

BALANCE OF FREEDOM AND SECURITY IN GHANA'S DEMOCRACY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENT NANA AKUFO ADDO'S NATIONAL BRIEFINGS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the balance of freedom and security in Ghana's democracy during the Covid-19 pandemic via the precautionary measures announced by the government. Ghana is considered as one of the most stable democracies in Africa. Considering the Covid-19 health crisis, via the periodic briefings of the President, this research seeks to find out if and how the President tried to strike a balance between keeping Ghanaians safe and maintaining basic freedoms. Content analysis is used to analyze the 20 speeches given by the President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Akufo Addo, from March 2020 to March 2021 to assess the President's choice of words regarding freedom and security. The findings indicate that, in times of the heightened security threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the President's speeches included plentiful words of securitization. However, with the help of a detailed analysis and contextualization of the words used, the paper concludes that the President's initiatives and directives were geared towards striking a balance between keeping Ghanaians safe and maintaining basic freedoms.

Keywords: freedom, security, democracy, Covid-19 pandemic, balance

Introduction

Freedom and security are two concepts that live side by side. The availability of security provides the atmosphere in which freedom flourishes. People from all walks of lives can freely live their lives the way they are accustomed to in an atmosphere free of threat to such lifestyles. Therefore, an ideal situation is where balance is achieved regarding freedom and security. One political, philosophical and social concepts that suits this explanation is the response communitarianism, which basically draws its prime tenet on the thought that a good society is the one that carefully balances freedom and security (social order). This is achieved when pluralistic societal interests are prioritized. Even liberalism adheres to this concept regarding liberty and social order (Etzioni, 2005). Specifically, people should be free to go about their personal businesses, however that does not mean that they have the right to harm others (Gordon, 1993). With this, freedom and security are being put to use concurrently, which is how it is often harnessed within a given society.

Both freedom and security are mostly associated with the state in terms of applicability and maintenance because it is the state that possesses the authority and capacity to uphold them. Dinh (2001) relates the state to the concept by saying that "in the same way that an individual's moral right to property would be meaningless unless the government establishes courts of law in which those rights can be declared and enforced so too.... Civil liberties would be a nullity unless they are protected" (p. 400). The protection and enforcement here are rendered by the state. Therefore, although it is possible to discuss freedom and security at individual and organizational levels, it is important to point out that the freedom and security being discussed in this research is located at the state level.

This research examines how the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, tried to balance security and freedom during the Covid-19 pandemic through his speeches to his country. Civil libertarians often claim that

governments that seek to limit freedoms take the opportunity to securitize gradually whenever an extraordinary event arises, until people's liberty has decreased significantly (Etzioni, 2005). The President's speeches offer an indication whether an attempt has been made to use the extraordinary event (Covid-19) to securitize or not. Extraordinary events are useful as a measure in this respect due to their rare occurrence. Additionally, this research serves as one test of the reputation Ghana has attained as one of the most democratic and stable countries in Africa (Australian Trade & Investment Commission, 2017). Numerous African countries, including Ivory Coast and Mali, have lost the democratic gains they have achieved over the years and are sliding back into chaos and dictatorship. Irregularities in elections, power struggles, and the Covid-19 pandemic were some of the key factors leading to securitization in those countries, consequently resulting in the loss of some basic freedoms (Campbell & Nolan, 2021; Smith, 2013; Whitehouse, 2012). Comparatively, this research helps to determine whether Ghana continues to be a beacon of democracy in Africa in such extraordinary times. Especially in a time where the strength and tolerance of democracies of the world is being tested by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Literature

