiz*ees*.

4.2 Methods

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice (Janks, 1997, p. 329). Critical discourse analysis is not a homogenous approach with a unified method of conducting discourse analysis (Sengul, 2019). However, the general consensus is that CDA contains two essential elements: A more or less political concern with the workings of ideology and power in society; and a specific interest in the way language contributes to, perpetuates and reveals these workings (Breeze, 2011, p. 495). Van Dijk (2015, p. 466) defines CDA as discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.

CDA will be used as a methodological tool to evaluate, chronologically, policies and discourses of securitizing moves in France and The Netherlands. CDA is particularly applied to the domain of politics, where CDA is employed in analyzing parliamentary proceedings, election campaigns, demonstrations, and most importantly, political speeches and statements as ideological battles among politicians (Khan, et al., 2019, p. 4).

More specifically, this thesis will focus on the contributions of Van Dijk (2006; 2004; 1998) to the field of discourse analysis. Van Dijk's theory of the ideological square model of critical discourse analysis will be utilized in this thesis to understand how an 'in' and 'out' group is constructed; primarily between securitizing actors as the securitiz*ers* and Muslims as the securiti*zees*. This ideological square model is comprised of four principles:

- Emphasize positive things about Us.
- Emphasize negative things about Them.
- De-emphasize negative things about Us.
- De-emphasize positive things about Them

These four principles form a conceptual square, called the 'ideological square', and may be applied to the analysis of all levels of discourse structures (van Dijk, 1998, p. 44). Van Dijk (2006, 2004, 1998) outlines that the analytical tool of the ideological square model is useful in exploring polarizing discourses between 'us' and 'them'. The ideological square emphasizes the oppositions in the self-other representations, where the self or the in-group is often represented as positive, while the other, the out-group, is represented as negative (Khan, et al., 2019). These principles show how binary oppositions are structurally created through power structures in discourse. Hence, CDA and Van Dijk's ideological square will be a formulative part of the study in analyzing speech acts of Emmanuel Macron, Geert Wilders, Bente Becker and Thierry Baudet.

In-depth interviews

From February to May the interview process took place. I first began by researching Muslim civil society, human rights, anti-Islamophobia groups in both France and The Netherlands. The assumptions underlying this approach are that those who operate within the civil society sector, directly disagree with, and are affected by forms of securitization. Emails initially were sent to contact addresses of organisations found on their websites, and activists who replied were asked if they would like to partake in my study. Activists, usually volunteer with these organisations alongside their full-time jobs or careers. For this reason, not every organisation could provide me with a spokesperson to talk to. Permeating the activist sphere proved more difficult than I imagined. Eventually, I secured four participants – two from the Netherlands and two from France. These activists each categorised themselves differently, some as civil liberties and human rights activists, others as feminist activists, and anti-Islamophobia activists. This reflects the plethora of identities and lived experiences that falls within the category of 'activist'.

Online video call interviews were conducted between March and May 2021. Interviews were held with the goal of identifying individual perceptions, beliefs, feelings and experiences (Hennink, 2010) in relation to increased securitization of Muslims. A semi-structured interview guide, that differed depending on the activist's location, was used, using opening questions and topic probes, centring around questions of securitization, identity, belonging, activism and public participation. Furthermore, the cyclical nature of data collection was evidenced in the way that responses and themes from one participant that were identified in one interview were used to refine questions and topical probes in the following interview (Hennink, 2010). Interviews were conducted through English due to the researchers lack knowledge of Dutch and French and the interviewees high understanding of English.

4.3 Strengths and Limitations

Sengul (2019) outlines some of the strengths of critical discourse analysis, arguing that it is a valuable resource for the field of political communication for understanding an increasingly complex media and communication environment. Sengul (2019) recognizes that specific methodological critiques of CDA frequently cite concerns of rigour, sample size and selection as limitations to this approach.

A limitation to in-depth interviews, is that because it typically focuses on the views of individuals, this data collection technique easily leads us down the slippery slope of methodological individualism when it comes to explanation (Lamont & Swidler, 2014).

The primary advantage of this method is that in-depth interviews provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Lamont and Swidler (2014) add to this, arguing that interviewing both allows for and encourages systematic attention to research design, especially comparison across contexts, situations, and kinds of people.

4.4 Methods of analysis

Interviews were analysed thematically, within an interpretive phenomenological approach. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is utilised to explore in detail the participants' view of the topic under investigation (Smith, et al., 1999, p. 219). The topic under investigation in this case was national securitization and Islamophobia. The approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (Smith, et al., 1999, p. 219). IPA is concerned with how participants are making sense of their personal and social

world, and IPA allowed me to explore in detail the participant's views regarding securitization, national security, how this contributes to Islamophobia and activism. This approach also acknowledges that the perspectives of study participants reflect their subjective views of the social world, and that researchers also bring their subjective influences to the research process, particularly during data collection and interpretation (Hennink, 2010). Phenomenology is included in the interpretive tradition, and this is rooted in the notion that all of our knowledge and understanding of the world comes from our experiences (Hein & Austin, 2001).

Interviews were analysed by transcribing and reviewing data and looking for patterns and themes among participants. Considering probes and specific questions were used, these questions served as themes from which to analyse the data. However, themes also came up which the researcher did not anticipate. These themes were included in the data analysis as they offered rich, phenomenological insight into the life of the activists.

A reflexive reading of the data was also central here, which Mason (2002)argues will:

Locate you as part of the data that you have generated and will seek to explore your role and perspective in the process of generation and interpretation of data. You will probably see yourself as inevitable and inextricably implicated in the data generation and interpretation process, and you will therefore seek a reading of data which captures or expresses those relationships (2002, p.149).

4.5 Conclusion

This methodological chapter has set the foundation for the proceeding findings that have emerged from this research. Critical discourse analysis and in-depth interviews have been evidenced as the most beneficial research methods for this study. The guide for the interviews, as well as the ethics statement, will be attached in the appendix.

5. In what ways has the securitization of Islam been evidenced in recent years in both the Netherlands and France?

5.1 Introduction

Since the 1990's, with the intensification of globalization and mass migration, Islam has gained an increased presence in Western Europe. With this, came additional attention and scrutiny, both politically and socially. During the 1990s, the idea of Islam as a danger to national social cohesion became increasingly central (De Koning, 2020). Further, the aftermath of 9/11 saw Islam become a heated topic of national and international debate, with policies relating to integration, immigration and security being at the forefront of these discussions. Jihadist fears after an increase in Western European terrorist attacks, saw right wing political discourse gain prominence and synonymise terms of 'terrorist', 'Islam' and 'security threat' in public and national discourse. Islamophobic attitudes manifested themselves in the increased securitization of Islam, where European countries expanded the powers of the State to deal more harshly with potential threats associated with Muslim citizens or immigrants (Cesari, 2012). This trend of securitization has been sweeping across Europe, with the arrival of burqa bans, counterterrorism measures, criminalization of NGOs and intense security and anti-terrorism bills, all having a disproportionate effect on the Muslim community (Fox & Akbaba, 2015, Cesari 2012; 2009). The central research question to be analysed in this chapter, will ask; in what ways has the securitization of Islam been evidenced in recent years in both the Netherlands and France? This chapter will showcase, through critical discourse analysis and the theory of securitization, how Islam has been constructed as an existential threat to the Dutch and French nation-state.

5.2 In what ways has the securitization of Islam been evidenced in the post 9/11 era in Europe?

The securitization of Islam, which has long characterized French debates, is now, post 9/11, finding a place in Germany, Italy, Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands, and beyond (Edmunds, 2011, p. 73). This securitization encompasses subtle changes of mainstream policies, limits on Islamic religious practices and dress and the rise of anti-Islamic discourse (Cesari, 2012). Examples of this include the 2004 burqa ban in France proposed the Islamic veil as an 'existential threat' to the survival of French values (Mavelli, 2013). This total or partial ban of the face veil has now been extended to Belgium, Italy, Bulgaria, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark (Bouattia, 2021). In the UK the 2007 'Prevent' strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy had direct implications on the 'disciplining' of the Muslim community (O'Toole, et al., 2016). In Switzerland, a country with only four mosques with minarets and no radical Islamic politics, also

outlawed the wearing of Islamic clothing in an act 'soft' securitization against perceived cultural threats (Edmunds, 2011). De Koning (2020) argues that post 9/11, issues focusing on security and combatting radicalization topped the Dutch political agenda, with the securitized gazed fixed firmly on the Islamic community. In May 2010, Silvana Koch-Mechrin, German Member of the European Parliament, advocated for a European-wide ban on the burqa, arguing that the full veil represents the antithesis of European values (Edmunds, 2011, p. 76). The increase of burqa bans is directly related to the perception of assertive Muslims as an enemy (Cesari, 2012, p.447). This securitization has increased the social cost of being a European Muslim; continuously implying a difference between trustful Muslims (assimilated ones) and distrustful Muslims (those who wear headscarves or beards) (Edmunds, 2011, p. 74). These legal responses to terrorism and immigration have had three major effects: increased surveillance and police activity around Islamic actors and organizations; banning of groups and deportation of radicals; and greater limitations on the religious practices of Muslims (Cesari, 2012, p. 432).

5.3 Rise of populism and the facilitation of securitization of Islam

The rise of populist parties across Europe has contributed to facilitating this securitization of Islam. From a relative absence in the 1980's, radical right-wing parties (RRP) gradually appeared on the democratic scene, becoming important political forces in nearly every corner of the continent (Damhuis, 2020), with Islam, security, and immigration being at the top of their political agenda. Support for these parties often became affiliated with the preservation of culture, nativism, and authenticity (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019, p. 61). This preservation of culture, nativism and authenticity is directly reflected in parties such as the AfD in Germany, the Front National in France, the PVV in The Netherlands, as they construct Islam as an existential threat to Judeo-Christian and liberal-secular Western European norms and values. The rise in populism has had significant ramifications for immigrant communities and Islamic communities. Anti-Islamic discourse has become a key aspect of securitization, and has been weaponized by far-right, populist politicians, under the guise of state security or protecting nationhood values. The term Islamophobia has been derived from the word 'Islam' with the suffix 'phobia', which means 'fear of Islam'. (Khan, et al., 2019).

