Discovering 'Referent Object(s)' and 'Existential Threat(s)' in the Public Speeches of the USA Presidents Bush and Obama (2001-2017): A Securitization Theory Perspective

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Abstract

This research examines the War on Terror policies by the selected public speeches of the two former Presidents of the USA, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, with the object of discovering the referent object(s) and existential threat(s) – the two significant aspects of securitization theory. The process of securitization of Muslim communities, which expanded in parallel with the war on terror policy followed by the Bush and Obama administrations in the USA after September 11, has also been examined. The study claims that the concepts of referent objects and existential threats were realized through the discursive political practices of the Presidents. The study finds that President Bush mobilized public opinion against different people, groups, terrorist organizations, and nations by securitizing them. In contrast, President Obama securitized some terrorist groups while seeking to desecuritize a previously securitized but less serious issue.

Keywords:

Securitization Theory, Referent Object, Existential Threat, Securitizing Actor.

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**ABD Başkanları Bush ve Obama'nın
Kamuya Açık Konuşmalarında "Referans Nesne(ler)" ve
"Varoluşsal Tehdit(ler)"i Keşfetmek (2001-2017):
Bir Güvenlikleştirme Teorisi Perspektifi**

Özet

Bu araştırma, güvenlikleştirme teorisinin iki önemli yönü olan *referans nesne(ler)* ve *varoluşsal tehdit(ler)*i keşfetme amacıyla ABD'nin iki eski Başkanı George W. Bush ve Barack Obama'nın seçilmiş kamuya açık konuşmaları üzerinden Terörle karşı Savaş politikalarını incelemektedir. ABD'de Bush ve Obama yönetimlerinin 11 Eylül sonrasında izlediği terörle savaş politikasına paralel olarak genişleyen Müslüman toplulukların güvenlikleştirilmesi süreci de incelenmiştir. Çalışma, referans nesneleri ve varoluşsal tehdit kavramlarının söylemsel politik pratikler aracılığıyla gerçekleştiğini iddia etmektedir. Araştırma, Başkan Bush'un farklı kişilere, gruplara, terör örgütlerine ve uluslara karşı güvenlikleştirerek kamuoyunu harekete geçirdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bunun aksine, Başkan Obama, daha önce güvenlikleştirilmiş ancak daha az ciddi bir konuyu güvenlikleştirmeden çıkarmaya çalışırken bazı terörist grupları da güvenlikleştirmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Güvenlikleştirme Teorisi, Referans Nesnesi, Varoluşsal Tehdit, Güvenlikleştirici Aktör, Dinleyici Kitlesi.

Introduction

Declaring a global war on terrorism after the violent attacks on September 11, 2001, President Bush's administration has repeatedly stated that this war will not be a "war against immigrants" or a "war against Islam" (Bush, 2001, pp. 66-68; Bush, 2006, p. 434). Similar statements are found in the National Security Strategy published by President Obama's administration: "We are pursuing a strategy that will protect our country, not provide a haven for Al Qaeda, which has the most dangerous weapons and materials in the world, and we will establish partnerships with Muslim communities all over the world to destroy, eliminate and defeat Al Qaeda and its affiliates" (NSS, 2010, p. 19). Despite these statements, Muslim communities living in both the USA and many Western countries were exposed to direct and indirect physical and psychological violence after this attack (Mujahid, 2003; Mandaville, 2013, pp. 236-38; Pitter, 2017). One of

the reasons for this violence against Muslims is that other American citizens perceive the Muslim community as a threat to their existence. The reason behind creating this negative perception is identified as wrong steps and short-sighted policies taken by the government. The failure of governments to take adequate measures against these attacks has led to discussions about how attacks against Muslims and hate crimes are ignored and even affirmed by Western governments (CAIR, 2004, pp. 3-7; Bush, 2001, pp. 7-12). Human Rights Watch reports and assessments also provide data corroborating such claims (HRW, 2003, pp. 499-504; HRW, 2005, pp. 500-505). The objective of the present study is to examine the truth behind these allegations against the Western governments, especially the American government. In this context, we have attempted to review the selected public speeches of the two former Presidents of the USA, the Republican President George W. Bush and the Democratic President Barack Obama in light of securitization theory. We have tried to find out which issues the presidents identified as referent objects and which they identified as existential threats in their speeches. Additionally, using both direct and indirect speech acts, we have attempted to assess their claims regarding a specific population. For this reason, we resort to securitization theory, which claims that the discursive politics of securitization actors played a role in informing the public about referent objects and existential threats in the aftermath of 9/11 in the USA. The securitization theory claims there must be a threat to be able to securitize an issue, which should be eliminated for the survival of the referent object. Securitizing actors are the ones who make the speech act, attach existential importance to the referent object, identify the threats, and present the security issues to the public. The current study tries to prove whether the two former presidents are securitizing actors based on their public speeches. The study mainly tries to see the different directions of the presidential speeches and the supporting administrative steps followed by those to find out the intentions of the presidents. As securitization theory takes into account the subjective formation of danger and threat, the securitizing moves of the presidents have been studied in this paper, and thus it is argued that personal and ideological objectives had a significant impact on how the public addresses were prepared.

