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Master Thesis

Between “Patchwork Carpets” and “Emergency Brakes”

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A framing analysis of the decision-making Stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act in Germany

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ABSTRACT

Germany's Fourth Civil Protection Act entered into force on April 24, 2021. Its extensive scope was unique because it prescribed uniform nonpharmaceutical measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, while relocating authority from the states to the federal level. The German Federal government decided on openings and closures of schools, businesses, and curfews based on seven-day-incidence numbers per district.

To explain its adoption, this paper applies a qualitative and quantitative framing analysis. The focus lies on the responsibility, economic, and securitization frame (Nijkraak, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015; Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020).

To examine the role of framing in the Fourth Civil Protection Act's adoption, an extension of Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) is used (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015) and treated as "discursive patterns" (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 115). Thus, Entman's (2010, p. 391) definition of frames becomes crucial. He summarized that "[F]rames can perform up to four functions: define problems, specify causes, convey moral assessments, and endorse remedies (Entman, 1993, 2004)" (Entman, 2010, p. 391). Entman's (2010, p. 391) causes and problems related to the problem stream, the moral judgment and remedy are used for the policy stream (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Brunner, 2008, p. 502; Schmieder, Scheer, & Iurato, 2021, p. 5). Formal political actors are expected to use the aforementioned frames to influence policy outcomes in terms of framing (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445). The Act is adopted based on framing, if a "persuasive policy story" (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120) is presented, following the matching of problems and policies. Furthermore, the frame has to be supported by the German Federal government and the representatives of the second chamber (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445).

This paper reports that the German Federal government used the responsibility and securitization frames to match solutions to problems. Followingly, the aforementioned frames were also detected for representatives of the second chamber. It was detected that they expressed that the perception of urgency convinced them of the Act.

Keywords: framing theory, policy adoption, German politics, COVID-19, Multiple Streams Framework, Federalism, Pandemic Management, political decision-making

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List of Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative Für Deutschland
CDU/CSU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/ Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
MSF	Multiple Streams Framework
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

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1. The Fourth Civil Protection Act

In 2020, the Federal Ministry of Health emphasized the importance of the domestic federal structure for Germany (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13). German policy responses to COVID-19 foresaw that “the Federal Government recommended a social distancing policy for everyone in the country. The individual states then decided whether and when to close schools, museums and restaurants to protect people from infection” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13). Thereby, the focus relied on “nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs)” (Moon, 2020, p. 4). The federal government provided a framework for NPI measures that determined *what* had to be done, but states decided *how* to pursue it (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13).

“The idea behind this is that politics should be as devolved and as local as possible. For this reason, state responsibilities in Germany are divided according to the principle of subsidiarity: first, the municipalities are responsible for their local residents, then the states, or Länder” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13).

Based on the high level of decentralization and under the application of the principle of subsidiarity (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13), more than one third of districts in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) had individually applied curfews (n.a., 2020).

On April 22nd, 2021 the Fourth Civil Protection Act was passed (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021), and entered into force on April 24th, 2021 (Ministerium für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes NRW, 2021). This Act incorporated a hotly debated shift: the federal government decided on the framework and *how* the framework had to be pursued across all German states, under the condition that their seven-day incidence number per 100,000 inhabitants on the district level reached 100 or above (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, p. 802).

For instance, based on particular incidence numbers, the federal government decided that businesses, educational facilities, and cultural and leisure facilities had to close (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, pp. 803, 805). Social gatherings were limited, and curfews were put into place in relation to incidence numbers (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, p. 802). Sports outside were allowed for children under the age of 14 in groups of five (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, p. 804).

Policies, such as the Fourth Civil Protection Act, were drafted by formal political actors who aim to influence policy outcomes, according to their preferred outcome (Johannesson & Qvist, 2020, p. 8). One approach for political actors to support the preferred policy alternative is framing (Johannesson & Qvist, 2020, p. 8).

Colombini, Mayhew, Hawkins, Bista, Joshi, Schei, and Watts (2016, p. 495) specified that

“Policy frames construct a particular view of social reality, defining both the political issues (and problems) at stake and the policy responses which follow from this framing of the problem. Each policy frame is underpinned by a set of institutional and meta-cultural frames. Meta-cultural frames can be thought of as a shared set of values, which a particular society holds. [...] Political actors can attempt to frame issues in ways amenable to their interests and policy objectives, promoting a particular understanding of the issue at hand (Snow and Benford 1992; Rein and Schön 1994; Schön and Rein 1996).”

Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021, p. 196) suggested that policymakers are “one of the most important sources” for frames. Based on Jacoby (2000), Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021, p. 198) reported that “[P]olitical elites usually have quite a bit of latitude in defining policy issues [...]. Therefore, they do so in ways that shine the best possible light on their own preferred courses of action”. Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 2) highlighted the importance of framing in crisis communication, as “[L]eaders have the opportunity to offer a frame against which the crisis can be understood and 'that provides guidance in times of a collective stress' (Boin et al. 2017, 86)”. They used the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis in which political actors focus on “meaning-making” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 2).

Thus, this paper follows Krishnatray and Shrivastava’s (2021, p. 196) suggestions and analyzes the frames used by the German federal government and state-level representatives, who display formal political actors in the first (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021d; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c) and the second chamber (Bundesrat, n.d.; Bundesrat, 2021c). The goal is to understand *which* emphases were put forward and *how* they were put forward during the decision-making stage in both chambers. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative frame analysis is performed.

Furthermore, the findings of the frame analysis are used in relation to Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), precisely to Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer’s (2015) extension. Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 444) introduced that policy adoption can be explained by a second coupling process of the problem and the policy streams within the political stream during the decision-making stage. In addition, Winkel and Leipold (2016, p. 116) treated the MSF “as discursive patterns”. Hence, during the decision-making stage, “a political entrepreneur might try to convince them that the problem, to which the policy is supposed to be a solution, is highly salient” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 446). Following Entman (2010, p. 402), the attempt of political actors to convince others of their preferred approach displays “strategic framing“. “If decision coupling is successful, it ends with

the adoption of a bill” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Thus, the findings from the frame analysis and their support by political actors reveal the extent to which the utilized political actors’ frames aligned the streams, which led to the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act. Eventually, the analysis answers the following research questions:

RQ: To which extent did frames applied by political actors in the decision-making stage lead to the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?

The main research question can be divided into three sub-questions:

Sub-question (i): “Which frames did federal actors use in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?”

Sub-question (ii): “Which frames did state-level actors use in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?”

Sub-question (iii): “To what extent did the detected frames by federal and state-level actors align the problem and policy stream in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?”

1.1. Scientific Relevance

This section deals with the scientific relevance of this paper. The following paragraph discusses the existing literature on crisis communication and framing in relation to COVID-19, as well as previous cases of framing in conjunction with policy adoption. Furthermore, section 1.1 highlights that the empirical findings that can be retrieved from this paper add to the body of knowledge.

Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 3) referred to Bauwens et al. (2021), who consider “research on leadership and communication during the COVID-19 crisis [...] as 'emergent’”. Nevertheless, Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, pp. 3-4) analyzed the crisis communication by Angela Merkel in 2020. They concluded that in the first half of 2020, Merkel prioritized the aspect of public health over wealth and that she mainly used a “solidarity frame” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, pp. 3-4). According to Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 11), Merkel reminded people of “social cohesion”.

Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021) also analyzed speeches of national leaders, such as Angela Merkel, from 2020. For Merkel, they found “empathy and understanding” (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 203). She appeared to understand the consequences of COVID-19 on the general public (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 203). Therefore, Merkel reminded people to care for each other by distancing (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 203). This finding was also reported by Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 11): “[S]olidarity was framed as keeping physical distance, but also as showing mutual support and helping vulnerable groups”. Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 12) found that Merkel used the solidarity frame throughout 2020. Her approach was described as “people-centric” (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 204) when discussing the measures that should be followed. At first, she used the frame, as mentioned earlier,

“to mobilise the people and ensure acceptance for the newly introduced policy measures and rules of social behaviour, her claims at the end of April rather legitimised the actions taken and demonstrated that, without solidarity by the people and the institutional support for workers and companies, the previous political measures were not sustainable” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 12).

Regarding solidarity, Merkel also focused on EU-wide cooperation (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 14).

According to Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021, p. 205), Merkel applied the “discipline frame”. In this regard, she repeatedly mentioned the importance of democracy and added that the restrictions were necessary “to save lives” (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 205).

Merkel’s frames from 2020 seemed to differ from other leaders, as “[M]ilitaristic frames became a dominant communication strategy by prominent Western political leaders such as Macron, Johnson, Trump, Morrison, and Sánchez (Berrocal et al. 2021; Castro Seixas 2021; Mintrom et al. 2021)” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 2). Besides one comparison to the Second World War, she refrained from using this approach (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 204). Contrary to the US-American president Trump or Japan’s Prime Minister Abe, Merkel did not mention economic issues (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 203). However, Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 16) reported a different finding: in the second half of 2020, Merkel “argued that Germany and the EU need an economic recovery programme to minimise the economic damage due to the pandemic and create a positive outlook”. Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022) and Krishnatray and Shrivastava’s (2021, p. 203) findings could hint at a change in Merkel’s framing approach. This change was introduced by Colombini et al. (2016, p. 495).

Colombini et al. (2016, p. 493) used framing and included it in Kingdon’s MSF model “and the subsequent debates” to explain Nepal’s prioritization of gender-based violence in

2010. The debate on gender-based violence started in the 1990s and continued until 2010. They found that when political actors re-framed gender-based violence as a “health issue”, instead of focusing on the “criminal justice issue”, policies to combat the “health threat” were passed (Colombini, et al., 2016, p. 501).

To my best knowledge, I could not detect any research conducted on frames applied by German political actors in relation to COVID-19 besides Merkel in 2020, specifically not in relation to the Fourth Civil Protection Act. Therefore, this paper aims to fill the knowledge gap. Due to this paper’s focus on framing in the decision-making stage of the aforementioned Act, it contributes to research on political communication and crisis management, in particular to the “emergent” research on the framing of COVID-19 responses (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, pp. 3-4). This paper manages to retrieve frames used by federal and state-level actors and, therefore, adds to Merkel’s use of frames from 2020 in response to COVID-19 (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022; Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021), given that “the framing of an issue and its solution by a given actor may shift over time” (Colombini, et al., 2016, p. 495).

Further, I could not identify any research conducted in regards to how frames applied by political actors in the decision-making stage aligned Kingdon’s streams and led to the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act, as proposed by Colombini et al. (2016), Herweg et al. (2015), Winkel and Leipold (2016), and Entman (2010). Thus, this paper adds empirical findings regarding the role and persuasiveness of frames in policy adoption (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 104).

Drawing on the findings by Helms, van Esch, and Crawford (2019) and Aggestam and Hyde-Price (2020), the federal government of Germany, spearheaded by Dr. Angela Merkel, accounted as a European poster child. German diplomacy dominated the negotiations with the USA and Russia during the Ukraine crisis (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2020), and Angela Merkel negotiated with the Greek Minister of Finance, facing the Euro crisis (Helms, Van Esch, & Crawford, 2019). Due to Germany's previous leadership role and elevated position concerning European, if not international, affairs, it can be argued that the analysis of frames and their role in the decision-making stage of the Fourth German Civil Protection Act displays crucial knowledge in terms of crisis management and political communication for scholars in the field of European Studies and Comparative Policy Analysis.

1.2. Societal Relevance

Research on framing in conjunction with diseases showed that specific frames trigger governmental actions and reactions (Pieri, 2018, pp. 87-88). For the case of Ebola in the UK, Pieri (2018, pp. 87-88) laid out that the use of the securitization frame led to “the very public U-turn made by the [British] Government in openly rejecting the need for screening first, only to then suddenly sanction its introduction as necessary” (Pieri, 2018, p. 87). Therefore, the policy shift affected people in terms of commuting and mobility. It could be argued that the Fourth Civil Protection Act represented such a change in the course of action in the context of COVID-19 for Germany. Previously, the state-level representatives held informal meetings online with Angela Merkel, who represented the federal level (CDU, 2021). Behind closed digital doors, the political actors agreed on previous measures, such as limitations on social gatherings, mask mandates, and the opening and closure of educational institutions (CDU, 2021). However, the Fourth Civil Protection Act covered these decisions instead (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021). Additionally, it governed curfews on the basis of districts’ seven-day-incidence numbers (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021). A decision that later in 2021 was forwarded to the Federal Constitutional Court in Germany, which found the measures appropriate (ZDF, 2021). The fact that the Federal Constitutional Court in Germany received two complaints underlines the shift in pandemic management in Germany (ZDF, 2021). Therefore, a frame analysis of the decision-making stage of the Act is salient because the decision concerned citizens’ individual rights, and limitations thereof in a pandemic situation (ZDF, 2021). The identification of frames used by political actors during the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act bears societal relevance, as they reflect political actors’ perception of societally accepted values and their perception of “a relevant problem” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 437).

