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The Securitisation of Historical Memory: Comparing German and Japanese Political
Discourse on World War II

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“On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorised assistance on it.”

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Writing a thesis on German and Japanese memory culture as a German who has had the privilege of travelling to Japan felt, at times, like a deeply personal as well as an academic undertaking. It is a subject that speaks to my longstanding love of language and communication, and to my belief in the power of the words we choose to shape how we understand the world and one another. It is a topic I came to care about greatly, and completing this work is something I am genuinely proud of.

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Abstract (English)

This thesis examines the securitisation of historical memory in political speeches, focusing on how and to what extent state leaders frame interpretations of the past as matters of security. While securitisation theory traditionally centres on future oriented threats, this study extends the framework to retrospective objects by analysing how collective memory of the Second World War is constructed as something that must be protected, preserved, or defended. It asks to what extent historical memory is securitised in political discourse and how this securitisation is discursively constructed.

Empirically, the thesis conducts a structured comparative analysis of twenty speeches delivered by Angela Merkel and Shinzō Abe in 2015, marking the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Methodologically, the study combines securitisation theory with framing analysis and applies a qualitative coding scheme capturing referent objects, threat constructions, and urgency claims, alongside problem definition, responsibility attribution, and moral evaluation. Particular attention is paid to whether memory functions as a central organising principle or as a supporting element within wider political argumentation.

The findings demonstrate that both Germany and Japan securitise historical memory, but differ significantly in extent and form. In the German case, memory is consistently embedded as a central normative foundation of political identity, with securitising moves linking remembrance to democratic continuity, moral responsibility, and the stability of the European order. In contrast, Japanese discourse employs memory more selectively and instrumentally, integrating it into arguments about contemporary security challenges, alliance politics, and institutional reform. Here, securitisation tends to be situational and policy oriented rather than constitutive of political identity.

By identifying these patterns, the thesis contributes to securitisation theory by demonstrating how security logics operate in the governance of collective memory and by showing that retrospective objects can function as referent objects of security. More broadly, it highlights how the strategic mobilisation of historical memory reshapes political discourse by privileging particular interpretations of the past and linking them to claims about present and future security.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Versicherheitlichung historischer Erinnerung in politischen Reden und analysiert, wie und in welchem Ausmass staatliche Führungspersonen Deutungen der Vergangenheit als Fragen der Sicherheit rahmen. Sie erweitert die Versicherheitlichungstheorie auf retrospektive Bezugsobjekte, indem sie zeigt, wie die kollektive Erinnerung an den Zweiten Weltkrieg als etwas konstruiert wird, das geschützt, bewahrt oder verteidigt werden muss.

Empirisch basiert die Studie auf einer strukturierten vergleichenden Analyse von zwanzig Reden von Angela Merkel und Shinzō Abe aus dem Jahr 2015. Methodisch kombiniert die Arbeit Versicherheitlichungstheorie mit Framing-Analyse und nutzt ein qualitatives Kodierschema zur Erfassung von Referenzobjekten, Bedrohungskonstruktionen und Dringlichkeitsansprüchen sowie von Problemdefinition, Verantwortungszuschreibung und moralischer Bewertung.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass sowohl Deutschland als auch Japan historische Erinnerung versicherheitlichen, sich jedoch deutlich in Ausmass und Form unterscheiden. In Deutschland fungiert Erinnerung als zentrale normative Grundlage politischer Identität und wird mit demokratischer Kontinuität, moralischer Verantwortung und der Stabilität der europäischen Ordnung verknüpft. In Japan wird Erinnerung selektiver und instrumenteller eingesetzt und in Argumente zu gegenwärtigen Sicherheitsherausforderungen, Bündnispolitik und institutionellen Reformen integriert. Versicherheitlichung ist hier stärker situativ und politikbezogen als identitätskonstitutiv.

Die Arbeit leistet einen Beitrag zur Versicherheitlichungstheorie, indem sie zeigt, dass retrospektive Objekte als Referenzobjekte von Sicherheit fungieren können und dass die strategische Mobilisierung historischer Erinnerung politische Diskurse prägt, indem sie bestimmte Deutungen der Vergangenheit privilegiert und mit Aussagen über gegenwärtige und zukünftige Sicherheit verknüpft.

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Introduction

Since the early 2000s, political leaders have shifted from using security language only in exceptional situations to employing it routinely. Issues such as terrorism, migration, public health, and climate change are now commonly framed as existential security threats. Scholars describe this development as a broad expansion of securitisation across political discourse (Sakamoto 2023 p.3). In contemporary politics, security has become a dominant language through which an ever wider range of issues is understood and governed. Questions once treated as matters of policy, identity, or social organisation are increasingly framed in terms of threat, urgency, and protection. This expansion of securitisation is particularly visible in the context of rising populism, where political actors mobilise security narratives to draw moral and political boundaries and to define what is at stake for the survival of the political community (Kurylo 2020). Security has thus shifted from an exceptional response to a routine mode of political reasoning that structures how diverse issues are understood and governed.

This broadening of securitisation has not remained confined to forward-looking concerns such as migration, terrorism, or economic instability. It has also begun to shape how political leaders speak about the past. In commemorative contexts, historical memory is increasingly constructed as something that can be endangered, distorted, or lost, and that therefore requires protection (Mälksoo 2015). This move is especially visible in moments of heightened symbolic attention, such as major historical anniversaries (Yefremenko 2022; Sierp 2025). In these settings, the past is no longer presented merely as a record of events, but as a fragile moral resource whose integrity is tied to present and future political order.

This thesis examines this phenomenon through a comparative analysis of Germany and Japan during the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015. That year marked a moment of intensified reflection in both countries, as political leaders addressed histories of mass violence, defeat, and responsibility under conditions of renewed political contestation. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered a series of speeches that linked remembrance of the Second World War to contemporary democratic responsibility. In Japan, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's commemorative interventions similarly sought to situate the war's legacy within

ongoing debates about national identity, apology, and political normalisation. In both cases, memory became a site of political work rather than passive recollection.

This development raises a fundamental conceptual puzzle. Securitisation theory was developed to explain how future-oriented threats are constructed as existential and demanding of urgent political attention (Balzacq et al. 2016). Historical memory does not fit this model easily. It is intangible, retrospective, and inherently contested. Yet in the commemorative speeches of political leaders, memory is presented as morally indispensable and politically consequential for the survival of democratic order (European Observatory on Memories 2025). Examining how political speech constructs historical memory as an existential concern, and with what political consequences, is essential for understanding the contemporary expansion of security logic. This thesis extends securitisation theory to retrospective objects and examines how security logics operate in the governance of collective memory.

The securitisation of historical memory carries significant societal and political implications. In contexts marked by populism and moral polarisation, struggles over the past are inseparable from struggles over national identity and political belonging (Agarin 2020). Constructing memory as a security issue does not merely elevate its importance but restructures the conditions of political debate by privileging certain interpretations as necessary for collective survival while marginalising alternative readings. Commemorative speeches are particularly powerful arenas in which this framing is articulated and stabilised. They combine institutional authority, ritualised settings, and moral language, allowing political leaders to articulate and normalise security claims about the past (Wodak et al. 2009). Examining these speeches therefore provides insight into how democratic societies negotiate responsibility, continuity, and belonging under political pressure.

Against this background, this thesis addresses the following research question: *To what extent and how do state leaders securitise historical memory in political speeches, and how does framing shape the meaning and political effects of this securitisation?* The question is interpretive rather than normative. It does not assess whether particular historical narratives are correct, nor does it evaluate whether memory should be securitised. Instead, it examines how security logics and framing strategies are deployed in political speech and how they structure meaning, moral obligation, and boundaries within democratic communities. Political effects are

understood in discursive terms, including processes of meaning construction, responsibility attribution, and inclusion and exclusion. The analysis further distinguishes between cases where historical memory constitutes the central organising principle of a speech and cases where it functions as a supporting element within broader political arguments.

The research question is addressed through a comparative analysis of official speeches by Angela Merkel and Shinzō Abe delivered in 2015. Germany and Japan constitute post-war democracies with highly institutionalised memory cultures, making them comparable, while differing significantly in historical experience and the politics of remembrance. This most similar systems design allows for analytical leverage by holding structural conditions constant while examining variation in how historical memory is securitised and framed. The comparison is theory-driven and focused on discursive patterns rather than on national narratives as such.

The thesis proceeds in several steps. It begins with a literature review that maps existing scholarship on securitisation, political speech, and memory politics, identifying a gap at their intersection. It then develops a conceptual framework that brings securitisation theory and framing theory into dialogue to establish the analytical tools used in the study. A background chapter situates Germany and Japan within their respective post-war memory regimes. The methodology chapter concludes by introducing a five-type typology that organises the empirical analysis. Together, these chapters prepare the ground for the empirical analysis of the leaders' speeches. This thesis argues that while both Germany and Japan securitise historical memory in political speeches, they do so to different extents and in distinct ways, with German discourse embedding memory as a continuous normative foundation of political identity and responsibility, whereas Japanese discourse deploys memory more selectively to support contemporary security and policy agendas.

Literature Review: Security, Memory, and the Gap at Their Intersection

Securitisation as a Discursive Practice

Scholarly debates on securitisation provide a necessary starting point for analysing how political actors construct threats through language and public discourse. Securitisation theory has long established that security is not an objective condition

but a discursive accomplishment. Early formulations by Ole Wæver conceptualise securitisation as a speech act through which political actors construct issues as existential threats, thereby legitimising extraordinary attention and prioritisation (Wæver 1995; 1998). From this perspective, security emerges through language and public articulation rather than material conditions alone, making political speech a central site of analysis. This understanding is systematised by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1997), who embed securitisation within a broader analytical framework structured around referent objects, audiences, and sectoral logics. Their work firmly anchors securitisation within mainstream International Relations scholarship and demonstrates its applicability across a wide range of issue areas.

At the same time, the empirical focus of this literature remains largely oriented towards policy debates, crisis situations, and future-oriented threat construction. Subsequent contributions, most notably by Balzacq (2010), further refine securitisation theory by emphasising its contextual, audience-centred, and pragmatic dimensions. By shifting attention from formal speech acts to processes of persuasion and social resonance, this work opens conceptual space for analysing historically and culturally embedded forms of political discourse. Nevertheless, despite this increased sensitivity to context, commemorative speech and historical memory remain largely absent from securitisation research, which continues to privilege policy-driven and instrumental uses of security language.

Extending Securitisation to Identity and Memory

Building on discursive approaches to securitisation, a growing body of scholarship has extended security analysis to questions of identity and memory. Mälksoo's (2015) concept of mnemonical security is central to this shift, as it frames authoritative interpretations of the past as objects that political communities seek to defend against perceived threats. This argument aligns with Mitzen's (2006) concept of ontological security, which understands security as the maintenance of a stable collective identity and shared self-narratives rather than protection from material threats alone. Taken together, these approaches suggest that memory becomes securitisable not just because it is disputed, but because challenges to shared interpretations of the past can destabilise collective identity. From this perspective, both mnemonic and

ontological security literatures help explain why memory plays a particularly sensitive role in security politics, even though they stem from different theoretical traditions.

Subsequent scholarship has sought to translate these insights into more explicit analyses of memory securitisation, though with uneven results. Much of the empirical work has focused on institutional and legal mechanisms through which memory is governed. For example, David's (2020) analysis of memory laws and human rights regimes showed how the past is regulated and protected in the name of normative commitments. Pakhomenko and Sarajeva (2020) move the debate further by explicitly conceptualising memory as a referent object of securitisation and by foregrounding narratives and political elites as central to this process. Their framework provides one of the clearest attempts to operationalise memory securitisation within security studies. However, its empirical application remains concentrated on moments of crisis, geopolitical contestation, and institutional conflict. As a result, while this literature establishes a strong conceptual foundation for treating memory as a security issue, it leaves underexplored how securitising moves are articulated through routine, symbolic, and commemorative forms of political speech, particularly in non-crisis settings.

The Methodological Blind Spot: How Memory is Securitised

A small but influential strand of scholarship has highlighted the strategic use of memory and symbolism within security politics, without fully incorporating these insights into securitisation theory. Nesbitt-Larking and McAuley (2017) show how myth and memory are used to strengthen political narratives and make security claims more convincing by appealing to emotion and symbolism. While their analysis highlights that security threats are constructed through meaning rather than material factors alone, it treats memory mainly as a rhetorical tool. As a result, securitisation remains implicit, and memory is not examined as something that is itself framed as needing protection in security terms.

Related insights are offered by Makhortykh (2020), who examines how historical memory is mobilised to legitimise contemporary security narratives, particularly by shaping perceptions of threat and necessity. This work confirms the relevance of memory to securitisation processes, but it treats discourse primarily as corroborating

material rather than as the object of analysis. Speech functions as a justificatory device for pre-defined security claims, not as the site where memory is actively transformed into a security issue. The resulting methodological gap lies not in insufficient attention to memory, but in the lack of systematic analysis of how securitising moves are enacted through routine and symbolic political speech.

Commemorative Speeches as a Political Arena

A substantial body of scholarship has examined commemorative speeches as a distinct arena of political meaning-making, focusing on how they shape collective memory and national identity. A key reference in this literature is Bodnar's (1992) distinction between official and vernacular memory, which highlights how commemorative practices are driven by elites but remain open to contestation. From this perspective, commemorative speeches are not neutral reflections on the past, nor are they merely symbolic rituals. Instead, they are moments in which political actors attempt to stabilise particular interpretations of history, articulate shared values, and define who belongs to the political community. Commemoration thus appears as an active political process rather than a retrospective act of remembrance.

Building on this understanding, discourse-oriented studies show how commemorative speeches assign moral responsibility and shape collective obligations. Hakhverdyan's (2017) analysis of genocide commemorations demonstrates how leaders use commemorative rhetoric to articulate ethical lessons and orient collective identity towards the future. Similarly, Berg's (2008) study of Austria's *Gedenkjahr* illustrates how commemoration operates as a negotiated and often contested practice that does not resolve debates about the past but keeps them politically alive.

Together, this literature makes clear that commemorative speeches are politically consequential and carry significant moral authority. However, these studies largely stop short of analysing commemoration through a security lens. As a result, they leave unexplored how commemorative speech may also function as a site where particular interpretations of the past are constructed as necessary to protect the political community.

Post-war Memory and Democratic Vulnerability

Scholarship on post-war memory has long highlighted the close link between how societies remember past violence and the health of democratic political life. Wigger's (2022) intervention frames the failure to confront the past as a danger to democracy itself, casting memory as a moral obligation rather than a purely historical concern.

While explicitly normative, this argument is important because it introduces the idea that unresolved or distorted memory represents a form of political risk. Olick (2007) further develops this insight by conceptualising memory as an ongoing and contested political process rather than a task that can be completed or closed. From this perspective, post-war remembrance remains politically salient precisely because it continues to shape collective identity and moral self-understanding over time.

Recent work has further demonstrated the political stakes of post-war memory debates. Hansen et al.'s (2001) analysis of authenticity, victimhood, and responsibility shows how competing claims about the past structure political legitimacy and public authority in contemporary societies. Together, this literature makes clear that post-war memory is widely understood as fragile, contested, and normatively charged, with direct implications for democratic identity. However, while these studies convincingly show why memory matters, they do not conceptualise these dynamics in security terms. As a result, the question of how democratic vulnerability is articulated through the language of threat and protection in post-war memory politics remains largely unexplored.

Comparative and Case-Based Securitisation of Memory

A growing body of comparative and case-based research shows that memory can operate as a security issue in specific political contexts. For example, Subotić (2016) demonstrates how historical narratives are used in international politics to build legitimacy and maintain ontological security, especially during periods of foreign policy change. In this way, memory is positioned as both a political resource and a potential source of threat. More direct links between commemoration and securitisation are made by Naxera and Krčál (2020), who analyse national anniversary celebrations as platforms through which security narratives are publicly articulated and sustained beyond immediate crises. Their study comes closest to the present thesis in empirically linking commemoration and securitisation, yet it remains focused on nationalism and state security rather than moral responsibility or democratic self-understanding. A

similar emphasis on exceptional contexts characterises Pakhomenko and Gridina's (2020) analysis of memory securitisation during the pandemic, which illustrates the flexibility of securitisation logic but ties it closely to crisis conditions. Taken together, this literature confirms that memory securitisation is empirically observable, while remaining largely confined to conflictual, nationalist, or crisis-driven settings, leaving less visible and more routine forms of memory securitisation underexplored.

Germany and Japan: Rich Scholarship, Missing Lens

Germany and Japan are both the subject of rich and well developed scholarship on post-war memory, responsibility, and commemoration. In the German context, Assmann's work on cultural memory has been particularly influential in showing how debates over guilt, responsibility, and moral obligation shape democratic identity over time (2006). Studies of German memory politics consistently emphasise the central role of the past in defining political norms and collective self-understanding, especially in relation to the Holocaust and the legacy of National Socialism.

A similarly extensive literature exists on Japanese war memory, though it foregrounds different tensions. Works by Chong (2017) and Kentaro (2006) highlight the persistent political struggle over war responsibility, particularly the uneasy balance between narratives of victimhood and acknowledgment of perpetration. Nelson's (2002) analysis of ritual practices surrounding war memory further shows how commemoration in Japan often operates through emotional and symbolic registers that seek to pacify the past rather than confront it directly. Tanaka's (2006) examination of museums, education, and public narratives demonstrates how official memory practices have shaped public understandings of the war, often privileging civilian suffering while marginalising questions of responsibility, with lasting political consequences.

Despite this extensive scholarship, there is a clear research gap. Existing studies on Germany and Japan analyse memory primarily as a moral, cultural, or political issue, but they do not examine how memory is constructed as a matter of security. In particular, there is little systematic analysis of how political leaders in post-war democracies use commemorative speeches to present specific interpretations of the past as necessary for protecting the political community, its identity, or its democratic

order. This absence of a securitisation perspective on commemorative speech constitutes the central gap that the present thesis seeks to address.

Taken together, the literature shows that memory is political, contested, and normatively charged, that security threats are constructed through discourse, and that commemorative speeches are key sites where authoritative meaning is produced. What is missing at the intersection of these debates is an integrated analysis of commemorative speeches as acts of memory securitisation. This gap motivates the conceptual framework developed in the following chapter.

Conceptual Framework: Bringing Securitisation and Framing Theory into Dialogue

Purpose and Architecture of the Conceptual Framework

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework that guides the analysis and explains how its different elements relate to one another. The framework brings together three strands of literature that address complementary aspects of the same problem. These are securitisation theory, which explains how issues are constructed as matters of security, framing theory, which accounts for how meaning is organised and made persuasive in discourse, and scholarship on memory politics and cognition, which helps explain why references to the past are particularly powerful, emotionally resonant, and durable. Combined, these approaches make it possible to analyse how historical memory can be mobilised as a security concern in political speech.

The framework is grounded in a constructivist and interpretive approach. It starts from the assumption that security, identity, and meaning are not fixed or self-evident, but are produced through discourse and shared understandings. For this reason, the analysis focuses on elite discourse, and in particular on formal speeches delivered by political leaders. The aim is not to trace policy outcomes, behavioural effects, or public opinion responses, but to examine how security claims are articulated and justified at the level of political language.

The framework is intended as an analytical tool rather than a normative position. While the securitisation of historical memory raises important ethical and political questions, this thesis does not seek to assess whether such practices are justified or desirable.

Instead, the framework provides a set of concepts that guide empirical coding and comparative analysis by clarifying how security, framing, and memory intersect in discourse.

To bring these strands together, the framework begins from the question of how an issue comes to be understood as a matter of security in the first place. Among the three components outlined above, securitisation theory provides the most direct account of this move by specifying the conditions under which political actors frame something as existentially significant and in need of protection. It therefore serves as the starting point for the conceptual discussion that follows. The next section introduces securitisation theory in more detail and clarifies its core assumptions, key concepts, and analytical limits, which together form the foundation on which the remainder of the framework is built.