Many authors have written about the balance of security and freedoms in democratic societies. After 9/11, numerous scholars have argued that, in times of perceived extraordinary security crises, governments use these circumstances as an excuse to curtail freedoms (Baker, 2003; Bunyan, 2002; Charles, 2020; Cole, 2003; Haubrich, 2014; Silberstein, 2004). Benkler's (2013) argument highlights how freedom is curbed easily by excessive security measures in times of perceived heightened security threat. He uses the case of the U.S. government's extended surveillance programs on virtually all Americans following the 9/11 terrorist attacks which effectively curtailed the freedom to privacy. Likewise, others have cited a lack of oversight by the judiciary as an enabler for governments to securitize more in times of perceived security threats (Aberbach, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Ornstein and Mann, 2006; Owens, 2006). Others, however, have argued that in

times of extraordinary security threats, conventional security mechanisms may not address the crises at hand, thereby justifying a government's imposition of stricter measures (Gorman, 2002; Price, as cited in Cuomo, 2016; Mooney, 2020). In relation to health crises, Mooney (2020) argues for adopting strict measures if these safeguarded the interest of the public, even if some members of society disagree. In an article in May 2020, Mooney utilizes a narrative/interpretive approach to equate the anti-Covid-19 restrictions movement of today with those of 1832 in Liverpool and 1890 in Nottingham (Mooney, 2020). Analyzing English newspaper contents from that time period, he showed that the contemporary and past anti-pandemic restrictions adherents use a similar language in arguing that the government would take away their freedoms with those restrictions.

Another academic area focuses on the struggle to balance freedom and security (Huysmans, 2010; Ovadia, 2006; Wagner and Kneip, 2018; Waldron, 2017). In a conference titled "Media freedom and independence in times of COVID-19", organized by the UN in May 2020 to tackle disinformation and aid press freedom, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet emphasized that "under international law restrictions on civil liberties in times of crisis should be demonstrated as necessary, appropriate and proportionate" (Bachelet, 2020). Similarly, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in May 2020 reiterated that civil liberties curtailment during the pandemic must be "limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation" (OSCE, 2020).

Most research conducted about Ghana and the Covid-19 pandemic assessed the pandemic's impact on education due to school closures (Adarkwah, 2021; Amanor-Mfoafo et al., 2020; Agormeda et al., 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020; Sabates, Carter & Stern, 2021; Upoalkpajor & Upoalkpajor, 2020). Others have focused on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the country (Asante & Mills, 2020; Bukari, et al., 2020; Nakouwo & Akplehey, 2020; Obese et al., 2021; Owusu, Frimpong-Manso, & Kwabena, 2020; Saire & Panford-Quainoo, 2020). Closely related to democratic governance, freedom, and security, some have discussed the

legislative response of the Ghanaian government in the wake of the pandemic (Addadzi-Koom, 2020), the politicization of the pandemic lockdown (Brammah, 2020), and the effect of elections on the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions (Pulejo & Querubín, 2020). Evidently, only little research in Ghana has directed attention towards assessing freedom and security via content analysing of the President's speeches.

More closely related to freedom and security, and as part of the group of scholars arguing that governments tend to use extraordinary crises to curtail freedoms in times of heightened security threat to the public welfare, Charles (2020) argues that the Ghanaian government was setting a dangerous precedent by using the Covid-19 pandemic to curtail the freedom of religion. Using critical analysis of electronics and social media reports, the author stated that, due to the huge impact of religious establishments, they should have been spared closure. Furthermore, the government needed the religious establishments to fill the spiritual and logistical gap the country required most in such difficult times. Therefore, not only was imposing a lockdown on religious establishments detrimental to the people, but it was also not in the best interest of the government.

This paper explores whether Ghana falls within the category of democracies curtailing freedoms in times of extraordinary crises or whether they attempt to balance freedom and security. With the Covid-19 pandemic as the most significant health crisis threatening the Ghanaian public since the country's democratic transition in 1992, this paper illuminates where the country stands in terms of balancing security and freedom in times of extraordinary crisis, testing Ghana's quality of democracy and governance by analyzing the balance of freedom and security in these exceptional times.