After this chapter concludes with the presentation of the scientific and societal relevance, the next chapter discusses the theoretical framework.

2. Theory

This section discusses framing theory first. It suggests that framing has four functions (Entman, 2010, p. 391) and that framing is used by politicians (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 196). In particular, the responsibility and economic frames are presented as generic frames (Nijkraake et al., 2015, p. 84, Table 2; Guenduez, Schedler & Ciocan, 2016, p. 585). The different functions of frames, as proposed by Entman (2010, p. 391), will play an important role in the analysis part. The section discusses how the aforementioned frames have been used previously in the context of health policies. Then, the securitization frame is laid out, as discussed by Wicke and Bolognesi (2020), Kamradt-Scott and McInnes (2012, p. 104) and Pieri (2018, pp. 87-88). Specifically, Kamradt-Scott and McInnes (2012, p. 95) stated that the securitization frame is no longer tied to military issues but extends to health issues.

Additionally, the section delves into the extension of Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). Thereby, it connects theory and findings from the literature with the research conducted. The following section discusses the methodological approach of this paper before presenting the empirical findings. Lastly, this paper discusses the findings and provides a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

2.1 Framing Theory

Nijkraake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, p. 81) and Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021, p. 198) referred to Entman (1993) for definitions of framing. Thus, they summarized that “[t]o frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 198). Hence, presenting and contextualizing information in specific manners raises awareness (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 198). Not only does framing raise awareness of issues, but it also “shapes how people define problems, causes of problems, [...] and solutions to problems (Cooper, 2002)” (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, p. 81). Colombini et al. (2016, p. 495) added that “[E]ach policy frame is underpinned by a set of institutional and meta-cultural frames. Meta-cultural frames can be thought of as a shared set of values, which a particular society holds”.

For the scope of this paper, it suggests that political actors use framing when debating the Fourth Civil Protection Act to present their ideas. As mentioned earlier, the focus on the

actors is supported by Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021, p. 196), who identified politicians as “being one of the most important sources” for frames. Eventually, Entman (2010, p. 391) summarized the findings from above as “[F]rames can perform up to four functions: define problems, specify causes, convey moral assessments, and endorse remedies (Entman, 1993, 2004)”.

Frames can be generic or specific (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 585). Guenduez, Schedler, and Ciocan (2016, p. 585) quoted De Vreese et al. (2001, p. 108) when they reported that “generic frames are broadly applicable to a range of different news topics, some even over time and, potentially, in different cultural contexts”. This paper focuses on two generic frames from Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 585). This choice is motivated by the frames’ broad applicability, their ability to “pick up political [...] variations” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 586), as well as “their clear and concise operationalization of the theoretical constructs” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 586). Contrary to generic frames, specific frames apply only to particular issues (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 585). Hence, this paper includes the securitization frame (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020). Scholars have suggested that the formerly issue-specific frame was used in relation to health policies, as “[S]ecurity is no longer restricted to the narrow confines of military threats, and health issues are now regularly cited as one amongst a number of non-traditional security concerns” (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 95). Thus, this paper covers the extent to which securitization is applied to non-military issues to the body of research (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 95).

The following three sub-sections discuss the frames and how previous studies reported them.

2.1.1 Responsibility Frame

De Vreese (2005, p. 56) summarized that “the responsibility frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or solving to either the government or to an individual or group”. On the one hand, an analysis of the German media reported that the debate on sugar taxation included attribution of blame to the federal government for lax regulations, when “government failure” was mentioned (Moerschel, von Philipsborn, Hawkins, & McGill, 2022, p. 269). On the other hand, opponents of the sugar tax introduced terms, such as „nanny state“ (Moerschel, von Philipsborn, Hawkins, & McGill, 2022, p. 269). In addition, Temmann et al. (2022, p. 829) found that „[T]hrough attributional

processes, responsibility frames may influence [...] policy opinions (Iyengar, 1996) [...]. Ultimately, attributions of responsibility might even enable [...] policies“.

Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863) reported that the responsibility frame displayed a predominant frame, with a presence of over 40 percent in the Swedish newspapers that dealt with the H1N1 pandemic. The Swedish sample mentioned the problem of executive delays of measures and blamed it on bureaucracy (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863). Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 862) reported that the responsibility frame displayed the most prevalent frame used in Australian newspaper media (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 862). 26 percent of the articles used the responsibility frame to cover the government and its actions, 42 percent covered “who was responsible for a specific action or who was to blame for a specific outcome” (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 862), and “68% of the articles in the responsibility frame [...] were negative in nature” (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 862).

Further, Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863) suggested that reported problems were uncertainty, disorganization, or miscommunication, which can be related to blame and tied to solutions (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). Seven percent of the Australian news coverage and 30 percent of the Swedish newspaper articles covered the problem of disorganization in pandemic management (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863). In Sweden and Australia, articles picked up issues, such as the lack of scientific information concerning measures and miscommunication (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863). Specifically, the WHO Pandemic Communication Plan for Sweden identified the latter because “it could lead [...] to misleading and conflicting messages” (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863). Thus, problems were pointed out and blamed on one actor, while suggesting that another actor could provide a solution (De Vreese, 2005, p. 56).

The following section discusses the economic frame.

2.1.2 Economic Frame

Half of the Australian articles that applied the economic frame to cover pandemic measures were negative and highlighted the financial losses faced by economic branches, such as tourism (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 864).

In contrast, Swedish articles that used the economic frame were positive and underlined the savings by the domestic economy in relation to vaccinations (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 864). Moreover, Nijkraake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, pp. 84, Table 2) suggested that the economic frame can be brought up as “a reference to economic consequences of

pursuing or not pursuing a course of action” that comes into existence “now or in the future” (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2).

Next, the following section describes the securitization frame.

2.1.3 Securitization Frame

Kamradt-Scott and McInnes (2012, p. 95) proposed that a securitization frame no longer pertained to military threats only but also included health threats, specifically “‘naturally occurring’ emerging and re-emerging infectious disease outbreaks (McInnes and Lee 2006, Kelle 2007, Davies 2008, 2010, Elbe 2009, 2010, Enemark 2009)”. In relation, Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863) identified “the military’s preparedness” in the Swedish newspaper coverage of the H1N1 pandemic, similarly to Kamradt-Scott and McInness (2012, p. 98), who referred to “military readiness”. Kamradt-Scott and McInnes (2012, p. 104) reported that “government officials, health practitioners, policymakers, representatives of international and regional organisations and scholars” applied the securitization frame to pandemics in the past. Consequently, “decision makers appeared to have been successfully persuaded of this, resulting in the authorisation of new pandemic plans” (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 104).

Especially the SARS outbreak in the early 2000s displayed “a ‘wake-up call’” to political actors, which increased efforts to improve responses to such health threats (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 105). The securitization frame was used to cover Ebola and introduced “the very public U-turn made by the [British] Government in openly rejecting the need for screening first, only to then suddenly sanction its introduction as necessary” (Pieri, 2018, p. 87).

Wicke and Bolognesi (2020) analyzed frames used to cover COVID-19 policy responses on Twitter. Most tweets displayed “war-related terminology” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1). Further, the securitization frame included many other implications, for instance, that “medical professionals are the army of allies, the body is the battlefield, medical tools are weapons, and applying a treatment is fighting” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5). Thus, the securitization frame in the COVID-19-related policy discourse stressed “risks and can potentially be lethal” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5) and “the urgency associated with a very negative situation, and the necessity for actions to be taken, in order to achieve a final outcome quickly” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5).

Next, the extension of Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Framework is laid out.

2.2 Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework

Bélar and Howlett (2016, p. 222) referred to Kingdon (1984), who suggested the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), and thereby “a means of understanding public policy agenda setting”. He proposed “three categories of independent (and interdependent) variables that interact to produce “windows of opportunity” (Bélar & Howlett, 2016, p. 222). Kingdon proposed that the problem, policy, and politics streams run beside one another until they couple and open a “policy window” (Bélar & Howlett, 2016, p. 222).

Eventually, the “streams of problems, policies, and politics come together at certain critical times. Solutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favourable political forces” (Bélar & Howlett, 2016, p. 222).

2.2.1 Problem Stream

Problems display “dramatic events such as crises” (Bélar & Howlett, 2016, p. 222). Thus, the problem stream contains information in terms of “which issues are core issues [...]” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 437). Moreover, it incorporates struggles deemed in need of governmental responses, as proposed by Bélar and Howlett (2016, p. 222)

In conjunction with the politics stream, Johannesson and Qvist (2020, p. 7) report that the “political climate” determines the acknowledgment of problems. Therefore, Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 437) added that the recognition of problems follows political actors’ “clear preferences that allow us to identify what they perceive as relevant problems”.

To identify the content pertinent to the problem stream introduced by political actors in the decision-make stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act, Entman's (2010, p. 391) suggestion that frames include causes and problem definitions can be used.

2.2.2 Policy Stream

According to Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer's extension of the MSF (2015, p. 441), "the much more important role of political parties in parliamentary democracies" needs to be considered. Following Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 441), parties remain focused on policies because they have "specific party preferences and thus seek to influence policy output accordingly (Schmidt 1996; Strøm 1990; Zohlnhöfer 2009). As a result, parties and their respective policy experts tend to play a much more active part [...] parliamentary systems".

The policy stream, therefore, covers "problem-solving solutions" (Schmieder, Scheer, & Iurato, 2021, p. 5). It is reported that a "viable policy alternative" (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 442) needed to be "feasible, fit the community's dominant values", to prevail (Brunner, 2008, p. 502).

Therefore, Entman's (2010, p. 391) definition of frames can be used again. Moral judgments (Entman, 2010, p. 391) pertain to the "dominant values" (Brunner, 2008, p. 502), and remedies (Entman, 2010, p. 391) can be used to identify policy responses, as the corresponding "problem-solving solution[s]" (Schmieder, Scheer, & Iurato, 2021, p. 5).

2.2.3 "Decision-Coupling" in the Politics Stream

Schmieder, Scheer, and Iurato (2021, p. 5) suggested that "[I]n this stream, policymakers have the motive, power, and opportunity to turn solution proposals into legally binding policies". Considering Germany's parliamentary system, parties are placed "at the centre of the political stream" (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 439), which is why this paper takes parties' frames on the federal level into account.

Kingdon's original framework concludes with a proposal on the agenda, while Fowler (2019, p. 406) argues that "[P]olicymaking tends to conclude with a decision on a policy to be used (i.e., policy adoption) that is preceded by a series of smaller decisions (i.e., agenda setting)". Thereby, Fowler (2019, p. 406) connects agenda setting with policy adoption and extends the MSF over the process of decision-making. In this manner, Herweg, Huß, and, Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 445, Figure 1) created a theoretical extension of the MSF and adjusted it to the German parliamentary democracy, illustrated in Figure 1 on the following page.