Securitisation as an Analytical Framework

This thesis adopts securitisation theory, as developed by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1997), as its primary analytical framework for examining how issues come to be treated as matters of security. Rather than assuming that security concerns arise from objective material threats to state survival, the framework conceptualises security as a socially constructed practice through which political actors define and elevate particular issues as existentially significant within specific historical and political contexts (p. 19).

A central contribution of this approach is its departure from state-centric and materially deterministic understandings of security. By broadening the analytical focus beyond military capabilities and external threats, securitisation theory makes it possible to analyse security dynamics that revolve around non-military referent objects and discursive processes of threat construction (pp. 6–7). Security, in this sense, is not limited to physical survival, but encompasses the conditions under which political communities understand and reproduce their continued existence, including questions of identity, legitimacy, and collective meaning.

The framework further introduces a flexible understanding of levels of analysis, allowing security to be examined at local, national, regional, and global scales without presupposing the primacy of the international system (p.6). Securitisation operates through the interaction of securitising actors, audiences, and referent objects, and may

unfold within or beyond formal state institutions. In this thesis, the analysis is situated primarily at the national level, where state leaders act as securitising actors and address both domestic and international audiences through commemorative speech acts. This focus retains sensitivity to state authority while avoiding the ontological privileging of the state characteristic of neorealist theory.

Within securitisation theory, securitisation refers to the process by which an issue is discursively constructed as an existential threat to a valued referent object (p.23). A referent object is the entity presented as requiring protection in order to survive and may include collective identities, historical narratives, or normative principles, alongside more traditional objects such as the state. An existential threat does not necessarily imply imminent physical destruction. Instead, it signals a perceived danger to the continuity or integrity of the referent object as understood by the relevant political community (p.21). Existentiality is therefore not an objective condition but a claim verbalised and sustained through discourse.

Finally, the framework foregrounds the role of audience acceptance, while acknowledging the conceptual ambiguity and empirical difficulty of identifying such acceptance in practice (p.25). Rather than treating securitisation as a binary success-or-failure outcome, this thesis approaches securitisation as a graduated, contested, and context-dependent process, shaped by framing, historical resonance, and interpretive repertoires. This approach allows the analysis to focus on how security claims are articulated and structured in commemorative discourse, without assuming their automatic effectiveness or translation into concrete policy measures.

It is important to distinguish securitisation from general politicisation or moralisation. Not every reference to historical responsibility constitutes securitisation. Securitisation occurs only when historical memory is elevated beyond normal political debate and constructed as existentially consequential for the continuity or integrity of a valued referent object, such as democratic order, collective identity, or peace (Mälksoo 2015). The analysis therefore examines when and how political leaders transform memory into a security issue by presenting it as indispensable to the survival or stability of the political community.

The following section builds on this conceptual foundation by outlining the sectoral structure of the securitisation framework and situating the analysis within the relevant security sectors.

Societal Security, Identity, and Memory

Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde's securitisation framework conceptualises security as operating across several analytically distinct sectors, namely the military, political, economic, societal, and environmental sectors (p. 27). These sectors do not correspond to policy fields as such. Rather, they capture different logics of security, defined by what is presented as threatened and why that threat is understood as existential. Sectoral differentiation therefore functions as an analytical device that helps identify the nature of the referent object at stake and the form of insecurity being articulated.

Within this framework, societal security is concerned with threats to collective identity rather than to territory or material state capacity (pp. 119–120). The referent object in this sector is the continuity of a shared sense of 'who we are' as a political community. Identity is understood as socially constructed and historically embedded, reproduced through language, symbols, and narratives rather than through fixed biological or territorial markers (pp. 120–121). As a result, societal security is particularly sensitive to discursive practices and struggles over meaning.

Historical memory is central to societal security because it structures how political communities interpret their past and derive collective identity from it. Dominant interpretations of historical events provide moral orientation, delineate the boundaries of political belonging, and connect past experiences to present values and future expectations. Because memory operates through interpretation, narration, and symbolism rather than through uncontested historical fact, it is particularly exposed to claims of erosion, distortion, denial, or political misuse, even in the absence of immediate physical danger (pp. 122–123). Challenges to established interpretations of the past can therefore be framed not merely as historical disagreement, but as threats to the moral coherence and continuity of the political community.

This logic is particularly pronounced in post-war societies, where identity is often deeply entangled with experiences of violence, guilt, responsibility, and rupture (pp. 123–124). In these contexts, memory becomes a focal point for broader anxieties

about continuity and legitimacy, making it especially prone to securitisation. For this reason, the analysis in this thesis is positioned primarily within the societal security sector. Commemorative speeches construct challenges to remembrance, responsibility, or historical continuity as threats to the ontological survival of the political community, rather than as dangers to territorial integrity or institutional stability. Memory thus fits analytically within societal security, where the preservation of identity and continuity forms the core security concern.

The framework also recognises that security issues may overlap across different sectors (p. 17), and the material analysed in this thesis reflects this overlap. When historical memory is securitised, it produces effects within the political security sector, as interpretations of the past are mobilised to sustain democratic norms, political authority, and the moral foundations of the state. These political effects are not incidental, nor do they constitute the primary referent object of securitisation. Rather, political stability is shaped indirectly through the securitisation of identity and memory, which serve as the central objects of protection. Acknowledging this overlap strengthens the analysis by recognising that securitisation dynamics rarely remain confined to a single sector in practice.

Speech Acts, Discourse, and Their Limits

A core contribution of securitisation theory lies in its emphasis on speech acts as the mechanism through which security is produced (pp. 23–26). Security, in this understanding, is not merely described but enacted through language that presents an issue as an existential threat to a valued referent object. This focus on discourse makes securitisation theory particularly well suited for analysing formal political speeches, where meaning is carefully crafted, publicly performed, and institutionally authorised.

For the purposes of this thesis, the speech-act approach offers clear analytical advantages. Commemorative speeches are highly ritualised forms of elite discourse in which political leaders explicitly articulate interpretations of the past and link them to present concerns and future obligations. Treating these interventions as securitising moves allows the analysis to examine how claims about threat, responsibility, and protection are structured at the level of political language, without presupposing their translation into concrete policy measures.

At the same time, the literature has highlighted important limitations of an overly narrow speech-act reading of securitisation. One concern is an excessive reliance on the explicit use of the word “security,” which risks overlooking more subtle forms of threat construction that do not employ securitising vocabulary directly (pp. 25–26). Another limitation relates to the under-theorisation of audience interpretation, as acceptance is often assumed or inferred rather than empirically demonstrated. Finally, the original formulation tends to treat securitisation as a binary outcome, either successful or unsuccessful, leaving little room for gradual, partial, or contested processes.

Recognising these limits does not undermine the value of securitisation theory but clarifies how it should be applied. In this thesis, speech acts are treated as analytical entry points into broader processes of meaning construction, rather than as definitive indicators of securitisation success. This approach preserves the strengths of the framework while opening space for complementary perspectives on framing and interpretation, which are taken up in the following section.

Internal Critiques of Securitisation Theory

While securitisation theory provides a coherent framework for analysing how issues are constructed as existential threats, it has also been subject to sustained internal critique. Two contributions are particularly relevant for the purposes of this thesis, namely those by Ciută (2009) and Skidmore (1999). Both authors engage critically with the Copenhagen School from within the broader constructivist tradition, and both highlight limitations that are especially relevant for discourse-based analyses.

Ciută’s critique centres on the problem of context and meaning. He argues that securitisation theory risks undermining its own constructivist premise by implicitly fixing the meaning of security in advance (2009). While the framework claims that security is what actors make of it, it nevertheless tends to define security in terms of survival and existential threat before empirical analysis begins. This move, Ciută suggests, places the analyst in a privileged position and risks imposing theoretical categories onto political practice rather than reconstructing actors’ own understandings. As a result, security meanings become detached from the contexts in which they are produced and interpreted.

To address this problem, Ciută (2009) advances a hermeneutical approach to security analysis. From this perspective, security meanings are inherently contextual and must

be interpreted in relation to historically and socially situated practices. Security is not a stable or uniform concept, but a liminal one, located between theory and practice and continuously shaped through interpretation. This implies that analysts should resist the temptation to pre-define what counts as security and instead remain attentive to how security is articulated, contested, and understood in specific empirical settings.

Skidmore's critique focuses on the explanatory limits of securitisation theory's emphasis on speech acts. He argues that an overly narrow focus on discourse risks neglecting important dimensions of political life, including causality, political context, and actor motivation (1999). While securitisation theory is effective at describing how security claims are articulated, it is less successful at explaining why particular actors pursue such claims or why certain security narratives gain traction while others do not. By privileging language over broader political dynamics, the framework may obscure the conditions under which securitising moves become persuasive or influential. In response, this thesis situates securitising speech acts within their historical and political contexts and treats them as strategic interventions shaped by existing memory narratives and institutional roles, rather than as isolated linguistic events.

Skidmore (1999) also points to conceptual instability in the distinction between politicisation and securitisation. In practice, it is often unclear where normal political debate ends and security begins, particularly in issue areas that involve moral claims, identity, or long-term risks. This ambiguity complicates empirical application and challenges the idea that securitisation can be identified as a clearly bounded or binary process. Together, these critiques call for a more cautious and context-sensitive use of securitisation theory.

For this thesis, the value of these critiques lies not in rejecting securitisation theory, but in clarifying how it should be applied. They justify an approach that treats securitising moves as situated and interpretive practices, rather than as self-contained speech acts with predetermined meanings.

Why Securitisation Alone is Insufficient

The critiques raised by Ciută (2009) and Skidmore (1999) highlight a key limitation of securitisation theory for the purposes of this thesis. While the framework explains why historical memory can be elevated to the level of existential concern, it offers fewer tools for analysing how meaning is structured within discourse and why some

interpretations resonate more strongly than others. This is particularly problematic in cases where security is implied rather than explicitly articulated.

Elements of a similar dynamic are evident in commemorative speeches. Historical memory can be framed as something that must be protected for the survival of the political community without being labelled a security issue. Mortensgaard (2018) argues that securitisation theory effectively identifies when an issue is elevated to existential significance but lacks the analytical tools to explain how that significance is organised and made persuasive, a gap that framing theory is well positioned to fill. For this reason, the following section turns to framing theory, which provides the analytical tools needed to examine how interpretations are structured, prioritised, and stabilised in discourse.

Framing Theory: How Meaning is Organised

What Framing Theory Contributes

Where securitisation theory explains how issues are elevated to existential significance, framing theory provides the tools to analyse how meaning is organised once an issue has been rendered important. Framing theory shifts the analytical focus from the declaration of threat to the structuring of interpretation, making it particularly well suited for analysing commemorative discourse, where meaning is often implied, moralised, and normalised rather than explicitly stated.

Entman (1993) provides one of the foundational accounts of framing theory, describing it as the practice of selecting certain elements of an issue and making them more “salient” within a text so that they stand out to the audience (p. 52). For Entman, salience refers to making certain interpretations more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable for audiences. Frames perform this function by defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral evaluations, and suggesting remedies (pp. 52–53). This approach is particularly useful for analysing political speeches, as it allows the analyst to trace how specific interpretations of events are prioritised over others without assuming equal audience effects or policy outcomes.

Entman’s formulation clarifies how meaning is highlighted, but it says less about how interpretive boundaries are maintained once frames are established. This dimension is addressed more directly in the work of Heath (2005), who conceptualises framing as a process of boundary-setting within public discourse (pp. 161–163). From this

perspective, frames do not simply emphasise certain elements of reality. They also delimit what can reasonably be said, questioned, or contested. Framing thus plays a stabilising role by narrowing the range of acceptable interpretations and anchoring discourse within shared norms and values. This insight is especially relevant for commemorative speeches, where the authority of the speaker and the ritualised context often discourage overt contestation.

A complementary perspective is provided by Littlejohn and Foss, who conceptualise frames as interpretive structures that help individuals and groups make sense of complex social realities (2009, pp. 295–297). They argue that frames function as cognitive and cultural shortcuts that organise perception by simplifying information and linking it to familiar narratives and symbols. Meaning, in this view, is not fixed or inherent in events themselves, but emerges through interaction and interpretation. Frames guide understanding by shaping what is noticed, how it is evaluated, and how it is connected to broader systems of belief.

Taken together, these approaches highlight several features of framing that are central to this thesis. First, frames operate through both emphasis and exclusion, making certain interpretations appear natural while rendering alternatives marginal or unthinkable. Second, meaning is understood as negotiated rather than given, produced through discourse rather than discovered as an objective reality. Third, frames draw on shared cultural and cognitive resources, which helps explain why some interpretations resonate more strongly than others across time and context.

In the context of memory politics, these insights are particularly important. Historical memory is not simply recalled or transmitted, but actively constructed through selective narration, moral evaluation, and boundary-setting (Wertsch 2021). Framing theory therefore provides the analytical vocabulary needed to examine how commemorative speeches organise interpretations of the past, stabilise particular understandings of responsibility and identity, and embed securitising logics within broader processes of meaning construction.

Frames in communication versus frames in thought

A key contribution of framing theory is the analytical distinction between frames in communication and frames in thought, developed most clearly by Chong and Druckman (2007). This distinction is central for avoiding overly deterministic

assumptions about the effects of elite discourse and is particularly important for a study based on political speeches. Frames in communication refer to the interpretive packages embedded in texts, such as speeches, media reports, or official statements. Frames in thought, by contrast, refer to the considerations, beliefs, and evaluative schemas that individuals draw upon when interpreting an issue (p. 104).

This distinction allows framing to be analysed at the level of discourse without presuming uniform or automatic audience effects. Political leaders may deploy frames strategically in speeches, but these frames do not translate directly into shared understandings. Instead, framing effects depend on how audiences process, accept, resist, or reinterpret the frames they encounter. As Chong and Druckman emphasise, framing should therefore be understood as an interaction between communicated messages and pre-existing cognitive structures rather than as a simple transmission of meaning (2007, pp. 105–106).

Chong and Druckman further argue that framing effects are conditional and context dependent. Their impact varies according to factors such as prior beliefs, values, political knowledge, and exposure to competing frames (2007, pp. 109–111). In environments where multiple frames are present, individuals may draw selectively on those that resonate with their existing orientations, or may become less susceptible to framing altogether. This insight is particularly relevant for commemorative discourse, which often operates within dense fields of historical narratives, moral norms, and established interpretations.

For the purposes of this thesis, the value of this distinction lies in its methodological implications. By separating frames in communication from frames in thought, the analysis can focus on how political leaders structure meaning in commemorative speeches without making claims about how these frames are received or internalised by audiences. This avoids the assumption that framing necessarily produces measurable effects or consensus, an assumption that Chong and Druckman explicitly caution against (2007, p. 112). At the same time, recognising the cognitive dimension of framing helps explain why certain framings of historical memory appear durable and resonant over time. Frames that align with widely shared cultural narratives or moral understandings are more likely to be perceived as plausible and meaningful, even in the absence of explicit persuasion. Framing theory thus provides a way to analyse elite

discourse that remains sensitive to audience interpretation while maintaining analytical focus on texts themselves.

By incorporating this distinction, the framework developed in this thesis treats commemorative speeches as sites of meaning construction rather than instruments of direct influence. Framing theory, as articulated by Chong and Druckman, therefore complements securitisation theory by clarifying how security-relevant meanings are communicated and structured, without assuming their effectiveness or acceptance.

Security as a master frame

Watson (2011) argues that security functions as a “master frame”, meaning that it operates as a broad interpretive lens that organises how issues are understood and evaluated (p. 285). Rather than being analytically exceptional, security framing works in similar ways to other dominant frames by shaping problem definitions, moral judgments, and perceptions of urgency. From this perspective, securitisation can be understood as a specific form of framing. Securitising moves rely on familiar framing mechanisms such as selection, emphasis, and moral evaluation to present issues as vital to collective survival (Watson 2011, pp. 286–287). What distinguishes security framing is therefore not its structure, but the heightened significance it assigns to the issue at hand.

For this thesis, Watson’s approach provides the key conceptual bridge between securitisation and framing theory. It allows security claims in commemorative speeches to be analysed as part of broader processes of meaning construction, rather than as isolated or exceptional speech acts. This makes it possible to examine how security operates as a framing device that organises interpretations of historical memory and stabilises collective identity.

Operational Framing Categories

To translate framing theory into a usable analytical tool, this thesis draws on the work of Christiansen (2024), who develops the concept of collective action frames. These frames describe how issues are structured in discourse in ways that make them understandable, actionable, and meaningful to an audience. Christiansen distinguishes between three basic types of frames, each of which captures a different aspect of meaning construction (pp. 3–5).

Diagnostic frames define what the problem is and why it matters. They identify what is at stake and often point to what or who is responsible for the situation. In the context of commemorative speeches, diagnostic frames may define the past as a source of moral obligation, danger, or vulnerability. Prognostic frames focus on what should be done in response. They outline appropriate courses of action, such as remembrance, vigilance, or responsibility, and help translate abstract concerns into concrete expectations (Christiansen 2024, pp. 6–7). Motivational frames, finally, explain why action is necessary and why it is urgent. They appeal to moral duty, collective responsibility, or the consequences of inaction in order to encourage commitment (pp. 7–8).

These categories are particularly useful because they are directly applicable to empirical analysis. They provide a clear structure for coding political speeches and allow for systematic comparison across leaders, cases, and contexts. By identifying how diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames are combined, the analysis can trace how different actors organise meaning around historical memory and security in similar or divergent ways.

Why Framing is Indispensable

Framing theory is indispensable for this thesis because it explains dimensions of meaning construction that securitisation theory alone cannot fully capture. In particular, framing theory makes it possible to analyse how historical memory is moralised, how responsibility is attributed, and how a sense of urgency is created through discourse. Commemorative speeches rarely rely on explicit security language. Instead, they present the past as morally binding, fragile, or demanding of action. Framing theory helps explain how these meanings are constructed through narrative emphasis, evaluation, and omission. It also clarifies how responsibility is assigned, whether to political leaders, citizens, or the community as a whole, and how these assignments shape expectations about behaviour and remembrance. Because framing analysis is inherently interpretive, it limits the extent to which meanings can be operationalised in fully standardised or directly comparable terms.

At the same time, framing theory does not replace securitisation theory. Rather, it complements it by focusing on how security-relevant meanings are organised and stabilised in discourse. While securitisation theory explains why historical memory can

be treated as existentially significant, framing theory explains how this significance is communicated and sustained. Together, the two approaches allow for a more detailed and nuanced analysis of how commemorative speeches construct historical memory as a matter of security.

Memory as a Securitisable Referent Object

Memory, Identity, and Ontological Security

This thesis treats historical memory as a potential referent object of securitisation within the societal security sector. This move builds on securitisation theory's explicit recognition that collective identity, and not only territory or state institutions, can be framed as existentially threatened. Wæver argues that societal security is concerned with the survival of collective identities and shared understandings of "who we are," rather than with material survival alone (Wæver 1995). From this perspective, threats may target the continuity and coherence of identity without involving physical violence.

Scholars of memory politics further emphasise that collective identity is sustained through shared interpretations of the past. Pakhomenko and Sarajeva show that historical memory provides narratives that connect past experiences to present identity and future expectations, thereby contributing to a sense of continuity over time (2020).

Memory, in this sense, functions as more than background context. It becomes a core resource through which political communities understand themselves and their place in the world.

Because identity depends on relatively stable narratives, memory can also function as an object of ontological security. Ontological security refers to the need for a consistent sense of self and continuity. When dominant memory narratives are challenged, this continuity may be perceived as destabilised, even in the absence of material threats. Pakhomenko and Sarajeva therefore argue that memory can be constructed as something that must be protected in order to preserve the coherence and stability of the political community (2020).

On this basis, the securitisation of memory can be understood as an exaggerated form of memory politics. Rather than treating competing interpretations of the past as part of normal political debate, securitising moves frame certain memory narratives as existentially significant. Challenges to these narratives are presented as threats to

collective identity itself, which places memory firmly within the logic of societal security outlined by Wæver (1995).

Memory as a Discursive Resource in Securitisation

In addition to functioning as a referent object, memory also operates as a discursive resource within securitisation processes. Securitisation theory allows referent objects to be defined discursively, meaning that what is presented as threatened emerges through language rather than existing as an objective fact. Within this framework, historical memory can be mobilised to identify dangers, assign responsibility, and justify claims about existential risk.