5.4 Locations of this study

Although securitization has been widespread across Europe and beyond in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, this thesis choses to focus on two European countries, France and Netherlands, as locations for this study. This decision has been justified on basis of their strict state secularism, neighbouring locality, and large Muslim populations. Moreover, I aim

to unravel whether securitization measures adopted in France have impacted Dutch security regimes.

France

In France in 1905 the Law of Separation of Churches and State was rendered to solidify the separation between the state and religious affairs. Although laïcité is not explicitly labelled within this law, this unique form of secularism grew to acquire this label and is perceived as part of the core values of the French Republic. It is the linchpin of the state-religion relationship in France. Gauchet (2003) argues it denotes a system where religions continue to exist but within a social and political order which they can no longer determine. Barras (2013) argues laïcité has been mobilized in recent years as a resource to address the visible presence of Islam in the Republic and to justify an increasingly non-accommodating stance vis-á-vis demands made by French Muslims in different spaces.

The Muslim population of France currently stands at around 6 million, being the country with the largest Muslim population in Western Europe. This 'Muslim community' in France, is an extremely diverse group of people with widely differing beliefs, practices and customs (Tolan, 2017, p. 48). France's relationship with the Muslim community has roots in colonial history, when the French first militarised Algeria in 1830. Over recent decades, due to many immigration policies put in place in the 1970s and 1980s, France has experienced a wave of immigration from ex-colonial landmarks (Barras, 2010). This increased presence of Muslims in France, and much of Europe, is forcing a reconsideration of the delicate existing balance between religion on one hand and secular principles of social and political life on the other (Cesari, 2007, p. 35).

The Netherlands

The discussion of secular politics within the Netherlands departs from what Bracke (2011) considers a landmark moment in the redefinition of Dutch identity, that is, Bolkestein's speech 'On the Collapse of the Soviet Union' at the Liberal International in 1991 in Luzern (Prins, 2000; Douwes et al., 2005). This speech denounced the 'failure of integration' of the post-colonial labour migrants to the Netherlands, and scapegoated Islam as the reason for this failure (Bracke, 2011, p. 30). The values of European civilization – of liberalism, separation of church and state, toleration – were prided by Bolkestein. Islam was seen, by him, as the antithesis to these values.

Furthermore, Dutch secularism organized itself through pillarization, which implies the organization of the social body along confessional or sectarian lines in a segmented policy (Bracke, 2011, p.31). Dutch institutional church-state relations are centred around the idea that religious

and non-religious "philosophies of life" (levensovertuigingen) should be treated in an even-handed manner, that religious freedom means effective opportunity to practice and protection of religious associations from state intervention (Maussen, 2009, p. 252). However, the 'de-pillarization' of Dutch society has been consistently called into question since the 1960s.

The Netherlands account for more than one million Muslims, which amounts to more than 6.5 per cent of the Dutch population and ranks second in Western Europe (after France) in terms of relative size of its Muslim population (Bracke, 2014, p. 360). The Netherlands' relationship with the Muslim community differs from France, in that, as Maussen (2009) argues, French colonial history has mattered far more for post-war policies to immigration of the Muslim population in France, than Dutch colonial history has done for policy responses to Muslims in the Netherlands. Bracke (2014, p. 360) is in agreeance with this perspective, in arguing that the Dutch colonial relationship to Muslims is rarely brought to bear on the contemporary debates about Islam in the Netherlands. The differing post-colonial and neo-colonial attitudes in France and The Netherlands, and the ways in which these attitudes inform state engagement with Muslim communities, offers merit for exploration and justification for choosing these locations as a sight of study.

5.5 Using CDA to analyse securitization in France and the Netherlands

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the methodological tool which has been selected to evaluate, chronologically, policies and discourses of securitizing moves in France and The Netherlands. A process of securitization is typically analysed through discourse analysis (Waever, 2003). Various scholars investigating securitization and the construction of an 'out-group', have also utilised CDA (Khan, et al., 2019; Vezovnik, 2018; Verkuyten, 2013). Discourse is utilised to present something as an existential threat to a referent object – which does not by itself create securitization but serves as an important element of successful securitization (Vezovnik, 2018).

More specifically, as outlined in the methodology chapter, it is Ten van Dijk's ideological square model of critical discourse analysis which is most useful in understanding how an 'in' and 'out' group is conjectured. This approach will prove useful in exploring how the in-group, (securitizing actors, governments in France and The Netherlands) construct the out-group (Islam) as negative, through the process of securitization.

5.6 Securitization in France

In October 2020, in Les Mureaux, outside Paris, President Emmanuel Macron gave a speech outlining a bill aimed at combatting 'Islamic separatism'. During this speech, Macron

admitted France had created its own form of separatism within the Republic, between Islamic and non-Islamic communities. He outlined an anti-separatism bill aimed at combatting this separatism and defending France against a religion he believes to be jeopardizing French values. This bill outlined immediate changes to the state-Muslim relationship in France. The measures put forward included the required training of imams in France, increased surveillance of the funding of mosques, the complete ban on the home-schooling of Muslim children, the outlawing of any religious organisation that promotes ideas 'contrary to the laws of the republic' (Macron, 2020). This bill, much like the 2004 headscarf debate, showcases how French public figures understand the relationships among religion, the state, and the individual, and how they justify their arguments and policies in terms of concepts such as *laïcité*, republicanism and equality (Bowen, 2007). This speech act can be perceived as a securitizing move as it labels Muslims a 'suspect community', poses Islam as an existential threat to French values, and compromises civil liberties and religious freedoms under the guise of security.

5.7 Securitizing move one: The anti-separatism bill

The examples below illustrate how Islam is framed as an existential threat to the French nation state. What is threatened, here, is French Republican values and the secular republic. This reveals much of the basis of Amiraux's (2016) claim that the publicly visible 'otherness' embodied by the Muslim population in Europe has sparked movements of transnational public discussions, mainly driven by the fear of the collapse of 'national cohesion'. Furthermore, it heightens Mavelli's (2013) claim that securitization reproduces secular modes of conformity and subjectivity. Words underlined showcase the language used to construct Islam as an existential threat to this national cohesion, in Macron's 'anti-separatism' bill speech.

Example 1 – Republican values threatened

'What today, in our society, endangers our Republic, our ability to live together?'

'What we must tackle is Islamist separatism. A conscious, theorized, political-religious project is materializing through repeated deviations from the Republic's values, which is often reflected by the formation of a counter-society.'

'radical Islamism is leading to a repudiation of the Republic's laws'. (Macron, 2020).

Buzan et al. (1998, p.22) argue that, in the political sector, existential threats are traditionally defined in terms of the constituting principle – sovereignty – but also sometimes the ideology of the state. The quotations evidenced above showcase how French Republican sovereignty and values are perceived and constructed to be threatened.

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Example 2 – Imams pose a threat

Macron proposes training imams in accordance with French values, through an imagined constructed difference between French values and Islamic values. Oliver Roy (2013, p. 8) highlights this 'theological predicament' of the underlying rational for stressing the need to train 'good' imams, even in countries where the separation of church and state is enshrined in the constitution. This showcases that Islam, in this sense, is a threat to anything other than the values which France produces and must be controlled:

'we <u>ourselves</u> will train our imams and pslamodists'

Example 3 – Mosques are potential houses of radicalization

Mosques are also constructed as potential houses of radicalization. In this bill, Macron outlined that foreign influence of funding of mosques is to be monitored, as well as limiting the importation of imams from countries such as Turkey, Algeria and Morocco in order to cultivate an 'Islam compatible with the values of the Republic'. This, as argued by Cesari (2012, p.439), only contributes to promoting the idea that mosques are places for radicalization and recruitment for future terrorists.

'<u>mosques</u> will therefore be incentivized to <u>abandon such [foreign] associations</u>.. monitoring of those origins and transparency requirements for their <u>funding.. freeing Islam</u> in France from the foreign influences that are rarely for the best'

Houses of prayer have been securitized, in that Macron believes these mosques are promoting radicalization, and pose a threat to French republican values, in so far as these mosques must be 'free' from radical influences.

Example 4 – Secular charter to reinstate Republican values

Furthermore, a secular charter was outlined in this bill, to be signed by any organisation or non-governmental group that receives state funding, to ensure these groups are not 'utilising NGO profits to carry forward their own ideals, to indoctrinate' (Macron, 2020). In this sense, securitization was expanded not only to deal with the existential threat of Islam, but to any civil society group who campaigned on behalf of Muslims' rights, such as the Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF):

'we will therefore increase <u>controls,</u> put into law the <u>principles</u> under which it will be possible to dissolve associations found to be conveying <u>these messages</u>, to be violating our laws and principles.'

Consequences for civil society organisations

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This bill had ramifications for civil society members and human rights activists. On December 2, 2020, the CCIF, (Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France) had been dissolved by decree. Alluding to the country's Internal Security Code, the government alleged that the organization's activities provoked, or propagated theories tending to encourage or justify discrimination, hate, or violence on the basis of a person or group's origin, ethnicity, nationality, race or religion and that it engaged in actions aimed at provoking acts of terrorism in France or abroad (Watch, 2020). There was little basis for these claims and is paradoxical in that Macron has accused the CCIF of encouraging discrimination, whilst he himself targeted Muslims through this speech act.