Background and Methodology of the Study

After the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, then-Republican President George W. Bush immediately took several actions. Among those efforts, his public speeches played a significant role in articulating public opinion against the perceived terrorists and their allies. Despite his initiatives being supported by most of the US citizens, he was

criticized for some of the actions considered to be illegitimate by the opposition parties and by some other civil society organizations and individuals. After coming into power in 2010, President Barack Obama highlighted some of the previous initiatives as undemocratic. Rather than identifying some actors and factors as the American enemies he intended to bring an attitudinal change among the American people towards their enemies. Therefore, this research is intended to pick up those issues that were acquainted as existential threats that must be removed or destroyed in the quickest time. It also aims to distinguish those issues that have been classified as the most important priority to protect. A referent object is defined as an entity that is taken as the focus for analysis in security studies, or, put differently, that which is to be secured (Peoples, C. & Vaughan-Williams, N., 2010, p. 4). On the other hand, the existential threat is a concept seen as an unprecedented danger that requires police action immediately to block its development (Balzacq T. , 2011, p. 3). The statements of the heads of government are crucial in the policy of the state. That is why the presidents' statements have sought to identify the continuity or differences between the steps taken by both governments to combat terrorism. If the statements of both governments in identifying the existential threats and the reference objects maintain consistency, then it must be understood that the problem is universal, and the steps taken to address it are legitimate. On the other hand, if the statements of both governments are not consistent, then it would be logical to identify the problems anew and take different steps to deal with them. This is why this research is so important in clarifying the steps of presidents as securitizing actors. The study will also look at whether they are highlighting a subject as more important than its actual position in identifying the referent object, or whether they were pursuing any other interest by portraying an individual, group, state, or element as a serious existential threat. The reason behind finding a different motive is that the operations conducted in post-Nine Eleven America under the heading of war on terror have mostly been attributed to a specific religious community (Elsheikh, Sisemore, & Lee, 2017). It has been alleged that the war on terror has created a kind of anxiety among the Muslim community living in America and a kind of hatred towards Muslims among other communities (Wajahat, et al., 2011; Matthew, Yasmine, Ken, & Ken, 2015). There have been numerous hate crimes in which Muslims have been the victims (CAIR, 2002; CAIR, 2004; CAIR, 2005). In this context, the study perceives that the audiences are motivated through statements of the Presidents to commit crimes.

In light of the above discussion, the present study seeks answers to the following questions: *What issues have been mentioned in the subsequent*

speeches of the two US Presidents, G.W. Bush, and Barack Obama, since 9/11, identifying them as referent objects and expressing the need to protect them? What are some of the issues that the above-mentioned Presidents have highlighted as a serious threat to the United States and its people and the need for immediate destruction? In light of the above questions, the present research aims to identify the referent objects that emerged in the public speeches of President Bush and President Obama and to identify the threats to their existence. It is exploratory research aimed at discovering the threat perceptions that were expressed and disseminated throughout the world in the public speeches of the Presidents.

To select from among the hundreds of public speeches of the Presidents, we have used a non-probability judgmental or purposive sampling technique and followed some criteria such as the public speeches made after important national and international events, made at the UN General Assembly, given on important visits abroad and State of the Union addresses in front of the people of the USA. Following each of the above criteria, four speeches from each of them have been used as data in this study. We acknowledge that identifying someone as a securitizing or desecuritizing actor requires more information than just four addresses. However, due to the word limitation of the article, we have tried to get closer to reality by limiting the analysis to these few statements. Moreover, since the research tries to understand the perspectives and attitudes of the actors, some of Obama's speeches as a senator before becoming president are considered necessary, where he strongly criticized the policies of the Bush administration.