Commemorative discourse provides a particularly clear site for this process. Through speeches and rituals, political leaders selectively interpret the past and connect it to present concerns. Memory is used to draw boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, to define moral obligations, and to establish continuity between historical experience and contemporary political identity. In this way, memory becomes a key medium through which threats are articulated and understood.

Importantly, the securitisation of memory does not rely on material instruments alone. It is enacted primarily through symbolic and discursive practices, including official speeches, commemorative rituals, and institutionalised narratives. This makes commemorative discourse especially relevant for analysing how memory is framed as something that must be defended in order to safeguard collective identity.

Why Memory Intensifies Securitising Moves

Memory is particularly well suited to securitisation because it carries strong moral and emotional authority. Pakhomenko and Sarajeva note that memory narratives often involve questions of guilt, responsibility, and injustice, which lend them normative weight (2020). When such narratives are framed as threatened, the resulting security claims tend to appear morally compelling rather than strategically motivated.

Memory also introduces a form of moral asymmetry. Challenges to dominant interpretations of the past can be portrayed not merely as alternative viewpoints, but as ethically problematic or dangerous. This reduces the space for contestation and positions certain narratives as beyond legitimate debate. As a result, securitising

moves centred on memory may appear less open to negotiation than those based on material threats.

Finally, memory has long-term resonance. Because it links past, present, and future, securitised memory narratives can persist beyond immediate political contexts. This temporal depth helps explain why memory-based security claims may remain influential even in the absence of acute crises. For the purposes of this thesis, these characteristics help clarify why memory is a particularly powerful object of securitisation in commemorative discourse.

From Conceptual Framework to Methodology

Taken together, this conceptual framework establishes a coherent analytical foundation for examining how historical memory is constructed as a security concern in commemorative discourse. Securitisation theory provides the logic through which memory can be elevated to existential significance, framing theory explains how this significance is organised and stabilised through discourse, and scholarship on memory and identity justifies treating memory as a legitimate referent object within societal security. Combined, these approaches allow the analysis to account for identity, meaning, and interpretation without assuming material threats, automatic audience acceptance, or direct policy effects.

The following methodology chapter builds directly on this conceptual foundation. It translates the key concepts developed here into a structured coding scheme that specifies how securitising logics, framing strategies, and memory narratives are identified and compared across cases. In doing so, the methodology ensures consistency between the theoretical assumptions outlined in this chapter and the empirical analysis that follows.

Research Design

This thesis employs a qualitative, comparative research design based on interpretive discourse analysis. The focus is on how political leaders construct meaning through language, rather than on audience reception or policy outcomes. While the analysis focuses on elite discourse, securitising moves are not treated as occurring in isolation. They are interpreted in light of each country's established memory regime and broader national identity constructions, which shape the plausibility and resonance of claims

about threat, continuity, and responsibility. National identity is therefore incorporated as a contextual condition rather than as a separate analytical category. The analysis is theory driven, drawing on securitisation theory to identify constructions of existential significance and on framing theory to examine how these meanings are organised and stabilised in political speech. Elite political speeches are treated as authoritative discursive interventions through which interpretations of the past are linked to present and future political concerns. Empirically, the study prioritises meaning construction, including the articulation of threat, vulnerability, urgency, and moral obligation. The analysis is guided by a deductive coding scheme developed from the relevant literature, which is complemented by inductive interpretive codes identified during the analysis to capture recurrent themes and case specific patterns.

Case Selection

Germany and Japan are selected as post-war democracies with highly institutionalised and politically salient memory cultures. In both cases, the legacy of the Second World War plays a central role in national identity, democratic self-understanding, and public political discourse. This makes them analytically well suited for examining how historical memory is mobilised and potentially securitised through elite speech. The temporal focus is on the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015. Major anniversaries function as moments of heightened symbolic attention in which political leaders face increased expectations to articulate authoritative interpretations of the past and to link historical responsibility to present and future political orientations (Secler 2025).

Angela Merkel and Shinzō Abe are selected as the central political actors because securitisation theory conceptualises political elites, and particularly holders of executive authority, as primary securitising actors. As Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1997) and Wæver (1995) argue, securitising moves derive their force from the institutional position of the speaker and their recognised authority to define what is existentially at stake. In the context of memory politics, this authority is further reinforced by the role of state leaders in producing and stabilising official narratives of the past (Bodnar 1992; Mälksoo 2015). Speeches delivered by heads of government therefore constitute particularly consequential sites for analysing how historical memory is framed as politically indispensable and potentially in need of protection.

The comparison follows a most similar systems design. Germany and Japan share key structural characteristics, including post war democratic reconstruction, defeat in the Second World War, and long standing engagement with questions of historical responsibility. At the same time, they differ substantially in the politics of remembrance, particularly with regard to apology, victimhood, and the internationalisation of memory. This combination of structural similarity and variation enables analytical leverage by holding broad contextual conditions constant while examining how differing memory regimes shape securitising and framing practices.

Data Collection

The empirical material for this study consists of official speeches delivered by heads of government in 2015. To ensure authoritative, reliable, and comprehensive sources, all speeches were collected from official government archives. German speeches by Angela Merkel were retrieved from the Federal Government archive (Bundesregierung), which publishes verbatim transcripts of official addresses, statements, and speeches. Japanese speeches by Shinzō Abe were collected from the official archive of the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei), using the English translations provided by the Japanese government where available.

A deliberate language choice was made in the collection and use of these materials. The German speeches are analysed in the original German, as no official government translations were available and the researcher is fluent in German. The Japanese speeches are analysed using the official English translations published by the Prime Minister's Office. Using these official translations ensures that the language of the Japanese speeches reflects an explicit communicative choice made by the Japanese government itself, particularly with regard to how historical memory is presented to international audiences. This approach preserves the political and discursive intent embedded in the choice of language and allows for meaningful comparison across cases without introducing ad hoc researcher translation.

Data collection followed a systematic review of all speeches delivered by Merkel and Abe in 2015 within the respective archives. Each speech was screened for substantive reference to the Second World War, historical trauma, commemoration, or lessons drawn from the war in relation to contemporary political concerns. This procedure

ensured comprehensive coverage of the relevant speech universe for the selected time period while avoiding selective or convenience sampling.

Data Selection and Corpus Construction

Speech selection was guided by content rather than by event type or formal setting. Speeches were included if they contained sustained and analytically relevant references to the Second World War, its legacies, practices of commemoration, or broader narratives of historical responsibility and continuity. This approach reflects the analytical interest of the thesis in how historical memory is mobilised discursively, rather than in commemoration as a purely ceremonial practice. As a result, the corpus includes both formally commemorative speeches and non-commemorative political speeches in which historical memory plays a significant role. This allows the analysis to assess whether the securitisation of memory is confined to ritualised commemorative settings or extends into routine political and security discourse.

An initial screening of the archival material identified 42 speeches that contained references to the Second World War, historical trauma, or related memory narratives. These speeches were first classified into five categories according to the role, prominence, and function of historical memory within each address.

Following this classification, the categories were evaluated in terms of their analytical relevance to the research question. Two categories were excluded at this stage. One category was removed because it consisted exclusively of Japanese speeches and would therefore have undermined the comparative design. A further category was excluded because singular brief references to the Second World War were incidental and did not involve substantive engagement with historical memory, making mere mention of the past insufficient for the purposes of this analysis.

The remaining three categories were retained as analytically central. Category 1 comprises core commemorative speeches, in which remembrance constitutes the primary purpose of the address. Category 2 includes commemoration-adjacent speeches, where historical memory is a central but not exclusive focus. Category 3 consists of political and security speeches in which references to the past are embedded within broader political, security, or policy-oriented discourse.

Retaining these categories resulted in a final corpus of 20 speeches that most clearly and consistently engage historical memory in ways relevant to the securitisation framework. The final corpus consists of 10 German and 10 Japanese speeches (see Tables 1 and 2). The balanced distribution across cases is an outcome of the selection process rather than a pre-defined quota.

Table 1 German Corpus (Angela Merkel, 2015)

Category	Speech / Address (Date)
1	Address at the Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau (26 January)
1	Address at the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Dachau Concentration Camp (3 May)
1	Address at the State Memorial Service for Former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (23 November)
2	Address at the Annual Reception of the Federation of Expellees (5 May)
2	Address at the Ceremony “25 Years of German Unity – 25 Years of Saxony-Anhalt” (1 October)
2	Address during the Visit to the Exhibition “Germany – Memories of a Nation” (7 January)
2	Address at the Award Ceremony of the Abraham Geiger Prize (2 December)
3	New Year’s Address for 2015 (31 December 2014 at 24h)
3	Government Statement Following the Terrorist Attacks in France (15 January)
3	Address at the Munich Security Conference (7 February)

Table 2 Japanese Corpus (Shinzō Abe, 2015)

Category	Speech / Address (Date)
1	Address at the Seventieth National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead (15 August)
1	Address at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony (6 August)
1	Address at the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony (9 August)
1	Address at the Memorial Ceremony Commemorating the Fallen on the 70th Anniversary of the End of the Battle of Okinawa (23 June)
1	Remarks at Yad Vashem (19 January)
2	Opening Remarks at the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and Japan’s Role in the World Order (25 February)
2	Remarks at the CSIS Symposium on the Global History of the Twentieth Century (9 July)
3	Address to a Joint Meeting of the United States Congress (29 April)
3	Address at the Graduation Ceremony of the National Defence Academy (22 March)
3	Press Conference Following the Cabinet Decision on the Legislation for Peace and Security (14 July)

Method of Analysis

This thesis employs qualitative discourse analysis. The analysis is theory-informed, drawing on securitisation theory and framing theory to guide the identification and interpretation of meaning in political speech. Rather than testing theory, these approaches are used as analytical lenses to structure the coding and interpretation of the empirical material.

The analysis proceeds through systematic coding of a corpus of political speeches. To enhance transparency and consistency, the coding process was conducted using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. The software was used to organise the corpus, apply the deductive coding scheme systematically across cases, and document the development of inductive subcodes. MAXQDA supports traceability of coding decisions and facilitates structured comparison between the German and Japanese corpora. The coding scheme (see table 3) is developed deductively from the relevant theoretical literature and applied consistently across the corpus. This deductive approach is complemented by limited inductive coding to capture recurring themes and patterns that emerge from the material itself.

The analysis focuses on discursive constructions rather than behavioural outcomes. It examines how speeches frame historical memory, define what is at stake, and attribute meaning, responsibility, and obligation within democratic political communities.

Operationalisation of Key Concepts

Securitisation is operationalised as the discursive construction of historical memory as existentially consequential and in need of protection. A passage is coded as securitising when historical memory is linked to a valued referent object (S1) and is accompanied by either a construction of threat (S2) or an expression of urgency or necessity (S3). Expressions of moral obligation are coded as securitising only when they are explicitly or implicitly linked to claims about the continuity, integrity, or survival of a valued political community. This operationalisation is grounded in the Copenhagen School's understanding of securitisation as a process that elevates an issue beyond normal politics through claims of necessity rather than through explicit security language (Wæver 1995).

Framing is operationalised as the organisation of meaning through selection, emphasis, and moral interpretation. Framing codes are used to analyse how securitising meanings are structured rather than whether they exist. Drawing on classic framing theory, the analysis distinguishes between problem definition (F1), responsibility attribution (F2), and moral evaluation (F3), allowing for systematic comparison of how historical memory is rendered politically meaningful across cases (Entman 1993; Chong and Druckman 2007; Bodnar 1992; Olick 2007).

Political effects are understood in discursive rather than behavioural terms. Rather than tracing policy outcomes or audience responses, the analysis focuses on how speeches construct boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, allocate responsibility across political actors and generations, and stabilise particular understandings of identity, obligation, and legitimacy within democratic communities.

Table 3 Deductive Coding Scheme

Code	Analytical question	Description
S1 Referent object	What is presented as needing protection?	Links historical memory to the survival or integrity of democratic order, collective identity, moral responsibility, or peace
S2 Threat construction	What endangers memory?	Portrayals of forgetting, distortion, denial, instrumentalisation, or repetition of past violence
S3 Urgency / necessity	Why must memory be protected?	Expressions of moral duty, temporal urgency, or irreversibility (“never again”)
F1 Problem definition	How is memory framed as an issue?	Construction of memory as warning, foundation, vulnerability, or lesson
F2 Responsibility attribution	Who is responsible?	Allocation of responsibility to the state, leaders, citizens, generations, or the international community
F3 Moral evaluation	How is the past judged?	Normative evaluation in terms of guilt, victimhood, achievement, redemption, or warning

Comparative Strategy

This thesis adopts a structured comparative strategy that combines within-case analysis with cross-case comparison. The aim is not to compare national memory narratives as such, but to examine how historical memory is securitised through political speech in two post-war democracies using a shared analytical framework. Comparison is therefore conducted at the level of discursive patterns rather than at the level of individual speeches or country-specific histories.

The analysis proceeds in two stages. In the first stage, the German and Japanese speech corpora are analysed separately using the same coding scheme. Each speech is segmented into comparable textual units, such as paragraphs or short thematic passages, to ensure consistency across cases. These units are first coded for securitisation using the S-codes. A passage is identified as a securitising move when historical memory is linked to a valued referent object and accompanied by either a construction of threat or an expression of urgency or necessity (or both). This step establishes when historical memory is treated as existentially consequential within each case.

The S-codes function as umbrella categories that capture securitising logic at an abstract analytical level. During the coding process, more fine-grained distinctions are developed inductively within these categories. When a referent object is identified, it is coded under S1. If a specific referent object recurs across multiple passages, it is subsequently differentiated through the creation of subcodes nested within the broader S1 category. The same procedure applies to threat constructions (S2) and expressions of urgency or necessity (S3). This inductive subcoding allows the analysis to capture recurring substantive patterns without altering the core theoretical structure of the coding scheme.

In a second step within each case, framing codes are applied to passages already identified as securitising. These codes capture how securitising meanings are organised through problem definition, responsibility attribution, and moral evaluation. This allows the analysis to move beyond identifying the presence of securitisation to examining how it is discursively constructed. The within-case analysis thus produces a set of recurring configurations that link referent objects, threat constructions, and urgency claims to specific framing patterns.

The second stage of the comparative strategy consists of cross-case comparison. Rather than comparing individual speeches, the analysis compares the dominant configurations of securitisation and framing identified in each case. This comparison focuses on similarities and differences in the types of referent objects prioritised, the threats articulated in relation to memory, the ways urgency or necessity is invoked, and the framing mechanisms that support these securitising moves. Using a shared

analytical grid ensures that differences observed between Germany and Japan reflect variation in discursive practice rather than differences in method or case selection.

Variation across speech contexts is incorporated into the comparison by examining whether securitisation patterns differ between core commemorative speeches, commemoration-adjacent speeches, and non-commemorative political and security discourse. This makes it possible to assess whether the securitisation of historical memory is confined to ritualised commemorative settings or normalised across broader political discourse, and whether this dynamic differs across cases.

The results of the comparison are presented thematically rather than speech by speech. Themes are derived from recurring patterns in the coding and are illustrated through representative examples from both cases. This approach allows for systematic comparison while maintaining analytical focus on meaning construction and avoiding descriptive national narratives.

Analytical Typology

The coding and comparative process yielded five functional types of memory use that organise the empirical analysis. These types emerged inductively from systematic coding across both corpora, though they speak to broader theoretical debates about the variable and contextual nature of securitisation and the political uses of memory (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1997; Ciută 2009; Mälksoo 2015). The five types are arranged along a spectrum from highest to lowest intensity of memory securitisation as shown in Table 4.

Direct securitisation of historical memory comes closest to the classical understanding of securitisation, treating memory itself as a referent object whose erosion constitutes an existential danger (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1997; Mälksoo 2015). Memory as a normative generator describes cases where the past functions as the source of values, identities, and obligations that are subsequently defended, consistent with work that understands memory as constitutive of collective moral order (Assmann 2006; Olick 2007). Memory as a securitising frame for present threats captures speeches in which historical references give contemporary dangers greater depth and moral weight without themselves becoming the central object of protection (Entman 1993; Watson 2011). Memory as a legitimising foundation describes cases where the

past provides the historical grounding of a political order that is then defended (Subotić 2016). Finally, non-securitised memory use describes cases where the past is politically present but not linked to threat, urgency, or necessity, confirming that securitisation is always contextually produced rather than inherent to particular issues (Ciută 2009).

Not every speech maps cleanly onto a single type. Merkel's Neujahrsansprache of 31 December 2014 is the clearest example: it contains brief memory invocations alongside present-day securitisation of the Ukraine crisis and IS terrorism, but these elements do not combine into a coherent securitising move around memory. Rather than assigning it to a category it does not fully inhabit, it is referenced where relevant as a supporting illustration, with its primary analytical value lying in corroborating the broader finding that memory presence does not automatically produce securitisation. Each type forms the basis of one empirical chapter.

Tabel 4 Typology of Memory Securitisation (Spectrum from Highest to Lowest Intensity)

Intensity	Type	Description
Highest	Direct securitisation of historical memory	Memory itself is treated as a referent object whose erosion constitutes an existential danger, elevating it beyond the scope of normal politics.
	Memory as a normative generator	The past functions as the source of values, identities, and obligations that are subsequently framed as requiring defence.
	Memory as a securitising frame for present threats	Historical references give contemporary dangers greater depth and moral weight without memory itself becoming the central object of protection.
	Memory as a legitimising foundation of political order	The past provides the historical grounding of an existing political order that is then defended against challenge or erosion.
Lowest	Non-securitised memory use	The past is politically present but not linked to threat, urgency, or necessity.

Scope and limitations

The five-type typology described above reflects the analytical scope of this study and carries with it certain limitations. This study focuses on elite political discourse and analyses how historical memory is securitised and framed in selected speeches by heads of government. The analysis is limited to the discursive level and does not

assess audience reception, media circulation, or policy implementation, nor does it make claims about the effectiveness of securitising moves. Empirically, the findings are confined to the selected corpus and the 2015 commemorative context, and are therefore not intended to capture longitudinal change or broader societal memory practices. A further limitation concerns language and translation. German speeches are analysed in the original language, while Japanese speeches are analysed using official government English translations, which may affect the comparability of rhetorical nuance despite reflecting an explicit communicative choice by the Japanese government. The comparative design prioritises analytical depth and conceptual clarity over representativeness, and the results should be understood as illustrating patterns of memory securitisation within this specific temporal and political setting. The analysis is further restricted to heads of government from governing parties in liberal democracies, leaving the securitisation of historical memory by opposition actors, populist movements, or non-democratic leaders beyond the scope of this study.

Setting the Scene: Postwar Memory and the Road to 2015

Postwar Reconstruction and the Immediate Legacy of War

The Second World War ended in Europe on 8 May 1945, when Germany signed the instrument of unconditional surrender, and in Asia following Japan's capitulation in August 1945. Japan's surrender followed the atomic bombings of Hiroshima on 6 August and Nagasaki on 9 August, after which Emperor Hirohito (昭和天皇) announced Japan's acceptance of the Allied terms on 15 August. In both countries, military defeat was followed by foreign occupation and extensive institutional restructuring, fundamentally reshaping the political order and raising questions about how the war and its legacy should be understood in the postwar period (Conrad 2003; Lawson and Tannaka 2010).

In Germany, the Allied powers dismantled the structures of the Nazi regime and initiated denazification (*Entnazifizierung*, meaning the systematic removal of National Socialist influence from public life), dividing the country into four occupation zones. In the western zones, these reforms culminated in the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 and the adoption of the Basic Law, which placed the protection of human dignity and fundamental rights at the centre of the new

constitutional order. Japan underwent a similarly far reaching transformation under Allied occupation led by General Douglas MacArthur. The Constitution of Japan, adopted in 1947, established parliamentary democracy, expanded civil liberties, and included the well-known Article 9 (Heiwa Jōkō, 平和条項, or the Peace Clause), by which Japan renounced war as a sovereign right of the nation. In both countries, these institutional reforms aimed not only at political reconstruction but at redefining the normative foundations of the postwar state (Dobbins et al. 2008; Conrad 2003).

