

## **Abstract**

This Master Thesis called “The Securitization of Immigration. An Assessment of the Extent of Securitization of Immigration in the German Political Discourse in the aftermath of the 2015 European Refugee Crisis“ aims to identify the influence of the 2015 European refugee crisis on the German political discourse in reference to immigration and asylum. Since immigration became one of the greatest security concerns in the post-Cold War era, it appears plausible that the unprecedented high-numbers of asylum applications in 2015/16 triggered securitization in Germany. This impression is reinforced in reference to the increasing popularity of the anti-Islam, far-right PEGIDA movement and the right-wing populist party AfD. However, the merely welcoming attitude towards refugees among the German population, which attracted attention all over the world, challenges the securitization thesis, because the political discourse is assumed to be oriented towards public opinion. Thus, the political discourse in the aftermath of the 2015 European Refugee Crisis is assumed to be torn between fear (securitization discourse) and optimism (humanitarian discourse) in regard to immigration and asylum. By conducting a discourse analysis, contextualized speech-acts based on a generic structure used by Holger Stritzel were identified, in order to analyze whether the securitization or the humanitarian discourse dominated the political discourse. The primary sources of the discourse analysis constitute parliamentary debates that took place in the German Bundestag between August 2015 and February 2016, because literature has given major attention to the media discourse, but has largely ignored the political discourse in the parliament. The results of the analysis confirm the fragmentation of the political debate in reference to asylum and immigration. On the one hand, the majority of identified speech-acts originates from political representatives of the political opposition which vehemently took a stand for immigrants and asylum. Most frequently, the opposition constructed specific governmental actions or the absence of specific measures as potential treat to the well being of refugees. On the other side, speech-acts, which aimed to portray certain groups of immigrants as danger, were predominantly uttered by representatives of the CDU/ CSU fraction. Often, those were directed against asylum applicants which were assumed to have purely economic reasons for their migration.

## **Keywords**

securitization, threat construction, discourse analysis, asylum, immigration, European Refugee Crisis, Germany