
Between Securitization and Desecuritization: The Shifting Discourse on the COVID-19 Pandemic in Serbia*

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has urged the political decision-makers to assess numerous factors when choosing between the options they perceive an optimal response to this global crisis. Using the theory of securitization, which claims that an issue is constituted as a security threat through the use of a specific speech act performed by the securitizing actors in order to gain support by the audience for the emergency measures, the article examines how Serbian government's decisions followed a pattern of revolving securitization and desecuritization of the COVID-19 pandemic in their response to the crisis. Serbian government's initial approach of downplaying the threat was immediately followed by the state of emergency which lasted until the June 2020 parliamentary elections' campaign. The shifts between the securitization and desecuritization processes lasted until the unsuccessful securitizing move in July demotivated the government from further attempts to securitize the issue out of fear of the audience's reaction. The authors argue that the constant change of the security discourse on the issue caused a loss of the authority possessed by the securitizers, induced a state of confusion among the citizens (audience), and was primarily shaped by the context of potential political implications it can bring, particularly in relation to the parliamentary elections of 2020.

Keywords: securitization, desecuritization, COVID-19, pandemic, Serbia

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1. Introduction

The unprecedented upheaval that affected every aspect of life brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic required a response from states, the actors people most usually expect to manage, direct and control various issues, both predictable and unpredictable ones. As Jović points out, the COVID-19 pandemic created a sort of social laboratory, an opportunity to ascertain what the state was and how powerful or powerless it could be in facing a crisis it might have not been able to adequately respond to (Jović, 2020: 473).

Viewed from the angle of security studies, the need to introduce new emergency measures that disrupt the normal procedures, proposed by authority figures on the basis of the rise of a new existential threat, recommends securitization theory as an appropriate framework for analyzing the effects of the pandemic and different reactions it produced. Securitization theory claims that an issue is constituted as a security threat through the use of a specific speech act performed by the securitizing actors, usually elites, in order to gain support from the audience for the emergency measures. Accordingly, the COVID-19 pandemic satisfied the criteria of an existential threat through its sudden impact and the danger it presented for the survival of several referent objects deemed important by the audience. The governments determined that regular practices were not suitable enough as a response and attempted to present it as exceptional security case that required measures falling outside of the scope of standardized procedures, in this case those regarding the health risks for the population.

However, the reactions by different states varied on the basis of diverse historical, cultural, political, economic, climate and geographical factors. The role of securitization in these responses by specific states has been analyzed (Molnár, Takács, & Jakusné Harnos, 2020; Vankovska, 2020; Ramadhan, 2020). In the case of Serbia, securitization of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was closely followed by the reverse process of desecuritization. This repeated several times, creating a revolving loop, which was mainly influenced by political developments in the country, the most important being the parliamentary elections held in June. Accordingly, the article focuses on the year 2020, in an attempt to trace effects and

causes of this loop of securitization and desecuritization, which was not present in the same way in the later period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The constant change of the security discourse on the issue throughout the year caused the loss of the authority possessed by the securitizers, induced a state of confusion among the citizens (audience), and was primarily shaped by the context of potential political implications it could bring, particularly in relation to the parliamentary elections of 2020. Thus, even though securitization of COVID-19 by the state was a logical reaction, one that was not exclusive to Serbia, this shifting discourse whose changes were not emanating from the evolving circumstances produced specific consequences that affected its success in the second part of the year.

The article is divided into two parts. The first part explains the central concepts of the securitization theory and its main critiques, which contributed to its further evolution or pointed out some of its major flaws. The second part deals with the securitization and desecuritization of the COVID-19 pandemic in Serbia in 2020. First the timeline of the events is offered, followed by an analysis of specific characteristics stemming from the constant switching between securitization and desecuritization attempts.

2. Securitization Theory

The securitization theory emerged as one of the defining contributions to the security studies by the Copenhagen School.¹ This group of scholars, gathered around authors such as Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, proposed and developed in their works the specific way to research how security was understood, how it could be defined and how it functioned. Besides introducing a new and influential framework for analyzing security and its many facets, it was also subjected to different types of critiques, some aiming to refine the theory and make it more applicable, and others

¹ The term Copenhagen School, as is often the case, was not a name that originated from the scholars for whom it could be said to have belonged to it. Instead, it was introduced by an author analyzing their work and attempting to point out their common ideas and approaches. In this case, the term was coined by Bill McSweeney in his book review article "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School" (1996).

that were more dismissive of its usefulness or, its normative foundations.