Questions of wartime responsibility were initially addressed through international war crimes tribunals. The Nuremberg Trials of 1945 to 1946 prosecuted leading figures of the Nazi regime, while the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, known as the Tokyo Trials, conducted proceedings against Japanese political and military leaders between 1946 and 1948. Both processes established legal records of wartime atrocities, but by concentrating responsibility on a limited group of political and military elites they also allowed broader segments of society in both countries to distance themselves from collective responsibility (Lawson and Tannaka 2010; Conrad 2003). During the early postwar years, political priorities in both Germany and Japan were dominated by reconstruction, economic recovery, and the geopolitical tensions of the Cold War, leaving public debate about the meaning of the war relatively limited. Nevertheless, the institutional frameworks established during the occupation period shaped the ways in which both societies would later confront their wartime pasts.

The Evolution of Memory Politics after 1945

Although early postwar engagement with wartime responsibility was limited, debates about the meaning of the war gradually intensified during the second half of the twentieth century and increasingly became the subject of political, academic, and societal contestation. Despite similarities in their postwar political reconstruction, memory politics developed along strikingly different trajectories in Germany and Japan, shaped by distinct domestic political cultures, different relationships to victimhood and perpetration, and different regional geopolitical contexts (Conrad 2003; Frei 2002).

Vergangenheitsbewältigung and German Memory Culture

In West Germany, a significant shift began during the 1960s when younger generations started questioning narratives that had minimised societal responsibility for Nazi crimes. The Auschwitz trials held in Frankfurt between 1963 and 1965 brought the crimes of the Holocaust into public consciousness in a way the Nuremberg Trials had not, because they involved ordinary Germans rather than senior political and military elites (Frei 2002). The Holocaust gradually moved to the centre of German historical consciousness, and remembrance became progressively institutionalised through education, memorial sites, museums, and public commemorative practice.

This process of reckoning with the past became known as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (literally "overcoming the past," though the term is often used to mean coming to terms with or working through the past). The concept captures something important about the German case: it is not simply that the Nazi period is remembered, but that it is actively and continuously processed as a moral and political challenge with direct implications for the present. Habermas (1987) describes this as a form of constitutional patriotism (*Verfassungspatriotismus*), in which national identity is grounded not in ethnic or cultural homogeneity but in commitment to the democratic and human rights principles of the postwar constitutional order, principles understood as a direct response to the crimes of the Nazi regime. Acknowledging the crimes of National Socialism is not therefore a burden on German democratic identity but a constitutive element of it.

This did not happen without contestation. The historians' dispute of the mid-1980s saw prominent conservative historians argue that the Holocaust should be historicised and contextualised rather than treated as a uniquely German moral catastrophe, provoking fierce opposition from figures including Habermas (1987) and revealing deep disagreements about the relationship between historical memory and national identity (Maier 1988). Nationalist actors periodically challenged the dominant narrative of responsibility, and what some described as an excessive *Erinnerungskultur* (memory culture) became a recurring target of right wing political critique, particularly with the rise of parties such as the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) in the 2010s (Wasserman 2025). These contestations illustrate that even in a case often described as a model of coming to terms with the past, memory politics remains connected to ongoing

arguments about national identity, democratic legitimacy, and what it means to be German (Tourlamain 2014).

Victimhood, Nationalism, and Japanese Memory Culture

In Japan, engagement with the wartime past developed along a more contested and in important respects structurally opposite trajectory. Where German memory culture became organised primarily around perpetrator identity and the acknowledgment of crimes committed against others, Japanese public memory became organised in significant part around victimhood, particularly the experience of atomic bomb survivors (*hibakusha*, 被爆者) in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the suffering of ordinary Japanese people during the war (Orr 2001). This is not to say that awareness of Japanese aggression in Asia was entirely absent from public discourse, but that the dominant affective register of Japanese war memory was shaped by experiences of suffering and loss rather than by guilt and obligation toward those Japan harmed.

Orr (2001) describes this as the *higaisha ishiki* (meaning victim consciousness) that came to dominate Japanese war memory in the postwar decades, arguing that it was actively cultivated rather than simply emerging organically from popular experience. The atomic bomb narratives of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were particularly important in this respect. Japan's identity as the only country to have suffered nuclear attack in wartime provided a powerful and internationally legible framework for positioning Japan as a victim of the war rather than as its aggressor. Igarashi (2000) argues that this narrative served a specific political function in the early postwar period, enabling Japan to reconcile its wartime defeat with a renewed sense of national purpose and moral identity centred on peace advocacy rather than historical accountability.

This victimhood centred memory culture intersected with Japanese nationalism in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. On one hand, progressive and pacifist political actors drew on the atomic bomb narrative to argue for Japan's constitutional pacifism and its unique responsibility to advocate for nuclear disarmament. On the other hand, nationalist political actors used different aspects of wartime memory to argue for a more assertive Japanese national identity that rejected what they saw as a "masochistic" (*jigyaku-shikan*, 自虐史観, or self-torturing historical view) account of the war imposed by the Allied occupation (Lawson and Tannaka 2010). This nationalist

historiography sought to rehabilitate Japan's wartime role by emphasising themes of liberation from Western colonialism, the hardships endured by ordinary Japanese soldiers and civilians, and the role of the Allied firebombing campaigns and atomic bombings as evidence of Allied aggression rather than justified responses to Japanese militarism.

The political expression of this tension is visible in recurring controversies that have no equivalent in postwar Germany. Visits by senior politicians including prime ministers to the Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines the spirits of Japan's war dead including convicted Class A war criminals, have generated repeated diplomatic crises with China and South Korea (Saaler 2005). Disputes over school textbooks concerning the representation of the Nanjing Massacre, the comfort women system, and other wartime atrocities have been a recurring feature of Japanese politics since the 1980s. These controversies illustrate what Dudden (2008) describes as Japan's "troubled apologies," a pattern in which official expressions of remorse for wartime aggression are repeatedly undermined or qualified by revisionist political statements, producing what neighbouring states experience as a fundamentally unreliable commitment to historical accountability.

Memory, National Identity, and Political Discourse

Collective memory plays a central role in the construction of national identity, providing the narratives through which political communities define their values, responsibilities, and self-understanding (Assmann 2006; Olick 2007). In both Germany and Japan, interpretations of the Second World War became closely linked to broader debates about what kind of country each state should be in the postwar period. In Germany, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* produced a democratic political identity increasingly centred on historical awareness, moral accountability, and the institutional rejection of authoritarianism. The Nazi past is not merely a historical fact in German political culture but an ongoing moral challenge whose implications extend into the present, shaping debates about migration, antisemitism, democratic values, and Germany's international role (Assmann 2006).

In Japan, the absence of an equivalent settled reckoning with perpetration means that the relationship between historical memory and national identity has remained more

fragmented and politically contested. Different political actors draw on different aspects of the wartime past to support competing visions of Japan's present role and future direction (for example pacifists invoke Hiroshima and Article 9 to argue for constitutional restraint, while nationalists invoke Japan's wartime suffering and the injustice of the Tokyo Trials to argue for a revision of the postwar settlement and a more assertive security posture (Lind 2008)). This contestation is not merely academic. It shapes concrete policy debates about Japan's defence posture, its alliance relationships, and its diplomatic relations with neighbours who experienced Japanese aggression and regard the unresolved memory questions as evidence of insufficient contrition.

These debates do not take place in the abstract. They are articulated in specific institutional arenas, including education systems, textbooks, memorial sites, museums, and, crucially for this thesis, political speeches delivered at commemorative events. Naxera and Krčál (2020) argue that commemorative speeches represent particularly important sites of meaning production in national memory politics, because they offer political leaders a ritualised and publicly authorised occasion to frame the significance of the past for contemporary audiences.

The Seventieth Anniversary of the End of the War

Major anniversaries frequently serve as focal points for public reflection on the past, intensifying debates about historical interpretation and national identity. The seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015 represented one such moment in both Germany and Japan. Political leaders were expected to address the historical legacy of the war and articulate its meaning for contemporary society, producing a concentrated body of commemorative and political speech that offers unusual analytical insight into how the past is mobilised in the present. The speeches delivered by Angela Merkel and Shinzō Abe during 2015 form the empirical basis of the analysis that follows. Together they allow for a systematic comparative examination of how political leaders in two postwar democracies frame historical memory and deploy it within contemporary political discourse, which is the central concern of this thesis.

Chapter 1: Reading Memory Securitisation: A Typological Approach

This chapter addresses the central empirical question of the thesis: *to what extent and how do state leaders securitise historical memory in political speeches, and how does framing shape the meaning and political effects of this securitisation?* It examines the 2015 speech corpora of Angela Merkel and Shinzō Abe to identify when historical memory is elevated to existential significance, how this is discursively constructed, and what kinds of political work such constructions perform. The analysis is organised thematically rather than by case, enabling direct comparison of recurring patterns across both corpora rather than isolating national cases.

Both leaders securitise historical memory, but selectively and to different extents. Together, their speeches support the central claim that memory securitisation operates as a differentiated repertoire rather than a single uniform process. As set out in the methodology chapter, the empirical analysis is structured around five functional types arranged along a spectrum from highest to lowest intensity of memory securitisation: direct securitisation of historical memory, memory as a normative generator, memory as a securitising frame for present threats, memory as a legitimising foundation of political order, and non-securitised memory use. The analysis applies the combined securitisation and framing framework developed in the conceptual framework chapter, and operationalises key concepts as set out in the methodology chapter.

Within each type, the analysis proceeds in a consistent sequence: Merkel's corpus is examined first, followed by Abe's, before a comparative discussion draws out the similarities, divergences, and analytical implications across both cases. This structure keeps the two corpora analytically distinct while enabling sustained comparison at each stage.

Not every speech maps cleanly onto a single type. Merkel's Neujahrsansprache of 31 December 2014 is the clearest example. It contains brief memory invocations alongside present-day securitisation of the Ukraine crisis and IS terrorism, but these elements do not combine into a coherent securitising move around memory. Rather than assigning it to a category it does not fully inhabit, it is referenced where relevant as a supporting illustration, with its primary analytical value lying in corroborating the broader finding that memory presence does not automatically produce securitisation.

Chapter 2: Memory as Referent Object: Direct Securitisation in Commemorative Speech

The most direct form of memory securitisation is also its most theoretically significant. In these cases, the past is not merely invoked as moral reference or contextual background. It is constructed as something that must be actively preserved, defended, and transmitted, on the grounds that its erosion would threaten the continuity of the political community itself. This chapter examines the strongest instances of this logic in both corpora.

Merkel: Dachau and the Auschwitz Committee Speech

This section analyses two key speeches by Angela Merkel: her address at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial on 3 May 2015 (hereafter *Dachau speech*) and her speech before the International Auschwitz Committee in Berlin on 27 January 2015 (hereafter *Auschwitz Committee speech*). While analysed together due to their shared structure, the Auschwitz Committee speech provides the clearest articulation of memory as a principle of political obligation, whereas the Dachau speech grounds this logic more concretely in sites, symbols, and practices of remembrance.

Both speeches constitute high intensity cases of direct securitisation of historical memory. They demonstrate not only that memory is securitised to a significant extent, but also how this securitisation is constructed through the interaction of threat, obligation, and meaning.

A defining feature of both speeches is the transformation of memory from retrospective reflection into present political necessity. This is articulated most explicitly in the Auschwitz Committee speech, where Merkel states that “*Aus Erinnerung erwächst ein Auftrag*” (“From memory arises a mandate”) (*Auschwitz Committee speech*). This formulation collapses the distinction between remembering and acting, positioning memory as a source of binding obligation. In line with scholarship that understands collective memory as constitutive of political identity (Assmann, 2006; Olick, 2007), memory is thus constructed as an active force underpinning the political order. At the same time, by presenting memory as something that must be sustained, the speech

aligns with arguments that conceptualise memory itself as an object of security (Mälksoo, 2015).

This logic is reinforced in both speeches through the close linkage between memory and key elements of the political community. Jewish life in Germany, human dignity, and the democratic constitutional order is presented as dependent on the continued presence of memory. The implication is that the erosion of memory would undermine these core structures, thereby elevating memory to the level of a referent object whose preservation becomes politically necessary.

The strength of this securitising move becomes particularly visible in the construction of threat. In both speeches, threats are articulated in concrete and overlapping ways. A first dimension is temporal. Merkel refers to “*die letzten Zeitzeugen*” (“the last contemporary witnesses”), framing the disappearance of survivors as a loss that endangers the transmission of memory (*Auschwitz Committee speech*). Time itself becomes a source of threat, introducing a gradual erosion that must be actively countered. This reflects a societal security logic in which the continuity of identity is placed at risk (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1997).

At the same time, both speeches identify contemporary antisemitism as a present danger. References to attacks, hostility, and the need to protect Jewish institutions establish a direct link between past persecution and current developments. By doing so, Merkel constructs a continuity of threat that connects historical experience to present conditions, transforming memory into a framework through which contemporary risks are interpreted.

The Dachau speech further reinforces this logic through a particularly concrete example. Merkel refers to the theft of the “*Arbeit macht frei*” gate inscription, presenting it as an attack not only on a historical artefact but on the integrity of memory itself (*Dachau speech*). This moment is analytically significant because it materialises memory in physical sites and symbols, demonstrating that these too can become targets of violation. In this sense, securitisation extends beyond discourse to include the protection of memorial infrastructure, supporting arguments that memory can function as a politically vulnerable object (Pakhomenko and Sarajeva, 2020).

These threat constructions are accompanied by a strong articulation of obligation. Merkel repeatedly emphasises that “*wir dürfen nicht vergessen*” (“we must not forget”)

and refers to an “*immerwährende Verantwortung*” (“permanent responsibility”) (*Dachau speech; Auschwitz Committee speech*). These formulations establish remembrance as an ongoing political task. Unlike securitising moves tied to immediate crisis, the urgency here is structured as continuous and generational. The obligation to preserve memory becomes more pressing as the temporal threats identified earlier intensify.

This temporal structure is crucial for understanding how securitisation operates in these speeches. It suggests a form of security logic that is not based on exceptional measures but on sustained political practice. In line with Ciută’s (2009) critique of securitisation theory, this demonstrates that security is context dependent and can take forms that differ from crisis driven models.

Finally, the securitising move is stabilised through a dense structure of meaning construction. The speeches define the Shoah as a foundational rupture that shapes the present, attribute responsibility across state and society, and articulate strong moral evaluations that distinguish clearly between victims and perpetrators. Following Entman (1993), this structuring of meaning reinforces the persuasiveness of the securitisation by linking threat and obligation to a broader moral narrative.

Taken together, the Dachau and Auschwitz Committee speeches represent high intensity cases of direct memory securitisation. They show both a high extent of securitisation, through the dense articulation of referent object, threat, and obligation, and a specific mode of construction, characterised by concrete threats, strong moral positioning, and enduring responsibility. As such, they provide a benchmark against which other forms of memory use in the corpus can be assessed.

Abe: National Memorial Ceremony, Okinawa, Yad Vashem, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki

The five speeches examined in this section represent the strongest instances of direct memory securitisation in the Japanese corpus. They span three distinct commemorative contexts: the national war dead ceremonies at the National Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead on 15 August 2015 (hereafter National Memorial Ceremony speech) and the Okinawa Memorial Ceremony on 23 June 2015 (hereafter Okinawa speech), the international Holocaust commemoration at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem on 19 January 2015 (hereafter Yad Vashem speech), and the atomic bomb

anniversary ceremonies at Hiroshima on 6 August 2015 (hereafter Hiroshima speech) and Nagasaki on 9 August 2015 (hereafter Nagasaki speech). Reading these speeches together, rather than in isolation, reveals a more substantial and analytically coherent pattern of direct memory securitisation than is visible in any single speech. That said, understanding how Abe's securitisation operates, and how it differs from Merkel's, remains central to answering the research question about how framing shapes the meaning and political effects of memory securitisation.

The referent objects constructed across these five speeches are closely related but not identical. In the National Memorial Ceremony speech, Abe addresses the souls of the war dead directly, telling them that “your children and your grandchildren built up your homeland into a free and democratic country and now enjoy peace and prosperity,” and insisting that “we will not forget even for a moment that this was made possible by building upon, and only upon, your precious sacrifices”. This formulation does more than commemorate. Peace and democratic prosperity are explicitly grounded in wartime sacrifice, which means they carry a memorial obligation within them. To forget the sacrifice is, by implication, to undermine the legitimacy of the political order built upon it. Memory is positioned not merely as background but as the condition of possibility for present political life, which is consistent with what Mälksoo (2015) identifies as the constitutive function of memory in security discourse, where the past does not simply inform but actively sustains the political community.

In the Okinawa speech, this logic takes a more emotionally charged and regionally specific form. Abe describes how “the quiet life of the people of Okinawa Prefecture was transformed into scenes of carnage,” with 200,000 lives lost, and calls on his audience to “have this anguishing history etched deeply into our hearts and continually give it profound consideration,” adding that “this must be an ongoing endeavour” (Okinawa speech). The language of ongoing endeavour is analytically significant. Abe is not simply commemorating the dead. He is constructing remembrance as an active and continuous political practice whose cessation would constitute a political failure. The threat is implicit rather than named, but the insistence on continuity performs securitising work by framing any relaxation of commemorative effort as a danger to the political order that Okinawan sacrifice helped produce.

The Hiroshima and Nagasaki speeches add a dimension to this picture that the national war dead ceremonies do not provide, and which substantially strengthens the

case for direct memory securitisation in Abe's corpus. In the Hiroshima speech, Abe states that “as the only country to have ever experienced the horror of nuclear devastations in war, Japan has an important mission of realizing a world free of nuclear weapons by steadily carrying out a succession of realistic and practical measures,” and adds that Japan has “a duty to communicate far and wide the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, across generations and beyond national borders” (Hiroshima speech). The Nagasaki speech makes the same claim almost verbatim, reinforcing it with an explicit commitment to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles and the goal of nuclear disarmament. These formulations do several things simultaneously. They construct a referent object, Japan's unique witness identity derived from atomic bomb memory, and they tie that identity to a specific and binding political mission. They also name the closing window of living testimony as a concrete and irreversible threat. The Hiroshima speech notes that the average age of atomic bomb survivors is for the first time over eighty, which is a precise and undeniable statement of temporal threat. This is S2 as slow erosion rather than acute attack, but it is securitisation nonetheless. The aging and dying of the *hibakusha* 被爆者 (atomic bomb survivors) is not an abstract process. It is a datable, trackable, politically acknowledged danger to the chain of living memory, and Abe constructs it as such.

What is equally important is that this temporal threat generates not only moral urgency but concrete policy obligation. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki speeches immediately follow the duty to communicate with specific policy announcements: a new UN General Assembly resolution on nuclear weapons elimination, the convening of the CTBT Group of Eminent Persons, and the G7 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Hiroshima the following year. This is memory securitisation producing present day political action, which is a more fully articulated securitising move than anything in the National Memorial Ceremony or Okinawa speeches. As Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) argue, a securitising move is most fully realised when the referent object, the threat, and the necessity of action are all present and mutually reinforcing. In the atomic bomb speeches, Abe comes closer to this model than anywhere else in the commemorative corpus, because the “only country” identity claim provides the referent object, the dying of witnesses provides the threat, and the disarmament policy agenda provides the urgency.

The Yad Vashem speech is short but analytically dense, and it is the strongest case of direct securitisation in the Japanese corpus when measured by the concentration of securitising moves relative to speech length. Standing before the Eternal Flame, Abe states “Today, I have learned how much merciless humans can be by singling out a group of people and making that group the object of discrimination and hatred... Today, I find myself fully determined: Ha-sho'a le'olam lo od. The Holocaust, never again” (Yad Vashem speech). The use of Hebrew is analytically notable. It is not a general moral statement. It is a pledge expressed in the language of the victim community, at the site of commemoration, in the presence of those who carry living memory of the Shoah. As Pakhomenko and Sarajeva (2020) argue, securitising moves gain force from their performative context, and the spatial and linguistic choices here amplify the force of the commitment. Abe then frames the Eternal Flame explicitly as a beacon for ongoing political work (“with the Eternal Flame burning here at Yad Vashem serving as a beacon, we must continue to work towards the realization of a world free of discrimination and war, where human rights are protected” (Yad Vashem speech)). The referent object is global, encompassing universal human rights and a world free of discrimination, and the threat is the repetition of historically demonstrated atrocity. S3 is expressed through a final pledge: “I make a pledge that we should never ever let such tragedies be repeated again” (Yad Vashem speech). The double “never ever” construction, unusual in political speech, amplifies the urgency and gives the pledge the character of an absolute rather than a conditional commitment.