The Speech Act Theory has been used to extract important parts from the statements as research data. Austin, J. and Searle, J. have studied the Speech Act theory in developing the effectiveness of language in philosophy (Austin J. , 1962; Searle, 1977). The Speech Act theory focuses on the effectiveness or functions of language, i.e., to do things. Moreover, to understand how the audience agreed with the securitizing actor's movement we attached great importance to the *context*. The American media's negative propaganda about Islam and Muslims, and its exaggerated stereotype and belligerent hostility, has been continued for a long time. The idea that Islam is a threat to American security, American national interests, and its way of life, according to Said, is part of an *Orientalist* framework that has been guiding America's relations with Muslim populations at home and abroad (Said, 1997). He said that malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of insulting foreign culture in the West (1997, p. xii). Van Dijk argues that this discourse of *orientalism* plays an important role in the production and reproduction of racism (Dijk, 1997, p. 58). Ahmed and Matthes analyzed 345

academic studies published in various journals between 2000 and 2015. Those studies portrayed that Muslims tend to have a negative frame of mind and thus Islam is a predominantly violent religion (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016). In his article entitled *Islam in America*, Smith explains that the devastating reality of 9/11 brought about major changes in the consciousness and reaction of both the Muslim community and the American public (Smith J. I., 2010, p. 28). In this context, Muslim Americans have found themselves the target of increased racial and religious profiling. It has thus been proven that *having an Islamic appearance or a Muslim name* can make a suspect of terrorism and be subject to hate crimes and government-sanctioned discrimination (Salaita, 2006; Welch, 2006). Thus, Islamophobia among non-Muslims in Western society gradually increased. In such a perspective, to label something as a threat, a securitizing actor doesn't need to use direct securitizing language rather he can fulfill his purpose through the Indirect Speech Act. Borrowing the idea of *indirect securitization* from Searle we argue the utterance that causes securitization has two illocutions, i.e., direct and indirect, and among those, indirect securitization causes much effect on the audience (Searle, 1977).

We have arranged the first part of the paper with a description of the emergence of securitization theory along with its conceptual dynamics. The next part is concerned with describing the selected speeches of the Presidents to highlight the referent objects and existential threats. While describing the excerpts of the strategies it has been tried to make critical explanations based on securitization theory. Throughout the speeches, we have also found some indirect securitizing moves of the Presidents by which some components had been securitized more in one regime and the same components had been tried to desecuritize in the other regime. Finally, the paper argues that the *threat perceptions have been created not only to destroy the evils but also to meet some other individual, partisan, and ideological purposes through discursive politics*.

Securitization Theory in International Relations

The securitization approach to the Copenhagen School (CS) is said to have emerged as an illustration of the emphasis that the Poststructuralist approach puts on the discursive construction of reality. Emerging as a critical approach to traditional security studies (Huysmans, 1998, p. 479); the Copenhagen School began to develop in 1985 with the establishment of the Center for Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Copenhagen. The most important contribution of the school in terms of security studies is the theory of securitization (Buzan, B. Waever, O. and De Wilde, J., 1998, p. 23).

According to Wæver, security can be well understood as a discursive act, i.e., as a speech act. The basic idea of the speech act theory is, just uttered: certain statements that perform more than simply explain a specified reality. In its most general definition, the theory of securitization seeks to understand how and in what way any (political) issue becomes a security problem. Securitization can also be defined as regulating the politicized issue towards the security (state) field (Balcı A. & Kardaş T., 2012, p. 100). If any priority development is presented as a 'security problem', the political structure declares that it has special rights to tackle the problem. If, after this declaration, it persuades the audience to deal with extraordinary methods with a sense of importance and urgency, to eliminate the problem that is threatening its survival, the process of securitization has occurred here. Moreover, Wæver proposes *desecuritizing* issues that refer "shifting of issues out of emergency mood and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere" (Buzan, B. Waever, O. and De Wilde, J., 1998, p. 4; Austin & Beaulieu-Brossard, 2017, p. 2). In their book Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde say "Securitization studies aim to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes (securitizing actor), on what issues (existential threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (that is, what explains when securitization is successful)" (Buzan, B. Waever, O. and De Wilde, J., 1998, p. 32). Therefore, CS relies on a two-stage process of securitization to explain how and when an issue is to be perceived and acted upon as an existential threat to security. First, the representation of certain issues, persons, or entities as existential threats to referent objects. The second stage is that securitization is accomplished just when the securitizing actor succeeds in convincing a relevant audience that the represented referent object is existentially threatened. Only then can extraordinary measures be imposed (Emmers, 2013, pp. 133-134). Moreover, this study uses the term desecuritizing. Desecuritizing a problem merely means that it is brought to low politics for public discussion so that the government may formulate its policies accordingly. It does not imply that the threat no longer exists (Shipoli, 2018, p. 72). However, we have also used the term partial desecuritizing actor in the article to mean that an actor simultaneously attempts to securitize someone and desecuritize someone else (Austin & Beaulieu-Brossard, 2017, pp. 1-2).

In the following chapter, we are going through the speeches of the Presidents. From the speeches we will bring out the issues that have been taken very seriously, illustrated by its illusions, tried to motivate the audience through historical narratives, and repeated the same thing over and over again in different speeches.