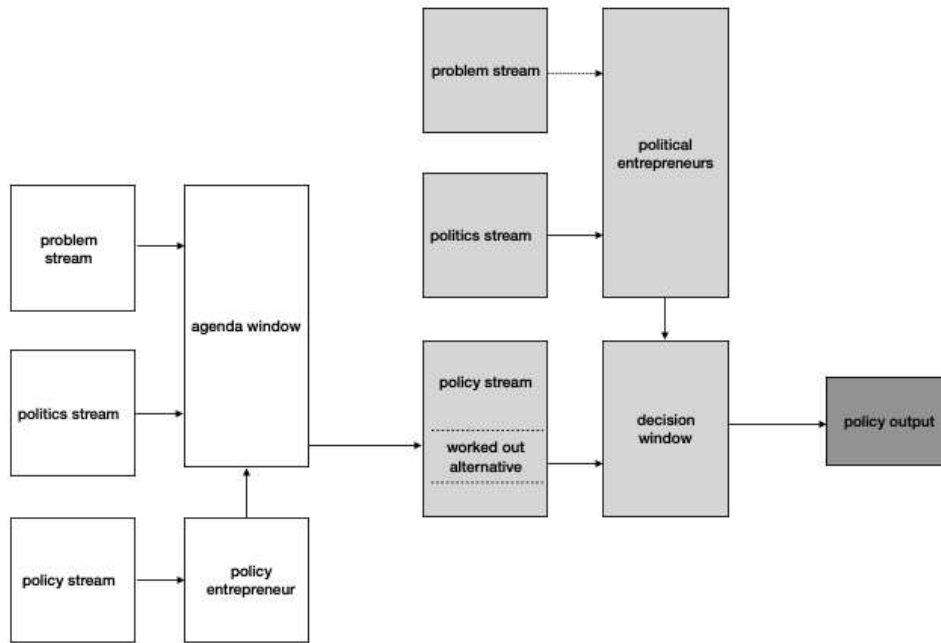


Figure 1. Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer's (2015, p. 445, Figure 1.) adjusted extension of the MSF

Their adjusted theory distinguishes between two phases of the policy process (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). The first phase can be referred to as “agenda coupling” and concludes with a proposal which displays Kingdon’s original vision (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). The second phase is called “decision coupling” and is preceded by the proposal with agenda status (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Therefore, it concerns the “bargaining about the details of the proposal between the actors of the political stream” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Involved actors are reported to be

“(i.e., coalition partners, [...] MPs, party leadership and inner-party factions, actors of the subnational levels in federalist systems, etc.) [...] The reason is that these actors will not pass up the chance to influence a policy once an issue is on the agenda” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445).

This paper is in line with Winkel and Leipold (2016, p. 115), who regard Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Framework as “discursive patterns”, in which political actors struggle for “discursive agency” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 112). Following this, political actors gain agency by presenting a “persuasive policy story” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120). Due to party competition and differing ideologies (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, pp. 437, 442), they compete for “discursive agency” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 112) through “strategic framing” (Entman, 2010, p. 402). Thereby, actors from the politics stream aim to influence a

proposal with agenda status according to their preference (Johannesson & Qvist, 2020, p. 13; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, pp. 442; 444, 445).

The following section proposes the derived hypotheses concerning the presented theory and literature.

2.3 Hypotheses

After the previous sections discussed the findings from the literature, this section points out the hypotheses. In particular, the following hypotheses draw on the fact that party competition and ideologies (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 442) build the foundation for “strategic framing” (Entman, 2010, p. 402) during the decision-making phase. This finding needs to be considered because “these actors will not pass up the chance to influence a policy once an issue is on the agenda. Hence, the political stream is of prime importance for the decision coupling” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445). First, the hypotheses for the occurrence of frames in relation to parties on the federal level are introduced. Then, the subsequent hypotheses discuss the expectation at the state level, as well as the alignment of the streams.

The first hypothesis relates to the responsibility frame, presented in section 1.2.3. Hegele and Schnabel (2021, p. 2) introduced that decentralized crisis management does not go uncontested. Critics believe that a high degree of decentralization fails to rapidly and effectively address crises (Hegele & Schnabel, 2021, p. 2). The scholars mentioned above stressed that “[A] federation-wide crisis suggests centralised decision making” (Hegele & Schnabel, 2021, p. 2). Since 2018, the CDU/CSU and SPD have formed “the grand coalition” and governed on the federal level (Kinski & Poguntke, 2019, p. 105). Therefore, they have been responsible for pandemic management on the federal level and shared the responsibility with the state-level representatives (CDU, 2021). Due to existing party competition (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 442) and the “the chance to influence a policy” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445), it could be possible that the governing parties on the federal level follow Hegele and Schnabel (2021) and claim that the federal “government has the ability to alleviate the problem” (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2), while indicating that the state level is to be blamed for a problem (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). Summarizing, they could claim the legal power to decide on nonpharmaceutical interventions by themselves, while blaming problems, such as disorganization, uncertainty, and miscommunication, as suggested by Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863), on the state-level

representatives. Thus, hypothesis H1 is derived: *“More than other parties, the CDU/CSU and SPD framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a federal remedy and the result of state-level problems.”*

As for the party ideology of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), its party program states to “use the agility of the market economy to grow quickly out of the crisis” (FDP, n.d., p. 4) and to “rely on the power of the social market economy and economic prosperity as a counter-model to the dirigiste state” (FDP, n.d., pp. 4, 5). Concerning pandemic management, Born, Dietrich, and Müller (2021, p. 1) introduce that “policy makers are faced with a trade-off. By imposing a lockdown, they may limit the spread of COVID-19 infections and deaths. But a lockdown might also entail severe economic and social costs [1, 2]”. Thus, as included in the Fourth Civil Protection Act (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021), closing measures could clash with its party ideology (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlhöfer, 2015, p. 442). The federal party leader of the FDP, Christian Lindner, already unsuccessfully demanded to avoid a second federal lockdown in September 2020 (Tagesschau.de, 2020). Furthermore, the FDP displayed an oppositional party on the federal level (Kinski & Poguntke, 2019, p. 105), which is why they could stress that closing measures lead to economic losses, following Sandell, Sebar, Harris (2013, p. 864). Thus, the second hypothesis H2 is derived: *“More than other parties, the FDP framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a matter of economic losses”*.

The third hypothesis pertains to the governing position of the CDU/CSU and SPD (Kinski & Poguntke, 2019, p. 105) in the realm of party competition (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlhöfer, 2015, p. 442). The proposal of the Fourth Civil Protection Act was put forward by the two aforementioned parties (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021). They could use the securitization frame because “decision makers appeared to have been successfully persuaded of this, resulting in the authorisation of new pandemic plans” (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 104), which is precisely the Act concerned. Thus, they could stress that the issue is a matter of life and death, which stresses “the necessity for actions to be taken, in order to achieve a final outcome quickly” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5). Furthermore, the issue at hand could require combined forces, whereby the CDU/CSU and SPD would use “[W]ar-related terminology” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1). Eventually, the third hypothesis, H3, is derived: *“More than other parties, the CDU/CSU and SPD framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a matter of security”*.

Since the Bundesrat (n.d.) consists of state-level representatives, they voted on an Act that took away their authority to decide on “nonpharmaceutical interventions” (Moon, 2020, p.

4), if a district's seven-day incidence number per 100,000 inhabitants reaches 100 or above (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, p. 802). Thus, the heads of state could express a rather negative stance on the Act, regardless of partisanship. The findings for the responsibility frame suggest that the state level could blame the federal level for a problem, such as disorganization, uncertainty, or miscommunication (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863; Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, p. 84, Table 2). Furthermore, the actors could stress the benefit of regional measures and decentralization (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13), whereby they would emphasize that their "level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem" (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). Thus, hypothesis H4 is derived: "*The heads of state framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a state-level remedy and the result of federal problems.*"

Lastly, Entman (2010, p. 391) suggested that frames present "problems, specify causes, convey moral assessments, and endorse remedies". In relation, this paper expects political actors to use the frames, as indicated above, so that they present a "persuasive policy story" (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120) and, therefore, align the problem and policy streams in the decision-making stage. Following Herweg, Huß and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 444), the alignment of streams in the decision-making phase leads to "the adoption of the bill" (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). On the federal level, the CDU/CSU and SPD formed the majority government (Kinski & Poguntke, 2019, p. 105). To align the streams, the parties require the support of state-level representatives (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445). Therefore, the following hypothesis concerns these formal political actors. Following the previously stated expectations, the frames that point to the Fourth Civil Protection Act as the remedy (Entman, 2010, p. 391) were the responsibility and securitization frames. Thus, the two frames could align the streams, whereby the Act gets adopted. Thus, hypothesis H5 is derived: "*The federal government and state-level representatives align the problem and policy streams by applying (a) the responsibility frame / (b) the securitization frame in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act*".

The following section 2. elaborates on the research design, the motivation to analyze the indicated case, and how data was collected. Further, the section discusses the operationalization and data analysis.

3 Research Design

This paper aims to answer two descriptive sub-questions and one explanatory sub-question. First, sub-questions (i) and (ii) emphasized the frames used by political actors in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act. The first sub-question asked for frames applied by federal actors, while the second asked for frames applied by state-level representatives. Following, sub-question (iii) focused on the alignment of streams (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Similar to above, hypotheses were derived and subsequently tested, qualitatively and quantitatively. Following Bryman (2003, p. 2), the approach can be described as “putting flesh on the bones of quantitative findings”.

3.1 Case Selection

The Fourth Civil Protection Act settled issues from closing schools and leisure businesses to curfews (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, pp. 802, 803, 805), as mentioned in the introductory section. Disagreements have been brought up during the decision-making stage, according to Bundestag (2021a). While some parties suggested that the states should already implement the federal framework, others proclaimed that the Act displayed the government’s mistrust toward citizens (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021a).

Furthermore, the case was chosen because “[T]hings become more intricate if the party, or coalition, that has put the proposal on the agenda [...] (3) needs the approval of a second chamber” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 445). The second chamber in Germany consists of the heads of state, who eventually voted in favor of passing parts of their authority to the federal level (Bundesrat, n.d.). Hence, the Fourth Civil Protection Act is salient to analyze in terms of frames applied by federal and state-level politicians and how they aligned the streams.

3.2 Data Collection

As for the data collection, this paper utilized policy texts to retrieve political actors' frames in terms of the Fourth Civil Protection Act. This approach is motivated by Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al. (2015, p. 4), who used "key policy texts" to retrieve actors' positions. Johannesson and Qvist (2020, p. 10) clarified these documents as "reports, decisions, protocols from assembly debates, [...], proposals". Corbetta (2003, p. 14) added that "[T]he world of politics offers the social researcher a rich source of documentary material, from acts of Parliament to political manifestos, and from politicians' speeches to election propaganda". The first objective of this paper is to describe the frames used by political actors in the first and second chambers. The second objective is to explain the policy adoption based on the alignment of the problem and policy stream in the politics stream through framing (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, pp. 444, 445; Entman, 2010, p. 164). Thus, this paper's objectives align with policy documents' content, as Corbetta proposed (2003, p. 14).

The data collection adhered to criteria. First, only documents were included that fit Johannesson and Qvist's clarification (2020, p. 10). Thus, the websites of the Bundestag (2021a; 2021d), Bundesrat (Bundesrat, n.d.), and Federal Ministry of Health (Federal Ministry of Health, n.d.) were searched for documents related to the Fourth Civil Protection Act. Second, any documents that dealt with anything besides the Fourth Civil Protection Act were excluded, as this lies outside the scope of this analysis. Furthermore, documents that included information on informal actors were excluded, based on Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 446), who suggested that "coupling activities from policy-entrepreneurs located in the formal governmental system [...] have a better chance of success in coupling the streams". Lastly, any duplicates were excluded.

Thus, the search criteria yielded one formulation guide by the Federal Ministry of Health, under Jens Spahn, CDU, for the coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021), three plenary protocols (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c; Bundesrat, 2021c), fourteen motions (Theurer et al., 2021a; Theurer et al. 2021b, 2021c; Theurer et al., 2021d; Theurer et al., 2021e; Theurer et al., 2021f; Theurer et al., 2021g; Schulz-Asche et al., 2021; Hahn et al., 2021; Barrientos et al., 2021; Bundesrat, 2021a; Bundesrat, 2021b; Kessler et al, 2021a; Kessler et al., 2021b), one report (Ausschuss für Gesundheit, 2021 b) and one resolution (Bundesrat, 2021d). The indicated documents can be seen in Appendix 1 "List of Documents".

3.3 Methods and Operationalization

Sub-questions (i) and (ii) aim to describe the frames applied by federal and state-level political actors. To achieve that aim, hypotheses were derived from the literature and subsequently tested. Therefore, a coding scheme was created, following the operationalizations from the literature for the responsibility, economic and securitization frames (see Table 1 in the appendix). Elo and Kyngäs (2008, p. 111) proposed that precisely deductive coding “is often used in cases where the researcher wishes to retest existing data in a new context (Catanzaro 1988). This may also involve testing [...] models or hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman 1995)”. In terms of the unit of analysis, this paper followed Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 10), who proposed that “a specific segment that contains [...] a [...] frame. A segment can be a sentence but can also be shorter or longer than a sentence, depending on how detailed and complex the segment is”. Due to the focus on the aforementioned documents, only “manifest content” was analyzed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109). To relate the frames to actors, parties, and levels, the coding scheme followed Kneuer and Wallaschek’s (2022, p. 10) suggestion and included them as “meta data”. All in all, the utilization of a coding scheme provided for insights in regards to the occurrences of frames on each level and political actors.