In its core form, the securitization theory is based on the speech act theory introduced by J. L. Austin (1962) and refined by John Searle (1979). It relies on the performative function of language and its ability to shape reality, create something new through its application, and not just describe the world as it is. Thus, the often-quoted description made by Waever, of security as a speech act lies at the center of the securitization theory in its original form: “security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it, something is done (as in betting, giving a promise, naming a ship)” (Waever, 1993: 7). Accordingly, the securitization is the process by which an issue is constituted as a matter of security. More specifically, by framing some issue as a (existential) threat to a particular referent object, the securitizing actor attempts to gain support from the audience to enact special measures to address the said issue (Nedić & Mandić, 2023: 158). From this definition, several key elements of securitization can be identified: referent object, threat, securitizing actors, securitizing move, special measures, functional actors, and audience.

Referent object lies at the center of securitization; it is the entity that is worth protecting and keeping. In the traditional understanding of security, the referent object is the state and its survival against the military threats presented by other states. This fundamentally realist approach provides the foundation for the expansion of the concept of security from the military sector to other sectors, and introduces corresponding referent objects for each of them. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde identify four additional ones: the political sector, where the referent object is the constituting principle of sovereignty or ideology of the state; the economic sector, where the most common referent object is the global market itself, although the national economies or even particular specific firms could also be designated as such; the societal sector with large-scale collective identities, such as nations or religions, as its referent object; the environmental sector with its referent object ranging from individual species or types of habitat to the whole biosphere (Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998: 22–23).

Whichever sector the referent object belongs to, securitization relies on the successful presentation of the existence of an existential threat endangering it. Again, stemming from the military sector, their main characteristic is swift emergence and ability to “undercut the political order within a state and thereby ‘alter the premises for all other questions’” (Waever 1993: 5). Emergency measures required to curb these threats, which include “actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure”, are proposed by securitizing actors. They are usually speaking from a position of formal authority that provides them with the means and opportunities to conduct the measures if they are approved by the audience. In other words: “successful securitization is not decided by the securitizer but by the audience of the security speech act” (Buzan et al., 1998: 31). Thus, the audience plays a crucial role, although it remains rather underdeveloped as a concept, an important criticism that will be further elaborated below. Another important element are functional actors, who, while not performing securitization by themselves, play an important role to enable or hinder it.

However, not every securitizing move, i.e., a speech act aimed at securitizing a certain issue, succeeds. As Waever (1993: 12) says: “the most interesting about a speech act is that it might fail”. Every speech act consists of an explanation of what is necessary in order to address the threat, but also what will happen if the required measures are not taken. Its positive outcome is a possibility, not a certainty. Authors propose three facilitating conditions that affect the result of a securitizing move: adherence to the grammar of security, social capital of actors, and features of the alleged threat. Taken together, these three facilitating conditions reinforce the point that securitization is an intersubjective process that “rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* the subjects” (Buzan et al., 1998: 31). On the other hand, while the first of these conditions is internal, as it relates to the characteristics of the speech act itself, the second and the third are external, as they stem from the context in which the speech act is performed.

Rising from this brief presentation of the core concepts of the securitization theory is one final point. The securitization is a process of taking issues outside of normal field of politics,

where it is handled through the standard procedures of the political process, to the heightened sphere of security, a sphere above politics, reserved for urgent issues requiring immediate response and leaving less room for debate and differing opinions. In a sense, securitization leads to a depoliticization of an issue. Conversely, the opposite process of desecuritization is a form of politicization (Balzacq, 2019: 11). It is based on moving an issue from the high-tension field of security to the political field, where opinions, contestation, different attitudes and proposed solutions are argued and decided upon. Although members of the Copenhagen School show normative preference for desecuritization, the particularities of the process are not elaborated in detail. This is one of the aspects that was further developed in some of the more constructive critiques of the original securitization theory, as it will be shown in the next section.