Examining President Bush's Speeches as a Securitizing Actor

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush took unprecedented steps to protect the homeland and create a world free from terrorism. For the present study, some of President Bush's key speeches at home and abroad have been selected to gain a clear understanding of the securitized issues. Each statement is first examined from the point of view of securitization, the reference object and existential threat are tried to be determined, and finally, comments are presented in the context of the current study.

Initial Identification of Referent Objects and Existential Threats

Immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush addressed the nation in his Oval Office in Washington, DC. He distinguished the three primary elements as *American citizens*, the *American way of life*, and *freedom* as the referent objects (Bush, 2001, p. 57). He stressed that terrorists can destroy the foundation of a tall building, but not the foundation of America. He mentioned that the USA is a symbol of freedom and opportunity around the world as the reason behind targeting *America* and its *lifestyle*. He expressed his determination not only to fight the terrorists but also to those who harbor the terrorists.

Although his speech covered maintaining the unity of citizens to deal with the new challenge, it seemed like *an attempt to hide the failure of the security forces, especially in preventing the second attack*. He claimed that with his strong military, his government was executing emergency response plans; however, it could not detect the next attack that came to the second tower after 17 minutes. In his introductory speech, he emphasized that terrorists are not only attacking American citizens but also attacking the *American way of life* and *freedom*. To understand the goals and objectives of the war on terrorism, these two ideas are essential because they are commonly mentioned in speeches and policy writings. This brief address makes clear that America, its people, its way of life, and its freedom are facing existential dangers from terrorists and their safe harbors. Here the referent objects are *America, American citizens, the American lifestyle,* and *freedom.*

Indirect Disclosure of Existential Threats

President Bush devised the term national determination in his first official address to the joint session of the 107th Congress on September 20, 2001,

coining it in his own words: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done" (Bush, 2001, p. 65). In his speech, the President very carefully and distinctly defined terrorists and al-Qaeda so that the peace-loving Muslim community would not become a target, and said, "Americans ask: who is attacking our country? The evidence we gathered points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as Al Qaeda." According to him, the purpose of Al Qaeda is not to make money; their goal is to recreate the world and impose their radical beliefs on people everywhere. In his speech, he stated that the terrorists practiced a form of Islamic extremism that was rejected by the vast majority of Muslim scholars and Muslim clerics – a fringe movement that perverted the peaceful teachings of Islam (Bush, 2001, pp. 66-67).

Initially, Bush determined that the direction of the terrorists was to kill Christians, Jews, and all Americans. Though his words to describe the terrorists and the state of the Taliban regime were appropriate, the audience understood that they—along with all other Americans, Jews, and Christians—were victims and referent objects and that the terrorists who pose the greatest threat to the world are individuals who have been recruited from Muslim communities across the globe. He further underlined that a radical terrorist network and every nation that supports it are America's real enemies, not his Muslim or Arab allies (Bush, 2001, p. 68). Although the above words spoken by the President sound good, we see that he gave the message to non-Muslims to be cautious towards Muslims. However, his remarks about the Taliban regime's extreme Islamic practices conveyed a different message about Islam to the audience. He said, *we respect your belief*, and thus formed the concept of *we and you*. With the message received, a non-Muslim citizen may have a different perspective towards another Muslim neighbor.

Attempting to Create a Threat Image in the United Nations

On November 10, 2001, President Bush, addressing the United Nations General Assembly, compared the terror incident to the Second World War incident, saying that the evil had returned and the cause was renewed. He says that this evil is harming humanity, not people, and that it must be met early, decisively, and collectively (Bush, 2001, pp. 83-84). This speech was an attempt at intimidation in public. Certain phrases have the power to foster an atmosphere in which there are grounds for everyone to believe that someone is guilty or among the guilty. In this speech, Mr. President said, "And the

people of my country will remember those who plotted against us. We learn their names. We're coming to know their faces." (Bush, 2001, p. 84). All the terrorists found are Muslims, and thousands of Muslims in America have names similar to theirs. Such words could alter people's perspectives and cause them to act differently toward a particular group. The audience began to perceive *names* and *faces* as existential threats as they were brought up more and more. Thus, following 9/11, we saw hundreds of hate crimes committed against Muslim communities and individuals who resembled Muslims based solely on their names, Islamic attire, or facial features.

Description of the Taliban's brutality was also an attempt to create a radical image. Even though the enduring freedom operations against the Taliban were carried out, it seems that the goal was to present an alternative viewpoint while detailing their horrific actions in detail during speeches. These statements of the president "They (Afghan Women) are beaten for wearing very thin socks and men are imprisoned for missing prayer meetings" (Bush, 2001, p. 86) may lead the audience to think that *the women who wear thick socks or the men who regularly go to the mosque for prayers* contain the belief of fundamentalist ideology of terrorists.