A “qualitative content analysis” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 11) was performed to clarify how political actors used the frames. Each document mentioned in 3.2 was read and screened for frames as indicated in the coding scheme (Table 1 in the appendix). Thereby, the segments that contained the frames were noted in German, presented in English, and in relation to the literature in the analysis. Examples of coded segments for all frames are included in the appendix in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

In relation to the explanatory sub-question (iii), the coding scheme (Table 1 in the appendix) noted whether the text segments discussed the problem stream by highlighting causes and problems (Entman, 2010, p. 391) or the policy stream by emphasizing moral judgments and solutions (Entman, 2010, p. 391). Therefore, the expected hypotheses could be tested again, similar to earlier (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111). The occurrence of frames and streams was retrieved in relation to “meta data” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 10). Since the segments were noted in a codebook, this paper provided a “qualitative content analysis” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 11) in terms of how political actors aligned the streams through framing. All in all, the utilization of a coding scheme provided for insights in regards to the occurrences and content of frames on each level and political actor.

Summarizing, this paper pursued a qualitative frame analysis reliant on deductive coding of manifest content, while quantitatively measuring the occurrences of the findings in relation to the political levels and actors.

3.4 Data Analysis

This paper used a coding scheme (Table 1 in the appendix) that noted the document, the date, the person, if available, and the political affiliation as well as the level as “meta data” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 10), in addition to the operationalization of frames and streams (see Table 1 in the appendix). The coder used the coding scheme to read, screen, and code the indicated documents from the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act. Since the identified segment is noted, it can be used for the “qualitative content analysis” (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 11) of frames, to discuss “how people perceive and make sense of their communication” (Linström & Marais, 2012, p. 26). This approach ensures the examination of frames for the federal and state-level, and the extent to which the problem and policy streams were aligned in terms of framing. Thus, the qualitative part of the analysis partly answered sub-questions (i), (ii), and (iii) and discussed the expected hypotheses (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111).

Furthermore, the coding scheme is also used to retrieve occurrences. For instance, the frames’ occurrences per party or level can be retrieved. For political actors, this helps “to examine overall trends” (Linström & Marais, 2012, p. 27). The quantitative finding is not only needed, in terms of the expected occurrences of frames per parties or level, as included in (i) and (ii), as well as hypotheses 1-4, but also in terms of the frames’ support by political actors in (iii) and H5a and H5b. The latter is used to explain the alignment of the streams, based on the German federal government and the state-level representatives’ support of the frames. Thus, qualitative, and quantitative analysis helps to answer the three sub-questions, and therefore the main research question.

4. Empirical Findings

This section displays the findings from the analysis. Its structure follows the sub-questions. Its first sub-section is devoted to finding frames used by political actors in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act on the federal level. Thus, it discusses the responsibility, economic, and securitization frames and shows which hypotheses can be accepted or rejected. The following section does the same for the state level and answers the second sub-question. Lastly, the section examines to which extent the frames aligned the streams, which led to the Act's adoption.

4.1 Federal Level

First, section 4.1. discusses the frames on the federal level in terms of content, political affiliation, and occurrence. First, the findings for the responsibility frame are discussed.

4.1.1 Responsibility Frame

In terms of the responsibility frame, the Federal Ministry of Health, under Jens Spahn, CDU, mentioned that the measures passed at the state level “were not sufficiently effective” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 1), whereby the ministry stressed that the problem at hand mainly existed on the state level, which is in line with Nijkrake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, pp. 84, Table 2) who suggested that “some level of government” is blamed for a problem. The ministry added that “inconsistent interpretation of the measures adopted by the federal states at the regular conference of minister presidents” displayed another problem (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10). Thus, the states were not only blamed for insufficient measures, but also for inconsistent measures (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 1, 10). Bas, SPD, picked up the same notion and referred to the problem as a “patchwork carpet” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28105), to describe the inconsistency of state-level measures (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2).

Jens Spahn, CDU, suggested that there had been an agreement between the federal and state levels to use the App “Luca” and the program “SORMAS” across all German states, which did not take place (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 163). This was repeated by Wiese, SPD, who pointed at “North Rhine-Westphalia’s Minister of Education Gebauer of the FDP, who is responsible for the chaos and confusion in school policy in North Rhine-Westphalia” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28116). Thus, problems of disorganization at the state level were detected,

as proposed by Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863) and Nijkrake, Gosselt, Gutteling (2015, pp. 84, Table 2).

Concerning Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863), who suggested that the responsibility frame covers the adherence of citizens “to measures to yield collective protection”, Spahn, CDU, stated that people’s “participation breaks down, trust breaks down, acceptance breaks down” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 167) due to impaired organization. This finding corresponded with Nijkrake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, p. 84, Table 2), who proposed that the frame expresses that “the problem requires urgent action”.

These findings prepared Luczak’s moral judgment, CDU, that “[W]e must do everything possible” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28224). Based on his use of “we” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28224), he located “the ability to alleviate the problem” (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) on the federal level, precisely with the governing parties.

After stressing the urgency (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) and the federal ability to solve the problem of impaired cooperation (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2), the CDU/CSU and SPD, suggested the remedy of authorizing “the Federal Government [...] to issue statutory ordinances, [...] for the uniform determination of Corona measures” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 2). Furthermore, Angela Merkel, CDU, used a fascinating metaphor: “[W]e implement the emergency brake nationwide” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101). By framing the remedy as an “emergency brake” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101), Merkel highlighted the urgency related to the policy response, as proposed by Nijkrake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, p. 84, Table 2). Subsequently, she underlined the federal ability to pull the “emergency brake” (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). These findings show that hypothesis H1, which reads as follows: “*More than other parties, the CDU/CSU and SPD framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a federal remedy and the result of state-level problems.*” can be accepted for the parties content-wise.

Quantitatively, it was found that 52,8% of the coded segments for the responsibility frame belonged to the CDU/CSU and 32,4% to the SPD (Table 5 in the appendix). In total numbers, the frame was detected 57 times for the CDU/CSU and 35 times for SPD (Figure 2). Figure 2 shows that the other parties applied the frame less. For instance, the next highest occurrence was detected for Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen at 7,4% or 8 times (Table 5 in the appendix, Figure 2). Relating the coded segments per party to the respective frames, it becomes evident that 48% of the SPD’s coded segments related to the responsibility frame (Table 6 in

the appendix). At 48% or 35 times, the responsibility frame displayed the SPD’s most detected frame (Table 6 in the appendix). In relation to all respective frames, the responsibility frame displayed the second most used frame for the CDU/CSU at 57 times, which made up 29,5% of its coded statements (Table 6 in the appendix). Thus, hypothesis H1 can be accepted in terms of occurrences and content.

Next, the findings for the economic frame on the federal level are discussed.

The Occurrence of the Responsibility Frame per Party on the Federal Level

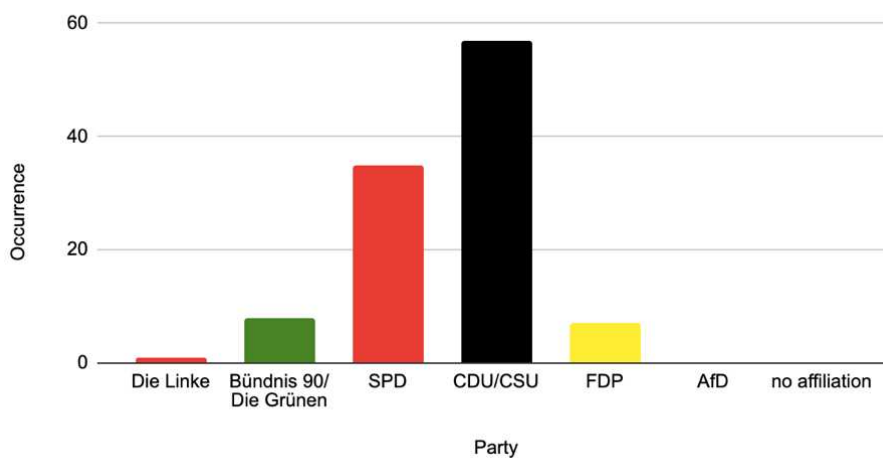


Figure 2. The Use of the Responsibility Frame on the Federal Level distinguished by Parties

4.1.2 Economic Frame

As for the content of the economic frame, the CDU/CSU and SPD mentioned: “the closure of cultural institutions”, “recreational facilities” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15), and “all facilities, which do not serve the necessary activities of daily life” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 14) as the remedy, which reflected Sandell, Sebar, and Harris’ findings (2013, p. 864) of economic burdens for specific economic branches. Simultaneously, the governing parties suggested “resulting revenue shortfalls and the economic burdens” three times (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15) as the problem resulting from closing measures.

Concerning the problem of financial losses as a result of closing measures (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15), the governing parties expressed the judgment that these measures “serve[s] the necessary contact reduction, as otherwise, the infection process threatens to get out of control” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15). Following Born, Dietrich,

and Müller (2021, p. 1), they prioritize health over wealth. Additionally, Stracke, a member of the CSU, justified the measures by saying that “[T]hat's why we're not talking about shutting down the relevant sectors of the economy - quite the opposite. Instead, we are talking about safeguarding jobs” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28117). He mentioned “financial gains” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589) “in the future” (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) in relation to his preferred policy response (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28117). Another remedy, suggested three times by the CDU/CSU and SPD, are the Fourth Civil Protection Act’s “reimbursement programs” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15).

As for the FDP, Thomae stated: “ladies and gentlemen, we will soon be unable to recognize our downtowns” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219), which suggested bankruptcy as a problem. Economic losses were previously described by Nijkrake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, pp. 84, Table 2), Guenduez, Schedler, and Ciocan (2016, p. 589), and Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 864). Further, the FDP pointed out that the proposal of the Fourth Civil Protection Act “removed the possibility of test-based opening” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28107), whereby the FDP emphasized “financial losses” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589) as a “reference[s] to economic consequences of pursuing some course of action” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589).

Thomae said that “[W]e take the health dangers from Corona very, very seriously, but we also take the [...] consequences of pandemic control policy very seriously” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219). Contrary to the governing parties, the FDP regarded economic consequences as equally important as health issues (Born, Dietrich, & Müller, 2021, p. 1). Subsequently, the FDP proposed to allow “model project[s] with strict protective measures and testing concepts to combat the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus” (Theurer M. , et al., 2021d, p. 1). The aforementioned party further claimed that “test-based opening concepts are a perspective to reduce social and economic damage” (Theurer M. , et al., 2021g, p. 2). Eventually, “model project[s]” (Theurer M. , et al., 2021d, p. 1) were not included in the Fourth Civil Protection Act (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021).

These findings of the economic frame are interesting because the governing parties were detected mentioning that closing measures were remedies to the pandemic (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15), while highlighting them as causes for economic losses (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589), which they aim to solve with reimbursement measures. The latter was also included in the Fourth Civil Protection Act as another remedy (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 19).

As for the FDP, it was found that it proposed bankruptcy as a problem (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219) related to closing measures (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589). Further, the focus on economic issues as being equally as crucial as health matters was stressed (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219). Furthermore, the FDP unsuccessfully suggested the remedy of re-opening measures, based on previous tests (Theurer M. , et al., 2021d, p. 1).