Definitions of Freedom and Security

The concept of security is broad, and there has been no single definition that fits all situations. Scholars have, however, developed parameters with-

in which definitions of the term may fall. Smith and Brooks (2013) define security as “an outcome of risk” (p. 10) to suggest that the need to securitize is propelled by a presence of perceived danger. Manunta (1999) gives a broader definition of security to equal the availability of assets, with individuals, groups, or nation-states wishing to protect assets against a perceived threat. Security is also defined as “being without unacceptable risk when restricting the concept of risk to intentional unwanted acts by intelligent actors” (Amundrud, Aven & Flage, 2017). Other scholars have associated security with safety, an absence of threat, and the presence of a promise of protection from danger (Jarvis & Holland, 2015). All these definitions share the negation of risk. This research adopts Manunta's (1999) definition due to its broad and encompassing nature, including the nation-state as a protector of assets against a perceived threat. Defining the concept of freedom also requires context, as a “naked” definition of the term would not facilitate the intended purpose in a particular instance. Agamben's (1999) context-less definition of freedom, for instance, states that “Freedom is freedom for both good and evil” (p. 183). The question then is, should people be free to commit evil and illegal acts as an exercise of freedom? Obviously, no society would accept the practicality and eventuality of such a definition. According to Prozorov (2007), “freedom is a priori linked to a form of order as the only possible locus for its practice and, moreover, becomes an attribute of that order” (p. 3). If freedom is not viewed as an embodiment of a particular order, then its parameters and constitutions would be chaotic, and could be subjected to abuse. In relation to freedom as an embodiment of a particular system, Petit (2000) asserts that the restraints by a lawful and fair regime “does not make you unfree” (p. 5). Not only does this indicate that a meaningful definition of freedom is only achieved when the term is associated with a particular order, but it also illustrates a real and legitimate parameter within which it can actually be exercised. Therefore, as far as this research is concerned, Prozorov's definition is adopted to conceptualize and operationalize freedom. Thus,

the freedom of Ghanaians in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions is defined within the parameters of the laws of Ghana.

Can there be an equilibrium of freedom and security?

The definition of freedom above implies that whenever the need for tighter security arises, some freedoms can be curtailed, or at least perceived to be curtailed by those who overly support freedom. For instance, the frequent killing of black people by police in the U.S. has led to a growing call for defunding and abolishing the police (Davis, 2020; Loader, 2020; O'Rourke, Su & Binder, 2021). These demands partly stem from the fear of a loss of freedom and were not only uttered by ordinary citizens but also by prominent figures, including famous public office holders (Davis, 2020). It has always seemed that for security to be upheld in a society, there must be a compromise regarding some freedoms. Which freedoms ought to be curbed and to what extent usually divide societies. Historically, while Benjamin Franklin proclaimed that "they that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety" (Franklin, 1759, as cited in Dinh, 2001, p. 399), Abraham Lincoln, after unilaterally suspending the writ of *habeas corpus* in 1861, maintained that liberty could be an impediment to proper functioning of the government, and a threat to its existence (Dinh, 2001).

Benjamin Franklin's view applies to this research and to modern discussions regarding freedom and security. Essential liberties, such as freedom of movement, to choose what to eat, to own property, to speak one's opinion, could be a good measurement to judge whether freedoms are being curtailed. When these essential liberties are compromised for the sake of a looming security threat, freedom is lost, unless the circumstances are extraordinary, and a reversal to normalcy when the perceived threat has vanished is guaranteed. However, the latter is rarely attained. For example, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, freedom and liberty have never reversed

to the level they were before the attack (Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008; Bird & Brandt, 2010; Shaheen, 2008). Similarly, the Covid-19 pandemic might equally lead to a long-term curtailment of freedom and liberty (Bauer et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020; Mayer, Schintler & Bledsoe, 2020; Repucci & Slipowitz, 2020).

Overall, there should be a balance regarding freedom and security if society is to function orderly. While this equilibrium may be easily achieved and held in times free of crisis, the difficulty arises in extraordinary times with a need of and resort to securitization. The definitions of both freedom and security show that excess of either one of them could be a dangerous slope towards a disorderly society. Commenting on the balance of security and freedom, Edmond Burke emphasized that "the only liberty I mean is a liberty connected with order; that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them" (Burke, 1774, as cited in Bork, 1996). This research determines whether the President of Ghana achieved a balance of security and freedom from his numerous speeches regarding the Covid-19 measures, taking into consideration the above definitions and comparisons.