2.1. *Critiques of the Securitization Theory*

Some of the most potent criticism aimed at the securitization theory addresses the concept of audience. Buzan et al. (1998: 41) define it as “those the securitizing act attempts to convince to accept exceptional procedures because of the specific security nature of some issue”. However, they do not develop it much further. In an attempt to enhance the audience concept, Balzacq introduces two types of support: moral and formal. The first relates to the general, more tacit support for an action, which is necessary but usually not sufficient. The second is understood as a direct support to the act given by formal institutions, or from other positions of authority (Balzacq, 2005: 184–185). The importance of audience links to the issue of internal or external focal point of securitization or, in Balzacq’s terms, the distinction between the philosophical and sociological views: “for the philosophical view, the audience is a formal-given-category, which is often poised in a receptive mode. The sociological view emphasizes, by contrast, the mutual constitution of securitizing actors and audiences” (Balzacq, 2011: 2). The philosophical view of securitization positions the speech act of securitizers as crucial and constitutive in itself, reshaping the context by its performative power, while the sociological view identifies the key

elements for the successful securitization in a wider social context and interrelations between the actor and the audience.

The second important strand of criticism stems from the normative implications of the theory as it is envisioned by the Copenhagen School. For example, McDonald points out how the securitization theory centers on the dominant actors, leaders with authority and ability to extract resources and gather general support for their proposals. He stresses that “the focus only on dominant voices and their designation of security and threat is normatively problematic, contributing to the silencing of marginal voices and ignoring the ways in which such actors have attempted precisely to contest these security constructions” (McDonald, 2008: 574). One clear example of this issue is given by Hansen, who analyzes gender aspects of securitization and identifies two problems. The first is the “security as silence” that occurs when insecurity cannot be voiced. The second, “subsuming security”, arises because gendered security problems are connected with other aspects of the subject’s identity, and are usually treated as individual and secondary security problems (Hansen, 2000: 287). On the other hand, Floyd attempts to determine when a securitization is justifiable. She proposes three criteria to determine the moral rightness of securitization: there must be an objective existential threat, the referent object of security must be morally legitimate, and the security response must be appropriate to the threat in question (Floyd, 2011: 428).

The issue of just securitization leads to the concept of desecuritization. Aradau argues that “being intrinsically linked with securitization as its mirror image, desecuritization suffers from the same contradictions that plague the concept of securitization” (Aradau, 2004: 389). Relying on the ideas stemming from critical security studies, she presents how desecuritization can be strengthened through connection with the idea of emancipation. Further development of the desecuritization concept is given by Hansen, who makes a distinction between four different types of desecuritization:

“Change through stabilization is when an issue is cast in terms other than security, but where the larger conflict still looms; replacement is when an issue is removed from the securitized, while another securitization takes its place;

rearticulation is when an issue is moved from the securitized to the politicized due to a resolution of the threats and dangers, that underpinned the original securitization; and silencing is when desecuritisation takes the form of a depoliticisation, which marginalizes potentially insecure subjects” (Hansen, 2012: 529).

Finally, Balzacq attempts to transcend the need to situate securitization and desecuritization on the axis between politics and security. He offers an alternative understanding of securitization as “politics of the extraordinary”. In this reading of the concept “securitization does not give vent to exceptional procedural rules that lie beyond politics [but] intensifies the political saliency of public problems” (Balzacq, 2019: 13), thus strengthening the connections between security and politics. Conversely, desecuritization does not lead from the domain of security back to the domain of politics, since the distinction between the two is not precise and their boundaries are much less strictly defined. He envisions securitization as a specific regime of practices, whose components are connected through the concept of legitimacy. Legitimacy has three aspects: legality, justification, and consent. Legality is based on the fact that in part the legitimacy of the process relies on the legal rules and procedures. But, “the support of the public is acquired through justificatory processes and not exclusively from the legality of security practices” and thus depends on the leaders’ ability to persuade the public (Balzacq, 2019: 15). Finally, consent gives the elites the right to develop new rules and obligations for the public, while for the public it means the duty to comply to the power granted to the elites. It has both a moral and a symbolic dimension:

“On the one hand, when people conduct themselves in accordance with the regime of practices established thanks to deontic powers, they contribute to the maintenance of normative consent toward those practices. This is the moral aspect of consent. On the other hand, actions that manifest consent are carried out in public, which means that third parties, whether acting in the same way or not, can indeed testify that the actors conform to prescribed regimes of practices. This is the symbolic aspect of consent” (Balzacq, 2019: 16).