<u>Viewing the anti-separatism bill through the lens of securitization</u>

Securitization requires the designation of existential threats calling for emergency action or special measures and the acceptance of that designation by a significant audience (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 27). Macron designated Islam as an existential threat, and enacted special measures, like this bill and its ramifications, to deal with this perceived threat.

5.8 Discourse analysis of Macron's speech

Utilising Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square model to conduct an analysis on this speech, it is apparent in how Muslims are constructed as the 'other' in Emmanuel Macron's speech. Utilising national identity narratives, he demarcates in-groups from out-groups and legitimizes negative attitudes towards out-groups (Talay, 2019).

<u>Emphasize positive 'in-group' characteristics</u>

Firstly, Macron emphasizes the positive 'in-group' characteristics, of how laïcité is a core Republican value, and these values promote empowerment and national cohesion. Bowen (2007) argues that the government and media in France have found Republicanism to be the safest place to anchor their particular policies, attacks and analyses, especially when these are under siege. This is reflected in Macron's assumption of *laïcité* as a stabilizing force in French society, and any deterrence from this must be contained or posited as an outsider:

'A united France is <u>cemented by laïcité</u>'

<u>Emphasize negative 'out-group' characteristics</u>

Macron proceeds to emphasize the 'out-group's negative characteristics, by his ambiguous use of the term 'radical', which is weaponized in sharp distinction between the 'Republican secular society'. This reductivity and ambiguity assumes each believer of Islam is susceptible of

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radicalization, and contributes to the view, as argued by Triandafyllidou (2017), that Muslims are seen as culturally dangerous and that they raise challenges of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity.

[Islamist separatism's] 'indoctrination.. and negation of <u>our principles</u>, gender equality and human dignity'

'The problem is <u>this ideology</u>.. which claims that <u>its own laws</u> are superior to the Republic's'.

'There's <u>a crisis of Islam</u>, which is being infected by these <u>radical</u> manifestations'.

'this <u>radical</u> Islamism – proclaimed a systematic way of organizing things to contravene the Republic's laws and create a parallel order, establish other values, develop another way of organizing society'

<u>De-emphasize negative 'in-group' characteristics</u>

Secondly, Macron de-emphasizes the 'in-groups' negative characteristics, in denouncing that laïcité is at fault, or France's colonial history for reproducing socio-economic inequalities and separatism.

'The problem <u>isn't laïcité</u>'

'we're a country with a colonial past'

Viewing this speech act through the lens of securitization and the ideological square model, the three core components of securitization are at play in this bill – special powers (strict security measures), securitizing actor in a position of power (Presidency) and an existential threat (Islam). Macron has constructed Islam as the antithesis of French Republican values, whereby laïcité and security measures are instrumentalized in the justification of the subordination and discrimination of Muslims. Furthermore, Macron's anti-separatism bill showcases the ways in which he believes laïcité is intrinsically linked to citizenship – only individuals who embrace the norms of the secular ethic can be fully fledged citizens and participate in the collective life (Barras, 2010, p. 235). Macron labels Islam as a religion 'in crisis' – yet has this speech aided or abetted this 'crisis'? It is my opinion that this speech claiming to tackle this 'crisis' and 'separatist drive', under the false promises of a uniform republic, has only served to starken polarizations and 'in' and 'out' group binaries.

5.9 Securitization in The Netherlands

Prior to 9/11, the securitization logic already existed in Dutch policies in which a form of Islam was perceived to be 'unacceptable' and was regarded as a potential danger to social cohesion and the rule of law (De Koning, 2020). As early as 1998, Binnenlandse Veilgheidsdienst (BVS, National Intelligence and Security Agency) published a new report in which it warned against the rise of a form of political Islam that would gain both increasing influence through mosques and funding from Islamic foundations abroad (De Koning, 2020, p. 128). The creation of a 'political

Islam' by these state security agencies began to frame Islam in two respects: firstly, where Islam gets framed as a security threat, and secondly, on the terrain of national identity, where Islam gets framed as the civilisational 'other' to Dutch identity (Bracke, 2014, p. 361).The killing of Dutch film director Theo van Gogh in 2004 caused a surge in the Dutch national security service and prompted the government to set up the NCTV (National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and Security) which led to increased surveillance of Salafist organisation, and the conflating of 'Islam with the risk of terrorism' (Welten & Abbas, 2021). The House of Representatives has issued a formal request to increase transparency concerning foreign investments in mosques and religious institutions (Reub, 2019).

These examples of institutionalised securitization of Islam showcases how the labelling of Muslims as a security threat has existed structurally in the Netherlands for quite some time. Politicians such as Geert Wilders have made this anti-Muslim sentiment visible. In 2006, this polarization between 'us' (Dutch) and 'them' (Muslims) gained increasing prominence with the establishment of the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) of the Netherlands. Geert Wilders, the front man of the PVV, began to criticise Islam's place within Dutch society and adopted the promise of ending the 'Islamization' of Europe as a core party philosophy. The PVV manifesto focuses on anti-immigration, anti-Islamic and Eurosceptic rhetoric, which promises to 'de-Islamize' the country (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019). His use of the slogan 'Less Moroccans! Less Moroccans!" during his 2014 election campaign, and his continued blaming of the 2019 Utrecht terrorist attack on the influx of Muslim migrants showcase how Wilders has scapegoated Muslims living within the Netherlands as security concerns (Welten & Abbas, 2021). Furthermore, a 2018 executive summary by the U.S. State Department regarding the freedom of religion in the Netherlands highlighted specific discriminatory actions by Dutch politicians, namely the Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest created by PVV politician Geert Wilders, showcasing how the fundamental right to the freedom of religion was not respected within Dutch political establishment (Welten & Abbas, 2021, p. 17). This is further evidence of the ways in which securitizing actors have limited religious liberties.

The discourse implored by Wilders, through parliamentary proceedings and party manifestos, can be seen as a direct example of an ideological square model, which functions as an act of securitization, in that he constructs Islam as an existential threat to Dutch values and society.

5.10 Securitizing move 2: Geert Wilders

Through the frame of Van Dijk's ideological square model, this thesis will now look at how securitizing moves have begun to frame Islam as an existential threat to Dutch society. The

Dutch Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD, People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) claimed, as far back as 1991, that Islam was a threat to liberal democracy and a hindrance to the 'integration' of immigrants (Hafez, 2014, p. 483). During the preliminary election program of the PVV, 2017-2021, Wilders constituted Islam as an existential threat to Dutch society. In his founding manifesto, Wilders promised to 'de-Islamize the Netherlands' and 'prohibit Islamic headscarves and other Islamic expressions which violate public order' (Wilders, 2016).

<u>Example 1 – PVV party manifesto</u>

A clear securitizing move can be observed when Geert Wilders published his manifesto for the 2021 elections. The examples below showcase how Dutch people and Dutch culture are perceived as being 'under threat', from mass immigration (Wilders, 2021) and how Islam is perceived as an existential threat to the referent object of the Dutch nation state:

'It is an <u>existential</u> problem: the survival of a free Netherlands depends on the extent to which we manage to <u>push back Islam</u>' (Wilders, 2021, p. 4).

Buzan et al (1998, p. 20) argue that security is about survival, when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object. In this case, Dutch society is threatened by Islam. Furthermore, Wilders continuously utilises theme of 'de-Islamization' as a concurrent PVV political party manifesto.

<u>Example 2 – Dutch freedom is threatened</u>

Islam, according to Wilders, is framed as threatening Dutch freedom:

'there is nothing more unwise than to give free rein to the <u>Muslim ideology</u> that wants to take away <u>our freedom</u>' (Wilders, 2021, p.7).

'It is high time to defend <u>our</u> freedom, because of <u>our</u> culture, our way of life and safeguard <u>our</u> core values' (Wilders, 2021, p.8).

This showcases, in agreeance with Bracke's (2014, p.366) claim, that in discussions about identity, culture and civilisation, and in public debate in general, notions of a Dutch self are established in relation to a cultural and civilisational 'other' which is Islam.

<u>Is this evidence of securitization?</u>

However, a discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization – this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 25). In

one sense, it could be argued that Wilder's securitizing move has been accepted by the audience, as Geert Wilders' Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV) has been relatively successful at both national elections and European parliament elections since the party's inception in 2006 and Wilder's profile is arguably bigger than that of any other Dutch politician of his era; both at home and abroad (Talay, 2019, p. 46). On the other hand, Wilder's far-right party only won 17 seats in the 2021 general election, thus showcasing his lessening popularity, and lack of acceptance by the audience (Darmanin, 2021).

5.11 Discourse analysis of Wilders manifesto

The idea of 'our freedom' vs 'their' 'radical religion' implored by Wilders is a direct example of Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square model in CDA. In this way, the ideological square model is useful in investigating how Wilders has constructed Islam as the 'other' to Dutch identity.

Emphasize positive in-group characteristics

Firstly, he emphasizes positive in-group characteristics. He heralds Dutch 'traditions and freedoms' and 'Dutch cosiness and respect for the elderly' (Wilders, 2021, pp. 4, 6). According to Wilders, 'our own people' [Dutch] are those suffering discrimination and must be protected (Wilders, 2021, p. 6). Wilders praises Dutch culture and society, heralding 'our own culture, identity and traditions' (Wilders, 2021, p.11). Furthermore, he posits the Netherlands as 'a beautiful country with a fantastic culture that we will always protect' (Wilders, 2021, p. 12).

Emphasize negative out-group characteristics

Wilders then proceeds to emphasize negative attributes of the out-group, the Muslim population. He synonymises Islam with 'terror' 'violence' and 'insecurity' arguing that it has 'no place' in The Netherlands (Wilders, 2016). Similar to Macron, he argues Islam is an 'ideology' (Wilders, 2016). He constructs Islam in emphasizing a negative portrayal of the religion, arguing 'Islam is the most violent political ideology that exists' (Wilders, 2021, p. 5). This contributes to the idea that Islam is radical and the nation state must be secured from threat.