It is also analytically important to note what is absent across all five speeches. There is no named contemporary actor that threatens memory or the values memory sustains. There is no equivalent to Merkel's naming of contemporary antisemitism, the Paris attacks, or the desecration of the Dachau gate. Even in the atomic bomb speeches, where the threat is most precisely defined, the danger is the passage of time and the failure of international disarmament cooperation rather than an identifiable adversary. As Ciută (2009) argues, security logic does not always require a threatening agent, and Abe's commemorative corpus demonstrates this clearly. The absence of a named adversary reflects both the nature of the threats Abe constructs and the moral position from which he speaks. He speaks of a nation defined by suffering and witness rather than by perpetration and guilt.

The urgency expressed across these speeches operates through three overlapping mechanisms. The first is intergenerational pledge language. He states “we shall never again repeat the horrors of war and we shall carve out a future for the nation for the generation alive now and the generations of tomorrow” (National Memorial Ceremony speech). The second is the transmission imperative tied to dying testimony. Abe speaks of the duty to “communicate far and wide”, “across generations and beyond national borders”, what atomic bomb survivors experienced (Hiroshima speech). The third is the performative pledge, most concentrated in the “never again” formulations of the Yad Vashem speech. Together, these mechanisms create what one could describe as long term urgency rather than immediate crisis urgency. The timescale is generational, the threat is gradual, and the obligation is continuous rather than emergency driven. This is consistent with what Christiansen (2024) describes as motivational framing, in which necessity is grounded in the longer term consequences of inaction rather than in the pressure of an immediate danger.

Framing patterns across the five speeches reinforce this reading. F3 (moral evaluation) is the dominant code in all five, reaching F3=9 in both Okinawa and Yad Vashem and F3=8 in the National Memorial Ceremony speech (all relatively short speeches). The emotional register is what can be described as reverence, gratitude, and humility, emotions that produce attachment to memory without invoking fear of a specific enemy. F1 (problem definition) is present in all five speeches, constructing the past as an explanatory foundation for present obligations and future goals. The atomic bomb speeches show the most developed F1 coding because the problem is defined with unusual specificity, with nuclear weapons presented as a humanitarian catastrophe whose effects are still felt by living people and which the international community has failed to eliminate. F2 (responsibility attribution) is broadly distributed across all five speeches, addressed to a collective Japanese ‘we’ rather than to specific named institutions or groups. The Yad Vashem speech is an exception here. It assigns responsibility both to Japan and to humanity more broadly. Additionally, a reference is made to Sugihara, which shifts historical responsibility back across ordinary Japanese citizens who chose courage over complicity.¹

¹ Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat who issued transit visas that helped thousands of Jews escape the Holocaust (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2019).

Comparative Analysis

Both Merkel and Abe genuinely securitise historical memory in commemorative settings, and it is worth stating this clearly before turning to the differences between them. The pledge language of Yad Vashem, the demographic precision of the dying witnesses argument in the Hiroshima speech, and the transmission imperative running through the atomic bomb speeches are not merely ceremonial gestures. They construct memory as politically indispensable, link its erosion to identifiable processes of loss, and generate obligations extending into concrete policy. The comparison therefore does not concern whether direct memory securitisation occurs in both corpora. It concerns how the character, intensity, and political effects of that securitisation differ, and what those differences reveal about how framing shapes the meaning of security discourse.

The most immediately visible difference lies in threat construction. Merkel's commemorative speeches populate the threat environment with named, present day, socially located dangers. Antisemitic attacks on Jewish individuals, the need for police protection at synagogues, the theft of the '*Arbeit macht frei*' gate inscription, and the Paris attacks framed as evidence of "*islamistischen Terrorismus und Antisemitismus*" (Islamist terrorism and antisemitism) are recent and identifiable events, constructed as evidence that the political order sustained by memory is already under assault. Abe's threat construction operates differently. The danger in his commemorative speeches is gradual and structural rather than acute and social. In the National Memorial Ceremony and the Okinawa speeches it is the erosion of historical consciousness through forgetting and insufficient reflection. In the atomic bomb speeches in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, urgency is tied to the closing window of living testimony and expressed with demographic precision, as survivors' average age has exceeded eighty for the first time. The duty to "communicate far and wide the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, across generations and beyond national borders" becomes more pressing as the remaining witnesses disappear (Hiroshima speech). Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) distinguish between identity threats that are acute and agent driven and those that are gradual and structural. Merkel's commemorative securitisation operates in the first register; Abe's operates almost entirely in the second. This difference is not incidental. It reflects distinct threat

environments, distinct political purposes, and, as the following paragraphs show, distinct moral positions.

Those moral positions represent the deepest divergence in the corpus. Merkel speaks from a perpetrator nation identity, which shapes her discourse throughout. It determines the referent objects she constructs, the threats she names, the obligations she generates, and the framing she deploys. When she describes Germany's constitutional order as the institutional response to Nazi inhumanity, or frames the ongoing duty to remember as "*immerwährende Verantwortung*" (permanent responsibility), she is grounding political obligation in what Germany did to others. Abe's commemorative speeches ground obligation in what Japan and its people suffered. "We will not forget even for a moment that this was made possible by building upon, and only upon, your precious sacrifices", he states in the National Memorial Ceremony speech, and the direction of the debt runs inward, toward Japan's own dead, rather than outward toward those Japan harmed. As Hansen et al. (2001) argue, the asymmetry between perpetrator and victim identity claims is one of the defining structural tensions in post war memory politics, and the Merkel and Abe corpora give that asymmetry precise empirical form. Abe only directly acknowledges perpetration once in the corpus as discussed in chapter 5.

The coding data makes this structural difference measurable. In the Auschwitz Committee speech, S2 and S3 each reach 25 coded segments alongside F3=50 and F1=31, and these elements appear together within the same passages rather than distributed across the speech. The cumulative effect is that threat, moral evaluation, problem definition, and urgency reinforce one another in real time. This produces what Card et al. (2022) describe as discursive saturation, a condition in which securitisation structures the discourse as a whole rather than appearing in isolated moments. This comes close to what Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) describe as a fully articulated securitising move. Abe's national war dead speeches produce markedly lower densities, with the National Memorial Ceremony speech recording F3=8, S2=2, and S3=2. The Yad Vashem speech achieves a higher securitisation density relative to its length, and the atomic bomb speeches produce more developed F1 and S3 coding than the war dead ceremonies (National Memorial Ceremony and Okinawa), moving from memory directly into policy action in a way that resembles Merkel's model more closely. But even here, S2 remains low because the threat, however precisely

described, is structural rather than social and does not generate the same cumulative clustering visible in the German commemorative corpus.

The consequences of these differences become fully clear when examining the political effects of framing. Entman (1993) argues that the force of a frame depends not only on what it emphasises but on how clearly it assigns responsibility and prescribes action. By this measure, Merkel's commemorative framing is both morally compelling and institutionally specific. It names the German state, German citizens, and German institutions as bearers of obligation, identifies antisemitism as the concrete contemporary threat against which that obligation must be exercised, and defines the conditions of democratic membership in ways that carry direct implications for present day social and political questions. Abe's framing, by contrast, is morally compelling but institutionally broader. Responsibility is distributed across a collective national we in the National Memorial Ceremony and the Okinawa speeches, across humanity in the Yad Vashem speech, and across the international community in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki speeches. This breadth gives Abe's commemorative discourse a wide moral reach, but it reduces its capacity to generate the kind of targeted political work that Merkel's framing performs. Bodnar (1992) argues that official commemorative discourse is always partly about defining who belongs to the political community and on what terms. In Merkel's speeches that function is carried out with considerable specificity. This sharper delineation also reinforces an implicit us-versus-them narrative tied to national identity, defining democratic belonging through responsibility, vigilance, and rejection of antisemitism (De Cilla, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999). In Abe's, it operates at a level of generality that makes contestation less likely but targeted political mobilisation correspondingly more difficult.

This does not mean Abe's commemorative securitisation is analytically less significant. It produces genuine attachment to memory as a political value and, in both atomic bomb speeches (Hiroshima and Nagasaki), concrete policy commitments in the domain of nuclear disarmament. What it does not produce is a framework in which memory defines the internal boundaries of the political community and renders specific social groups or developments legible as threats to democratic belonging. That is what antisemitism does in Merkel's speeches, and nothing in Abe's commemorative corpus quite replicates it. Assmann (2006) argues that the weight of Holocaust memory in German political identity stems from the inseparability of guilt and obligation. Memory

does not merely inform democratic values but constitutes their condition of possibility. That inseparability is what gives Merkel's commemorative securitisation its intensity and its political specificity, and its structural absence in Abe's corpus explains the differences in density, referent object definition, and framing effects that the coding data reveals.

These findings establish the core comparative argument of the chapter at the strongest end of the securitisation spectrum. The differences in threat character, self-implication, referent object specificity, and framing effects are visible precisely where securitisation is most intense, which means they cannot be attributed to contextual variation alone. To return directly to the research question, the analysis of direct securitisation demonstrates that both leaders do so, but to different extents and through different modes. Merkel securitises memory to a greater extent, producing denser and more tightly integrated securitising moves in which threat, obligation, and moral evaluation compound one another. Abe securitises memory through a more diffuse but equally coherent logic, grounded in generational transmission, dying testimony, and the construction of a unique witness identity. In Merkel's case, framing shapes the political effect by producing a tight interpretive structure that assigns specific obligations to named actors and renders concrete social developments as threats to democratic belonging. In Abe's case, framing generates wide moral reach and concrete disarmament commitments, but its breadth limits the capacity of memory securitisation to do politically targeted work within the domestic community. These differences are not incidental. They reflect the systematically different moral positions from which each leader speaks, and they persist, as the following sections demonstrate, across every functional type of memory use in the corpus.

Chapter 3: Memory as a Normative Generator

The previous chapter examined cases in which historical memory itself is constructed as a referent object of security, something that must be actively preserved and defended. This chapter turns to a more indirect configuration. In these speeches, memory is not primarily presented as something under threat. Instead, it functions as a generative force, producing the norms, values, and identities that subsequently become the objects of securitising moves. The referent object is not memory but the political, moral, or social order that memory is explicitly said to have produced. This is

still securitisation. The causal chain is simply longer: memory creates something, and that something is securitised.

Understanding why memory is particularly well suited to this generative function requires attending to what Assmann (2006) calls the constitutive role of cultural memory in democratic societies. Memory culture is itself a normative phenomenon as it establishes what a community is obligated to remember, how that remembrance should be performed, and what political commitments follow from it. Olick (2007) develops a related point, arguing that the institutionalisation of memory practices in post-war democracies has created durable normative frameworks in which acknowledgment of historical wrongdoing becomes a condition of political legitimacy rather than merely a moral gesture. When memory culture becomes this deeply embedded in democratic identity, the norms it generates begin to feel binding rather than chosen, and it is precisely these norms that become the object of securitisation.

The causal logic therefore runs as follows (and as shown below in Figure 1). Memory produces a norm, value, or identity. That norm, value, or identity is presented as requiring protection. A threat to it is constructed, and urgency around its defence is generated. Securitisation theory typically identifies the referent object as the starting point of analysis (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1997), but in this type the referent object is itself the product of a prior discursive process in which memory does the generative work. This extends securitisation theory in an important direction, showing that security can be produced indirectly through memory rather than only through direct threat construction. Additionally, Ciută's (2009) argument that security meanings are always contextually produced is equally relevant here. The securitising logic in these

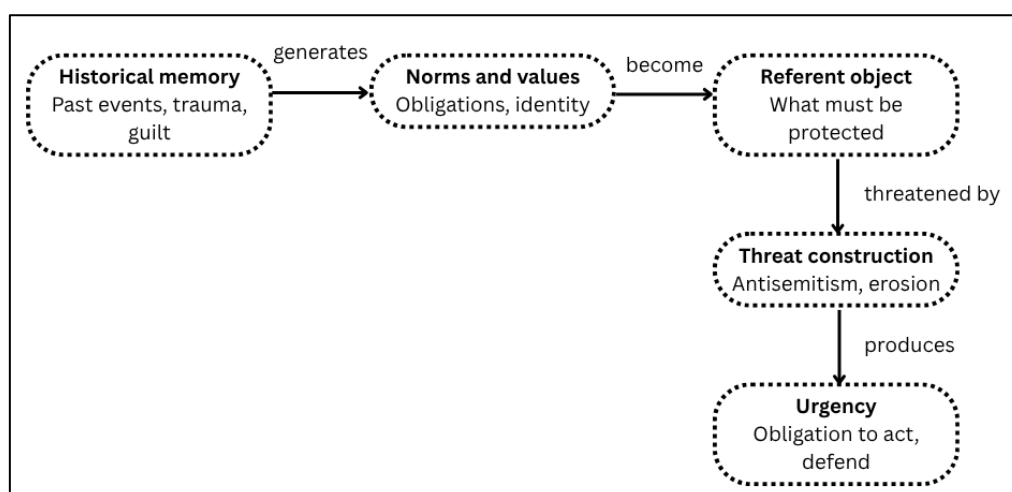


Figure 1: The causal chain of memory as normative generator.

speeches is real, but it requires the analyst to trace the causal chain back through the normative order to the memory that generated it.

The following sections show that both Merkel and Abe draw on historical memory to generate normative commitments, but differ fundamentally in the moral position from which those commitments are derived, the specificity of the referent objects they produce, and the intensity with which they are subsequently securitised.

Merkel: The Abraham-Geiger Prize Speech and the Neujahrsansprache

The primary case of the normative generator type in the German corpus is Merkel's address at the award ceremony for the Abraham-Geiger Prize in Berlin on 2 December 2015 (hereafter Abraham-Geiger speech). Delivered to an audience of Jewish community representatives, religious scholars, and political figures at the Jewish Museum, the speech moves well beyond a ceremonial occasion. It articulates a sustained argument about what German democratic identity requires in the present, and it grounds that argument in the historical memory of the Shoah and the postwar constitutional reckoning that followed. The profile developed through MAXDQA for this speech is analytically revealing: F1=49, F3=46, F2=26, S2=21, and S3=23, but S1=3. The framing apparatus is extremely dense, threat construction and urgency are both substantial, but memory itself is not the primary referent object. What is being securitised is the normative and constitutional order that memory is said to have produced.

The speech opens by framing the return of Jewish life to Germany as something that requires explanation rather than simply celebration. Merkel describes it as "*eigentlich ein Wunder*" (actually a miracle) and "*ein großes Geschenk*" (a great gift), before immediately providing the historical explanation for why it is miraculous at all. Seventy years have passed since the end of the Shoah, and what those seventy years mean for German political identity is the real subject of this speech. The analytical significance of this opening is that it constructs Jewish life in Germany not as a natural condition but as a historically contingent achievement, one that could not be taken for granted and that carries a specific political meaning.

That meaning is then articulated through the Basic Law. Merkel states explicitly that the Grundgesetz "*war die Antwort auf die Unmenschlichkeit Deutschlands in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*" (was the answer to the inhumanity of Germany in the period

of National Socialism). This captures the core normative generation move. The Shoah constituted a constitutional rupture, to which the postwar order was designed as a direct institutional response. The protection of human dignity, equality before the law, and freedom of conscience within that order is thus derived from historical memory rather than abstract universal principles. The Basic Law is not presented as a technical legal document but as a moral reckoning with a specific past, which means that challenges to its values carry the weight of that past rather than merely the weight of a political disagreement. As Assmann (2006) argues, the particular weight of Holocaust memory in German political identity derives precisely from this inseparability of guilt and obligation. He argued that memory does not merely inform democratic values, it constitutes their condition of possibility.

From this foundation, the Abraham-Geiger speech develops a series of binding norms. Foremost among them is what Merkel describes as the *"kompromissloser Kampf gegen jede Form von Antisemitismus"* (uncompromising struggle against every form of antisemitism), which she frames as a condition of democratic membership rather than a policy preference. This reflects the normative generator mechanism at work. Memory of the Shoah produces the anti-antisemitism norm, which defines the conditions of belonging in German democracy, and contemporary antisemitism is then framed as a threat to those conditions rather than to memory itself. Notably, the S2 coding reflects this. Threats in the speech include antisemitism from multiple origins, including what Merkel describes as communities where *"Antisemitismus und Hass auf Israel Teil des öffentlichen Lebens sind"* (antisemitism and hatred of Israel are part of public life), integration tensions, and the broader challenge of sustaining a pluralist democratic order under pressure. These are present day political dangers, not threats to historical memory as such.

The migration and integration passage is the most analytically complex section of the speech and the most politically consequential. Merkel argues that integration does not mean abandoning one's roots, but living them *"auf der Grundlage und im Rahmen unserer Werte und unserer Gesellschaftsordnung"* (on the basis and within the framework of our values and our social order), to which the uncompromising struggle against antisemitism *"zwingend dazugehört"* (necessarily belongs). This formulation uses memory-derived norms to define the conditions of democratic belonging. What Germany's historical reckoning produced is a normative order, and membership in

German democratic society means accepting that order. Framing here does not merely emphasise certain values. As Entman (1993) argues, it delimits the boundaries of legitimate political belonging, and the boundary in this speech is drawn through Shoah memory rather than through abstract principle. Bodnar (1992) makes a related point in his account of official memory, arguing that commemorative discourse is always partly about defining who belongs to the political community and on what terms, and the Abraham-Geiger speech confirms this with unusual directness.

The framing structure throughout is dense and mutually reinforcing. F1 codes link present challenges systematically to historical lessons. Here, the Nazi past defines the problem, the postwar constitutional order defines the solution, and present antisemitism and integration tensions define the ongoing challenge. F2 codes distribute responsibility broadly but not diffusely, assigning the German state, German citizens, migrants, and Jewish communities specific roles within the normative order derived from memory. F3 codes are the most numerous in the speech, reflecting the intense moral language that runs throughout, from the celebration of Jewish life as a gift to the absolute condemnation of antisemitism as incompatible with German democratic identity. Together, these framing elements produce what one could describe as a full framing cycle, in which problem definition, responsibility attribution, and moral evaluation align especially strongly in the antisemitism section, creating a coherent and self-reinforcing securitising logic. This is consistent with what Mälksoo (2015) describes as the grounding of mnemonic security in specific and socially embedded memory practices rather than in generalised appeals to historical consciousness.

The *Neujahrsansprache* of 31 December 2014 offers a thinner but supporting illustration of the normative generator type. The speech invokes the 1989 Monday demonstrations² and the constitutional freedoms won through reunification as historical foundations for present political commitments. She uses the appropriation of "*Wir sind das Volk*" by contemporary nationalist actors as a warning against the misuse of democratic memory. Memory of 1989 generates a democratic norm, and that norm is then mobilised against present populist contestation. The securitisation is less developed than in the Abraham-Geiger speech, with lower S2 and S3 values and a

² These were weekly peaceful protests in East Germany, centred in Leipzig, that mobilised mass opposition to the regime and helped precipitate the collapse of the GDR.

less concentrated framing structure, but the causal logic is the similar (memory produces something, and that something requires defence). As noted in the typology overview, this speech does not map cleanly onto a single chapter and is treated here as a supporting illustration rather than a primary case.

In terms of the research question, Merkel securitises historical memory in the Abraham-Geiger speech not by constructing memory itself as threatened but by deriving from it a normative order whose violation is framed as a breach of Germany's foundational democratic reckoning. The extent of securitisation is real but indirect, and the mode is characterised by the generation of binding norms, the construction of present day antisemitism as a threat to those norms, and a framing structure that draws clear lines of democratic belonging through the weight of historical memory.