The Occurrence of the Economic Frame per Party on the Federal Level

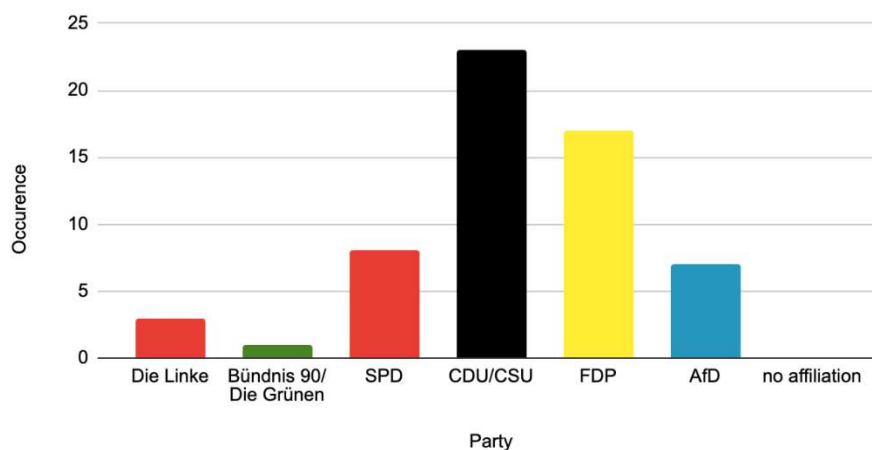


Figure 3. The Use of the Economic Frame on the Federal Level distinguished by Parties

The economic frame was used 59 times on the federal level (see Figure 3, Table 5 in the appendix). Concerning all coded segments on the federal level, the frame made up roughly 18% (see Table 7 in the appendix), presenting a minor occurrence. Comparing the parties' contribution to the frame, it shows that the CDU/CSU used the economic frame 23 times, which translated to 39% (Figure 3, Table 5 in the appendix). Then, the frame was found 17 times for the FDP, representing 28,8% (Figure 3, Table 5 in the appendix). All other parties and those without affiliations used the frame less (Figure 3). It can be argued that content-wise the frame was found for the FDP as expected. However, it did not use the frame more than others (Figure 3, Table 5 in the appendix). Instead, it used the frame more than most other parties. The economic frame displayed the most used frame for the FDP (Table 6 in the appendix). In relation to the respective frames, 17 coded segments were identified for the economic frame, which made up a share of 56,6% for the FDP (Table 6 in the appendix). Followingly, the responsibility frame followed at 7 times (23,3%), and the securitization frame was detected 6 times (20%) (Table 6 in the appendix). Therefore, this paper partly accepts hypothesis H2:

"More than other parties, the FDP framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in Germany in the decision-making stage as a matter of economic losses."

The following section discusses the findings for the securitization frame.

4.1.3 Securitization Frame

In regards to the securitization frame, the governing parties mentioned: "more infectious virus variants, in particular the viruses that are now responsible virus variants" (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 1). They specified that the virus variants "are spreading rapidly" (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 9). The mention of rapidness (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 9) could already pave the way for the suggestion of rapid and combined forces (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1). Thus, the earlier statements underlined the emergency at hand by pointing out the threat of virus mutations (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5).

Merkel, CDU, emphasized "[T]he threat of overburdening our healthcare system" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). Furthermore, Stracke, CSU, said that "[T]he situation in hospitals, in particular, is worsening, in some cases dramatically" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28117). As suggested by Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5) and Pieri (2018, pp. 86-88), the urgency of the circumstances is emphasized by highlighting the insufficient capacity to care for the ill (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). Interestingly, Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5) also reported on the emphasized role of the healthcare sector, which is reflected thus far (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). The governing parties expressed the problem that "[M]ore cases of younger patients with severe courses are admitted to intensive care units" (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 11). Additionally, the younger patients "have a significantly longer average length of stay in the ICU" (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 11). The SPD pointed out that "[P]eople with other illnesses who also need intensive care - heart attacks, accidents - have to be turned down and important operations have to be postponed" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28106). Thus, the problem is suggested as a matter of life and death (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5) by referencing vulnerable groups in society, such as children and people with illnesses (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 11; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28106).

Bas, SPD, reported on the circumstances of healthcare professionals when she discussed "[T]he cries for help from the intensive care physicians, but also from the nursing staff, are elementary" (144) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28105). Thus, the previously mentioned

statement (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28105) reflected Wicke and Bolognesi's finding (2020, p. 5) that the healthcare sector and healthcare professionals were highlighted.

Angela Merkel, CDU, stated that “[W]e must not leave doctors and nurses alone” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102), “[A]lone they cannot win the fight against the virus in this third wave, even with the best medical art and the most sacrificial effort” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102). Following Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5), Merkel portrayed the healthcare staff as “the army of allies” who “fight against the virus” by applying treatment (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102) and require amplified forces. Thereby, she applied “[W]ar-related terminology” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1).

Further, Merkel added that “[T]he virus does not allow itself to be negotiated with. It understands only one language: the language of determination” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). Thus, her moral judgment (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103) bears similarity to the doctrine of no negotiations with terrorists (Toros, 2008). Furthermore, her introduction of “determination” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103) resembles Kamradt-Scott and McInnes' (2012, p. 104) “military readiness”.

Followingly, Merkel, CDU, concluded that “[W]e implement the emergency brake nationwide” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). She also stated that “[E]very day counts. Every day earlier that the emergency brake is applied nationwide is a day won” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). Thus, the metaphor of an “emergency brake” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103) already implies that a threat is approaching and that a state of emergency was reached, which relates to Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, pp. 5,14). Stracke, CSU, added that “we focus on speed” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28223). Hence, the rapidness as a problem (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 9) is picked up and linked to a solution over mentioning the urgency (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5) as the moral judgment (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28119). Thus, content-wise, the frame was found for the CDU/CSU and SPD as expected in H3.

In terms of quantity, the securitization frame was found the most for the CDU/CSU at 67,7% or 113 times (Figure 4, Table 5 in the appendix). The SPD followed at 30 and 18% (Figure 4, Table 5 in the appendix). For the CDU/CSU, Table 6 in the appendix shows that in comparison to all frames, their contribution to the securitization frame lies at 58,8%, which is their highest share (Table 6 in the appendix). For the SPD, only the responsibility frame at 48% made up a more significant share of their coded segments than the securitization frame at 41,1% (Table 6 in the appendix).

As for its content and occurrence, the findings are in line with the expected hypothesis H3: “More than other parties, the CDU/CSU and SPD framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in Germany in the decision-making stage as a matter of security”, which is accepted.

The following section discusses the research question’s answer and the expected hypotheses’ findings.

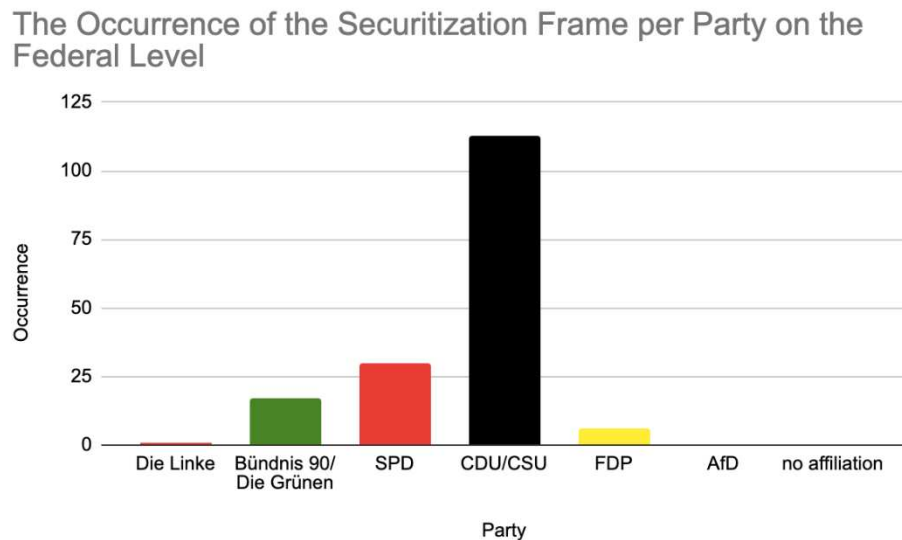


Figure 4. The Use of the Securitization Frame on the Federal Level distinguished by Parties

4.1.4 Answer to the first Sub-Question

The responsibility frame was used 108 times in total (see Figure 2, Table 5 in the appendix). The analysis showed that CDU/CSU and SPD contributed the most to the frame (see Figure 2, Table 5 in the appendix). The content was found as expected in hypothesis H1, which is why it was accepted. Further, the frame covered Entman’s four functions (2010, p. 391).

The economic frame was used 59 times on the federal level (see Figure 3, Table 5 in the appendix). 39% of the frame was applied by the CDU/CSU, while 28,8% was used by the FDP (Figure 3, Table 5 in the appendix). 28,8% belonged to the FDP (Table 5 in the appendix), however, the majority of the FDP’s coded segments related to the economic frame at 56,6% or 17 times (Table 6 in the appendix). The content presented by the FDP, in conjunction with the frame’s occurrence for the party have led to the partial acceptance of H2. In contrast, the governing parties used the frame to stress the remedy of reimbursement programs in relation to financial losses (Guendez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589; Federal Ministry of Health, 2021,

pp. 14, 15) that result from closing measures (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15), which were included as remedies. This finding was interesting because the governing parties aimed to suggest the Act as the remedy, while simultaneously pointing out that its measures led to the problem of economic losses (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15).

The securitization frame was found 167 times, and was predominantly used by the CDU/CSU at 113 times (67,7%), and SPD at 30 times (18%) (Figure 4, Table 5 in the appendix). The content was found as expected in H3, leading to the hypothesis' acceptance.

The following section touches on the respective findings of the responsibility frame, economic frame, and securitization frame for political actors on the state level.

4.2 State Level

Section 4.2 reports on the empirical findings of frames for political actors at the state level. Its structure follows the same order as the previous one. Thus, the responsibility frame for political actors on the state level is presented first.

4.2.1 Responsibility Frame

A problem-definition mentioned for the responsibility frame at the state level was provided by Ramelow, Die Linke, who described an example of miscommunication, when he spent

“[S]ix hours of watching TV without knowing where my colleagues are. I'm a bit stinky of the colleagues who forgot to let me know. [...] And in public, it looked like we prime ministers were kind of stupid. I'm sorry, this impression has not been corrected since then.” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159).

Thus, miscommunication interfered with cooperation, as introduced by Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 863). With this statement (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159), he placed the blame for miscommunication on his fellow heads of state who did not notify him (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863), which was suggested by the literature (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2).

Further, Buchholz, FDP, referred to the Fourth Civil Protection Act as a “sledgehammer emergency response initiated by the federal government” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161). Therefore, Buchholz expressed dissatisfaction with federally uniform measures and blamed the federal government (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). Haseloff, CDU,

used a similar notion when he stated that “the craft and content of the law, [...] leaves much to be desired” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). Moreover, Weil, SPD, said, “I don't think it was good for the reputation of Federalism in every case, either” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 151). Based on the statements by Buchholz, Haseloff, and Weil, who belong to different parties, it can be noted that all three regarded federally uniform measures as a problem (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 151, 153, 161). This was expected, as institutions previously highlighted the ability of the German federalist system to react regionally and decentralized (Federal Ministry of Health, 2020, p. 13). Leading up to H4, it was expected that state-level representatives mentioned disorganization (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863) as a problem and blamed it on the federal level. Instead, federal blame was detected concerning the drafting of the Act, as mentioned by Buchholz, Weil, and Haseloff (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 151, 153, 161).

Interestingly, Bouffier, CDU, elaborated that “I regret that we don't have the chance to improve one or two things” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 149). This finding was crucial because there would be a chance to improve the Act by appealing to the Conciliation Committee (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 150), but this would take time. Hence, the segment shows that “the problem requires urgent action” (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2), as suggested by the literature. Thereby, Bouffier, CDU, already hinted that he would vote for the Act due to his perceived urgency of the situation (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 149).

Ramelow, Die Linke, was found saying, “I'm not just pointing the finger at the federal government, I'm pointing it at us and say: only together can we continue to stand up to this pandemic” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161). Ramelow expressed that he regarded pandemic management as a shared responsibility (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) between the federal level and the states. The expectation included in H4 of framing pandemic management as a state-level matter could not be detected.

Regarding the remedy, Bouffier, CDU, repeated that he perceived a decision as urgent (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). In line with Nijkrake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, p. 84, Table 2), he stated that “[W]e can't behave like that. In the end, you have to take a position” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 151). Hence, his remedy is to vote for the Act. Köpping, SPD, said that “in view of the dramatic pandemic situation, the time delay associated with an appeal to the Conciliation Committee [...], the [...] State is refraining from appealing to the Conciliation Committee” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 170). Thus, Köpping also underlined that urgency (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) convinced him to vote in favor of the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 170).

Following Entman (2010, p. 391), it must be noted that the heads of state acknowledged the previous disorganization on their behalf (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159). The problems identified on the state level for the responsibility frame covered federal blame (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) for a poorly drafted Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 151, 153, 161). However, regarding judgments, the heads of state underlined the shared responsibility for pandemic management (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161). Additionally, they expressed their perceived urgency in conjunction with a decision (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2), which prevented them from voting against the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 170). Thus, the identified remedy was the vote for the Act in relation to perceived urgency, contrary to previous expectations in H4.