De-emphasize negative in-group characteristics

Wilders de-emphasizes the negative characteristics of Dutch history, namely, the slave trade and colonisation. Moreover, he refuses to see slavery as a controversial and inhumane system, and instead justifies it through again, victimizing Islam:

Why do the Dutch have to be ashamed of slavery history, but it is left undiscussed that slavery was and still is a major problem in the Islamic world?' (Wilders, 2021, p.11).

<u>De-emphasize positive out-group characteristics</u>

In de-emphasizing the positive out-group characteristics, Wilders awards one line to the Muslim community to showcase how each Muslim is not a radical:

'And while not all Muslims are violent, it is a fairytale to say that a few bad apples ruin it for the rest of the Muslim community' (Wilders, 2021, p. 8)

This political manifesto can be understood through Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square model, in that power is exercised in constructing Islam as a threat to Dutch values, security, and liberal democracy. The positive 'in-group' versus negative 'out-group' strategy has solidified the polarization between 'us' (Dutch) and 'them' (Muslims). The animosity towards Muslims is now more pervasive than toward any other religious or ethnic group (Asad, 2006) and has been reconstructed through the securitizing discourse of Geert Wilders.

5.12 Further evidence of securitization in The Netherlands

Buzan et. al (1998, p. 17) argues that security dynamics of Europe can best be understood as a constellation of security fears and interactions among nations, states and the EU. This 'constellation of security fears' can be related back to Islam being the securitized 'other' and evidenced in the ways Netherlands mirrored French securitization moves. Securitizing actors are linked by their mutual security concerns (Buzan, et al., 1998). In this sense, Emmanuel Macron, Geert Wilders and MP Bente Becker from the VVD party are linked by their securitization of Islam.

Links between international security regimes can be perceived between France and The Netherlands in terms of how they relate to each other in terms of threats and vulnerabilities. Previously, I outlined how Emmanuel Macron proposed the limiting of foreign funding for mosques in France under the anti-separatism bill. In March 2021, Dutch parliament overwhelmingly voted through a motion put forward by MP Bente Becker from the VVD party, in which mosques would face further monitoring over 'foreign influence' (Becker, 2021). This is an example of securitization as [Dutch] 'democratic values, fundamental freedoms and/or human rights' (Becker, 2021) are perceived to be under threat from the funding of mosques through foreign influences. Similar to France, Muslim organisations and institutions must denounce funds if they are accused of 'undesirable behaviour' (Bouattia, 2021). Islam is constructed as a religion which cannot be trusted, must be controlled and must be under strict scrutiny in Dutch society. This is clear evidence of a securitization, as it has been accepted by the audience (of fellow Dutch MPs), and overwhelmingly voted through.

Furthermore, the ideological square model is evidenced through the polarisation between 'us' (our democratic values) and 'them' (foreign influences). The securitization of Muslim subjects and polarising narratives between 'us' and 'them' are not just confined to politician Geert Wilders. Thierry Baudet of the Forum voor Democratie has also risen as a far-right, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim political candidate. Despite only forming this party at the end of 2016 and winning 1.78% of votes and 2 seats at the 2017 national general elections, Baudet's popularity has surged in a short period of time, winning the greatest number of votes at the senate elections of 2019 at 15.87% (Talay, 2019, p. 46). The key difference, however, between Baudet's polarisation between in-groups and out-groups and Wilder's strategizing, is Baudet never explicitly utilised the term 'Muslim' or 'Islam' in his 2019 victory speech (Baudet, 2019). Rather, he invited his audience to imagine Muslims by framing the in-group so clearly as Aryans, with the use of the word 'boreal', and evoking Islamophobic sentiments through carefully constructed intensification strategies, 'with all the immigration issues we have hundreds of thousands of people from totally different cultures' (Talay, 2019). This evidences the rise in the criminalization and securitization of Muslim subjects, in protection of Dutch nation state values that are not just confined to one politician or one political party in The Netherlands. The out-group is positioned as those who are responsible for the demise of Dutch culture and society.

Furthermore, in the 2021 Dutch presidential elections, Wilders drew on degrading stereotypes and stigmatization to accuse Moroccan women of failing to integrate by wearing headscarves (Wilders, 2021). This creates a 'Muslim problem' in which Muslims are scapegoated as the causes of failed socio-economic integration strategies. It remains to be seen whether Wilder's securitizing moves against the Muslim community can be seen as an act of securitization. In 2020 he was found guilty of inciting hate speech, by declaring 'less Moroccans, less Moroccans' at a 2014 political rally. This showcases the reluctance by Dutch audiences to accept his attempted securitization and anti-Islamic hate speech. However, even though Wilders may have faced repercussions for this hate speech, this does not negate the fact that structural Islamophobia and discrimination towards Muslim is rife within Dutch society. Furthermore, a recent 2021 report released by the ICCT (International Centre for Counter Terrorism) in The Hague reported that in their study of Salafism in the Netherlands, one respondent stated that nine out of ten Muslims feel that their freedom of religion is restricted (Welten & Abbas, 2021, p. 19).

The rise of politicians like Wilders and Baudet has had significant consequences for the Muslim communities of the Netherlands. The reign of tyranny against Islam leads to a public perception of Muslims as the enemy, and incompatible with Dutch values, and heightens anti-Islamic discourse. This showcases how Dutch tolerance is increasingly fragile, in that it fails to

protect the religious freedoms of the Muslim community. Through the lens of security, speech acts only fuel ostracization, stigmatization, and a polarising dichotomy between those who are perceived to be Dutch and those who are not. Interviews with activists who organise in these countries will follow in the upcoming chapters, to see how these securitizing discourses, have consequences for the communities which they consistently vilify.

5.13 Conclusion – what is perpetrated through securitization?

It can be argued that Emmanuel Macron's 'anti-separatism bill' has sent a ripple through the wave of increased securitization of Islam throughout Europe. His speech has institutionalized and justified anti-Islamic discourse, through ambiguous, undefined uses of the term 'radical' which directly scapegoats Muslims, positing them each as a 'threat'. This justified anti-Islamic discourse has travelled and found a place in the political manifestos of Dutch politicians such as Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet. Furthermore, this wave of securitization has been evidenced in the mirroring of policies enacted in France, such as control of Muslim organisations, and limitations on foreign funding of mosques in countries of The Netherlands and Austria. Although The Netherlands may have not enacted such strict security measures in the form of a bill or law like France's, this thesis acknowledges that Dutch security organisations such as RIVM (National Institute for Public Health and the Environment) and the AIVD (General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands) have been evidenced to structurally target Muslims through ethnic profiling, racialised categorisation and institutionalized Islamophobia, under the guise of state security (Welten & Abbas, 2021; De Koning, 2020; 2020). Showcasing the transnational trends of securitization, Austria, has however enacted strict security and counter-measures, similar to that of France, arguing they were fighting against 'political Islam'. These measures sanctioned the publication of a 'political Islam map', identifying the location of mosques and associations around the country (Towfigh Nia, 2021). This furthers the idea posited in European, secular, liberal states, that Islam is a threat that must be under strict scrutiny, control and surveillance.

The anti-separatism bill became renamed as the 'Law Consolidating Republican values'. This language change is quite stark, further consolidating the values the French state believes to be republican and universal. Since the initial drafting, significant amendments were added, such an amendment by French Sénateur de Maine-et-Loire, Stéphane Piednoir, proposing prohibiting worship in the enclosures and premises primarily assigned to public higher education (Piednoir, et al., 2021). This directly affects Muslim students in that chaplaincies were not included in this prohibition. A third amendment proposed preventing girls under the age of 18 from wearing the hijab in public areas. France is now edging toward a position of 'militant secularism' (Burchardt &

Griera, 2019), in their legal and political justification of laïcité to curtail Muslim's civil liberties and human rights.

A report by Amnesty International cited concerns regarding 'France's obligations to respect the rights to freedom of association and expression, and the principle of non-discrimination' (International, 2021). Furthermore, in the context of Europe, Amnesty spoke how 'the lawful activities and affiliations of Muslims have been used to justify surveillance, arrest, expulsion, nationality-stripping, counter-radicalisation measures and other restrictions on their rights' (International, 2021). This exposes how securitizing actors, in line with the theory of securitization, broke free from laws which would usually bind, to discriminate against Muslims, construct Muslims as security threats, and directly limit their civil liberties and religious freedoms.

6: 'They criminalize the Muslim. They make the Muslim the problem' – Securitization measures and the effect on the Muslim civil society community

6.1 Introduction

The trend of securitization of Islam across Western Europe has had detrimental effects for the religious freedom and civil liberties of Muslim populations living within these contexts (Amnesty International 2021; Bouattia, 2021; Cesari, 2012, 2009; Edmunds, 2011). From burqa bans to limitations on home schooling, contestations around mosque building, and anti-Islamic speech, the presence of Muslims in Europe is testing the notions and principles of liberal pluralism in European societies (Khan, 2000). This presence has led to new national security agendas based on counter-terrorism and has located Islam and Muslim communities not simply as 'problem communities' but as security concerns (Brown, 2008). This increasing 'securitized gaze' has had significant consequences for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations who seek to defend Muslim civil liberties and counteract a mainstream negative portrayal of Muslims. Amiraux (2016, p.39) argues that since 9/11, a discursive matrix has continuously and unfailing reinforced the link between Islam, terrorism and violence, and has had the non-symbolic effect of increasing police surveillance on places of worship and racial-religious profiling. This 'discursive matrix' has been reinforced through securitization and has detrimental effects on the acceptance of Islamophobia. Heightened surveillance, denouncement of funding, and scapegoating as 'the enemy within' has been a theme implored by right leaning politicians seeking to push Muslim civil society organisations to the periphery and clamp down on their political mobilisation (Nossiter, 2020). These securitization measures have been denounced by human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, who have repeatedly urged nations to recognise that security measures implemented under the facade of security and anti-terror violate fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression and freedom of religion, and stigmatise Muslim communities (Islamofobie, 2021). This chapter aims to find answers concerning how securitization affects those who organise on behalf of the religious freedoms and civil liberties of Muslims in these contexts.