Making the Audiences Live in Fear by Introducing the Enemies

On September 5, 2006, President Bush began his speech on "The Global War on Terrorism: The Enemy in His Own Words" by remembering 9/11. He said terrorists perpetrate outbreaks of violence through video and audio recordings, letters, leaflets posted on websites, and other documents (Bush, 2006, p. 395). Additionally, he claimed that these documents had given him a comprehensive grasp of the goals, ideologies, plans, and tactics of enemies to undermine America. Bush asserted that he took the terrorists' statements seriously and he understood their goals from what they said.

This speech by a securitizing actor was crucial to understanding referent objects and existential threats. We can analyze this conversation with a few points. *Initially*, it appears that the securitizing actor is eager to share information about the beliefs and ways of life of terrorists. He claimed to have understood the enemy's *mindset, ideology, goals,* and *tactics*, using quotes from the terrorists. However, no one questions how he obtained the terrorists' confessions. *It was never questioned whether it happened in a torture cell or in front of a judge in court*. *Second*, to highlight the danger and brutality of terrorists, he employed technical terms and expressions that inaccurately depicted the glorious past of the Muslim Caliphate. He described the terrorists as wanting to create a caliphate and used the terms Sunni extremism and

caliphate to characterize them. He purposefully depicts the *caliphate* as *an Islamic totalitarian empire from Southeast Asia to the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe, encompassing all current and former Muslim lands*. His use of the terms "a totalitarian Islamic empire" and "covering all existing and former Muslim lands" informs audiences that this empire is similar to the Ottoman Empire, even though he understands that such a caliphate is impossible in the current world order. *Third*, to highlight the Taliban's and Afghanistan's positions, he stated that *women are beaten if they are not covered up*, and *men are beaten if they do not attend mosque prayers*. The audience's perception of Muslim women and men who wear veils and typically attend mosques for prayer in American society is negatively impacted by this message. *Fourth*, he cautioned the audience not to believe any propaganda against his administration by displaying a letter that Bin Laden had written to Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban. He persuades the audience that any accusations made by Muslims against the Bush administration regarding the Patriot Act's implementation—which infringes upon fundamental human rights—may be the product of al-Qaeda propaganda. *Fifth*, the President had progressively shifted the focus of his speech to raise concerns about Muslim Americans living in the United States by mentioning that Al Qaeda *recruits and trains new terrorists virtually via the Internet.* His declaration that some were raised and educated in Western nations before being radicalized by Islamists only served to confirm this suspicion.

President Obama's Discourses: The Security Politics of Administration

The Obama administration took great care to steer clear of religious interpretations of 9/11, discarding the term *war on terror* and characterizing the US war as being against al-Qaeda rather than Islamic extremism or Muslim terrorists. Nevertheless, the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, which permits the indefinite detention of US citizens, was *not vetoed* by President Obama. Despite his declaration that he signed with *serious reservations*, some of his statements will be examined below to examine his policies.

A Bold Step to Achieve Equality among Citizens

On July 27, 2004, while still a senator, Mr. Obama delivered his famous Keynote Address to the Democratic National Convention, entitled "The Audacity of Hope.". Taking the theme of *the audacity of hope*, it was seen that

Obama created an atmosphere of hope of belonging among all types of citizens (Friedman, p. 86).

As an actor, Obama seems to have taken this situation as a chance to unite the nation with widespread support. He has also reminded the audience of the importance of America. To convey the message of equality, he intended to remind them of the founding principles of the United States, which have been recognized for two centuries and state that every person is created equal and has the unalienable right to pursue life, freedom, and happiness. Since he wasn't President, he wanted to draw attention to the general public's melancholy to inspire hope for the future. And this is what he meant when he said the audacity of hope.

Declaration of the Patriot Act a Threat to the Freedom and Security of its Citizens

In his speech on the PATRIOT ACT on December 15, 2005, Senator Obama expressed concern that while it was necessary to arm law enforcement agencies with the means to apprehend terrorists both inside American borders and abroad, he was also worried that this would allow terrorists to take advantage of legal loopholes to carry out attacks that might prove to be even more deadly than the ones that occurred on September 11, 2001. (Obama, Senate Floor Speech on the PATRIOT Act , 2005, p. 1).

Shortly after the Patriot Act was enacted, people of all backgrounds were worried that it threatened to violate some of the most precious rights in the United States. Obama vehemently opposed the legislation because it permitted law enforcement to infringe upon citizens' fundamental human rights. While securitization theory *recognizes that a specific policy must be implemented immediately to curb the development of the unprecedented threat*, Obama's opposition to this strategy can be referred to as partial desecuritization.