Methodology

This research collected primary data in form of 20 speeches made by the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo Addo, in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, available on the government of Ghana's official website. This research covers the time span of one year (March 2020 – March 2021). The President's speeches and addresses to the nation regarding the formulation and implementation of the Covid-19 pandemic measures were analyzed qualitatively since they serve as directives and orders for the entire country. Therefore, assessing the balance of freedom and security via this data provides insight into democracy and governance in extraordinary times in Ghana.

Through the use of content analysis, I analyzed the balance between security and freedom based on word frequencies and their contextual usage throughout the 20 speeches of the President. After adopting a definition of security and freedom, the keywords were then categorized into the groups “freedom,” “security,” and other categories relevant to democracy and governance in Ghana. Words related to precautionary measures were categorized under “security,” while words indicating a lack or easing of restrictions were categorized under “freedom.” Content analysis is not only applicable in both qualitative and quantitative research (Elo & Kynäs, 2008; Johnson, Reynolds & Mycoff, 2016) but also aims explicitly for external validity, unlike strictly qualitative research designs (Downe & Wamboldt, 1992). The reliability of this approach lies in clearly laid out definitions, categorizations, coding of key terms, and procedures used. They should be clear enough to promote inter-coder reliability (Johnson & Mycoff, 2016). To attain reliability, this research has not only categorized freedom related words on one side and security related words on another, but also observed the contextual usage of these words to achieve accuracy in the categorization. For example, if a security related word was used in a context that denotes non-security measures, it was not categorized under “security.” Therefore, the measurement and coding of words is based on the observation of both word frequency and contextual usage.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

Securitization theory is used to explain the relationship between the two elements of securitizing political agents and the audience, as well as the third element, the context that enabled the political agents to securitize. According to Buzan and Wæver (2009) of the Copenhagen School, the securitizing agents include state and non-state actors, individuals, and groups, while the referent objects can also consist of individuals, groups, or pressing issue(s) of national interest, including sovereignty, environment, economy, public health, and political crises. The speech act is considered a vital component

of the concept because the political agents can accomplish an objective via their discourse rather than report an incident. Ever since its inception, securitization theory has been developed further so that it can be applied widely, since even Wæver admitted to its inherent limitations to explain broader security phenomena (as cited in Stritzel, 2014, p. 12).

As a result, securitization theory has been explicated and applied to various security related areas, including climate change and security (Busby, 2020; Corry, 2011; Lucke, 2020; Mayer, 2012), security and immigration (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006; Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002; Wæver & Carlton, 1993), while others have criticized the theory (Ciută, 2009; Floyd, 2007; Leonard & Kaunert, 2011; McSweeney, 1996; Williams, 2003). One of the most recent criticisms sees securitization theory as racist (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2020). Although the authors admit that securitization theory can be applied to non-Western societies, it was nonetheless developed with elements of racial political thought, since the categorization into normal and extraordinary times veils racial violence in “normal” times. Therefore, building on previous critiques of the theory, Howell and Richter-Montpetit argue that securitization theory produces a racist, civilizationist and political imaginary. Moreover, securitization would also violate liberal political order, threatening to erase liberal progress worldwide. While this premise is relevant, it does not affect the extensive applicability of securitization theory, even in non-Western societies, as this research shows.

Balzacq (2005) criticizes the overreliance on speech act of securitization which leaves out the social consequences associated with it. However, he admits “that an effective securitization is audience-centered.” Thus, I draw from this to say that the emphasis on the speech act is paramount since the agent’s speech is the means by which the audience appreciates and assents to securitization. Moreover, this paper employs this concept because it is useful to explain the Ghanaian President’s speeches to the nation in which he announced securitization, using the Covid-19 pandemic as the refer-

ent object. By analysing word choice and frequency, content analysis as a method provides the detail and rigor with which one can conclude as to whether or not Ghana balanced the maintenance of freedom and protection of citizens.