6.2 Muslim civil society activism

Muslim political and civil society mobilisation in the West has materialised as an important counterpoint to the securitizing discourse which has been evidenced in the previous chapter, which has repeatedly cast Muslims as the irrational 'other', seen as a threat to national security, liberal secularism, and nationhood values. Dominant groups in many Western contexts have had a major

role in constructing Muslim identities in a manner that has generally stigmatised Muslim people (Nagel & Staeheli, 2011). Muslims themselves, have also had an active role in shaping their identities, and Muslim activists have responded in a variety of ways to their marginalisation (Nagel & Staeheli, 2011). Edmunds (2011) argues that European Muslims have rebelled against their removal from the protection of the law by declaring their rights as citizens and as humans as a way of combating religious and cultural discrimination

Civil society organisations in Western Europe are diverse in their political aims, mobilisation, and activist strategizing. Some, like the recently dissolved Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) implored a legal based framework to support victims of Islamophobic hate crimes. Similar to CCIF, *Meld Islamofobie* in The Netherlands also works to offer advice and solace to victims of Islamophobia, and to platform and counteract this form of institutional and societal racism. Others, like the *Comité Justice & Libertés Pour Tous* (CJL) promote an educational, political and legal based framework which seeks to 'empower individuals and communities on the basis of the production of knowledge, disseminated through education' (Louati, 2020, p. 1). The theme of empowerment also runs central to the activist ethos of *Al Nisa*, a gender-based organisation in The Netherlands which was founded originally by Dutch Muslim converts. The Dutch organisation *S.P.E.A.K.* is a feminist and anti-racist organization by and for Muslim women (van Es & van den Brandt, 2020). They protest discrimination, hate speech and violence that targets women who are visibly Muslim (van Es & van den Brandt, 2020, p. 191). These organisations have been chosen to showcase the diversity of aims and campaigning strategies within their mission statements. However, a theme that runs concurrent to each of these organisations is their active campaigning against Islamophobia, whereby Muslims rights are protected, and their religious claims and civil liberties taken seriously.

6.3 Qualitative data collection process

Interpretive phenomenological approach was chosen as the lens best suited to investigate these in-depth interviews through. IPA allowed me to explore in detail the participant's views regarding securitization, national security, and how this contributes to Islamophobia and activism.

Themes

Interviews were analysed thematically, within the remits of the themes that came up through questioning. Certain subjects were probed on, and these served as themes within themselves. However, other themes came up more organically than others, and these themes were included if they overlapped with one or more participant. This evidenced the cyclical nature of data collection. Interviews were coded and themes drawn from this coding. Unifying statements,

themes or arguments which were made by two or more participants also served as an important part of my analysis. Themes which were only referenced by one participant, were not included, as it was beyond the scope of the thesis to analyse each theme that arouse. Themes that were heavily evidenced by participants have been detailed in the box below, and further, the feelings these themes can contribute to, as articulated by the participants, have also been noted. Certain words from statements in the participant's answers have been underlined to emphasise these themes and emotions.

Themes found:

- Activists enter into the activist sphere for a variety of reasons
- Muslims suffer a negative portrayal in media and public discourse
- Securitization has led to an increased acceptance of Islamophobia
- Securitization is a trans European phenomenon
- Activists are organizing increasingly trans European to counteract this phenomenon
- Muslims have been disproportionately affected by securitization

These themes can contribute to feelings of:

- Frustration
- Isolation from other citizens
- Feeling 'othered'
- Being pitted as 'the problem'
- Being cast out

6.4 Theme one: motivating force behind entry into the activist sphere

Activists, like Muslims themselves, are not an ontological nor homogenous category. Nagel & Staeheli (2011) argue that civil participation among Muslims reflect the diversity of political identities and values that motivate them. However, it is important to note here, that not each interviewee chose to define themselves as Muslims. Rather, some preferred to acknowledge they advocated on behalf of the rights of Muslims, and chose not to disclose their religious affiliation, if any. Responses reflected the diversity of reasons for entering into the realm of activism.

Umair[1], a civil liberties activist operating in a human rights and civil liberties organisation in France, testified that combatting Islamophobia and human rights was at the core of his work:

'The work that I do, of course, Islamophobia takes a lot of time because it's the <u>biggest problem we are facing right now</u> in terms of civil liberties in France and beyond'.

Aaida, speaking from the Dutch context of operating within a Muslim women's organisation, also spoke that the theme of empowerment and reaction to instances of Islamophobia was a catalysing force for entry into the activist realm:

'We do everything to get the woman to <u>see her empowerment</u>. We once had a phone call from a woman who was, uh, because she went to the swimming pool and then she wore a burkini. They did not allow her to go in, and she was so shocked and she called us. And she said yeah I couldn't get in. And I said what do the by laws say?'

Furthermore, these sentiments were echoed by Badaa, who works within an anti-Islamophobic legal action organisation in France. Her impetus for change also occurred after an Islamophobic incident with a potential employer:

'And then she [employer] clearly said that, uh, it was clearly an issue to hire me with my headscarf. I was <u>completely shocked</u>. So I contacted [the CCIF] to denounce that I went through a discrimination. And I ended up doing my internship there. And it was the most striking experience in terms of Islamophobia. People complaining that they went through this discrimination or this hate crime and this and this. And it was so, you know, <u>anxious</u> to the feeling that I had. The injustice that I felt. I was like 'ok girl, you can't go out from this field. <u>You have to do something'</u>.

Chana, began her organisation in The Netherlands in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo Paris Attacks, with the initial aim of giving victims of Islamophobic hate crimes a space to have their voices heard and as a way to combat and publicise this specific type of discrimination:

'We were hearing a lot of accounts around us from people we knew and online from especially women who were wearing a hijab who were being attacked in the streets in The Netherlands… the initial aim was basically to <u>make this violence visible'</u>.

Thus, activists are both diverse and united in their reasoning behind entry into the activist sphere. It can be argued that isolating instances of discrimination can propel many to enter the

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[1] Pseudonyms have been chosen to protect the participants identity.

activist sphere to counteract this negative treatment and work toward empowering Muslim communities. It is evident that solidarity amongst a shared struggle consolidated their work.

6.5 Theme two: Securitization is a transnational case

A theme that unified all participants was their increased awareness of the regimes of security that had occurred in France, primarily the anti-separatism bill, and the fear that this trend would circulate, and has circulate, throughout Europe. An air of apprehension and concern was felt amongst participants in recognising how the phenomenon of anti-Islamic discourse (Geert Wilders) has found a place in Dutch society, a society that previously prided itself on tolerance and multiculturalism. Many felt they had to mobilize transnationally against this form of securitization and Islamophobia.

Badaa, operating within the French context, spoke of the causal relationship between French security measures and Dutch security measures, and how activists could mobilize against this:

'When I did those conferences [with other European civil society organisations] I warned people of the situation in France.. I tried to make them understand that even if the situation didn't reach this far in the Netherlands or wherever, it will reach this point. At some point. The Netherlands you have bans of the niqab, bans of this, bans of that. You wouldn't think that like 5 years ago things like this would happen in the Netherlands. So in 5 years you would have what happened in France like five or seven years before. You have to mobilize and act'.

Umair, spoke with worry that that France had become the 'laboratory of Islamophobia', and that policies enacted in France, have become exported elsewhere:

'The Geert Wilders phenomenon is literally something popped out of the blue. And to us, it's not like it's rooted in the Netherlands politics. It's not like in France, where you have a long history of anti-Muslim policies. I crossed paths with many people from the Geert Wilders movement, and I can say, um, they often quote France as an example. Because, France has successfully managed to pass legislation and make it [Islamophobia] completely legal. My idea is that France has successfully managed to become the laboratory of Islamophobia, and often times you see the dynamics of Islamophobia in France, are exported abroad'.

This fear of the exportation of securitization and Islamophobia was reiterated by Aaida in The Netherlands:

'If you look at the things they (France) do towards Muslim hate, or towards Muslims. It's almost like the Netherlands is copying what they do. Macron is feeding them [Islamophobia].. I think if you do this research in another five years, we might be at the stage that France is in now, everything just keeps going the way it is going'.

Chana, a Dutch activist, was reluctant however to define the relationship between France and The Netherlands as 'causal', but was worrisome of a general circulation of securitizing laws and anti-Islamic ideas:

'I don't know if you could say its directly causal.. But they are circulating, um ideas and circulating laws, laws and ideas that circulate that influence one place and the next'.

Therefore, this unifying theme of 'you have to mobilize, you have to act' showcases how activists organize to combat state security measures which increasingly, and disproportionately affect Muslims, before civil liberties and religious freedoms are compromised in other Western nations, under the guise of 'security'. As a result of securitization, activists have been forced to mobilize transnationally. As security measures continue to sweep Europe, collective, grassroots efforts are being catalysed in opposition to new laws and in defiance of religious freedoms and civil liberties.

'We're also, uh, trying to make connections with activists in the UK, who have worked on this for much longer than we have. We have very strong connections with scholars.. There's a lot of interaction in terms of ideas and how we try to translate them to sort of the streets' (Chana, 2021)

6.6 Theme three: Muslims are disproportionately affected by securitization

All interviewees were united in their observance and experience of how securitization policies disproportionately affect Muslim groups. These results echo Fox & Akbaba's (2015) findings which support the securitization argument showing that Muslims suffer from high levels of discrimination in comparison with other religious minorities.