Abe: CSIS Symposium speech and the Advisory Panel Opening Remarks

Where Merkel draws on historical memory to generate normative commitments anchored in perpetrator identity and constitutional obligation, Abe deploys a parallel but structurally distinct logic. In the remarks at the Symposium Hosted by the Centre for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) titled *Reflections on Global History of the 20th Century Towards a New Vision for the 21st Century* on 9 July, 2015 (hereafter CSIS speech) and the Opening Remarks at the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan's Role and the World Order in the 21st Century on 25 February, 2015 (hereafter Advisory Panel Speech), historical memory functions not as a referent object under threat but as an epistemic foundation from which lessons, principles, and political orientations are derived.

The Advisory Panel speech treats memory as a governance resource rather than an emotional or symbolic reference, with Abe insisting that "foundations for the future cannot possibly be disconnected from the past". Memory is constitutive of sound governance rather than democratic identity, which is already a revealing difference from Merkel. The CSIS speech extends this logic into a globally ambitious register. Abe structures the twentieth century as a narrative of "light" and "shadows" and derives from it a set of codified universal principles: "Never commit violence. Never discriminate. The dignity of each individual human being must be respected". Historical memory is converted into a rule system. This is consistent with what Subotić (2016) identifies as the use of historical narrative to sustain ontological security at the

international level, where stories about the past are mobilised to legitimate and stabilise present political orders. The referent objects that emerge are the liberal international order and the normative architecture of global governance, described by Abe as "a treasure of humanity that we must never spoil again" (CSIS speech). The coding data reflects this. The CSIS speech produces F1=29, the highest problem definition count in the Japanese corpus, alongside F3=23 and S3=8, indicating that the framing apparatus is doing substantial work before any securitising move is made.

Merkel's normative generation is rooted in guilt. The Shoah produced a constitutional rupture, that rupture generated an obligation, and the obligation is binding because Germany was the perpetrator. Abe's normative generation is rooted in lesson extraction. The twentieth century produced suffering on a global scale, those experiences yielded principles, and those principles are now Japan's contribution to the international order. This aligns with what Tanaka (2006) and Nelson (2002) have identified as a characteristic feature of Japanese official memory. They see a tendency to frame the war experience through the register of suffering and lessons learned rather than through direct acknowledgment of perpetration.

Threat construction reflects this difference. In the CSIS speech, S2 reaches only 3 coded segments, and the threats identified (the erosion of the postwar normative order and the failure of future generations to internalise lessons of history) are systemic and abstract. There are no named actors, no identifiable social groups, and no concrete present day developments. As Ciută (2009) argues, securitisation does not always operate through the identification of a specific threatening agent. In Merkel's speeches, the danger is already in the room. In Abe's, it is a future possibility if the right lessons are not drawn. Urgency is correspondingly moderate, expressed as necessity to maintain continuity and obligation to derive lessons and act on them. This is consistent with what Christiansen (2024) describes as motivational framing, in which necessity is grounded in the longer term consequences of inaction. F2 in the CSIS speech reaches only 4 coded segments, with responsibility distributed broadly across intellectual communities, state actors, and humanity at large. As Olick (2007) notes in his account of the politics of regret, when moral obligation is generalised across communities and generations, the obligation to learn from history is addressed to everyone, which in practice means it is addressed to no one in particular.

Comparative Analysis

The comparison between Merkel's and Abe's normative generator speeches reveals a pattern that is structurally parallel but substantively and morally divergent. Both leaders use historical memory to produce normative foundations that are subsequently defended. Both treat the past as something more than a record of events, treating it instead as a source of binding political and moral commitments. And in both corpora, the referent object in this type is not memory itself but the order, identity, or principles that memory is said to have generated. This structural similarity has been described by Pakhomenko and Sarajeva (2020) as the indirect securitisation of memory, in which the past shapes security discourse without itself being the primary object under threat. At this level of abstraction, the two cases look similar. The comparison becomes interesting precisely where that similarity breaks down.

The first and most fundamental point of divergence is the moral position from which each leader generates norms. Merkel generates norms from perpetrator identity. The Shoah is not invoked in the Abraham-Geiger speech as a universal catastrophe from which general lessons may be drawn. It is invoked as something Germany did, and the constitutional order, the protection of Jewish life, and the rejection of antisemitism are all presented as obligations that flow directly from that historical responsibility. Here, it can be argued that memory is not just descriptive or legitimising but normatively binding, structuring what Germany is, what Germany must do, and what must be rejected. The norms are inseparable from the guilt that produced them. To violate those norms, to tolerate antisemitism or to fail to protect Jewish life, is to fall short of a universal principle and to betray the foundational reckoning that German democracy rests on. Assmann (2006) argues in her account of German memory culture, the particular weight of Holocaust memory in German political identity derives precisely from this inseparability of guilt and obligation. He claims that memory informs democratic values and constitutes their condition of possibility.

Abe generates norms from a learner identity. The twentieth century produced lessons, Japan has internalised those lessons, and Japan now advocates for the principles they yield on the international stage. The CSIS speech in particular presents Japan's postwar trajectory as a model of how a nation can absorb the lessons of history and translate them into constructive international engagement. This framing positions Japan as exemplary rather than as culpable. The speech demonstrates how historical

memory can function not only as a source of identity or moral reflection, but as a regulatory framework for maintaining and legitimising the liberal international order. Hansen et al. (2001) argue that a defining tension in post war memory politics is the unequal weight given to authenticity claims based on perpetrator identity compared to those based on victimhood or lesson learning. The Merkel and Abe comparison gives this asymmetry a precise empirical form, and it does so across speeches that belong to the same functional type, which makes the divergence all the more analytically telling.

The second divergence concerns the specificity of the referent objects. Merkel's normative generation yields clearly defined S1 categories, including Jewish life in Germany, human dignity, Germany's identity as a post Shoah state, and a memory grounded moral political order. Together, these form a coherent argument that maintaining memory is necessary because the political and moral order depends on it. When Merkel states that "*Jüdisches Leben gehört zu uns, es ist Teil unserer Kultur und unserer Identität*" (Jewish life belongs to us, it is part of our culture and our identity) in the Abraham Geiger speech, she defends a concrete, historically situated object rather than an abstraction. This aligns with Mälksoo (2015), who argues that mnemonical security is grounded in specific, socially embedded memory practices rather than general appeals to historical consciousness.

Abe's normative generation produces referent objects that are broader and less clearly defined. He points to the liberal international order, universal human rights, and the wider postwar framework as what must be protected. These are meaningful political constructs, but they are diffuse and not tied to a single actor or concrete social context, which makes them harder to frame as directly under threat. As Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) note, securitisation is more persuasive when the referent object is clearly defined and its vulnerability can be convincingly demonstrated. The coding data reflects this directly. In the CSIS speech, S2 reaches only 3 coded segments, meaning that only three distinct passages construct a recognisable threat to the values Abe is defending, and S1 similarly reaches only 3 segments, indicating that the referent object itself is named and defined only briefly. In the Abraham-Geiger speech, by contrast, S2 appears in 21 segments and F1 in 49. Here, threats are constructed repeatedly throughout and the problem of antisemitism and democratic fragility is framed as an issue at almost every turn. The difference is stark. Merkel builds a cumulative

securitising logic by returning to the threat again and again. Abe names it rarely and briefly, not because he is less serious about the values he defends, but because the referent objects he constructs are less socially anchored and therefore less available to sustained and concrete threat construction.

The third divergence concerns the political effects of framing, and here the research question comes most directly into focus. In Merkel's case, framing draws clear lines of inclusion and exclusion within the political community. F1, F2, and F3 align especially strongly in the antisemitism section of the Abraham-Geiger speech, producing what can be described as a full framing cycle. The norms derived from Shoah memory define the conditions of membership in German democracy. Integration therefore means accepting those norms, and antisemitism, wherever it comes from, places a person or group outside the normative order German democracy requires. Framing emphasises certain values and delimits the boundaries of legitimate political belonging, which is precisely the function Entman (1993) identifies as central to the political work of interpretive frames. Bodnar (1992) makes a related point, arguing that commemorative discourse is always partly about defining who belongs to the community and on what terms.

Abe's normative generator speeches do not perform equivalent exclusion work. The norms they generate are universal in aspiration and correspondingly less useful as tools for defining internal political boundaries. Responsibility in the CSIS speech is attributed to a global collective rather than to specific domestic actors or groups, and when Abe states that "the dignity of each individual human being must be respected" (CSIS speech), he is making a claim no one is likely to contest. That is precisely why it carries less political edge than Merkel's specific defence of Jewish life in Germany. The universalism is morally admirable, but it is also politically safer. This is comparable to what Chong and Druckman (2007) describe as the conditional nature of framing effects. They argue that frames that resonate with widely shared values may generate broad agreement while producing limited mobilisation, precisely because their generality reduces the urgency and specificity of the implied obligation.

Returning to the research question, both leaders securitise historical memory indirectly in this type, defending orders, identities, and principles that memory is presented as having produced rather than memory itself. The mode differs systematically. Merkel's normative generation is guilt anchored, socially specific, and produces clear political

boundaries, while Abe's is lesson anchored, globally oriented, and produces a more diffuse but internationally ambitious normative vision. Framing is constitutive in both cases. It is through the organisation of problem definitions, responsibility attributions, and moral evaluations that memory is converted from historical reference into political obligation, and that conversion takes a different form depending on who is speaking, from what moral position, and to which audience. The following section examines a third configuration in which the past neither serves as a referent object nor generates the norms being defended, but functions instead as a resource for interpreting and intensifying present threats.

Chapter 4: Memory as a Securitising Frame for Present Threats

The previous chapters examined cases in which historical memory either constitutes a referent object under threat or generates the normative foundations that are subsequently defended. This chapter turns to a third configuration, one that is analytically distinct from both but equally important for answering the research question. In these speeches, historical memory does not appear as the primary object requiring protection, nor does it produce the norms being defended. Instead, it functions as an interpretive frame that gives present day dangers their historical depth, their moral gravity, and their political urgency. Memory is not securitised here. It securitises.

This distinction matters analytically because it shows that the relationship between memory and security can run in either direction. Memory can be the object of securitisation, as the previous chapters demonstrated, or it can be the instrument through which present threats are constructed as existentially serious. Watson (2011) describes security as a master frame that organises other political meanings. The speeches in this chapter show how memory can serve this function, as leaders embed present dangers within a longer historical narrative and make them legible as part of a recurring pattern rather than isolated events. The result, as Entman (1993) would predict, is that the interpretive frame shapes not only how a threat is understood but how urgently it demands a response.

The primary cases in this chapter are Merkel's government statement following the terrorist attacks in France, delivered before the Bundestag on 15 January 2015 (hereafter France speech), and Abe's address at the graduation ceremony of the

National Defence Academy on 22 March 2015 (hereafter Defence Academy speech). These speeches are paired analytically not because they address the same subject matter but because they use historical memory in a similar structural way. In both cases, memory serves as a resource that intensifies and legitimises the securitisation of present threats rather than as an object that itself requires defence. The chapter closes by flagging Abe's Press Conference on the Legislation for Peace and Security of 14 May 2015 (hereafter Press Conference Speech) as a limit case that demonstrates what happens when this framing function disappears entirely.

Merkel: The France Terror Statement

The France Speech is one of the most analytically complex speeches in the German corpus and repays careful attention precisely because of what it does not do. It does not securitise historical memory. Memory appears in it, prominently and deliberately, but its function is to frame and intensify the securitisation of present threats rather than to construct the past as something requiring defence. Understanding why this matters requires reading the speech's structure carefully.

The opening moves immediately into the present. Merkel addresses the Bundestag in a state of collective shock: *“Wir sind erschüttert und fassungslos über den Tod von 17 unschuldigen Menschen, die am Mittwoch der vergangenen Woche in Paris dem blanken Hass des internationalen Terrorismus zum Opfer gefallen sind”* (We are shaken and appalled by the deaths of 17 innocent people who fell victim last Wednesday in Paris to the naked hatred of international terrorism). The threat is immediately present, concrete, and named. It is not constructed through a memory frame. The Paris attacks are introduced directly as evidence of what Merkel calls *“zwei der großen Übel unserer Zeit”* (two of the great evils of our time), namely murderous Islamist terrorism and antisemitism, the hatred of Jews. This is S2 operating in purely contemporary terms before any historical reference has been made.

The historical memory move comes shortly afterwards, and its placement is analytically significant. Having already established the present threat, Merkel then reaches back to give it historical depth. She states *“Terror war nie weg. Terror hat immer existiert: in den Konzentrationslagern, in den Gulags, in den Morden an Walther Rathenau oder Matthias Erzberger, in den Morden an Martin Luther King, an Zoran*

Djindjic, an Hanns Martin Schleyer oder in den schrecklichen Morden des NSU” (Terror was never gone. Terror has always existed: in the concentration camps, in the Gulags, in the murders of Walther Rathenau and Matthias Erzberger, in the murders of Martin Luther King, Zoran Djindjic, Hanns Martin Schleyer, and in the terrible murders of the NSU). This is a notable rhetorical move. By placing the Paris attacks within a chain that runs from the concentration camps through the Gulags to political assassinations and far right violence, Merkel constructs terrorism not as a new phenomenon but as a historically recurring one. The Shoah does not appear here as a referent object that must be protected. It appears as the most extreme point in a historical continuum that culminates in the present attacks. Memory gives the threat its depth and its pattern.

The framing function of this historical move is reinforced a few paragraphs later, when Merkel explicitly names the German perpetrator identity in relation to Europe's violent past: *“Wir in Deutschland, wir in Europa haben wahrlich keinen Grund, mit erhobenem Zeigefinger zu sprechen, zu leidvoll war das jahrhundertelange Blutvergießen auf unserem Kontinent, bis hin zum von Deutschland begangenen Zivilisationsbruch der Schoah*” (We in Germany, we in Europe have truly no reason to speak with a raised finger, so painful was the centuries long bloodshed on our continent, culminating in the civilisational rupture of the Shoah committed by Germany). This is a striking deployment of perpetrator identity in a speech about terrorism. By invoking German guilt at this moment, Merkel simultaneously claims moral authority for defending democratic values against terrorism and positions that defence as continuous with Germany's post-Holocaust democratic reckoning. The Shoah is not securitised. It is the moral capital from which the speaker draws the authority to securitise the present.

The referent objects being defended in this speech are entirely present tense. They are press-freedom, the constitutional rights set out in Articles 1 through 5 of the *Grundgesetz*, pluralist social coexistence, Jewish life in Germany, and the freedom of Muslims in Germany from collective suspicion. Merkel is explicit: *“Jüdisches Leben gehört zu uns, es ist Teil unserer Kultur und Identität*” ('Jewish life belongs to us, it is part of our culture and identity'). This formulation appears in both the France speech and the Abraham-Geiger speech, but it functions differently in each. In the Abraham-Geiger speech, it is grounded in a normative chain derived from Shoah memory. In the France speech, it is a present tense political claim made in response to a present day

attack on Jewish people. The memory grounding is present as background but the political work is immediate.

The coding data confirms this claim. The France speech produces S2=42 and S3=40, among the highest values in the entire German corpus, yet F-codes related to memory framing are near zero. This is not a speech in which memory structures meaning throughout. It is a speech in which memory makes a single, concentrated, and highly effective appearance before the speech moves into its real analytical terrain. In this case that terrain is the nine point policy agenda covering counter terrorism legislation, intelligence cooperation, border surveillance, hate preacher prosecution, radicalisation prevention, and the long term democratic socialisation that Merkel frames as the deepest counter to terrorism. The historical frame does its work quickly and then steps back.

What it leaves behind is significant for how we understand framing effects. The single passage linking terrorism to the concentration camps and the Shoah adds historical colour to the speech. It also and maybe more importantly constructs terrorism as a civilisational threat rather than a criminal one, as something that must be understood in relation to Europe's worst moments rather than as an isolated law enforcement challenge. As Nesbitt-Larking and McAuley (2017) argue, the mobilisation of historical myth and memory in security discourse functions precisely by elevating contemporary threats to a register of existential seriousness that routine political language cannot achieve. Merkel's France speech demonstrates this mechanism with clarity. The historical frame appears briefly, does its elevating work, and then the speech proceeds to the policy agenda with the moral stakes already established.

Urgency in the France speech operates at two temporal levels simultaneously. The immediate urgency concerns the specific legislative and operational responses to the Paris attacks (for example new laws, intelligence measures, European coordination). The long term urgency concerns the democratic socialisation of society as a whole, what Merkel describes as "*Demokratie als Lebensprinzip*" (democracy as a way of life), which she frames as the ultimate counter to terrorism. This dual temporal structure reflects the framing function of memory. One could argue that the historical references position terrorism as a permanent and recurring challenge rather than a temporary crisis, which justifies both the immediate response and the long term democratic

project. S3 is high not because Merkel is responding to an emergency in the narrow sense but because she is constructing terrorism as an enduring condition requiring sustained political effort. This is consistent with what Christiansen (2024) describes as motivational framing, in which urgency is grounded in the long term consequences of insufficient vigilance rather than in the immediate pressure of crisis alone.

F2 (responsibility attribution) in the France speech is unusually broad, with responsibility spread across nine different actor categories, including the German state, European institutions, intelligence services, legislators, families, schools, associations, churches, and civil society more generally. This reflects how the speech frames the issue. If terrorism is understood as a civilisational challenge with historical roots rather than a one off criminal act, then responsibility cannot rest with a single actor. Instead, it is shared much more widely. Memory itself does not directly produce this distribution of responsibility, but the historical framing of terrorism as part of a recurring European pattern makes such a broad allocation feel both logical and necessary.

Abe: The National Defence Academy Graduation Speech

Abe's Defence Academy speech operates through the same structural logic as Merkel's France speech, but in an entirely different political direction. Where Merkel uses historical memory to frame a civilian democratic crisis, invoking the Shoah and Europe's violent past to intensify the urgency of defending press freedom, pluralism, and Jewish life, Abe uses sacrifice memory to frame a military institutional obligation, invoking wartime loss to intensify the duty of professional preparedness and security readiness. Here, the mechanism is parallel but the political effect appears profoundly different.

The speech is structured around two securitisation clusters separated by a long middle section of institutional legitimation and operational narrative. The first cluster appears early, establishing the foundational memory logic ("The peace that we enjoy today is built on the precious sacrifice of our forebears. We must always remember this and ensure that it is etched deeply on our minds. The tragedy of war must never again be repeated. This is the immense responsibility that we bear"). This formulation is analytically important because it performs the same conversion that the France

speech's historical frame performs, though in reverse direction. Rather than reaching back to give a present threat historical depth, Abe reaches back to derive a present professional obligation from historical loss. This creates a clear causal chain that unfolds step by step. Sacrifice is presented as having produced peace. That peace is then framed as inherently fragile rather than permanent. Because it is fragile, a duty to protect it emerges, and this duty is placed specifically on those who remember the sacrifices that made peace possible. Memory, in turn, frames the necessity of military preparedness.

The opening anecdote about Guadalcanal³ is worth examining closely, because it is where memory first enters the speech and it sets the emotional register for everything that follows. Abe describes how the remains of 137 soldiers who died in the war were collected in Guadalcanal and repatriated by the training vessel *Kashima*, “held firmly in the arms of your senior colleagues as they climbed the gangway”. This is a vivid and deliberately intimate image. The remains are a tangible, physical presence, carried in the hands of present day SDF officers. The continuity between the wartime dead and the graduating class is made bodily rather than merely rhetorical. Bodnar (1992) argues that official memory functions most powerfully when it creates felt connections between present communities and past sacrifice, and the Guadalcanal passage achieves precisely this. The graduates are positioned as the inheritors of a physical as well as a moral legacy, with a strong duty to defend said legacy.