Findings

The table below contains the findings of the research. In the 20 speeches examined, the President used words related to securitization more frequently than words related to freedom. Another aspect of the findings, and relevant to democracy and governance, is the President's use of religious related words, in some cases more often than words in the categories of "freedom" and "security." One such case is the frequent usage of the word 'God' (44 times), in each case to invoke God's blessings on the nation, as shown in the table below. Regarding the pandemic, he mentions that "This too shall pass, because the Battle is still the Lord's", and "May God bless us all and our homeland Ghana and make her great and strong" (Akufo-Addo, 2021). In fact, all the speeches ended with such a sentence, next to the other instances where the President mentioned God.

'Restrictions' is the most frequently used word among all the categories, usually referring to the strict Covid-19 pandemic measures imposed by the government. 'Protect' was used 37 times and was in all cases followed by the mentioning of lives of healthcare personnel, school children, and the nation. The President used 'protect' to justify the securitization, as evident in "It is my job to protect you", "it is very important that we protect all healthcare providers", "we will... protect people's lives, then their livelihoods" (Akufo-Addo, 2021). Public places that were ordered to close per the President's speeches included schools, nightclubs, beaches, places of worship, as well as the land, sea and air borders of the country, although air traveling was resumed later on. The President mentions that "all Universities, Senior High Schools, and basic schools, i.e., public and private schools, will be closed Monday, 16th March, 2020, till further notice" and "our borders, by air, land and sea, remain closed until further notice" (Akufo-Addo, 2021).

Words Category	Frequency
<i>Freedom:</i>	
Free	17
Easing	20
Permitted	9
Operate	4
Democratic	4
Democracy	1
Freedom	7
<i>Security:</i>	
Lockdown	3
Limited	3
Closed	24
Restrictions	54
Protect	37
Security	26
Law	14
<i>Others:</i>	
Parliament	10
God	44
Prophet Muhammad	2
Jesus Christ	1
Muslims	5
Christians	2

Table 1: Key Words Category Table (created from Presidency of the Republic of Ghana, 2021)

Discussion

The President used security related words more often than freedom related words. However, a closer analysis reveals that, given the magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has claimed millions of lives (WHO, 2020) worldwide at this point, it can be argued that the measures were not stringent and excessive. This could also be measured by the fact that the general public, which was also the President's audience, overwhelmingly followed the Covid-19 pandemic measures. While other countries, including Finland, France, Denmark, Norway, Romania, and Austria (Euronews, 2021), had anti-Covid-19 pandemic measures protests, Ghana had none. It is important to reiterate that the lack of anti-Covid-19 pandemic protests in Ghana is not because citizens are not free to protest, as can be seen by the numerous post-election protests held in the country in 2020 (Ghanaweb, 2020). Rather, the absence of protests against Covid-19 restrictions is an indication that the President's speeches resonated with his audience. The magnitude of the securitization object (Covid-19 pandemic) to the Ghanaian public does not necessarily negate the possibility that the President has securitized to achieve a political goal (Osei-Appiah, 2021; Nugent, Asiamah, Molony, & Selorme, 2020). Further analysis below will give a clearer indication whether the President's frequent use of securitizing words means that he ordered stringent restrictions on the Ghanaian public.

1. Does the President's Securitizing Language Equal Curbing of Freedoms?

The frequency of some words in the President's speeches does not necessarily imply a stringent imposition of security measures against freedoms. For example, of the 54 times the President mentioned the word 'restrictions,' almost half of the time the word is preceded by 'easing' to announce lifting of restrictions, for instance: "fellow Ghanaians, in Update No.15, I announced the easing of restrictions in some areas of national life" (Akufo-Addo, 2020). Moreover, 'lockdown' and 'limited,' indicators of restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, are only mentioned 3

times respectively throughout the 20 speeches. 'Limited' shows limitations to normal life, including the number of people allowed on vehicles and public transportation, the number of people allowed in stadiums, at burial sites, and at political rallies throughout the country. The word 'security' was used 26 times, usually referring to the involvement of security forces by the President, to shoulder the extra burden placed on health officials during the Covid-19 pandemic. The word was also used to describe the role of security officials, which is to enforce the laws and Covid-19 related measures. As he mentions in one speech: "should anyone be arrested by the security agencies disregarding this directive, that person will be dealt with strictly in accordance with law" (Akufo-Addo, 2021).