In France, Umair testified to the blatant targeting of Muslims:

'Gerard Darmanin, in late October 2020, went to the Grand Mosque of Paris, and told Muslim leaders, other faiths or other communities must not feel that they are also being targeted by this law'

French activist Badaa testified to this also:

'Muslims were overtly ostracized. The Muslims were overtly criminalized, their religion and practices.. They criminalize the Muslims. They make the Muslims the problem'

In the Netherlands, Muslims were scapegoated as the main reference point of anti-Islamic populist discourse and security regimes and this negatively impacted the activist sense of self:

'Geert Wilders, he makes it no secret, he hates Muslims. He hates us so much he once said, 'I'm gonna get rid, of, uh, their civil rights'. <u>*It's like we are not humans anymore'*</u> *(Aaida, 2021).*

'It is also very clear that they [security agencies] have very strong sort of focus on Muslims, especially Salafi Muslims as potential threats' (Chana).

Furthermore, ambiguous uses of the term 'radical' by security agencies leads to Muslims who may choose to veil, being targeted. Muslim women, more so than men, are targeted by security agencies, due to the visibility of the veil or niqab. Ambiguous uses of the term 'radical' in securitization discourse directly impinge upon the rights of the Muslim women in that they are unfairly surveillance and interrogated:

'In terms of securitization issues, one recent example is reports we've received from women who wear niqab who are suddenly, you know, receiving a home visit from police, questioning them about <u>*when they started wearing this*</u>*, about their religiosity.. and this is again linked to the protocols they used to identify radicalization, which are often very vague, right' (Chana).*

Securitization discourse has given anti-Islamic sentiments a platform, and has led to an increased acceptance of Islamophobia, and justified the compromising of individual civil rights and liberties. This Islamophobia, entrenched within power relations, has become accepted. This is a worrying trend of populist, right leaning discourse, which has directly impacted activists, in that Islamophobia and securing the rights of Muslims, has risen to the top of their agenda.

'The situation is <u>*problematic*</u>*. In terms of civil liberties, and all that discrimination was made* <u>*acceptable*</u> *thanks to Islamophobia' (Umair).*

Razack (2007) argues that new securitization regimes have allowed a suspension of rights on the ground of national security, enabling the increased use of surveillance and erosion of citizenship rights that follow from this. This suspension of rights was echoed by both Umair and Badaa, and these activists highlighted the immediacy with which they had to act, due to civil liberties being compromised:

'There is a <u>*violation of human rights*</u>*, there is a violation of the uh of* <u>*association of rights of religion*</u>*, the rights of non-discrimination, there is plenty of violation. But this is ok because it is France.. The bill came into a very* <u>*established Islamophobic environment'*</u>*.*

In The Netherlands, this negative public representation has destructive effects for the activists sense of self, in that their identity is belittled.

'because [this discrimination is towards] Muslims, it's <u>like, it doesn't matter</u>' (Aaida, 2021).

However, one activist in the Netherlands felt that this wave of Islamophobic hatred had not always existed there. Some of this anti-Islamophobic sentiment could be attributed to the rise of right-wing politicians such as Wilders:

'We should look forward, not backwards. And that's a little bit the feeling I have right now. We're going backward… <u>I don't think hate towards Muslim was always here.</u> I think the people used to not know a lot of Muslims and they you know like, didn't interact always with each other and now it has really changed. And, uh, people do, a lot of people do' (Aaida).

Furthermore, the lack of recognition from fellow activists that Muslims rights are being increasingly compromised, means that often, Muslim activists may feel alone in their campaigning:

'Its very disconcerting how very few people including also feminist organizations, how <u>very few people see this</u> [securitization, surveillance, niqab ban] as an infringement on freedom of religion, on the rights of women to wear to dress as they please' (Chana).

This acceptance of Islamophobia stretches beyond institutionalized realms of securitization, and leads to an acceptance even amongst Muslim communities:

'We found in our research among Muslim communities here that Islamophobia and experiences with Islamophobia are so normalized in people's lives that many people sort of <u>accept this as part of their reality</u>' (Chana).

6.7 Theme four: Securitization affects civil society activism

The securitization of Islam evidenced through the 2020 anti-separatism bill in France has had repercussions for civil society organisations operating within this sphere. Testimonies from activists in France showcased this:

'<u>all charities in France are under control..</u> All of that [surveillance of Muslims and charities] has become acceptable and these measures [anti-separatism bill] barely face any discrimination. So yes the amount of [anti-Islamophobia] work has went through the roof. Literally, as Emmanuel Macron finished his anti-separatism bill, they began raiding mosques and NGOs. Anything we do online, the government has access to it' (Umair).

Badaa mirrored these feelings and observations:

'Obviously there is securitization in France. Uh, criminalization of Muslims and human rights, fighting for Muslim rights, obviously <u>impacts our work and impacts myself</u> as an activist'.

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'It clearly <u>discriminates the Muslim</u>. It discriminates them in their practice of religion. It controls uh the Muslim association, the mosque, the independent Muslim schools. In the bill they wanted to put an end to home-schooling. Because apparently, home schooling forces radicalisation, separatism, communitarianism'.

'The minister of interior went on TV and publicly said the CCIF was the <u>enemy of the Republic</u>'.

Muslim journalists also came out in vehement opposition to these measures, with Gabon (2021) arguing that by placing the whole infrastructure of Islamic institutions under surveillance, France is seeking to strip Muslims of the possibility of independent self-organisation outside the state's controls

The consequences of securitization were primarily evidenced in the dissolution of the CCIF on 19 November 2020 (Watch, 2020). Activists were forced to relocate, rebrand and remobilise their grassroots efforts in response to this securitization. An official statement released by the CCIF following their dissolution showcased their shock and remorse at these measures, verifying that exceptional securitization measures were instituted by the state to deal with the assumed threat of Islam.

'By <u>accusing us</u>, without proof, of being responsible or even linked to this [terrorist] act, the Minister of the Interior is signing the end of the rule of law… With these statements on the dissolution of the CCIF, these political figures are playing the games of terrorists, dividing society and forcing people to choose between fighting terrorism and fighting racism, instead of uniting and fighting both' (Watch, 2020).

Dutch activists were fearful of self-organisation due to the constant surveillance and acceptance of Islamophobia:

'I'm <u>really scared</u> if I go and demonstrate somewhere.. that, you know like, a person who doesn't feel they like us, or see Muslim, <u>they maybe would do something to us</u>'. (Aaida).

The effects of securitization on civil society organisation have been evidenced primarily in the case of France. After the dissolution of the CCIF, an air of fear and scrutiny was cultivated in which civil society organisations were painted as the 'enemy' and in need of surveillance. Dutch activists have not been put under as much state surveillance thus far but have been seen to be fearful of public mobilization and activism due to Islamophobic attitudes in the public.

6.8 Theme five: An 'us' versus 'them' mentality is created through securitization

The idea that Muslims have been pitted as Europe's 'other' is not a new phenomenon. Amiraux (2016) believes this 'otherness' is constructed in relation to the upholding and return to

nation-state values and secular European ideals. Interviews revealed this theme of isolation from the nation state; in that Muslims are constructed as the outsiders and that securitization feeds into this polarization. This builds upon colonialist and neo-orientalist assumptions of Muslims as the 'other' in which they are the target of securitization discourses.

In France Muslims were constructed as the target, and the enemy:

'We became the <u>target, we became the national threat</u>. We became the enemy, the republican enemy, the <u>enemy of the Republic</u>' (Badaa).

However, a disparity also exists, where both parties have not had a chance to understand one another:

'Because sometimes they [Dutch] don't understand us and we [Muslims] don't understand them. I think that's something for both parties to go. Most of the time we are willing to learn and speak up, or whatever, but most politicians don't even wanna listen to that' (Aaida).

The construction of Muslims as a security threat feeds into this polarization:

'we have a problem with Muslims being <u>singled out</u> as a security problem, we think its counterproductive, that it actually <u>produces a polarization</u>. It reproduces racism and reproduces Islamophobia' (Chana).

Fox & Akbaba (2015, p. 181) argue that once a minority is securitized, policies that restrict that minority can be justified even if there is little connection between the policy and enhanced security, and these policies can undermine security by agitating the targeted minority, which may inspire acts that undermine security. This securitization therefore, not only aggravates the targeted minority, but starkens the polarization between 'us' [the Dutch/French securitizing actors] and them [the Muslim securitizees].

'[securitization and] ethnic profiling by the police in the streets produces a lot <u>of feelings of inferiority and produces anger</u> towards the police much more so than it actually helps solve anything' (Chana).

6.9 Theme six: Securitization reveals nation-state values

Securitization is enacted when the nation state posits that its security is being undermined by an existential threat. It has been evidenced thus far that Muslims, and the Islamic faith, has been pitted as an existential threat to the nation-state. This has led to limitations on religious freedom, compromised civil liberties, and an accepted air of Islamophobia. This securitization reveals intrinsic values which the state holds to be true, as revealed through Emmanuel Macron's speech when he viewed 'Republican values' as being under siege from 'Islamic separatism'. To utilise

Burchardt & Griera's (2019) term, a 'militant secularism' is now being utilised in France to compromise civil liberties and justify Islamophobia, as felt by the interviewees.

Islamophobia, has become so entrenched in French discourse, that it has become enmeshed within French identity, according to Umair:

'In France, throughout Europe, Islamophobia is the first societal problem we're faced with, a major challenge, for <u>it frames the national narrative around identity</u> and security'.

'In the name of laïcité, you can't exist as a Muslim person in the public space'.

'I can refer you to the Republican ideals – liberté, égalité, fraternité. You [the state] clearly don't believe in them because you are doing the exact opposite'.

This exposes the hypocritical nature of Republican ideals, in that they are not being upheld, and are being weaponised in justification for the discrimination enacted upon Muslims.