3. Securitization and Desecuritization of COVID-19 in Serbia in 2020

3.1. *Key Breaking Points And Outcomes of COVID-19 (De)Securitization in 2020*

The COVID-19 crisis in Serbia started in February 2020, much like in the rest of the world, as the disease started to spread on the European continent. First signs of precaution followed after Italy was struck by the virus in the same month. As the news of the increasing number of cases in Italy started to show up in Serbian media, it was evident that something had to be done (Srna, 2020; Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2020a). The first significant breaking point in Serbia was the joint press conference of Serbian government officials, led by the president Aleksandar Vučić and well-renowned Serbian medical doctors. The overarching atmosphere of the press conference was one of relaxing the situation. From security studies angle it can be said that the goal of the conference was to silence the looming issue in front of the wider public. Doctor Branimir Nestorović, a pediatric pulmonologist and one of the publicly most popular doctors in the country, addressed the public after a meeting with president Aleksandar Vučić about the coronavirus and stated “that there is no reason to panic, because more people are dying today from many other diseases in Serbia” (Novosti, 2020). Amongst other statements, more or less in the same manner, doctor Nestorović also said that he “can’t believe that people who survived sanctions, bombing, all kinds of harassment, were afraid of the most ridiculous virus in the history of mankind” (Novosti, 2020). These were first, preventive desecuritization narratives on COVID-19. However, after this conference the situation with COVID-19 in Serbia rapidly worsened.

The beginning of March 2020 marked the start of the COVID-19 epidemic in Serbia. The first case was registered on March 6 (BBC, 2020a). Only a few days later, the government formed a Crisis HQ which consisted of state officials and experts from a wide range of important fields for combating the growing issues that surrounded the whole new reality regarding coronavirus (Vlada Republike Srbije, 2020). A state of emergency was declared and imposed on March 15. This proclamation included few

measures that the government and the Crisis HQ thought were necessary for combating the disease: the work of preschool, school and higher education institutions was suspended and online teaching was introduced; working from home was recommended; self-isolation was suggested for everyone, meaning there would be no public gatherings; people over 65 were advised not to go outside; the working hours of cafes and restaurants were shortened and the number of people who could stay in them was limited; the borders were closed; for travelers from abroad, 14-day self-isolation was introduced, or 28-day, if they came from higher risk areas; public transport in Belgrade stopped working; a curfew was introduced on March 18 (Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2020b).

The public discourse on the crisis escalated even further afterwards. One of the most significant breaking points was the SMS which was sent to citizens during the ongoing lockdown. The message contained the following: "The situation is dramatic. We are approaching the scenario from Italy and Spain. Please stay at home" (Đurović, 2020). In that period the Italy and Spain scenario meant that the health system would not be able to cope with the increasing number of virus cases and, consequently, the death toll would grow. So, that message created the unpleasant association among the citizens which led to, as the media reported, a certain amount of panic which was evident on social media (Đurović, 2020). April was a hard month with a large number of virus cases, strict measures and intensive lockdowns. This was the period with the biggest effect of successful securitization speech acts.

All of a sudden, the situation with the emergency measures changed with the beginning of May. Although the number of cases had not stopped increasing, the state of emergency and curfew ended on May 6 (N1, 2020a). The general stance of the government and the official experts was that life had to slowly start returning to normal, although adherence to measures such as wearing protective masks should remain (Stanković, 2020). This coincided with the upcoming parliamentary elections. They were initially supposed to happen on April 26 but were postponed due to the pandemic and the state of emergency. The rhetoric before and during the campaign for the parliamentary elections of 2020 represented the second desecuritization process in Serbia which resulted in a steady

removal of the COVID-19 topic from public and political discourse. The ruling party tried to shift the direction of the debate towards other topics, while the opposition organized protests throughout May that were mainly aimed at showing dissatisfaction with the rule of Aleksandar Vučić. Although the elections in question were parliamentary and the president did not run for reelection at the time, all political actors positioned themselves in relation to Vučić's politics. This was due to the power he had accumulated in the function of the president, enabled in part through the characteristics of the Serbian semi-presidential political system with a directly elected president (Mandić & Nedić, 2021). In the end, when the elections were held on June 21, leading parties of the opposition boycotted them. Vučić's Serbian Progressive Party again emerged victorious without any relevant alternatives on the ballot, winning 188 out of 250 seats in the Parliament (Miladinović, 2020).