The responsibility frame was detected 66 times for state-level representatives, which displayed a share of 56% of all coded segments at the state level (Figure 5, Table 7 in the appendix). Based on the content detected, H4 expecting that “*The heads of state blamed the federal level and referred to pandemic management as a state-level responsibility during the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act in Germany*” was rejected.

The subsequent section reports on the economic frame at the state level.

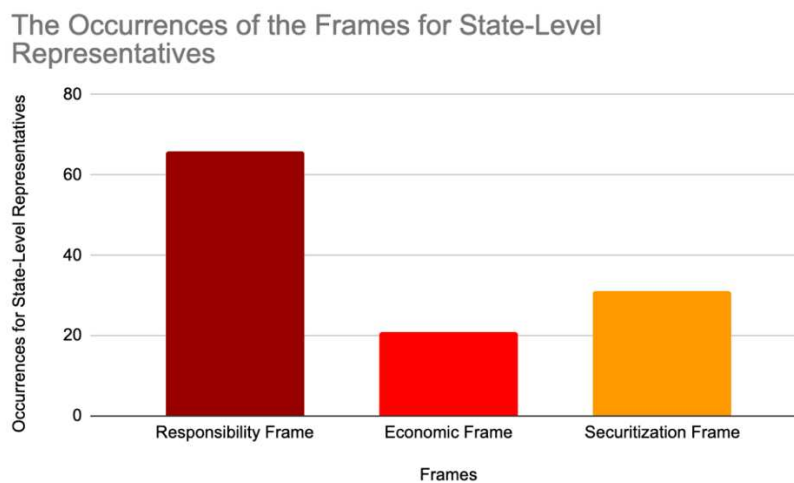


Figure 5. Occurrences of Frames at the State Level

4.2.2 Economic Frame

For the economic frame, Haseloff, CDU, brought forward that

“[N]ow it is always all or nothing. Much of what the countries have been successfully practicing in test mode is now ruled out. [...] the model projects [...] for the incidence range above a seven-day incidence of 100 newly infected persons per 100,000 inhabitants in

the [...] are now deliberately cut off and prevented for the future.”
(Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153).

Therefore, he criticized that opening measures as model projects were not possible, following the Act, which pertains to Guenduez, Schedler, and Ciocan's (2016, p. 589) suggestion of “mentions of financial [...] losses”, as well as their “reference[s] to economic consequences of pursuing some course of action” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589).

A similar notion was detected in Hans' statement, CDU:

“I find fault with the fact that no further incentives for testing are being created beyond this. The negative rapid test as a prerequisite for access to retail, outdoor catering, cultural events, private outdoor gatherings, as we do in the Saarland, has led to the number of rapid tests skyrocketing in our country” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 157).

Bouffier, CDU, and Hans, CDU, pointed out that in the state of Saarland, closing measures differentiated between indoor and outdoor activities, which the Act did not (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 150, 157).

Regarding problems, Bouffier, CDU, criticized that the Act included measures for retailers, while the Robert Koch Institute found that they were not contributing to COVID-19 transmissions (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 150). Therefore, he mentioned that economic branches were sanctioned with closing measures and “financial [...] losses” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589), while being classified as safe in terms of COVID-19 transmissions (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 150). His moral judgment was that “I don't know how to justify it in terms of the pandemic” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 150).

Ramelow, Die Linke, expressed the problem that business owners lost their trust in the government due to the economic consequences of the measures (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159). Precisely, Ramelow recalled that those “who no longer have confidence in us are the retailers, [...] all the trained florists tell me: this is a disaster, what you're doing to us” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159). Thus, “financial [...] losses” were mentioned concerning prior closing measures as part of the German pandemic management (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589).

Ramelow, Die Linke, mentioned the economic inadequacy of prior measures by referencing that “cultural workers are the losers of this pandemic, the solo self-employed and all service providers who work at the fair or whatever else” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 160). Thereby, Ramelow mentioned “financial [...] losses” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589) in terms of economic inadequacy of prior measures (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 160), which is in line with the literature (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589). Furthermore, he explicitly mentioned culture and entertainment as economic branches that were financially affected by

the measures (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 160), comparable to Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 864). Interestingly, he did not use any multinationals but creative people and family businesses operating at fairs (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 160), which could display an attempt to positively present economic actors.

As for the remedy at the state level, Haseloff, CDU, stated that “the “click and meet” approach [provides for certain] test incentives” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). He mentioned opening measures in relation to testing as a remedy (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). Müller, SPD, echoed this approach: “a minimum of shopping, retail opportunities” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156), as well as “Click and test and meet” [...] above all [have] to do with the fact that I wanted to create an incentive for more tests” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156). Thus, Haseloff and Müller mentioned opening measures bound to prescribed conditions as means for “financial gains” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589) and remedies, as suggested by Entman (2010, p. 391). However, this was not included in the Act (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021).

Additionally, Ramelow, Die Linke, brought up “the Federal Government to promise at least an appropriate share of the costs” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 170) as a remedy. He pointed out the “expenses or costs” at the state level, related to pandemic measures, as mentioned by Guenduez, Schedler, and Ciocan (2016, p. 589). Thus, he hopes for financial cooperation between the levels to ease the “financial [...] losses” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589).

In relation to Entman (2010, p. 391), the heads of state criticized that “model projects” were not included in the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). Further problems were the lack of scientific backing and precision in closing measures (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 150, 157), which prepared Ramelow’s judgment that retailers were losing trust in the governments (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159), due to the economic burden placed on them through closing measures (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 864). As a remedy, the heads of state reported projects requiring customers to get tested and to make an appointment to shop (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156). Eventually, the heads of state suggested sharing their “expenses” (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589) related to pandemic measures.

Table 7 in the appendix shows that the economic frame was detected 21 times for state-level representatives, which made up a share of 17,8% of the coded segments. Interestingly, the presented remedies were not included in the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156).

Comparably, its presence is rather low and can be argued to play a less significant role in state-level representatives’ framing approach in the decision-making phase of the Fourth

Civil Protection Act than, for instance, the responsibility frame at 56% (Table 7 in the appendix).

Section 4.2.3 shows the findings for the securitization frame at the state level.

4.2.3 Securitization Frame

As for the securitization frame, Müller, SPD, stressed that “anyone who becomes seriously ill now and ends up in intensive care, dies or is scarred for life” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Thus, it can be said that Müller underlined the severity of the circumstances and described the consequences of an infection like the state of a wounded soldier, whereby he utilized “[W]ar-related terminology”, as reported by Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 1). Similarly, Müller stated that “[Y]ounger people are now falling seriously ill and end up in intensive care” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Furthermore, he underlined the severity of COVID-19 infections by highlighting that vulnerable groups in society were affected (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Müller invoked the severity of COVID-19 infections (Pieri, 2018, pp. 86-87) for children as a vulnerable group in society by focusing on “[Y]ounger patients” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). This impression was stressed by Ramelow, Die Linke, who said that “[T]he virus is there. It's in the kindergartens. It's in the schools. It's being carried around.” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 158). Due to the similarity and repetition of the short sentences, he underlined the omnipresence of the virus (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 158). He portrayed COVID-19 as an invisible threat that latched onto people as carriers (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 158), which is in line with the literature (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5). Additionally, he mentioned that the virus reached kindergartens and schools (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 158), which display places that are supposed to keep children safe. Using them, he underlined the urgency of the situation (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5).

Müller also referred to the working conditions of healthcare professionals “and what great strains they have been exposed to” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Ramelow, Die Linke, picked this up and mentioned “[T]he current epidemic situation and concern for the health and lives of the population, as well as the burden on intensive care units and nursing staff” (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 170). Thus, the healthcare sector was brought up again, as suggested by Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5).

Interestingly, Buchholz, FDP, who remained critical of the Act, stated that “[L]änder's actions [...] continue to be directed toward protecting the health and lives of their citizens and preventing overburdening of the health care system” (Bundesrat, 2021a, p. 1). Thus, he

prioritized the healthcare sector's functionality and people's health (Born, Dietrich, & Müller, 2021, p. 1). Similarly, Bovenschulte, SPD, stated that his priority was "[P]reventing overburdening of the health care system" (Bundesrat, 2021b, p. 2).

Bouffier, CDU, repeatedly stressed the "urgency associated with a very negative situation" (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5). For instance, he expressed the judgment that "[W]e are in the biggest crisis of our country" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 147). Further, he believed that "there is a threat that the pandemic will be prolonged for months - with all the negative consequences" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 147). Thereby, Bouffier prepared to introduce "the necessity for actions to be taken, in order to achieve a final outcome quickly", following Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5). This could be observed when he said that "[T]herefore - I will leave no doubt about this - it is right to act" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 147). Eventually, he stated that "[I]n the end, you have to weigh things up. You have to weigh: Do I take the law now like this and try not to stop it because of the urgency?" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 150). Drawing on Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5), he added that he did not only want to take action, but he also wanted "to act quickly" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 147). He continued that "I am firmly convinced that we will only be able to combat the pandemic successfully if we work together very closely" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 148). He used "[W]ar-related terminology" to suggest that joined forces could be the remedy (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1). Furthermore, he summarized his remedy as follows:

"We have concluded in Hessen that because of the overriding objective that we do not want to overburden our health care system and that we do not want this pandemic to last any longer, if necessary, we do not choose the path of appealing to the Conciliation Committee because we do not want to stop the law" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 150).

Bouffier's stance was reflected by Haseloff, CDU, who concluded that "[H]owever, Saxony-Anhalt will not object at this point because [...] there is a need for action, we can all see that and it is undisputed" (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Hence, Wicke and Bolognesi's (2020, p. 5) suggestion of a threat that affects the circumstances quickly and negatively, which justifies quick actions was found for the securitization frame at the state level.

Eventually, the aforementioned frame was detected 31 times for political actors at the state level, which made up 26,3% (Table 7 in the appendix). Therefore, the securitization frame displayed the second most popular frame at the state level.

The following section answers the second sub-question and discusses hypothesis H4.

4.2.4 Answer to the second Sub-Question

This section summarizes the findings from 4.2.1 to 4.2.3, to answer the second sub-question (ii): "Which frames did state-level actors use during the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?". Eventually, hypothesis H4 was rejected.

In terms of frames' occurrences for state-level representatives, the responsibility frame was detected 66 times and made up 56% of the coded statements on the state level, whereby it was detected as the most predominant one (Table 7 in the appendix). It was followed by the securitization frame at 31 times and 26,3%. (Table 7 in the appendix). Lastly, the economic frame was detected 21 times at the state level, meaning that it made up only 17,8% of the heads of state's coded segments (Table 7 in the appendix). Thus, it can be concluded that the latter frame did not play a central role.

For the responsibility frame, the state-level representatives acknowledged the previous disorganization on their behalf (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159) and blamed themselves (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2). This was not expected to be found. Instead, H4 expected that state-level representatives framed the Act as the result of federal problems. Hence, H4 expected the heads of state to blame the federal level. In addition to the identified self-blame, the heads of state did blame the federal level (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) for the poorly drafted Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 151, 153, 161). Thus, the expectation can be corrected to the identification of shared blame. As for moral judgments, hypothesis H4 expected pandemic management to be framed as a state-level responsibility or remedy. However, the heads of state underlined the shared responsibility for pandemic management (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161), which led to the rejection of H4.

Regarding the economic frame, the heads of state criticized that "model projects" were not included in the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). Further problems were the lack of scientific backing and precision in closing measures (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 150, 157). Ramelow said that retailers were losing trust in the governments due to the economic burdens placed on them through closing measures (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 634). As a remedy, the heads of state reported, similar to the federal opposition, opening projects that require customers to get tested and to make appointments to shop (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156). Nevertheless, the remedy was not considered in the Act (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021) and the frame displayed the lowest presence at 17,8% (Table 7 in the appendix).

As for the securitization frame, the heads of state referred to vulnerable groups in society to stress the threat of COVID-19 infections (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Specifically, children were brought up with COVID-19 (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). They used "[W]ar-related

terminology” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, pp. 1, 5) to describe infections and the situation in the healthcare sector. Interestingly, the heads of state stressed that they perceived that actions were urgently needed (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 147; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5), which led to their decision to vote for the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154).