The middle section of the speech shifts away from direct memory securitisation into institutional prestige, international cooperation, and operational capability narratives. The SDF's minesweeping in the Persian Gulf, PKO activities in Cambodia, counter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, and its role in South Sudan serve a different function. These sections establish the institutional legitimacy and professional credibility of the SDF before the speech returns to its securitising logic in the closing section. The coding process revealed this sequencing clearly. The speech demonstrates how the securitisation of historical memory functions as a form of military

³ The Battle of Guadalcanal (August 1942 to February 1943) was a major Allied offensive and turning point in the Pacific War, involving intense fighting between United States and Japanese forces and marking the beginning of the shift against Japanese expansion (White 1995).

socialisation, with memory framing the institutional narrative at the beginning and end rather than running through it continuously.

The second and more concentrated securitisation cluster appears near the close, built around the story of Lieutenant General Kunio Nakagawa at the Battle of Peleliu. Nakagawa ordered the evacuation of 1,000 islanders before the battle commenced, and told his troops as the situation deteriorated (“You must continue to fulfil your duty right up until the very end”). Abe then turns this historical episode directly toward the graduating class asking “What is the duty that you are tasked with? It is to never again repeat the tragedy of war”. This is the speech's most analytically significant moment. This 'never again'-type of formulation appears here not as a moral pledge in the commemorative register of the Okinawa or National Memorial Ceremony speeches. Instead, it can be argued, as a professional obligation assigned to military officers by their commander in chief. Memory is the source of the duty. The threat is the repetition of historical violence. The urgency is operational. Graduates must train, prepare, and stand ready precisely because the past has demonstrated what failure of preparedness costs.

The F2 coding data reflects this unusual specificity. The Defence Academy speech produces F2=21, the highest responsibility attribution count in the Japanese corpus. The reason is clear from the text. Responsibility is assigned with unusual precision to a clearly defined group, the graduating SDF officer corps, by their named commander in chief, rather than being spread broadly across society or humanity. Abe speaks directly and personally to the graduates throughout, using second person address such as “you,” “your,” and “yours” in a way that is absent from the commemorative speeches. The burden of historical obligation is individualised and professionalised rather than collectivised and generalised. This reflects the operationalisation of memory into military duty and represents the clearest instance in the Japanese corpus where memory securitisation produces institutionally specific obligations rather than diffuse moral commitments.

The threat construction in the Defence Academy speech remains process based rather than actor based, consistent with the broader pattern in Abe's corpus identified in Chapter 2. The danger is the repetition of war, complacency, insufficient vigilance. It is not a named state, movement, or organisation. However, the speech does contain

one gesture toward the contemporary threat environment that is worth noting. Abe states that “the peace of yesterday is no guarantee of the peace of tomorrow,” and references the development of security legislation enabling seamless responses to grey zone situations and the exercise of collective self-defence. This connects the historical memory frame to the present day security agenda in a way that is more operationally specific than anything in the commemorative speeches. Memory is being used here not only to frame a professional identity but to legitimate a specific and contested policy direction, namely the Legislation for Peace and Security that would be announced two months later in the Press Conference speech.

This connection between the Defence Academy speech and the Press Conference speech is analytically important, and it is where the framing type most clearly reveals its political effects. Framing theory argues that frames do not merely describe reality but organise it in ways that make some responses seem natural and others seem inadequate (Entman 1993). By establishing the 'never again' obligation as the professional identity of SDF officers in March, Abe creates a narrative context in which the security legislation announced in May can be presented not as a controversial expansion of military authority but as the institutional fulfilment of a historical duty. The memory frame does not appear in the Press Conference speech, but the groundwork it laid in the Defence Academy speech is part of the discursive environment in which the legislation is introduced.

Abe Limit Case: The Press Conference Speech

The Press Conference on the Legislation for Peace and Security represents one of the most analytically productive cases in the entire Japanese corpus, not because of what it contains but because of what it almost entirely lacks. The speech opens with a memory reference: “Seventy years ago, we, the Japanese people, made a pledge: the tragedy of war must never again be repeated. We will continue to uphold this pledge to never wage war again into the future. This is a 'never again' formulation in the same register as the Defence Academy speech. But it is the last substantive appearance of historical memory in a speech that runs to several thousand words. What follows is an entirely present tense security argument that highlights North Korean ballistic missiles covering most of Japan, Japanese nationals killed by terrorism in Algeria, Syria, and Tunisia, the sevenfold increase in SDF scrambles, and the alliance gap that prevents

Japan from defending US forces under attack even when they are operating in Japan's defence.

The coding data confirms this reading with unusual clarity. All F-codes are near zero. S2 and S3 are among the highest in the Japanese corpus. Memory appears in the opening pledge and then recedes almost entirely as the speech moves into its contemporary security argument. This is the inverse of what Merkel's France speech does. Where Merkel inserts a historical frame into a present tense security speech to give that speech moral depth, Abe inserts a present tense pledge into what quickly becomes a contemporary security speech, and the pledge does not recur or develop. The 'never again' formulation authorises the speech without framing it.

This makes the Press Conference speech the clearest demonstration in either corpus of a speech where securitisation operates at maximum intensity without memory doing substantive work. It is not a case of memory as securitising frame. It is a case of securitisation without memory, in which memory makes a token appearance at the opening before the real security logic takes over. As Ciută (2009) argues, the meaning of security claims is always contextually produced, and the context of the Press Conference speech (a televised government announcement about controversial security legislation, addressed to a domestic audience already familiar with the 'never again' pledge as a political formula) is one in which memory can function as a legitimising opening gesture without needing to do the sustained framing work it performs in the Defence Academy speech.

The significance of this case for the overall argument is twofold. It confirms that memory and securitisation are analytically separable, which the typology requires. And it points toward the following chapter's category, memory as legitimising foundation, where memory appears not as a sustained framing device but as a brief foundational reference that authorises a security argument without structuring it throughout. The press conference speech sits at the boundary between these two categories. This position makes it analytically useful, as it shows where the framing function ends and the legitimising function begins.

Comparative Analysis

Both the France speech and the Defence Academy speech use historical memory as a securitising frame rather than an object, adding a historical dimension to present threats or obligations and elevating them beyond routine political management. That this structural parallel holds across two very different national memory cultures suggests the securitising frame type is not a peculiarity of either case but a general mechanism available to leaders operating in different political contexts with different historical legacies.

The differences emerge when we look at what each leader is framing and in which direction the memory moves. Merkel uses the Shoah and Europe's violent past to frame a civilian democratic crisis, constructing present day terrorism as part of a historical pattern of dehumanisation and civilisational rupture. The referent objects being defended are civil society, constitutional freedoms, and the conditions of democratic belonging, and by invoking the Shoah in the context of contemporary antisemitism, Merkel draws a normative boundary around democratic membership with direct implications for how integration, tolerance, and belonging are defined. Abe, by contrast, uses sacrifice memory to frame a military institutional obligation, constructing the professional duty of SDF officers as the continuation of a historical responsibility incurred by the wartime generation's sacrifice. The referent objects being defended are peace, national security, and the institutional capacity to protect them, and the political effect is to define the conditions of professional military identity and legitimate a specific security policy agenda rather than the conditions of democratic belonging.

This directional difference is the most important comparative finding of the chapter and connects directly to the research question. In Merkel's France speech, framing shapes the meaning of present day terrorism by embedding it in a historical narrative of recurring dehumanisation, generating urgency for both immediate security responses and long term democratic renewal. In Abe's Defence Academy speech, framing shapes the meaning of military professionalism by grounding it in historical sacrifice, generating a specific institutional obligation and legitimating a present day security policy direction. This is the same mechanism operating in two entirely different political directions with correspondingly different political effects.

The self-implication asymmetry identified in Chapter 2 reappears here in a modified form. In the France speech, Merkel invokes Germany's own perpetration as the source of the moral authority from which she defends democratic pluralism against terrorism. She states that *“wir in Deutschland, wir in Europa haben wahrlich keinen Grund, mit erhobenem Zeigefinger zu sprechen, zu leidvoll war das jahrhundertelange Blutvergießen auf unserem Kontinent, bis hin zum von Deutschland begangenen Zivilisationsbruch der Schoah”* (we in Germany, we in Europe have truly no reason to speak with a raised finger, so painful was the centuries long bloodshed on our continent, culminating in the civilisational rupture of the Shoah committed by Germany). The guilt is deployed strategically. By naming it, Merkel positions herself to defend tolerance and resist both antisemitism and anti-Muslim suspicion from a place of historical accountability rather than moral superiority. This is perpetrator identity generating political leverage in the present. In the Defence Academy speech, Abe invokes the sacrifice of the wartime generation to generate professional obligation in the present. There is no equivalent acknowledgment of Japanese perpetration. The moral direction runs from the suffering of Japan's own soldiers and civilians to the duty of their present day successors. As Hansen et al. (2001) argue, the asymmetry between perpetrator and victim identity claims shapes not only how the past is remembered but what kinds of political authority memory can generate in the present. The France speech and the Defence Academy speech give that asymmetry its clearest expression in the securitising frame type.

A final comparison highlights that the France speech compresses its historical framing into a single, efficient passage before shifting to its policy agenda. The Defence Academy speech's historical frame is distributed across two clusters separated by a long institutional narrative. This structural difference reflects the different audiences and purposes of the two speeches. Merkel is addressing the Bundestag in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack, and the memory frame must establish the moral stakes rapidly before the policy agenda takes over. Abe is addressing graduating officers at a ceremonial event, and the memory frame can afford to develop at the pace of a commemorative address before being operationalised into professional duty. Both framings are effective in context, and both leave memory doing substantive political work without becoming the primary object of the speech. That is precisely what the securitising frame type requires. The following chapter examines a

fourth configuration in which memory recedes even further from the centre of the speech, functioning not as a frame that gives present threats historical depth but as a foundational reference that legitimises the political order being defended.

Chapter 5: Memory as Legitimising Foundation of Political Order

The previous chapter showed how historical memory can frame present day threats, giving them historical depth and moral weight without being securitised itself. This chapter examines a fourth and related but distinct pattern. In the speeches analysed here, memory does not appear as something under threat, nor does it actively frame how present dangers are understood. Instead, it explains where a political order came from, giving it a historical justification and a moral seriousness that purely institutional or strategic arguments could not achieve alone. The securitisation that follows is real and sometimes intense, but what is being defended is the order itself rather than the memory that underpins it.

Political leaders frequently invoke historical memory not to warn against a present danger or to generate a normative obligation, but to explain why a particular political order deserves to be defended. Memory appears here as an origin story that anchors the current order in lived historical experience before stepping back as the speech proceeds on its own security terms. Subotić (2016) describes this as the narrative dimension of ontological security, the way leaders use historical stories to stabilise and legitimate the political orders they inhabit. Similarly, Pennebaker and Banasik (1997) make a related point in arguing that collective memory is frequently mobilised to confer legitimacy on present institutions rather than to mobilise audiences around threats to those narratives themselves. This is subtly but importantly different from the previous chapter. There, memory was an active interpretive device that structured meaning throughout the speech. Here it does its work near the opening and then largely disappears, and that difference has direct consequences for how framing shapes the political effects of memory securitisation, which is one of the central concerns of the research question.

The primary cases are Merkel's address at the 51st Munich Security Conference on 7 February 2015 (hereafter Munich speech) and Abe's address to a Joint Meeting of the US Congress on 29 April 2015 (hereafter Congress speech). Both involve high profile international settings, both contain substantive securitisation of geopolitical or alliance

related threats, and in both the historical memory reference is compact, deliberate, and foundational rather than sustained throughout. The press conference speech, discussed at the end of Chapter 4, serves as a transitional reference point. Its single opening memory pledge operates in the same legitimising mode before disappearing, making it the thinnest example of this type in the corpus.

Merkel: The Munich Security Conference Speech

The Munich speech is the clearest and most fully developed case of the legitimising foundation type in the German corpus. It is also one of the most densely securitised speeches in the entire dataset, with S2 and S3 among the highest values recorded, yet F-codes related to memory are near zero. This configuration, intense securitisation combined with minimal memory framing, is analytically decisive. It shows that securitisation can be fully articulated without memory doing sustained discursive work, and that when memory does appear it can perform a legitimising function without generating the framing effects visible in the France speech or the normative obligations visible in the Abraham-Geiger speech.

Memory enters the Munich speech in two concentrated and deliberate passages near the opening. The first is historical: *“Vor genau 70 Jahren endeten der von Deutschland entfesselte Zweite Weltkrieg und der Zivilisationsbruch der Schoah”* (Exactly 70 years ago, the Second World War unleashed by Germany and the civilisational rupture of the Shoah came to an end). The second draws the institutional conclusion: *“Unsere heutige internationale Ordnung beruht auf der bitteren Erfahrung zweier Weltkriege”* (Our present international order rests on the bitter experience of two world wars). These two sentences do all the memory work the speech requires. The first names the historical rupture and Germany's responsibility for it. The second draws the causal line from that rupture to the postwar order. Having established this foundation, the speech moves immediately and without further historical elaboration into its real argument, covering the Ukraine crisis, Russian violations of international law, IS terrorism, NATO readiness, and the fragility of the European peace order.

What the memory reference accomplishes in these two sentences is significant despite its brevity. By grounding the international order in the bitter experience of two world wars and the Shoah, Merkel gives that order a moral weight it would not carry if presented as merely a product of institutional design or strategic calculation. The

United Nations, NATO, and the European Union become the institutional response to civilisational catastrophe rather than simply convenient arrangements, which means that challenging their principles carries the gravity of threatening to repeat what produced them. This is legitimising foundation logic at its most compressed. As Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) argue, the strength of a securitising move depends in part on the moral weight attached to the referent object, and the Munich speech achieves that weight through historical anchoring rather than through sustained framing. Levy (1997) makes a complementary point in his account of how collective memory shapes foreign policy, arguing that historically anchored threat perceptions carry a persuasive force that purely strategic arguments cannot replicate, precisely because they connect present dangers to lessons drawn from experiences of catastrophic failure.

The speech then develops its security argument across several distinct threat domains. Russia's actions in Ukraine are framed as violations of the foundational principles of the European peace order (*"Russlands Vorgehen hat diese Grundlagen unseres Zusammenlebens in Europa verletzt. Die territoriale Integrität der Ukraine wird ebenso missachtet wie ihre staatliche Souveränität. Das Völkerrecht wird gebrochen"* ('Russia's conduct has violated the foundations of our coexistence in Europe. The territorial integrity of Ukraine is being disregarded, as is its state sovereignty. International law is being broken')). IS terrorism, Boko Haram, state failure in Syria, and the Ebola epidemic are constructed as additional threats to international stability, while NATO readiness and the OSCE's role in conflict prevention are presented as necessary responses. Throughout all of this, memory does not reappear. It has done its work near the opening and stepped aside.

The complete absence of memory from S2 and S3 in the Munich speech is analytically important for the thesis argument. It demonstrates that memory can underpin securitisation without being securitised, which is precisely what distinguishes the legitimising foundation type from the direct securitisation and normative generator types examined in earlier chapters. In this context, Merkel does not 'need' to construct memory as threatened or to derive norms from it because she is asking the audience to defend an international order rather than to protect memory itself. The historical grounding has already explained why that order deserves defence, and the securitisation proceeds without needing to return to it. Yifachel and Ghanem (2004)

describe this dynamic as the depoliticisation of historical narrative, where memory is invoked to establish legitimacy and then removed from active contestation, allowing the political argument built upon it to proceed as though its foundations were self-evident. The Munich speech is a precise example of this mechanism in action.

Abe: The Congress Speech

The Congress speech is Abe's longest and most diplomatically complex address in the corpus, and it is the clearest example of the legitimising foundation type in the Japanese corpus. It is also, as the coding confirmed, the lowest securitisation intensity speech in the Abe corpus, which makes it the closest Japanese equivalent to the Munich speech's structural logic, with memory present as foundation and securitisation directed entirely at present day geopolitical and alliance concerns, the two largely decoupled from one another.

The speech's title, "Toward an Alliance of Hope," signals its primary purpose immediately. This is an address oriented toward diplomatic legitimation and alliance solidarity rather than toward the construction of present threats. The historical memory sections appear in the middle of the speech, grouped around the WWII Memorial visit, and they perform a specific diplomatic function, one that Wertsch (2021) describes as reconciliation legitimation, where shared acknowledgment of a painful past is used to authorise and deepen a present political relationship. Abe describes standing before the Freedom Wall at the memorial and states "With deep repentance in my heart, I stood there in silent prayers for some time. My dear friends, on behalf of Japan and the Japanese people, I offer with profound respect my eternal condolences to the souls of all American people that were lost during World War II". This is the most direct expression of perpetrator acknowledgment in the entire Abe corpus, and the fact that it occurs in a diplomatic rather than a commemorative setting, addressed to a foreign legislative audience, is analytically significant for reasons developed in the comparative analysis below.

The memory reference then performs its legitimising work. Abe states "Post war, we started out on our path bearing in mind feelings of deep remorse over the war. Our actions brought suffering to the peoples in Asian countries. We must not avert our eyes from that. I will uphold the views expressed by the previous prime ministers in this

regard". Having acknowledged Japanese perpetration and expressed remorse, he constructs the postwar US-Japan alliance as the product of reconciliation from that historical starting point, giving it a moral depth that purely strategic framing could not achieve. Memory explains how two former enemies became the closest of allies, and that explanation grounds the alliance's present significance. The securitisation that follows is directed at the present day geopolitical environment, covering the security legislation being developed in Japan, the new defence cooperation guidelines, and the alliance's role in maintaining stability across the Asia Pacific region, without linking these commitments back to historical memory. The memory sections and the security sections of the speech are largely sequential rather than integrated, visible in the coding data where F-codes and S-codes do not cluster together in the way they do in the direct securitisation cases of Chapter 2.

One passage in the Congress speech stands apart from this pattern and deserves particular attention. After acknowledging Japanese perpetration in Asia, Abe claims "We must not avert our eyes from that". This phrase is the closest the Japanese corpus comes to a direct securitising move around historical responsibility, and it is considerably more restrained than anything Merkel says in her commemorative speeches about German obligation. It appears once, is not developed, and is followed by a forward looking statement about Japan's contributions to Asian development. The controlled nature of this self-implication, acknowledged but bounded rather than developed into an ongoing obligation, is consistent with what Lind (2008) identifies as a characteristic feature of Japanese official apology discourse, where expressions of remorse are carefully managed to fulfil diplomatic expectations without generating domestic political costs or committing to the kind of perpetual obligation that Merkel's perpetrator identity model entails. The Congress speech is the one moment in the Abe corpus where self-implication approaches Merkel's model, and the fact that it occurs in a foreign diplomatic context rather than a domestic commemorative one reinforces this reading.

Comparative Analysis

The Munich speech and the Congress speech share a structural logic that distinguishes them from all the cases examined in previous chapters. In both, historical memory appears early and deliberately, does its legitimising work efficiently, and then

steps aside as the speech moves into its security argument. In both, the referent objects being securitised are geopolitical rather than identity based, covering the international order and its institutional architecture at Munich and the US-Japan alliance and regional stability in Washington. Both audiences are international rather than domestic, which shapes the memory content significantly.

That last point produces one of the most analytically interesting comparative findings in the thesis. Both Merkel at Munich and Abe in Washington reduce the intensity and extent of memory securitisation relative to their domestic commemorative speeches. Merkel's strongest memory securitisation occurs in the Dachau and Auschwitz Committee speeches, both delivered in domestic commemorative contexts. Her Munich speech, delivered to an international security audience, contains two memory sentences before proceeding without further historical elaboration. Abe's strongest memory securitisation in the commemorative corpus occurs in the Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Yad Vashem speeches. His Congress speech, delivered to a foreign legislative audience, contains a reconciliation memory section that legitimises the alliance without securitising memory itself. Both leaders calibrate their memory use to their audience, deploying richer and more intense memory securitisation at home while reducing memory to a legitimising foundation when addressing international partners.

This audience calibration is not incidental to the analysis. It reflects a structural logic that Schudson (1989) identifies as characteristic of public memory more broadly, arguing that collective memory is always shaped by the social and institutional contexts in which it is deployed rather than reflecting a stable body of shared knowledge. Applied to the Munich and Congress speeches, Schudson's insight suggests that the reduction of memory securitisation in international settings is not a matter of individual rhetorical preference but a structural response to the demands of the diplomatic context. Aggressive memory securitisation risks provoking contestation, disrupting the reconciliatory narrative that underpins alliance relationships, or alienating partners who carry different historical memories of the same events. Both leaders therefore become memory legitimisers abroad even when they are memory securitisers at home, and the pattern holds across both national cases, confirming that audience calibration is a cross national structural feature of memory politics rather than a characteristic of either German or Japanese discourse specifically.