This period was followed by the first unsuccessful securitization process which occurred in July 2020 and resulted in mass protests. The attempt to again raise alertness towards the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and talk about a new state of emergency, caused an unexpected response by the citizens. The first cause was the proposed closure of student dormitories which incited gathering of students and an almost immediate withdrawal of this plan at the very beginning of July (Insajder, 2020). Then, on July 7, president Vučić announced that the situation in the capital was critical. As a response, public gatherings were to be banned and curfew reinstated. This caused large and violent protests on the same evening and for the next several days (Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2020c). The government abandoned these measures, and in general, for the rest of the year, no larger securitization processes were initiated by political leaders and government officials.² The July protests showed that, while the formal support of the institutions could somewhat easily be gathered, after the constant alternating

² On the other hand, political opposition and the media not supporting President Vučić and the Serbian Progressive Party constantly pointed out the growing number of infected people and the flaws in the government's relaxed approach during the autumn and winter, thus conducting a securitizing move. However, their type of authority, relationship with the audience, and the (lack of) ability to introduce emergency measures would require a separate analysis altogether.

between securitizing and desecuritizing moves, the moral support of the general audience would be harder to get.

3.2. *The Effects of the Constant Change of the Security Discourse*

This breakdown of the timeline of securitization and desecuritization attempts during the COVID-19 pandemic in Serbia during 2020 leads to several key points. First, the constant change of rhetoric by the (de)securitizing actors, which oscillated greatly and constantly shifted in its position, significantly influenced the authority of the securitizing actors. The first attempt of desecuritization before the first case of COVID-19 was registered in Serbia, quickly succeeded with a hard securitization discourse, affected the authority of the securitizers in the perception of the public. The authority inherently held by the members of the government combined with the authority of expertise that the leading health experts and doctors possessed, was in large part lost by July when the second major attempt to securitize the issue occurred. The fact that the existential threat was portrayed in a different manner in a short period of time without qualitative changes to support this shift largely contributed to this loss of authority.

Consequently, these later attempts to securitize the COVID-19 pandemic failed, since the facilitating conditions were not met in their entirety. The grammar of security was implemented in a way that stressed the gravity of the situation, direct comparison with previous months suggested an even greater level of threat, but the authority of the securitizing actors was put in question. The important point here is that this authority was lost due to previous securitizations and desecuritizations, leading to the conclusion that the securitizers' authority is not an infinite resource, but is spent more and more by every (de)securitizing speech act. Even further, the change from securitization to desecuritization and *vice versa* leads to a faster and larger expenditure of this resource, due to the perplexity it produces. Thus, even though the pandemic was still in full swing and circumstances favored securitization, securitizing actors lacked the authority to successfully achieve it, and resulting confusion further enhanced the crisis.

Second, the loop of securitization and desecuritization shaped the reaction of the audience. It created a state of confusion among the citizens and decreased the overall level of consent for the emergency measures. The authority figures failed to create a consistent approach that would promote uniform emergency measures required to deal with the existential threat and this opened the space for the audience to perceive the issue in a variety of different ways. The lack of consistency gave strength to the facilitating actors in the form of critics of the government's approach, including both the experts in the medical field arguing for more strict measures and those promoting alternative, non-scientific views of COVID-19. Furthermore, in some cases these two types of criticism were not that clearly and easily differentiated. The legitimacy of the whole process of securitization, including the question of the existence of the existential threat, the authority of the (de) securitizing actors, and the nature and form of emergency measures was questioned. Although the legality of the measures was in a sense established, the justification for them did not have sufficient support to incite an overwhelming consent of the public.

Here, an important caveat must be noted. Even though it is stated in the previous sentence that the measures were legal, this understanding was not a universal stance. There was important and strong criticism of the state of emergency on the basis that it had not been introduced in a way prescribed by the law (Beta, 2020). Authors of this article do not favor or argue for or against this opinion, but consider the introduced measures as legal in the sense that the authority figures invoked the legal framework of the state to introduce them, and the public generally accepted them as such. Furthermore, there was no successful legal attempt to challenge the legality of the measures, as the Constitutional Court dismissed the submitted initiative (N1, 2020b). Thus, from a pragmatic standpoint, and for the purpose of this article they are considered legal. Whether that was the case or not from the perspective of the law falls outside the scope of this research.³

³ For an analysis of the conformity of this measures with the Constitution see, for example, Marinković, 2021.