4.3 Alignment of the Streams in Relation to Frames

This section answers the third sub-question: (iii) *“To what extent did the detected frames by federal and state-level actors align the problem and policy stream in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?”*.

It combines the findings for the frames on both levels and focuses on the alignment of problems and policy streams, as well as their support by the German Federal government and state-level representatives. Further, it follows the structure as previously indicated: First, it discusses the actors’ use of the responsibility frame on both levels and how the findings relate to the alignment of the streams. Then, it does the same for the economic and securitization frames. Lastly, it answers the third research question and elaborates on the expected hypotheses 5.

4.3.1 The Responsibility Frame and the Alignment of Streams

The federal level, particularly the governing parties, framed the Act as the result of failed agreements, inconsistent and inefficient measures that hampered inter-level cooperation (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 163, 167; Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10). Additionally, the federal level framed the aforementioned issues as state-level problems (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 163, 167; Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10). As for the state-level representatives, the analysis found that they acknowledged previous disorganization on their behalf and blamed themselves (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159). However, they also blamed the federal level for the poorly drafted Fourth Civil Protection Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 151, 153, 161). It can be noted that the federal and state level agreed that mistakes had been made in terms of organization and cooperation (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 159, 163, 167). However, the state level appeared more self-critical than the federal level (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159).

For the federal level, the moral judgment mainly concerned the federal ability to solve the problem (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101), while the states referred to it as a shared

responsibility (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161). Nevertheless, both levels stressed that an urgent decision was required (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101; Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 149). Specifically, the state-level representatives expressed that the urgency of the circumstances convinced them to vote for the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 149).

Thus, both levels suggested the Fourth Civil Protection Act as the remedy. On the one hand, the federal level stressed “the emergency brake” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101) to achieve federal authority. On the other hand, the state-level representatives highlighted their willingness to cooperate due to urgency (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161).

The responsibility frame displayed the second most coded frame for federal actors at 108 times, which made up 32,3% of the coded segments (Table 7 in the appendix). Thereby, it displayed one of the two most predominant frames. The same can be said for the state level, as it was used the most frequently at 66 times and displayed 56% of the coded segments (Table 7 in the appendix).

For the context of this paper, the findings for the responsibility frame showed that on the federal level, solutions were matched to problems (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 163, 167; Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101), and were linked through moral judgments (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28101). Thus, political actors on the federal level showed a “persuasive policy story” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120).

For the state level, representatives also mentioned the remedy of the Act and stressed their perceived urgency (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161), as mentioned by Nijkraake, Gosselt, and Gutteling (2015, p. 84, Table 2), as the motivation behind their decision to agree on the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161). In regards to quality and quantity, hypothesis H5a: *“The federal government and state-level representatives align the problem and policy streams by applying (a) the responsibility frame in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act”* could be accepted (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlhöfer, 2015, p. 444).

4.3.2 The Economic Frame and the Alignment of Streams

For the FDP, an oppositional party on the federal level, bankruptcy displayed a problem (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219) related to closing measures (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589). This was found at the state level when the heads of state criticized that “model projects” were not included in the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). Thus, issues pertaining to the problem stream matched for the oppositional party and the state level

representatives (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohnhöfer, 2015, p. 444).

Further, the FDP expressed the moral judgment that economic matters were as crucial as health matters (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219). At the state level, Ramelow expressed that retail trade owners felt left alone due to their financial burden (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 864), which reflected the federal oppositional findings.

For the federal and state level, the aforementioned findings led to the suggestion of including “model project[s]” as opening measures (Theurer M. , et al., 2021d, p. 1; Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156). However, this notion was not included in the Fourth Civil Protection Act (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021). Thus, the economic frame portrayed the Fourth Civil Protection Act rather negatively, as it contained closing measures that were regarded to be the cause of economic problems (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219), which is in line with Sandell, Sebar, and Harris (2013, p. 864). Thus, the FDP’s stance reflected their party ideology, as previously expected (Herweg, Huß, & Zohnhöfer, 2015, p. 442).

In contrast, the federal governing parties framed closing measures as remedies to the pandemic (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15), while highlighting them as causes for economic losses (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589) as well. Thus, they suggested solving the issue through reimbursement measures, which were also included in the Act as a remedy (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 19). Content-wise, the included remedies in the economic frame led to problems, which again require remedies, whereby the frame appeared not as compelling as the others.

Summarizing, the state-level representatives and the federal opposition presented a “persuasive policy story” countering the Act (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120). However, the frame made up 17,7% for the federal level and 17,8% for the state level (Table 7 in the appendix), whereby it displayed a minuscule presence, and its content was ignored in the adoption. It could be ruled out that the economic frame facilitated the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act, nor did it prevent its adoption (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohnhöfer, 2015, p. 444).

4.3.3 The Securitization Frame and the Alignment of Streams

The federally governing parties introduced quickly spreading COVID-19 virus variants as the cause (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 9), which led to the problem of an increasing amount of people requiring medical care, in particular, younger and vulnerable patients (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 11), stressing the urgency of the problem at hand (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5). Similarly, the heads of state were detected referencing children with COVID-19 (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). Their infections were presented (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154) like wounded soldiers (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1).

Federal actors and state-level representatives introduced the problem of terrible working conditions for healthcare professionals who were displayed as allies, specifically on the federal level (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102; Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). The finding was already introduced by Wicke and Bolognesi (2020, p. 5).

Consequently, quick actions and a determined command (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103) were described on the federal level as necessary, while state-level representatives highlighted that combined forces were necessary (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 147, 149). Eventually, the frame linked the previous statements (Entman, 2010, p. 391) to the Fourth Civil Protection Act on the federal level, referred to as the “emergency brake” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103). Summarizing, both levels suggested militaristic approaches (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103; Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 147, 149).

The heads of state stressed that they perceived a decision as urgently needed (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 147; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5), which led to their decision to vote for the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154).

The securitization frame comprised 50% of the coded segments for the federal level and 26,3% for the state level (Table 7 in the appendix). At 67,7%, the CDU/CSU provided the most coded segments for the frame, followed by the SPD at 18% (Table 5 in the appendix). Therefore, this paper argues that the governing parties on the federal level presented a “persuasive policy story” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120). They managed to match their preferred solution of the Fourth Civil Protection Act to problems (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 9), while stressing the urgency thereof (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103; Wicke and Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5).

The political actors at the state level agreed on the causes and problems (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154) and suggested joining forces (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 147, 149). Additionally, the heads of state reported that “the urgency associated with a very negative situation, and the necessity for actions to be taken” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5) convinced them to vote for

the Act. Summarizing, the frame displayed the predominant one on the federal level and the second most used frame for state-level representatives (Table 7 in the appendix). Its content was found to match the problem and policy stream, whereby it aligned the streams through framing (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Eventually, hypothesis H5b: “*The federal government and state-level representatives align the problem and policy streams by applying (b) the securitization frame in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act*” could be accepted in terms of content and occurrence because “[S]olutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favourable political forces” (Bélar & Howlett, 2016, p. 222).

4.3.4 Answer to the third Sub-Question

This section answers sub-question (iii), “*To which extent did the detected frames align the problem and policy stream in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?*”. It can be said that the responsibility frame and securitization frame, as applied at the federal level, convinced state-level actors to vote for the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154) based on perceived urgency (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, p. 84, Table 2; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5). It was found that the perception of urgency heavily influenced the state-level actors’ choice of solution (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154).

On the one hand, perceived urgency convinced them of the necessity of clarity (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28213) in relation to the responsibility frame. On the other hand, perceived urgency convinced them of the necessity to save people’s lives and the healthcare sector in terms of the securitization frame (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103).

This paper detected that the responsibility frame was preset in 32,3% of the coded segments on the federal level and 56% at the state level (Table 7 in the appendix). Particularly, the federally governing parties used the frame the most, at 52,8% and 32,4% (Table 5 in the appendix). The same can be said for the securitization frame, which was reflected in 50% of the segments coded for the federal level (Table 7 in the appendix). The frame was coded at 67,7% for the CDU/CSU and 18% for the SPD (Table 5 in the appendix). Comparing the segments per actor, 58,8% of the segments by the CDU/CSU were detected in relation to the frame and 48% by the SPD (Table 6 in the appendix).

Thus, hypothesis H5: “*The federal government and state-level representatives align the problem and policy streams by applying (a) the responsibility frame / (b) the securitization frame in the decision-making stage of the Fourth Civil Protection Act*” was accepted.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper achieved to answer the main research question, “***To which extent did frames applied by political actors in the decision-making stage lead to the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act?***”.

As for the responsibility frame, H1 stating that “*More than other parties, the CDU/CSU and SPD framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act as a federal remedy and the result of state-level problems.*” could be accepted since the CDU/CSU’s share of the frame made up 52,8% and the SPD’s 32,4% (Table 5 in the appendix). Further, the content was identified as expected. For the state level, the responsibility frame was present in 56% of the segments and displayed the predominant frame (Table 7 in the appendix).

State-level representatives agreed with the federal level and acknowledged previous disorganization on their behalf (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159). Problems were brought up at the state level concerning the federal drafting of the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 151, 153, 161), but the political actors highlighted that “the problem requires urgent action” (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2) and voted against appealing to the Conciliation Committee, and for the Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 170). Eventually, state-level representatives were detected to suggest the remedy of the Fourth Civil Protection Act (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161).

Since state-level actors pointed out that they were to blame for prior disorganization (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 159), as suggested by the literature (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013, p. 863), they mentioned that the responsibility for pandemic management should be shared among the federal and state level (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 161). Thus, H4 was rejected.

The aforementioned findings showed that the responsibility frame was supported by the federal government and state-level representatives, which aligned the problem and policy streams among the two levels, and facilitated the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Therefore, H5a was accepted.

In line with the extant body of research, this finding repeated the frame’s ability to facilitate policy adoptions (Temmann, Wiedicke, Schaller, Scherr, & Reifgerste, 2022, p. 829).

In relation to the literature on crisis communication and crisis response, the adoption of the Act on the basis of the responsibility frame, which highlighted the federal ability “to alleviate the problem” (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2), stressed that non-regional crises are perceived to require “centralized decision making” (Hegele & Schnabel, 2021, p. 2), especially when “[C]itizens often expect federal governments to take charge in these situations” (Hegele & Schnabel, 2021, p. 2). Due to Germany’s previous leadership role (Helms, Van Esch, & Crawford, 2019; Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2020), the push for centralized decision-making on the federal level (Hegele & Schnabel, 2021, p. 2) could extend in the future to other federalist EU-member states or even worldwide. Further, it is possible that centralized decision-making (Hegele & Schnabel, 2021, p. 2) that limits individual rights (ZDF, 2021) also spreads across other fields, particularly other non-regional crises, such as disease, energy or climate.

On the one hand, the predominance of the responsibility frame in this paper could relate to the fact that the Act mainly concerned the shift of legal responsibilities (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021). On the other hand, it could have to do with the fact that the responsibility frame displayed a generic frame, and four items were used to measure the frame (Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2; Guenduez Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589). The inclusion was motivated by Entman’s (2010, p. 391) previously mentioned definition of frames’ four functions that extend from identifying causes to solutions.

As for the economic frame, H2: “*More than other parties, the FDP framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a matter of economic losses*” was partly accepted because the content was found as expected for the FDP, but only the CDU/CSU’s share was higher at 39% than the FDP’s at 28,8% (Table 5 in the appendix). In addition, the economic frame displayed the most used frame for the FDP compared to the other respective frames at 56,6% (Table 6 in the appendix). State-level representatives shared the FDP’s frame (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 153). Both levels matched problems, such as economic losses (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28219; Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589), to remedies, such as opening measures, based on appointments and tests (Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 156). Since they were not included in the Act, the frame, as applied by the federal oppositional party and the state-level representatives, did not suggest the Act as the remedy. Its negative content was not supported by the federal government. At 17,8% for state-level representatives (Table 7 in the appendix), its occurrence is rather low, compared to other frames, which is why this paper determined that it did not manage to align the streams (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel &

Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444). Due to its low presence (Table 9 in the appendix), it neither led to the Act's rejection.

Instead, the federally governing parties tried to use the economic frame to present the Fourth Civil Protection Act as the remedy (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, pp. 14, 15). However, they framed closing measures simultaneously as remedies and causes for economic losses (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589), which they aim to solve with reimbursement programs, which were included as remedies (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 19). Following Entman (2010, p. 391), the frame's functions were not as convincingly put together as the other two.