The self-implication asymmetry that has run through the comparative analysis since Chapter 2 takes a particular form here. At Munich, Merkel names Germany as the perpetrator of the Second World War and the Shoah in the very sentence that grounds the international order in historical experience. The perpetrator identity is built into the legitimising foundation itself, making Germany's guilt part of why the order matters and why Germany is committed to defending it. At Washington, Abe acknowledges Japanese perpetration in Asia in the most direct terms available in the corpus, but this acknowledgment functions as a diplomatic gesture of reconciliation rather than as the foundation of an ongoing obligation. The Congress speech is the one moment in the Abe corpus where self-implication approaches Merkel's model, and the fact that it occurs in a foreign diplomatic context rather than a domestic commemorative one is analytically telling. It suggests that for Abe, direct acknowledgment of perpetration is a resource available for diplomatic reconciliation rather than a constitutive element of domestic political identity in the way it is for Merkel. This is consistent with what Lind (2008) describes as the strategic management of apology in Japanese foreign policy, where acknowledgment is calibrated to audience expectations and diplomatic context rather than deriving from an internally generated obligation rooted in perpetrator identity.

Together, the Munich and Congress speeches answer the research question at the level of this functional type with some precision. To the extent that memory appears in these speeches, it does not function as a securitised object or as a sustained framing device. What is securitised is the political order that memory is said to have produced, and memory shapes the meaning of that securitisation by giving the defended order a moral depth derived from historical catastrophe before stepping aside. The political effect of the legitimising foundation type is therefore not to draw boundaries of democratic belonging or to generate institutional obligations, but to establish the historical seriousness of the order being defended before the security argument proceeds on its own terms. The following chapter examines cases where memory is politically present but performs none of these securitising functions at all, completing the typology and demonstrating the full range of variation across the two corpora.

Chapter 6: Non-Securitised Memory Use and the Limits of Securitisation

The five type typology developed in this thesis rests on the foundational claim that the presence of historical memory in political speech does not automatically produce securitisation. The previous four chapters demonstrated the different forms securitisation takes when memory is politically mobilised. This chapter demonstrates the opposite. These cases are not failures of securitisation but analytically necessary evidence that securitisation is always contextually produced rather than inherent to the invocation of the past (Ciută 2009). Without them, the typology risks overclaiming, suggesting that all political memory use is security discourse in some form. The non-securitised cases prevent that error and complete the analytical framework.

The primary cases are Merkel's address at the 25th anniversary celebrations of German Unity in Sachsen-Anhalt on 1 October 2015 (hereafter Sachsen-Anhalt speech), her address at the BdV Jahresempfang on 5 May 2015 (hereafter BdV speech), and her remarks at the British Museum on 7 January 2015 (hereafter British Museum speech). The Helmut Schmidt eulogy of 23 November 2015 functions as a calibration case. On the Japanese side, the reconciliation sections of the Congress speech, already discussed in Chapter 5, represent the clearest non-securitised memory use in Abe's corpus.

Merkel: Sachsen-Anhalt, BdV, and British Museum

The Sachsen-Anhalt speech presents the most analytically striking case in the German corpus. It is the most densely coded speech in the entire dataset, producing F3=53, F1=50, and F2=29, and is saturated with historical memory across its entire length. References to the Monday demonstrations of 1989, reunification, regional history, the *Bauhaus*, and the *DDR* past all appear, yet none of them are linked to a referent object under threat or to claims of urgency around memory itself. The securitisation that does appear in the speech is located entirely in the refugee and migration governance sections, where Merkel uses strong necessity language, describing the challenge as a "*Herkulesaufgabe*" (Herculean task) requiring immediate policy action (Sachsen-Anhalt speech). Memory and security operate in entirely separate registers throughout and never converge.

This separation is itself analytically significant. Wæver (1995) distinguishes between politicisation and securitisation, a distinction that applies directly here. An issue can be politically salient, emotionally charged, and discursively dominant without being elevated to existential significance. The Sachsen-Anhalt speech demonstrates this at the level of memory with unusual clarity. The high F-code density reflects rich historical framing performing functions of regional identity celebration, historical legitimation, and national cohesion. The near-absent S-codes around memory confirm that this framing is not doing securitising work. Skidmore (1999) makes a related point in arguing that the boundary between normal politics and securitisation is determined by the structure of the discourse rather than by the emotional intensity or political salience of its content, and the Sachsen-Anhalt speech is a precise illustration of a politically intense memory discourse that remains firmly on the politicised rather than securitised side of that boundary.

The BdV speech presents a different configuration. Merkel opens with acknowledgment of the Shoah and Germany's permanent responsibility for it, immediately followed by recognition of the suffering of German expellees, then moves into contemporary migration challenges, and closes with European unity as the overarching framework. The result is a fragmented memory landscape in which no single referent object emerges as primary: *“wir erinnern in diesen Tagen an das Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs vor 70 Jahren und des Zivilisationsbruchs der Schoah”* (in these days we remember the end of the Second World War 70 years ago and the civilisational rupture of the Shoah', immediately followed by acknowledgment of the millions of Germans who experienced *“Flucht und Vertreibung”* (flight and expulsion). Placing these two memory narratives in direct proximity without integrating them into a coherent securitising chain produces a diffusion of moral weight rather than a concentration of it. As Pakhomenko and Sarajeva (2020) argue, a securitising move requires a coherent and stable referent object, and when multiple competing memory narratives are placed alongside one another without resolution they cancel out each other's securitising potential rather than compounding it. Olick (2007) makes a related observation about the politics of regret, noting that when states attempt to hold multiple victim and perpetrator memory narratives simultaneously, the resulting moral complexity tends to resist the kind of binary threat construction that securitisation requires. The BdV speech is a precise empirical illustration of this dynamic.

The speech does contain isolated S1 coding, with four coded segments identifying the memory of expulsion as a referent object in certain passages, the highest S1 count in the Merkel corpus. This is worth acknowledging rather than suppressing, because it resists a clean non-securitised classification. The speech approaches securitisation in isolated moments without achieving it as a sustained discursive logic, confirming that the boundary between the types in the typology is occasionally blurred rather than always sharp.

The British Museum speech is the purest non-securitised case in the German corpus. Memory appears only as cultural context for an exhibition on German national history and as background for celebrating shared UK-German values. There are no F-codes linked to memory, no S-codes around memory as a referent object, and no urgency generated around historical narratives. The speech's security content concerns present day terrorism and the Ukraine crisis, both framed in entirely contemporary terms without historical anchoring. Memory and security operate in entirely separate domains and never interact. The contrast with the Dachau and Auschwitz Committee speeches is stark. It supports Ciută (2009), who argues that security meanings depend on context, as it is not the content of memory that determines securitisation but the discursive setting in which it is used.

Calibration Cases: Helmut Schmidt, Congress Speech

The Helmut Schmidt eulogy functions as an important calibration case for the German corpus. The speech is saturated with historical reference, covering Schmidt's wartime experience, his Auschwitz visit as one of three experiences that shook him to his foundations, and the RAF terrorism crisis of 1977. Historical memory carries enormous moral weight throughout, yet none of it is securitised. Every historical reference is anchored to Schmidt as an individual, illuminating his character and his capacity for responsibility, rather than framing a collective political community as threatened. This biographical register keeps the speech firmly outside the securitisation framework even while engaging some of the most politically charged historical content in the German corpus, demonstrating that moral weight and political salience alone are insufficient conditions for securitisation. Bodnar (1992) distinguishes between vernacular and official memory on the grounds that official memory is always oriented toward the collective political community rather than toward individual experience. The

Schmidt eulogy is official in its setting but vernacular in its orientation, and it is precisely this orientation that prevents its historical content from generating securitising moves.

On the Japanese side, the reconciliation sections of the Congress speech represent the clearest non-securitised memory use in Abe's corpus. The alliance legitimisation function of the WWII memory passages does not amount to securitisation of memory. There is no referent object built around memory, no threat to it, and no urgency around its preservation. Memory serves a diplomatic rather than a securitising purpose, consistent with the broader pattern identified across the corpus that audience calibration systematically reduces memory securitisation in international diplomatic settings.

Theoretical Implications

Three findings from these cases carry theoretical weight beyond their empirical contribution. First, memory density is not a reliable predictor of securitisation intensity. The Sachsen-Anhalt speech has the highest F-code density in the entire corpus and near-zero memory securitisation. Memory must be linked to a stable referent object, a credible threat, and a claim of urgency before securitisation occurs, and none of these conditions is met in the non-securitised cases regardless of how much historical content is present. Empirically, this confirms the theoretical claim by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde (1997) that a securitising move is a specific discursive act that depends on particular structural conditions rather than a general feature of politically charged speech.

Second, speech genre and setting appear to be the most reliable predictors of whether memory securitisation occurs. Commemorative speeches addressed to domestic audiences in memorial contexts consistently produce the strongest securitisation in both corpora. Diplomatic speeches addressed to international audiences consistently reduce memory securitisation to a legitimising foundation or eliminate it entirely. Celebratory and cultural speeches addressed to domestic audiences in non-memorial contexts consistently produce non-securitised memory use. This pattern holds across both the German and Japanese corpora, confirming that the determinants of memory securitisation are structural and contextual rather than idiosyncratic to individual leaders or national memory cultures. Naxera and Krčál (2020) make a similar point in

their account of anniversary speeches as securitisation platforms, arguing that the commemorative genre creates particular conditions of receptivity for securitising moves that other speech genres do not.

Third, the BdV fragmentation finding has implications for how we understand the relationship between memory pluralism and securitisation. When multiple competing memory narratives are placed in proximity without resolution, the securitising potential of each is diminished rather than compounded. Successful memory securitisation requires not merely the presence of historical content but the coherent organisation of that content around a stable and bounded referent object, a requirement that pluralistic or conciliatory memory discourses are structurally less able to satisfy.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine a deceptively simple question: to what extent and how do state leaders securitise historical memory in political speeches, and how does framing shape the meaning and political effects of this securitisation? The empirical analysis of twenty speeches by Angela Merkel and Shinzō Abe in 2015 has produced an answer that is more differentiated than either a straightforward yes or a straightforward no. Both leaders securitise historical memory. Neither does so consistently. And the way framing shapes the meaning and political effects of that securitisation varies systematically across speech type, audience, and the moral position from which each leader speaks. These findings have implications for securitisation theory, for comparative memory studies, and for how we understand the relationship between the past and democratic politics more broadly.

Summary of Findings

The empirical analysis identified five functional types of memory use across the two corpora: direct securitisation, memory as a normative generator, memory as a securitising frame for present threats, memory as a legitimising foundation, and non-securitised memory use. These types emerged inductively from the coding process but speak to a broader body of work on the contextual and variable nature of securitisation (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1997; Ciută 2009; Mälksoo 2015). The typology is the primary analytical contribution of this thesis, and its most significant feature is that it applies across both national cases. The same five types appear in

both the German and Japanese corpora, which means that the variation is not between two fundamentally different national approaches to memory politics but within a shared repertoire of memory securitisation that both leaders deploy differently depending on context.

At the strongest end of the securitisation spectrum, the Dachau and Auschwitz Committee speeches represent the clearest cases of direct memory securitisation in the German corpus, producing dense and tightly integrated coding patterns in which threat, moral evaluation, problem definition, and urgency compound one another simultaneously. Merkel constructs memory as a referent object whose erosion would undermine the democratic constitutional order, names concrete present day threats including contemporary antisemitism and attacks on memorial sites, and frames remembrance as an ongoing political duty rather than a ceremonial act. Abe's commemorative corpus produces genuine but structurally different direct securitisation. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki speeches construct Japan's unique witness identity as a referent object, name the closing window of living testimony as a precise and irreversible threat, and generate concrete policy obligations around nuclear disarmament. The Yad Vashem speech compresses a full securitising move into a very short text, using performative pledge language and the spatial authority of the site to amplify the force of the commitment. Both leaders securitise historical memory directly in commemorative settings. However, their threat constructions differ. Merkel's are concrete, named, and actor adjacent, while Abe's are gradual, structural, and process based.

Moving along the typological spectrum, the normative generator type shows that memory can produce the values and identities that are subsequently defended without itself being the threatened object. Merkel's Abraham-Geiger speech is the clearest example. Shoah memory generates binding constitutional obligations, and antisemitism is constructed as a threat to those obligations rather than to memory itself. Abe's CSIS and Advisory Panel speeches operate through a parallel but morally distinct logic, converting twentieth century historical experience into a codified set of universal principles and defending the liberal international order as the product of those lessons. The deepest divergence in the corpus appears here. Merkel generates norms from perpetrator identity, while Abe generates norms from a learner identity.

This is not a minor rhetorical difference. It determines what kind of referent object each leader can construct, what kind of threat is available to them, and what kind of political work the securitising move ultimately performs.

The securitising frame type, examined in Chapter 4, showed that the relationship between memory and security can run in either direction. In the France speech, Merkel uses Shoah memory and Europe's violent past to give present day terrorism and antisemitism their historical depth, constructing terrorism as a civilisational threat rather than a criminal one and drawing on Germany's perpetrator identity as moral capital for defending democratic pluralism. In Abe's Defence Academy speech, sacrifice memory is used to frame a military institutional obligation, operationalising the "never again" logic into professional duty and legitimising a specific security policy agenda. Both leaders use memory as a framing device in these speeches. The direction of the framing reflects the same asymmetry seen across the corpus, with Merkel focusing on civil society and democratic belonging and Abe on state institutions and security capacity.

The legitimising foundation type, examined in Chapter 5, produced one of the most analytically interesting cross-national findings in the thesis. Both Merkel at Munich and Abe in Washington systematically reduce memory securitisation when addressing international audiences, deploying memory as a brief foundational reference that legitimises the defended order before stepping aside entirely. This audience calibration pattern holds across both corpora, confirming that it is a structural feature of memory politics rather than a characteristic of either German or Japanese discourse specifically. Leaders securitise memory at home and legitimise with it abroad.

Finally, the non-securitised cases in Chapter 6 performed essential argumentative work by demonstrating that memory can be politically dense, emotionally charged, and discursively dominant without generating any securitising move. The Sachsen-Anhalt speech, the most heavily coded speech in the entire dataset, contains near-zero memory securitisation. The BdV speech shows that fragmented memory landscapes, in which multiple competing narratives are placed in proximity without resolution, prevent coherent securitisation from forming. The British Museum speech and the Helmut Schmidt eulogy confirm that speech genre and audience are more reliable predictors of securitisation than memory content. These cases complete the typology

and anchor the claim that memory securitisation is specific, bounded, and contextually produced rather than a general property of politically engaged historical discourse.

Answering the Research Question

To what extent do Merkel and Abe securitise historical memory? The answer is selectively and asymmetrically. Merkel's securitisation is denser, more tightly integrated, and produces more institutionally specific political effects. Abe's securitisation is real but more diffuse, operating through process-based threat construction, generational urgency, and universal referent objects that generate wide moral reach at the cost of domestic political specificity. Neither leader securitises memory consistently across all speech types, and in both corpora the strongest securitisation is concentrated in domestic commemorative settings.

How does framing shape the meaning and political effects of this securitisation? This is where the findings are most analytically productive. Framing does not merely accompany securitisation but it constitutes it. The same historical content, such as Shoah memory, can function as a referent object under threat in the Dachau speech, as a normative foundation in the Abraham-Geiger speech, as a framing device in the France speech, and as a legitimising reference in the Munich speech, depending entirely on how problem definition, responsibility attribution, and moral evaluation are organised around it. Entman (1993) argues that frames select aspects of reality and make them salient, and this is confirmed at a comparative level. The salience of memory, its threat environment, and its political obligations all shift with framing, not just content. Watson (2011) argues that security functions as a master frame that organises other political meanings, and this is confirmed here. However, the pattern is more differentiated than the literature suggests, as security can organise memory in multiple ways that do not produce the same political effects.

Theoretical Contributions

This thesis makes three contributions to the existing literature. The first is the typology itself. By demonstrating that memory securitisation is a differentiated repertoire rather than a uniform practice, the analysis extends the work of Mälksoo (2015) and Pakhomenko and Sarajeva (2020) beyond crisis and conflict settings into routine commemorative and political discourse. The typology is cross-nationally applicable,

emerging independently from both the German and Japanese corpora and holding across very different national memory cultures. This suggests it may have wider applicability beyond the two cases examined here.

The second contribution concerns the relationship between self-implication and securitisation intensity. The analysis shows that the moral position a leader occupies in relation to historical wrongdoing shapes the kind of memory securitisation that is structurally available to them. Perpetrator nation identity generates guilt-based obligation tied to specific victims, which produces concrete and institutionally specific referent objects, actor-adjacent threat construction, and tight framing that performs inclusion and exclusion work within the political community. Learner or witness identity generates lesson-based orientation tied to universal principles, which produces broader and more diffuse referent objects, process-based threat construction, and framing that generates wide moral reach without equivalent political specificity. This finding extends Hansen et al.'s (2001) account of the asymmetry between perpetrator and victim identity claims by showing how that asymmetry shapes not just historical narratives but the structure of securitising moves in contemporary political speech.

The third contribution is methodological. The combination of securitisation theory and framing theory, operationalised through a systematic coding scheme and applied comparatively across a large speech corpus, demonstrates that these two frameworks are complementary rather than competing. Securitisation theory identifies when and why memory is elevated to existential significance. Framing theory explains how that significance is organised, communicated, and made persuasive. The F-codes reveal patterns that the S-codes alone cannot capture, and the combination of both coding registers is what makes the typological differentiation possible. This supports the argument made by Mortensgaard (2018) for bridging the Copenhagen School and framing theory, and provides an empirical demonstration of how such a bridge can be operationalised in practice.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations of this study warrant acknowledgment. The analysis is confined to elite political discourse and makes no claims about audience reception, media circulation, or policy effects. The findings apply to the 2015 commemorative context

and are not intended to capture longitudinal change or broader societal memory practices. The language asymmetry between the German speeches, analysed in the original German, and the Japanese speeches, analysed using official English translations, may affect the comparability of rhetorical nuance at the margins, though the use of official translations reflects a deliberate communicative choice by the Japanese government rather than a researcher imposition. A further limitation concerns corpus size: several of the five types are illustrated by only one or two speeches per leader, which means that the analytical conclusions drawn for those types rest on a narrow empirical base. The typology is intended as a generative framework rather than a definitive taxonomy, and its broader validity remains to be tested against larger corpora.

Future research could extend the typology to other national cases, other time periods, or other political actors including opposition leaders and populist movements, whose memory securitisation practices may differ significantly from those of governing executives in established democracies. Expanding the corpus for Merkel and Abe themselves, beyond the 2015 commemorative year, would also allow conclusions drawn here to be tested against a wider range of speeches and contexts. Longitudinal analysis of how their memory securitisation changed over the course of their respective tenures would be particularly productive, given the intensification of right-wing memory contestation in Germany in the years following 2015 and the continued revision of Japanese security policy after the legislation examined here. Comparative research extending beyond post-war democracies to authoritarian and hybrid regimes would test whether the typology holds in political contexts where memory securitisation serves different institutional functions and faces different constraints.

Concluding Reflection

Historical memory and security have long been understood as separate domains of political analysis. Memory belongs to the past; security belongs to the present and future. What this thesis demonstrates is that this separation is analytically untenable. In the commemorative and political speeches of two of the most significant political leaders of the early twenty-first century, the past is not merely remembered. It is deployed, framed, and securitised as a resource for managing present political communities, defining who belongs, assigning obligation, and constructing the

dangers that threaten democratic order. The seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War provided an unusually concentrated opportunity to observe this dynamic, but the mechanisms it reveals are not historically specific to 2015. As long as political leaders invoke the past to legitimate the present, the question of how that invocation securitises will remain analytically and politically consequential. This thesis has tried to provide the conceptual tools to answer it.

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