Additionally, he challenged the rule stating that anyone seeking legal assistance must notify the FBI of their decision, claiming that no other area of law imposes such a requirement. He has also demonstrated that if the government chooses to search every private record or document in the library through reading books, making phone calls, sending emails, etc., there is no legal avenue for anyone to challenge this decision in court. He referred to terrorists as a significant menace to humanity, but he worries that battling them with a law that infringes on fundamental liberties is a far greater danger. Due to this, we consider him to be a partial desecuritizing actor.

Avoidance of Exceptional Measures despite Securitizing Terrorists

On May 21, 2009, President Obama began his speech on American Values and National Security with the economic crisis and two wars. He emphasized that the efforts America was making would not last long without promoting the *most fundamental values*, such as the *Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights*. They are the *foundation of freedom and justice* in the country and a shining light to all who seek *freedom, justice, equality and dignity* around the world (Obama, Speech on American Values and National Security, 2009, p. 2).

President Obama discussed the threat posed by extreme ideologies to his people as well as the technology that terrorists could use to cause significant harm to Americans. Al-Qaeda has been mentioned as an existential threat. However, he chose to create new alliances and rekindle diplomacy rather than enacting exceptional measures to fight them. Using the terminology "*change*" he said that America needed to show its values and resilient institutions rather than a hateful ideology (Obama, Speech on American Values and National Security, 2009, p. 3).

Another example of *change* in the Obama administration was its refusal to torture, and the use of brutal methods such as *so-called interrogation techniques,* and *pressurized water interrogations, in the Guantanamo Bay prison*. Obama spoke of terrorist ideology as a threat, but we saw that *he refused to take extraordinary measures to deal with them*, preferring to use existing political and legal processes. He said that the torture methods serve as a recruitment tool for terrorists and increase the terrorists' will to fight America.

Strengthening the Broken Relationship with the Muslim World

On June 4, 2009, Barack Obama gave *Selam* saying "Assalamualaikum" at Cairo University, mentioning that he brought peace greetings from his country's Muslim communities in hopes of a New Beginning. He talked about contemporary tensions between the US and Muslims around the world. He stressed that the change brought about by *modernity* and *globalization* has led many Muslims to *view the West as hostile to Islamic traditions*. Violent extremists exploited these tensions in a small but strong minority of Muslims. The attacks of 9/11 and the continued violence of these extremists have led some in America to inevitably view Islam as an enemy not only of America and Western countries but of human rights too (Obama, A New Beginning: Speech at Cairo University, 2009, p. 1).

This masterpiece speech can be analyzed from several angles. Since many of the audience were Muslims, before giving *Selam*, he mentioned that he carried *Selam* for them on behalf of American Muslim citizens. On the one hand, he sent the message to the Muslim world that Obama has not forgotten the Muslim identity of his ancestors. On the other hand, since he gave Salam on behalf of America's Muslim citizens and not on his own, *he did not give other citizens in America a chance to ask questions about Obama's identity.* Talking about the Qur'an, reciting the verses of the Qur'an, and talking about the Muslim Americans elected to the Congress who took an oath by the Qur'an was a very positive impression towards this goal. We have also seen that Islam is claimed to be a part of America by describing the socio-economic status of America's Muslims, the number of mosques in America, and the right of women to wear Hijabs.

By citing al-Qaeda and the Taliban as violent extremists, he stated that the war against them continues. He promised to remove American troops from Iraq. He also gave Iran an opportunity by saying if Iran complies with its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power (Obama, A New Beginning: Speech at Cairo University, 2009, p. 9). The obligation on Western countries to refrain from preventing Muslim citizens from practicing religion was a groundbreaking decision on religious freedom. Analyzing all the above points, we can say that Obama went into a normalization process where he wanted to combat terrorist threats with general political measures.

Critical Evaluation

Since it was made clear at the beginning of the paper that the purpose of the study is to find referent objects and existential threats from both the President's speeches, it is necessary to discuss some issues from a critical point of view in light of the above statements.

President Bush's speech emphasized from the outset that American citizens, the American way of life, and their freedom must be protected. In particular, he believed that the terrorist attacks were not only on the United States, but also on American citizens, and especially on American lifestyles. The reason for repeatedly referring to the US lifestyle, in particular, as a referent object is that it serves two purposes.