'Protect' was used frequently to refer to the objects the President deems worth protecting against the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic, including human lives, property, and health personnel, as well as the country as such. Consistent with securitization theory, the President's use of speech can legitimize securitization of the nation by constantly referring to protection of the nation as his ultimate goal. In this respect, he tried to convince his audience that securitization serves to safeguard their individual interest and that of the nation. He went further to engage the audience by saying, "Protect yourself. Protect each other. Protect your teachers. Protect your parents" (Akufo-Addo, 2021). Likewise, he mentions 'law' frequently, to inform the nation that the measures are in accordance with Ghana's law, and that citizens are to follow them in order for the country to overcome the common enemy, the Covid-19 pandemic. The public places that the President ordered to be closed, as part of the measures to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, were considered breeding grounds for spreading the disease, even by world standards. These public places include markets, malls, schools, mosques, churches, beaches, night clubs, and pubs. Since some have criticized the closure of religious places (Charles, 2020), does that mean that Ghana is curbing the freedom of religion during the Covid-19 pandemic? After all, many other democracies, including more advanced ones like the USA, the UK, Canada, and Germa-

ny, have instituted similar, or even more stringent measures, to contain the Covid-19 pandemic (BBC, 2020). Some see the imposition of measures as curtailing freedom, while others see it as a worthy trade off to secure a safer society (Viscusi, 2021). The widespread jubilation that ensued after the announcement of the relaxation of the Covid-19 pandemic measures in Ghana could indicate that a significant number of the population perceived the measures as a curtailment of freedom. It could also mean that even those who supported the restrictive measures became discontented.

2. Is There an Attempt to Balance Freedom and Security via the Speech Act of the President?

'Easing' is the most frequent word in the "freedom" category and was always followed by the word 'restrictions' to inform the audience about the content and time of the Covid-19 pandemic measures' lifting. For instance, the President stated "I am now in a position to outline the road map for easing safely the restrictions" (Akufo-Addo, 2020). In the context of freedom and security one could infer that the President attempted to balance the two. Another indication of this is the systematic procedure of the easing of restrictions, where the easing of the measures followed a decrease of infection rates. Only so much can be inferred here about the genuineness of the President's initiative, since Ghana's capacity for mass testing of the population is limited due to financial and logistical constraint. Therefore, the number of infections to justify the President's securitization may not be accurate, further solidifying the claim that the Covid-19 pandemic could have been used to curtail freedoms.

'Free' was used 17 times, the second most frequently used word in the "freedom" category. Contextually, the word is often used to convey to the citizens that Ghana is a free country, and that the forefathers envisioned it this way. For example, in one frequency the President mentioned that "with the help of the Almighty, we are, today, building a free, independent State, a State that, despite the urgency of the crisis, is governed by democratic institutions" (Akufo-Addo, 2021). The word is also used to convey the generosity of the government during the Covid-19 pandemic by stressing that

citizens received free Covid-19 tests, electricity, and water, as well as the use of a popular money transfer service (Akufo-Addo, 2021).