'We don't really understand what our values are in France… There is no egalité in this bill, there is no fraternité and uh we don't understand what is the republic for the republic. So we understand that this bill is overtly Islamophobic' (Badaa).

6.10 Theme seven: Negative media portrayal

Responses from activists also reflected the growing dissatisfaction, not only with the way Muslims were portrayed in mainstream media coverage, but also the lack of coverage of Islamophobic incidents and anti-Muslim hatred in media channels. Anti-Muslim sentiment can therefore be seen also as a structural, institutionalized issue.

Umair, whose work focuses on the civil liberties and human rights aspect of Islamophobia, argued:

'The reason why [we do our investigation, activism] is because the topics we deal with <u>we cannot wait any longer</u> for the media to take interest in them'.

This was echoed in The Netherlands by Chana:

'What we wanted, sort of make these <u>experiences</u> [instances of Islamophobia] visible, and make these voices of these, mostly women, heard, because we noticed <u>none of this was reported in the mainstream media</u>, like, absolutely nothing'.

Furthermore, securitization has legitimized this negative portrayal of Muslims, through the constant construction of Muslims as 'the problem' and as 'security threats'.

Yasser emphasised how this negative public representation has led to the scapegoating of Muslims:

'This minority has been described as problematic, the enemy within, and has been scapegoated for being a triple threat, a <u>threat</u> to national identity, national security, and a threat to national economy'

Aaida, a Dutch Muslim activist, was probed about her reaction to the monitoring and securitization of mosques introduced by MP Bente Becker. She argued that this heightened the negative public representation of Muslims:

'Mosques are not a threat, it's a house of worship.. it's like <u>the image of Muslims</u> is like put in danger because of that'

Chana, echoed these sentiments, in that anti-Islamic discourse contributed to the negative portrayal and discrimination faced by Muslims:

'We basically found out that many Muslims do perceive a link between the way Muslims are represented in the <u>media</u> and their own personal experiences of <u>discrimination</u>'

Instances of Islamophobia and Muslim hate crimes have been testified by activists as being topics the media choose not to report on. Moreover, the constant construction of mosques, religious dress and Islamic religious practices as 'security threats', consistently feeds into a negative public representation of Muslims. This form of anti-Islamic discourse is evidence of securitization (Cesari, 2009). Modood (1997) argues that this feeds into a form of cultural racism, in which Muslims are cast as an 'alien other' within the media (Saeed, 2007). Miller (2002) argues that the media exercises power in choosing to represent the world in certain ways, and that it matters profoundly who and what gets represented. The lack of Muslim representation, therefore, is evidence of governing power structures in which Muslims are cast out as the other.

6.11 Conclusion

Through these interviews I sought to understand the repercussions of securitization discourses, on those who actively campaign on behalf of Muslims. From increased monitoring and surveillance of mosques and organisations, to limits on burqa bans and face veilings, a narrative is being re-asserted in Europe which undermines the fundamental rights and freedoms of Muslims, as well as the 'casting out' of European Muslims. Muslim civil society organisation can be seen as an act of defiance against this 'casting out', as a way to define their presence, and advocate for a right to recognition from the state, amidst increasing limitations on religious dress, freedoms, worship, and presence. The repercussions of these securitization discourses were plenitude, and

through this research I wanted to shed light on the ways in which these security measures had implications for those organising 'on-the-ground'. Securitization, therefore, not only limits religious freedoms, civil liberties, and activist's ability to mobilize and organize, in that they are increasingly formulating transnational ties, and in some instances, such as the CCIF, are being forced to relocate and rebrand entirely. Activists are growing increasingly frustrated with the 'accepted' sense of Islamophobia that has been cultivated through right-wing discourse, and moreover, can feel alienated by the state when their rights, religious claims, and voices, are not taken into account or validated. Vague assumptions and misinformation about religious radicalism, constructs each Muslim as being susceptible of radicalization and terrorism. Interviews with activists showcase the fragility and detrimental effects of these vague and assumptive counter-terror measures which seek to combat radicalization. States have failed to grasp and contain real terror threats, and have, instead cast their Muslim citizens out of the nation-states idealised vision of national cohesion and secular forms of subjectivity (Mavelli, 2013).

7. Conclusion

7.1 Research aims

The overall aim of this thesis was to broaden the scope of the theory of securitization to showcase how, in the 9/11 environment, Islam has been securitized as an existential threat to France and the Netherlands. This trend of securitization is part of a wider, trans-European trend, which has seen securitization being enacted to increase the relegation of religion to the private sphere to facilitate the modern secular state (Mavelli, 2013). Furthermore, this thesis has found that Muslims have become this 'suspect community' within Europe, through security measures in the form of anti-Islamic speech, limitations on religious freedoms, and the increased monitoring of Muslim organisations and practices. Interviews showcased that this labelling of *all* Muslims as 'security concerns' has had detrimental effects on not only the activist and NGO sector, but Islamic community more widely. The process of securitization has reproduced neo-colonial assumptions which have cast Muslims out as the 'other' from secular conformity, in which they are never regarded as fully fledged citizens due to the visibility of their religiosity. Additionally, securitization has affected activists in that they are mobilizing transnationally across activist networks, in response to the transnational trend of securitization. Some activist networks, such as the CCIF have been dissolved, and other activists fear the dissolvement of their own organisation.

7.2 How this contributes to securitization theory

In Buzan et al.'s theory of security, religion as a potential source of securitization is given little or no weight. In their 1997 theory, they posit that depending on circumstances, any issue can be susceptible of securitization, varying from state to state. They argue, some states such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Burma will politicize and securitize religion, whereas others, such as France and The United States will not (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 24). This argument showcases the theories' outdatedness, as my findings present the fact that religion has been very much so politicized and securitized in France, as well as the rest of Western Europe, in the aftermath of 9/11.

Furthermore, my findings present how, in agreeance with their argument, 'security' is a self-referential practice, an issue becomes a security issue when it is presented as such, not necessarily because a real existential threat exists (Buzan, et al., 1998). This self-referential practice of security is presented through the discourse of Wilders, Macron, and Baudet, who have constructed Islam as the irrational 'other', not because such a threat exists, but because all Muslims have been constructed as potential security threats and concerns.

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Concludingly, this thesis argues that religion should be given due weight within securitization theory. Laustsen and Waever's (2000) approach to religion and securitization is limited in that they argue that religion is under threat, whereas in this thesis I have articulated how religion is constructed as a threat *to* securitizing actors and the values they proposedly stand for (liberalism, secularism, nationhood). Laegaard (2019) presents a convincing argument in agreeance with my claim that religion is constructed as a threatening force within securitization. Moreover, it is not only the general religion that is presented as a threat, but a particular religion or religious group – in Europe, most often Islam and Muslims (Laegaard, 2019, p. 112). The theory of securitization should be brought up to date with the multiplicity of ways in which religion continues to be framed as a threat to secular states, and the ways in which this securitization reinforces secularist assumptions that religion should be relegated to the private sphere. I am in agreeance with Lautsen and Waever's (2000, p. 737) argument that international relations theory is not the neutral observer it pretends to be, it is implicated by its own secularist self-perception.

7.3 Other avenues for securitization of Islam research

This thesis has argued that securitization of Islam is becoming solidified into law more so in France than in the Netherlands. A significant limitation of my approach of focusing solely on speech acts as a form of securitization has neglected the institutionalized securitization evident in the Dutch government surveillance agencies such as the NCTV (National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and Security), the BVD (National Security Agency), the AIVD (General Intelligence and Security Services) (Welten & Abbas, 2021). Securitization is, as Cesari (2009) notes, not only a speech act, but also part of a wider process of policy-making that affects the making of immigration laws, multicultural policies, anti-discrimination measures and security policies. Going forward, research that does not only focus on speech acts as a form of securitization but extends to an investigation into the institutionalized discriminatory practices of state security agencies in the Netherlands is needed.

7.4 Securitization, human rights and religious freedoms

In February 2021 a report by human rights organisation Amnesty International outlined how Western European counter-terror and security measures have had detrimental consequences on the human rights and religious freedoms of Muslim communities living within these countries, and that these counter-terrorism efforts have made Muslims more likely to be the subject of hate speech and attacks (International, 2021). Furthermore, PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) Equality and Non-Discrimination General Rapporteur objected to the targeting and inherent stigmatization of Muslims through the increased suspicion and indirect

suggestion between Muslims and foreign or terrorist threats articulated in France's anti-separatism bill (Jallow, 2021). Balzacq et al. (2016) recognises how the institutionalization of security has the potential to erode civil liberties. This thesis has contributed to this argument in showcasing that the religious freedoms and civil liberties of Muslims have been compromised under securitization.

The upholding of religious freedoms under European human rights law, is paradoxical, however. Within the remit of human rights law, Edmunds argues how human rights law has become an agent rather than audience of security politics and thus a proponent of a neo-colonial agenda in the name of preserving national security (Edmunds, 2020). She alludes to cases within the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) whereby decisions regarding the right of Muslim women to wear the veil (taken here to refer to various garments such as the hijab, niqab and burqa) has contributed to the precarity of the Muslim woman's body and judges all coverings to be a threat to public order (Edmunds, 2020, p. 319). In these cases, human rights institutions within Europe have become complicit within security regimes and narratives and have reproduced the idealized version of what it is to be a free and equal woman in Western Europe. Human rights are, therefore, indecisive in combatting securitization – being simultaneously conditions for freedom and resistance as well as instruments of oppression (Kreide, 2019, p. 61). Future scholars should, not only advocate for the Muslim woman's right to veil or not to veil but call into question the hierarchical powers of human rights institutions, which have recently become complicit in securitization and the discriminatory policing of Muslim women's bodies.