Firstly, it gives a clear message to the audience about the real motives of the terrorists who attacked the Twin Towers, and *secondly*, it identifies those as "others" who do not follow the so-called conventional Western/American

way of life. That is why, from his other speeches, when he was discussing the way of life of terrorists and the way they dress, the audience could easily understand that some of their neighboring people nurture the thoughts of terrorists. Although he never referred to American Muslims as terrorists in his speeches, the conservative lifestyle of American Muslims has been presented as an indirect threat to American non-Muslim citizens throughout the speeches. He also indirectly added conservative Muslim families to the list of suspects. Many Muslim families living in the United States, while fully respecting American law, seek to abide by the rules and regulations of Islamic law. He further fueled anti-Muslim sentiment in society by presenting the names of the terrorists and information about their higher education from various American universities to the audience. His audience quickly grasped the ideas of the civilizational war that were deeply embedded in their souls when he used the phrases *Civilizational War* and *Ideological Struggle* (Simons, 2010, p. 394). They would want to protect themselves from people who misrepresent Islam as well as Islam itself. We assert this based on the "total speech act situation," which is the prerequisite for the speech act's success. It is dependent upon the speaker's suitability and authority as well as the situation in which the speech is being delivered. For instance, the speech's setting—whether it occurs before or after a significant occasion. Put another way, the situation surrounding the speech act as a whole has more to do with the exterior sociological context than with the internal grammar of the speech (Balzacq T. , 2015, p. 5).

It would not be an exaggeration to say that President Bush did not just want to give the message to the audience that the referent objects are America, the American people, American friends, the American way of life, and freedom, and the existential threats are the terrorists and the terrorist states. He would rather give some more information that the audience could clearly understand in the light of contemporary perspectives and past events. For this reason, no matter how much Muslims are officially called friends, it has become normal for other citizens to view Muslims in a negative light. In support of this claim, the research of Eroukhmanoff is noteworthy, who uses John Searle's analysis in her article to highlight the steps of indirect securitization through indirect speech acts (Eroukhmanoff, 2018, p. 15). She argued in her research that although the President said, "Islam and America are not exclusive," he also meant, "securitizing Islam is inevitable in times of war," which the audience understood because they were familiar with the President's past and could draw conclusions from it (Eroukhmanoff, 2018, p. 15).

President Obama, since he was a senator, was determined to make people of all classes, professions, religions, races, and ethnic groups in America think only as Americans, not differently. Criticizing the Bush administration's War on Terror policy, he said that the implementation of the Patriot Act destroys civil liberties. By uttering such words, he had tried to get his audience out of the frightening situation. He also said he would work to end the bad politics of Bush that pitted one against another, and the Democrats against the Republicans. Unlike a securitizing actor, we found him as an actor, who appealed to all social, religious, and racial groups separately and evoked a "we" feeling in the audience.

Deliberately he talked about the *challenges* instead of *threats* which is a tactical attempt to dissuade the audience, which is indeed a desecuritizing effort. Throughout his tenure, he promoted the term *change* by which he intended to make a mental change in his citizens toward the traditions. He highlighted the courage and strength of American soldiers rather than portraying terrorists as menacing. He presented terrorists not as monsters to be kept in cages but as criminals to be brought to justice through trial. This attempt to reassure the audience, to bring them out of the atmosphere of fear, can never be a movement of a securitizing actor, rather it can be called a transformation from security politics to normal politics.

Notwithstanding, looking at Obama's actions, it is possible to see a lot of continuity with Bush. The examples are the continuation of the War on Terror with increasing armed drone attacks, the inability to close Guantanamo, the reinforcement of troops to Afghanistan, and the unquestioned execution of Bin Laden. Given all this, it seems impossible to agree with the idea that Obama is a de-securitizing or partial de-securitizing actor. At this point, the study includes, in the following analysis, the issues in which Obama's rhetoric and actions do not conflict.

First, it is true that within two days of being sworn in as president, Obama signed an executive order that severely outlawed the torture that was authorized under President Bush (Zenko, 2016). However, it is undeniable that while President Bush authorized approximately 50 drone attacks that resulted in 296 terrorists and 195 civilian deaths in Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia, Obama did authorize 506 drone attacks since coming to power, resulting in a total of 3,040 terrorist and 391 civilian deaths (Zenko, 2016; Rohde, 2012). In keeping with the context of the present study, the Presidential speeches have been considered the primary data. Only four public speeches of each President were selected using the non-probability judgmental or purposive sampling technique. In addition, reliable sources were used to collect data on hate crimes within the United States. The purpose behind all this is to try to analyze

whether the public speeches of the presidents and their authorized actions have any effect on the hate crimes that took place inside America.

In the international context, any action taken in the war against terrorism, especially the unilateral use of force to suppress terrorism within another state, has been applied by the United States for a long time. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans took a very different approach to implementing this policy. We have seen that President Bush has conducted more ground operations in various parts of the world to combat terrorism; while President Obama has preferred more drone operations in the air without putting the military at risk (Purkiss & Serle, 2017; Rohde, 2012). We have identified Obama as a partial desecuritizing actor because, despite his attacks being severe on the outside of the United States, there was no attempt throughout his speeches to identify any particular group living inside the United States as a threat. We claim this because he has been very cautious in his speeches. In his remarks on drone policy, he explained how the withdrawal of US forces from multiple nations had left space for safer and more effective drone operations intended to crush alleged terrorism there (Obama's Speech on Drone Policy, 2013). Furthermore, he was circumspect in his remarks on the terrorists operating in the USA, which prevents any religious group from attacking another: "And finally, we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States. Whether it's a shooter at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, a plane flying into a building in Texas, or the extremists who killed 168 people at the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, America has confronted many forms of violent extremism in our history" (Obama's Speech on Drone Policy, 2013). On the other hand, Bush's speeches, directly or indirectly, conveyed a message to the citizens that the enemy was all around them. And they could be attacked by that enemy at any moment. By describing their names and their lifestyles, he was able to make the enemies of the future clearer. This is essentially the role of a securitizing actor.