Thus, not only did the President constantly remind his audience that the country is free despite the strict measures, but he also announced stimulus packages to compensate for the hardship from the restrictions. Thus, one could infer that freedom and security were balanced. However, one may also interpret this generosity as not only means for the President to securitize more but also to self-promote or gain a political base, especially since 2020 was an election year. Ghanaian electorates perceive their government as especially generous in election years. Thus, the President may have capitalized on the Covid-19 pandemic to champion his re-election bid. The President's audience seem to have accepted his call, further legitimizing his securitization. Acceptance of the measures by the citizens is paramount, since it could be inferred to as a key measure of what democracy is about (Horowitz, 1991). Likewise, in reference to an important democratic governance principle, the President mentions 'Parliament' 10 times; it is one of the frequently used words in the "other" category. The President mentioned the Parliament to demonstrate the legislature's involvement in the decision-making process of pandemic measures. For example, the President mentioned that "the Minister for Finance has been directed by me to prepare, for approval by Parliament, a Coronavirus Alleviation Programme to address the disruption in economic activities, the hardship of our people, and to rescue and revitalize our industries" (Akufo-Addo, 2020). This indicates that even in extraordinary times, the President was willing to cooperate with the people's representatives systematically, to find a solution to the looming public threat of Covid-19 pandemic. It could also mean that it is an act of balancing, keeping the citizens of Ghana safe and maintaining freedoms, since the people's legislative representatives' approval was sought in the decision-making process.

3. Religion as a Key Reference Point in the President's Speeches

One needs to recognize the religious composition of Ghana in order to fully grasp why the President referred to God in all of his speeches. Nearly 71% of Ghana's population identifies as Christian, 18% as Muslim, and 5% as belonging to traditional African religion, while 6% identify as non-religious (U.S. Department of State, 2019). The magnitude of religiosity in Ghana also partly explains how Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, rose to power: "his early success as a political leader was due to his ability to resymbolize Ghanaian politics through religious symbols" (Addo, 1999, p. 2).

It thus becomes evident why Akufo Addo mentioned the word 'God' 44 times throughout his Covid-19 pandemic speeches, so much that it is the second most mentioned word among all the words categorized under freedom and security. With it, the President related to his audience, and appealed to deeply held beliefs, to gain the audience's cooperation. The President goes as deep as mentioning the names of the two most revered figures in the two largest religions in Ghana, respectively, as shown in the table above. Not only does this reaffirm the importance of the relationship between the political actor and his audience, according to speech act theory, but it also shows the deep understanding and recognition of the citizens' freedom of religion. Regarding the relationship between the political actor and his audience in the speech act, Leonard and Kaunert (2011), in reconceptualization of the audience in securitization theory, stressed the need to understand the composition of the audience and deduct a logic of persuasion therefrom (Leonard & Kaunert, 2011, p. 58). In this situation, the Ghanaian President has effectively utilized the speech act of the securitization theory to further his goal.

Furthermore, the President has recognized the religious composition of his audience and sought their respective cooperation through systematic appeals by referring to their collective reverence figure, God. He also appeals to them by referring to their respective most revered figures and what those figures teach their followers during difficult times, like the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the President cited a prophetic saying (Hadith) of the Muslim religion in which their prophet directed his followers to stay home and perform prayers there instead of congregating in a mosque because of the hazard of a heavy rain (Akufo-Addo, 2021). President Akufo Addo cited this to persuade his Muslim audience to follow the prophetic tradition by staying home to pray, and to avoid the usual Muslim practice of congregating in mosques in order to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus across the country.

Conclusion

The attempt to balance maintenance of basic freedoms, which is one of the canonical hallmarks of democracy, and providing security would always be an ongoing debate, especially among democratic societies. This is in part due to advanced technological development and the emergence of public health hazards, like the Covid-19 pandemic. The response of the President of Ghana in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic to effect a balance by keeping Ghanaians safe and maintaining their basic freedoms illustrates an apparent continuation of this wider debate. It also depicts the relevance of securitization theory in modern political discourses, especially in the areas of liberty and security. The results of this research validate the theory and its contextual applicability. With the Covid-19 global health pandemic providing a legitimate reason to securitize, the government could have carried out excesses with minimal scrutiny. However, this did not happen, underlining the democratic quality of the country in this regard. Yet, there is not only one interpretation of the President's speech and intentions. While some perceive that the President used the Covid-19 pandemic as an excuse to securitize, others see it as a trade-off that is necessary to protect the

greater good of the Ghanaian society. This also crystalizes the division within the Ghanaian society, as far as this issue is concerned, and therefore, helps in exploring prospective mechanisms that can bridge the gap in such division.

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