7.5 Future research in counter-terrorism and security

This thesis recognises that Western Europe has been and continues to be at risk of very real terrorist threats. However, my aim throughout this thesis was to unravel how vague, ambiguous and homogenising security discourses, have detrimental effects on minority groups, that only serve to starken polarization. Indeed, the very notion of 'radicalization' as noted by Fadil et al., (2019, p.4) has always been an oversimplification of an extremely complex phenomenon, and a source of ambiguity and confusion as a result of competing paradigms and multi-layered definitions. Furthermore, conflating 'Islam with the risk of terrorism' has been a concurrent phenomenon in matters of security, leading to Muslim communities being under constant observance (Bull & Rane, 2019, p. 2). Therefore, further study is needed in understanding how state sanctioned security measures and counter-terrorism policies can be strengthened in the fight against radicalization, that does not continuously construct Muslims as a monolith. The next challenge for Western Europe, will be to look at how to continue to combat domestic terrorism

and radicalization, without feeding into a separatist drive, polarizing us and them narratives, and instead recognize the rights of all citizens – regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender or race.

7.6 Limitations and disparity in findings

A disparity in my findings was brought to reflection through an interview response. Discussions about 'good' 'law-abiding' Muslims, and 'bad' 'pious' Muslims have abounded much in scholarly research, arguing that Muslims are often conceived through a binary frame of 'radical' versus 'moderate' (van Es, et al., 2021). However, an interviewee showcased how this rift is also evident *within* the Muslim community. For example, this interviewee highlighted how there are Muslims who emphasize their 'good side' or how they're different to 'those Salafi' Muslims. Furthermore, this interviewee also revealed how certain Muslims are complicit in state security measures, by advocating for the burqa ban and working for governmental security agencies such as the BVD (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*/ National Intelligence and Security Agency). Having only chosen to focus on civil society activists as my target demographic from which to elicit interview responses from, in a sense I have contributed to this 'good Muslim' 'bad Muslim' dichotomy. By only focusing on Muslims who actively campaign against Islamophobia, security measures and the curbing of civil liberties, I have aided in polarizing between those who accept, and those who don't accept securitization and Islamophobia. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the category 'Muslim' is not an ontological category, and this thesis does not reflect the plethora of diverse identities and lived experiences which fall within this identity. This thesis falls victim to contributing to the homogenising assumption that each Muslim constantly tries to speak up against Islamophobia and criminalization of Muslim groups.

My study has also been limited in the lack of recognition for gender and race as categories which also intersect with religion as points of securitization. Relating to gender, one interview participant noted how, 'in dealing with Islamophobia.. when veiled women are involved it's very easy to define it because it's usually obvious that women are targeted or not hired in a job or you know attacked'. The veil has also been marked as a protocol to identify radicalization, in broad and ambiguous terms. My analysis has been limited in that I failed to account for the ways in which women are more so systematically targeted as security concerns due to the visibility of their dress.

Secondly, as Fernando (2014) notes, Muslims are perceived, not only in religious terms, but racialized terms. As one respondent noted, 'the racialization of Muslims is connected to being an ethnic minority'. Security agencies discriminate not only through labelling some Muslims as security concerns, but also through ethnic profiling and 'looking Muslim'. My analysis has been limited in this lack of attention given to this area of inquiry. Contributions on the racialisation of

Muslims and anti-Islamophobia work that challenges this securitization can be found in De Koning (2016), and for racialisation and securitization in Brown (2018).

7.6 Concluding thoughts

There are many avenues from which this research could departed from. However, in encompassing my argument, I have sought to strengthen the debate which showcases that Muslims are disproportionately discriminated against and the main target of state security measures. In France in particular, militant secularism has justified securitization measures to deal with the 'perceived' threat Islam poses to the nation state. The impingements on civil liberties and human rights have been justified under a proposed protection of 'secular identity', as part of the 'Republic's universal principles' (Macron, 2020). One wonders how the president of France can articulate a fallacy of the 'strength of our Republic', by directly negating from these so called 'Republican values', by creating inequalities between those who make their religiosity visible and those who don't. This bill directly undermines the values Macron argues he is protecting. Through this bill, Macron has constructed what he believes to be a true citizenship model, whilst upholding the universal secular mode of reasoning (Asad, 2003) to articulate that those who deviate from these secular 'norms' of the republic, can never be recognised as fully fledged citizens.

The political and sociological ramifications of this bill for French Muslims are still unravelling, and already, measures introduced by Macron have been mirrored in neighbouring states such as Austria and The Netherlands. It is evident the securitization of Islam is not an isolated case, and rather, part of a wider trend set within a false pretext of preserving the security of the state. Scapegoating a minority group through national legislation sets a dangerous precedent that should be avoided at all costs (Jallow, 2021).

Concludingly, this research has, not only fulfilled a gap into the standing body of literature on the securitization of Islam in Europe but has re-posed questions regarding the reproduction of secular subjectivity, 'suspect communities', and 'others' that is perpetuated through securitization. Muslim and human rights activists are continuously trying to counteract this negative portrayal of Islam and safeguard the religious freedoms and civil liberties of Muslims. Academic research henceforth should seek not only to expose this discrimination and ostracization but utilise scholarly contributions to promote the potential of a religiously plural society, to better inform security and counter-terror policy, and to call into question the discriminatory practices of securitizing agents. This research is of utmost importance and immediacy, before the religious freedoms and human rights of Muslims across Europe continue to be compromised under the guise of 'security'.

French legal scholar Rim-Sarah Alouane, in response to the ramifications of the anti-separatism, has consolidated an argument regarding the portrayal of Islam that has been crafted through this bill:

'Islam is increasingly perceived as a religion foreign to Europe, a religion that must be contained and tamed. However, the visibility of Islam in the public sphere should be seen as a reflection of integration and citizenship, and not as separatism. It is this process of visibility that disturbs' (Alouane, 2021)

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9. Appendix

9.1 Ethics Statement

Participant consent form | Megan Gethin | MA Religion, Conflict & Globalization | Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies

Research Statement

This research is being conducted as qualitative data that will inform my master's thesis research for the track Religion, Conflict and Globalization. This thesis will analyse securitization policies that have emerged in recent years in Netherlands and France and will assess the ways in which these policies affect civil society members that work within organisations to mobilize Muslim and non-Muslim members alike to combat Islamophobia. Securitization is evidenced in the rise of anti-Islamic rhetoric of populist politicians such as Geert Wilders, and subtle changes of mainstream policies and laws that limit Islamic religious practice, such as the anti-separatism bill in France in 2020. Interviews will be conducted in order to understand how being labelled 'security threats' in the secular sphere affects those who work within civil society organisations, drawing on themes of religious identity, self-representation, belonging and public participation.

The Interview Procedure

Interviews will be conducted via online video conferencing software. Interview will then be audio recorded on a password secured mobile phone, in order to transcribe. Agreed ethical guidelines will be repeated during the beginning of the interview, before the interviewing process begins. After the interview, the recording will be deleted. Participants may view copies of transcriptions to ensure their words have been presented as intended. All principles outlined below will be approached with the guiding principle of *care,* which is a core ethical value enacted throughout the research process.
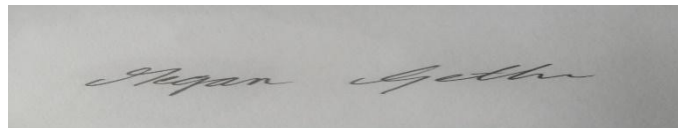
Ethics Statement

By agreeing to partake in this study, I agree that;

- I have received in-depth information about the purpose and goals of this research.
- I have received informed consent about what the research requires of me as a participant.
- Any personal information shared will be anonymised.
- Those participants who are already operating as head figures in their organisations and have public profiles, will not remain anonymous, as agreed by participants.
- I have given and granted consent regarding the interview process, and am informed in regard to what will happen in the interview once it has been conducted.
- I have given consent that I am a volunteer and I have a right to withdraw from the interview procedure and research process at any time.

Researcher: Megan Gethin

Signature:

Date: 19/04/21

Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Supervising lecturer: Dr. Julia Martínez-Ariño, University of Groningen

Contact: j.martinez.arino@rug.nl

9.2 Semi-Structured interview guide

<u>Introduction</u>

- Introduce myself, thank participant
- Explain research objectives
- Re-state ethics statement and ensure participant's consent

<u>General questions</u>

- Can you tell me more about what your organisation does?
- How did you get into the work you are in now?
- What are the main goals of your work?

<u>Questions about the organisation/activism</u>

- To what extent do you think, or not think, your activism or organisation goals changed at all in recent years?
- What is the main focus of your work at the moment?
- In what ways do you actively campaign against Islamophobia?
- How does anti-Islamic discourse affect you as an activist?
- How do these measures against Muslims make you feel personally?

<u>Participants from the Netherlands</u>

- My thesis looks at anti-Islamic discourse perpetrated by politicians such as Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet, I wondered if your work has, or has not been affected by this? If so, in what ways?
- What would you say the attitude to Muslims is presently in the Netherlands?
- In February 2021, MP Bente Becker from the leading VVD party, proposed that mosques will face monitoring over 'foreign influence'. Could I hear your thoughts on this?
- The second part of my research looks at the anti-separatism in France. I wondered how familiar you are on this and what your thoughts are about it?

<u>Media</u>

- How do you think Islam is presented through the media and the far right?

Securitization

- What groups do you think have been mostly affected by this form of securitization (anti-Islamic discourse, anti-separatism bill)?
- Has your work been affected by this securitization?

French participants

- What ideas of the French republic have been articulated through this bill, in your opinion?
- How would you define the relationship between Muslims and the French state?
- To what extent do you think, or not think, this relationship has changed?
- The second part of my research focuses on the Islam in Netherlands. I wondered if you had any thoughts regarding the situation there?

Closing

- What are your activism goals in the future?
- How has the pandemic affected your work?
- Thank participant
- Do you have any questions for me as a researcher?