Going back to the question of consent, the behavior in accordance with the introduced emergency measures has showed the interlinkage of both moral and symbolic aspects of consent. The moral aspect manifests through the behavior conforming to the measures, indicating one's support for the authorities, while the symbolic consists of demonstrating your support to third parties. The specific characteristic of the COVID-19 emergency procedures was that they required submission of securitizing actors as well, and their behavior reflected their own level of support for the introduced measures. The fact that some of the leading securitizers, including President Vučić, failed on numerous occasions to conform to the expected practices, such as wearing masks or avoiding public gatherings, and thus failing to show symbolic consent, decreased the overall moral consent of the general audience (BBC, 2020b; Mirković, 2020).

Third, the wider context of the (de)securitization processes was predominantly shaped by the political considerations, especially the parliamentary elections, eventually held on June 21. This issue loomed over all decisions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and directly influenced the rationale behind various attempts to securitize or desecuritize. This was most evident in the strong efforts by the securitizing actors in the government to desecuritize the pandemic by terminating the state of emergency and attempting to steer the political field towards a return to regular procedures in order to hold elections, at the same time pushing forward the discussion on other topics in the campaign. On the other hand, attempts to securitize the issue again almost immediately after the elections were held caused a very negative reaction by the public. The failure of those speech acts comes in large part from the fact that the audience recognized the motives behind these securitizing moves and thus remained unconvinced of the justifications presented by securitizers. The loop of securitizing and desecuritizing the same issue over a short period of time exposed the logic of the pattern. This goes to show that after a successful securitization of an issue, the reverse process of desecuritization does not lead to a return to the same political field that existed before. The political field is irrevocably transformed by securitization, and is then again transformed by desecuritization, creating a new

status quo in which the reprise of the same securitizing move cannot work anymore.

Having the presented analysis in mind, it must be pointed out that, although the authors have chosen securitization theory as a theoretical framework for the COVID-19 pandemic crisis in Serbia as an adequate analytical tool, they do not disregard other sociological approaches which attempt to describe this phenomenon, which can be compatible with our reasoning and strengthen it further, or offer opposite views and arguments. Responses to pandemics and other types of social disasters present a very complex type of situations. Therefore, securitization theory has not been applied as a strong type of causal chain explanation, but rather as a broader framework of processes, where socially constructed practices form a situation in which certain narratives prevail over others. Therefore, the authors argue that the chain of events described in this article invites an analysis from the point of view of the securitization theory as we have identified and examined a certain number of securitization and desecuritization processes which are confined by postulated theoretical and analytical framework. Still, the explanation based on securitization theory does not exclude other interpretations, either compatible or conflicting with the one presented here, of the evolution of the responses to COVID-19 and the measures introduced by the government to combat it.

4. Conclusion

Analyzing the COVID-19 pandemic through the securitization theory lens, it becomes evident that, due to its nature and widespread impact, it was securitized in many countries. In Serbia, this securitization took form of a loop of securitizing and desecuritizing moves, some successful and some not. This constant shift caused several important consequences. It showed that the change from securitization to desecuritization of an issue in a relatively short period of time expends the resource of authority that the securitizing actors possess. Taken together with some specific actions they performed, such as ignoring the introduced emergency measures while preaching to the public to adhere to them strictly, caused confusion in the public and opened the space for various

facilitating actors and their views to gain in importance and impact. The consequence was a lessened support for the emergency measures. All of this was taking place in a context of the coming parliamentary elections and the specificities of the political life in Serbia, including significant polarization between the government and the opposition. These conditions shaped the way in which the securitizers decided whether and when to securitize or desecuritize the pandemic, resulting in the periodical changes in the discourse regarding the threat that COVID-19 presented. Based on this, it can be concluded that the specific context promoted constant switches between the securitization and desecuritization, which in turn affected the authority of the securitizing actors, as well as the audience's attitude.

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