Obama has always made negative comments about Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prisons. He has long spoken of prolonged detention at Guantanamo Bay, torture, sleep deprivation, stress, horrific beatings, and other forms of torture. He took action to close the facility within a year shortly after being elected president by releasing Executive Order 13492 on January 22, 2009 (Obama B. H., 2009). Congress, however, objected to this plan and would not fund the detainees' transfer from Guantanamo to US territory because closing the detention facility raised many legal and security concerns, such as which laws to enact, how to prosecute the detainees in the US, and whether or not released prisoners would endanger US security (Telatar, 2014, p. 47). The aforementioned instruction allowed for the return of Guantanamo

detainees to their home countries or to a third country in a manner that aligns with legal requirements, US national security interests, and foreign policy objectives. On the website Closeguantanamo.org, 615 out of 779 have either been released or moved, with 83 of those releases occurring since Obama's inauguration (Carless, 2014). In December 2013, Obama signed the Defense Bill, hastening the closure of detention centers and simplifying the process of transferring inmates to other countries (RT, 2013). Additionally, the Obama administration prohibited the use of any form of harsh interrogation techniques, like as waterboarding, which gives the prisoner the sense that they are drowning, in the CIA's secret prisons that were established outside of US territory and were immune from US law (Restad, 2012). But in reality, he was impotent to close the jail in his lifetime. Because of this, a sizable portion of the liberal base that backed him and administration personnel have criticized President Obama (Bruck, 2016). The consensus was that President Obama intended to halt it but couldn't do so, and he held Congress accountable for his shortcomings. Long-running verbal sparring, particularly with the Pentagon, and contentious discussions that went beyond Obama's single choice (Bruck, 2016). Even a White House official said "We wanted to get it closed—but we didn't want a political firestorm. A large part of it was the Defense Department. They were against closing it then, and they still are" (Bruck, 2016).

The reason for the increase in troops in Afghanistan was the lessons learned from Iraq. According to Obama, the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq has led to the emergence of a terrorist organization called IS. That is why he changed the policy and increased the number of troops in Afghanistan (Landler, 2017; Bowman & Liasson, 2009). Moreover, the extrajudicial killing of bin Laden was in his view the destruction of the world's greatest terrorist responsible for the attack on the Twin Towers (Lehrer, 2011). He was able to create such a negative atmosphere about Bin Laden throughout America and around the world that few people questioned it even though it was an extrajudicial killing (McCrisken, 2014, p. 19).

After considering the aforementioned points, we have determined that, from a domestic American standpoint, President Obama is a partial desecuritizing actor. Although he has used sophisticated tools to deal with terrorists based outside America through his actions, he has not made any such attempt to align Muslim citizens inside America with terrorists. We have presented him as a partial desecuritizing actor as he continues to attempt to de-securitize Muslim citizens inside America through his words and actions while cracking down on actual terrorists.

Conclusion

In the above discussion, the counterterrorism policies of the USA between the two different governments have been tried to make clear in the speeches of the presidents. President Obama's speeches followed a slightly different format than President Bush's, who was judged to have forcefully securitized some people, groups, and topics and polarized public opinion against them. Despite stepping up his attacks on Al Qaeda and Afghanistan, none of the American communities or individuals were singled out in his remarks for securitization. President Bush declared war on terror, calling the Taliban government a menace to humankind and insisting that it turn over to the US the terrorists behind the attacks. In addition, he claimed that al Qaeda detested Americans and highlighted al Qaeda as an existential threat. He was a securitizing actor because he portrayed terrorists' deeds, convictions, dress, and way of life in a way that made a large segment of the public hostile to followers of that specific faith who lead similar lifestyles. Despite President Obama's statement calling for a "zero-tolerance policy" against al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, no negative indications have been found against Muslims living in the United States. His speeches at home and abroad seem to attempt to restore a kind of communal harmony in the world and dispel the anti-Muslim notion of America from among the Muslim world. Obama's actions in this regard could be characterized as a partial de-securitization effort, particularly for American Muslims, and a shift in the focus of Islam and Muslim concerns from security politics to mainstream politics in the United States.

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