In contrast to Krishnatray and Shrivastava's (2021, p. 203) findings, Merkel's party increasingly addressed economic issues, as the pandemic continued in 2021. The comparably high presence and the content of the economic frame for the federally governing parties in the decision-making stage of the Act in April 2021 (Table 5, 6 in the appendix) suggest that they perceived economic problems as salient issues whose "persistence threatens their re-election" (Herweg, Huß & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 437). The changing framing approach by Merkel's party is interesting because Colombini et al. (2016, p. 495) introduced that "the framing of an issue and its solution by a given actor may shift over time", which this paper uncovered for the CDU/CSU's perception of economic issues in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany in 2021 (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589).

The securitization frame was found as expected in H3: "*More than other parties, the CDU/CSU and SPD framed the Fourth Civil Protection Act in the decision-making stage as a matter of security*". It made up 58,8% of all coded segments for the CDU/CSU and 41,1% for the SPD (Table 6 in the appendix). Further, it made up 50% of the federal codes in total, displaying the most detected frame (Table 7 in the appendix). For state-level representatives, it displayed the second most detected frame, after the responsibility frame, at 26,3% (Table 7 in the appendix). Both levels of government stressed the health threat of COVID-19 and its mutations (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 9). Particularly vulnerable groups in society were mentioned (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 11). Subsequently, healthcare professionals were described as allies who require help fighting the health threat of COVID-19 (841) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102; Bundesrat, 2021c, p. 154). This finding was suggested by the literature (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5), to underline the urgency of the circumstances. The causes and problems prepared the moral judgment of the necessity of quick actions, determined commands (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103) and joined forces (Bundesrat, 2021c, pp. 147, 149). Again, this paper's finding draws on the literature's

suggestion of “[W]ar-related terminology” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 1). Eventually, the remedy identified on both governmental levels was the Act, referred to as the “emergency brake” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103), which amplified the feeling of fear (Pieri, 2018, p. 86) by underlining the state of emergency. As mentioned, the majority of statements by the federally governing parties and state-level representatives covered the content as laid out (Table 5, 6, 7 in the appendix). The problem and policy streams were aligned, and the occurrences of the frame led to the acceptance of hypothesis 5b (Entman, 2010, p. 391; Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 120; Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444).

For the securitization frame, this finding is in line with Kamradt-Scott and McInnes (2012, p. 104), who proposed that “decision makers appeared to have been successfully persuaded of this, resulting in the authorisation of new pandemic plans”, which perfectly described the adoption of the Fourth Civil Protection Act. Therefore, this paper added another case to the literature in which the urgency of the situation at hand convinced political actors of drastic shifts in pandemic management, which was also discussed by Pieri (2018). Additionally, this paper showed that the securitization frame is no longer tied to military threats only but is used in German political debates on COVID-19 (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 95)

For future health crises, this finding could mean that health–wealth trade-offs, as suggested by Hargreaves Heap, Koop, Matakos, Unan, and Weber (2020), are no longer as crucial. Instead, they could be replaced by trade-offs between individual rights and collective safety, since the Act concerned curfews and was forwarded to the Federal German Constitutional Court (Bundesgesetzblatt Online, 2021, pp. 802, 803, 805; ZDF, 2021).

This paper treated the MSF’s extension that focused on the opening of a “decision window” (Herweg, Huß, & Zohlnhöfer, 2015, p. 444) as “discursive patterns” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 116). This application helped to understand why “certain couplings are much more likely than others” (Winkel & Leipold, 2016, p. 125). Further, the findings reflected the persuasiveness of frames that led to increased policy outcomes (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 104). As Colombini et al. (2016, p. 501) suggested, this paper demonstrated that linking the extension of the MSF to framing explained “whether these windows result in effective policy change or not. The concept of framing therefore lends an additional depth of understanding”. In this context, the analysis showed that the emphasis on urgency, as included in the responsibility and securitization frames, trumped the concern for economic issues. Despite the overlapping of the two aforementioned frames in regard to urgency, the coding process was rather clear. Urgency in relation to the responsibility frame rather concerned uncertainty and the necessity for clarity (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021c, p. 28213), while

urgency, as expressed in the securitization frame, concerned people's safety and the healthcare sector's functionality (Federal Ministry of Health, 2021, p. 10; Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28103).

All in all, the paper's focus on deductive coding and manifest content allowed it to achieve the goal of retesting "existing data in a new context (Catanzaro 1988). This may also involve testing [...] models or hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman 1995)" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109). Krishnatray and Shrivastava (2021, p. 200) stated that "[O]ne clear advantage of deductive framing is that it allows cross-national analyses of content to discover similarities and dissimilarities". Therefore, this paper adds to the extant body of research that Merkel's party, the CDU/CSU, followed political leaders like Macron, who already used the securitization frame in 2020 (Kneuer & Wallaschek, 2022, p. 2), one year later, in 2021. However, the emphasis on deductive frames includes the disadvantage that "it can ignore the existence of important frames" (Krishnatray & Shrivastava, 2021, p. 200).

A contribution to the validity of the paper's findings, according to Brugman, Burgers, and Steen (2017, p. 182), is that it analyzed two frames that were primarily accepted as generic frames (Sandell, Sebar, & Harris, 2013; Nijkraake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015; Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016). Following the aforementioned scholars, analyses of "generic frames [provide] [...] for the identification of patterns of frames and effects over time and across topics (e.g. Chyi & McCombs, 2004)" (Brugman, Burgers, & Steen, 2017, p. 182). Similar to above, the disadvantage is that other existing frames could be ignored.

However, this paper ensured to include a frame that once was "issue-specific" to military threats but extended over the scope of health threats (Kamradt-Scott & McInnes, 2012, p. 95). Wicke and Bolognesi (2020) already detected the securitization frame in social media posts that specifically discussed COVID-19. Thus, this paper managed to pursue deductive research, while including a perspective on "issue-specific frames [that] invite[s] a more comprehensive analysis of the effects of framing with regard to particular topics than the study of generic frames, which establishes a profound understanding of framing (De Vreese, 2005)" (Brugman, Burgers, & Steen, 2017, p. 182).

Nevertheless, further research could examine the Fourth Civil Protection Act's decision-making stage under an inductive research approach, which allows researchers to identify newly emerging and specific frames (Guenduez, Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 585).

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Appendix

1. List of Documents

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Table 1. Coding Scheme

Sources	Stream	Content Measured
Entman (2010, p. 391), Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 437)	Problem Stream	“causes” “problem-definitions”
Entman (2010, p. 391), Schmieder, Scheer, and Iurato (2021, p. 5), Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 442), Brunner (2008, p. 502)	Policy Stream	Moral judgments, “remedies”
Herweg, Huß, and Zohlnhöfer (2015, p. 439), Kneuer and Wallaschek (2022, p. 10)	Political Stream	Document, Date, Political affiliation, Actor, Level of government
Sources	Frame	Content Measured
Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling (2015, p. 84, Table 2), Guenduez Schedler, and Ciocan (2016, p. 589).	Responsibility Frame	<p>“[T]he story suggests that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem” (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2).</p> <p>The blame for problems is attributed to a level of government (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2).</p> <p>A non-governmental actor (individual or collective) is blamed for the problem (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2; Guenduez Schedler, & Ciocan, 2016, p. 589).</p> <p>“the problem requires urgent action” (Nijkrake, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015, pp. 84, Table 2).</p>
Guenduez, Schedler, and Ciocan (2016, p. 589)	Economic Frame	“[M]entions of financial gains or losses (E1), costs or expenses (E2) and, more generally, references to economic consequences of

		pursuing some course of action or not (E3)”
Wicke and Bolognesi (2020), Pieri (2018)	Securitization Frame	<p>“war-related terminology” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 14) “amplifying fear” (Pieri, 2018, p. 86) is used.</p> <p>The solution of joined forces and a central command as a remedy is suggested.</p> <p>the urgency and severity of the problem, which stresses “the necessity of actions” (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020, p. 5) is mentioned.</p>

Table 2. Example from the Codebook for the Economic Frame

Meta Data						Economic Frame			
						Cause	Problem- definition	Moral judgment	Remedy
Statement	Document	Date	Actor	Affiliation	Level	Problem Stream		Policy Stream	
<p>“[...] der Mittelstand zugrunde geht, [...] dass Innenstädte veröden [...] Zahllose Geschäfte werden nie mehr öffnen. Generationen alte Familienbetriebe verschwinden für immer. Dem unternehmerischen Mittelstand bricht das Rückgrat.”</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>“[...] the middle class will perish, [...] that inner cities are becoming deserted [...] Countless shops will never be open again. Generation-old family businesses are disappearing forever. The backbone of entrepreneurial SMEs is broken.”</p>	<p>(Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28104)</p> <p>Plenarprotokoll 222. Sitzung (1. Lesung)</p>	16. April 2021	Weidel	AfD	Federal	yes		no	

Table 3. Example from the Codebook for the Responsibility Frame

Meta Data						Responsibility Frame			
						Cause	Problem-definition	Moral judgment	Remedy
Statement	Document	Date	Actor	Affiliation	Level	Problem Stream		Policy Stream	
<p>„die nordrhein-westfälische Schulministerin Gebauer von der FDP, die sich für ein heilloses Chaos und Durcheinander in der Schulpolitik in Nordrhein-Westfalen verantwortlich zeichnet.“</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>“North Rhine-Westphalia’s Minister of Education Gebauer of the FDP, who is responsible for the chaos and confusion in school policy in North Rhine-Westphalia”</p>	<p>Plenarprotokoll 222. Sitzung (1. Lesung)</p> <p>(Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28116)</p>	16. April 2021	Wiese	SPD	Federal	yes		no	
<p>„Aber das ist jetzt unsere Verantwortung, und diese Verantwortung gibt uns auch unsere Verfassung.“</p> <p>Translation</p> <p>“But that is our responsibility now, and that responsibility is also given to us by our Constitution.”</p>	<p>Plenarprotokoll 222. Sitzung (1. Lesung)</p> <p>(Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28114)</p>	16. April 2021	Frei	CDU	Federal	no		yes	

Table 4. Example from the Codebook for the Securitization Frame

Meta Data						Securitization Frame			
						Cause	Problem-definition	Moral judgment	Remedy
Statement	Document	Date	Actor	Affiliation	Level	Problem Stream		Policy Stream	
<p>“Die dritte Welle der Pandemie hat unser Land fest im Griff”</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>“The third wave of the pandemic has our country firmly under control.”</p>	<p>Plenarprotokoll 222. Sitzung (1. Lesung)</p> <p>(Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102)</p>	16. April 2021	Merkel	CDU	Federal	yes		no	
<p>“Alleine können sie den Kampf gegen das Virus in dieser dritten Welle auch mit bester medizinischer Kunst und dem aufopferungsvollsten Einsatz nicht gewinnen.“</p> <p>Translation:</p> <p>„[A]lone they cannot win the fight against the virus in this third wave, even with the best medical art and the most sacrificial effort”</p>	<p>Plenarprotokoll 222. Sitzung (1. Lesung)</p> <p>(Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b, p. 28102).</p>	16. April 2021	Merkel	CDU	Federal	no		yes	

Table 5. Occurrences of Frames and federal Actors' Contributions

Parties	Responsibility Frame	Economic Frame	Securitization Frame
Die Linke	1 1%	3 5%	1 0,6%
Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen	8 7,4%	1 1,7%	17 10,2%
SPD	35 32,4%	8 13,6%	30 18%
CDU/CSU	57 52,8%	23 39%	113 67,7%
FDP	7 6,5%	17 28,8%	6 3,6%
AfD	0	7 11,9%	0
No affiliation	0	0	0
Total	108 100%	59 100%	167 100%

Table 6. Occurrences of Frames in Relation to each federal Actor

Parties	Responsibility Frame	Economic Frame	Securitization Frame	Total
Die Linke	1 20%	3 60%%	1 20%	5 100%
Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen	8 30,8%	1 3,9%	17 65,4%	26 100%
SPD	35 48%	8 11%	30 41,1%	73 100%
CDU/CSU	57 29,5%	23 11,9%	113 58,8%	193 100%
FDP	7 23,3%	17 56,6%	6 20%	30 100%
AfD	0	7 100%	0	7 100%
No affiliation	0	0	0	0

Table 7. Comparison of the respective Frames per political Level

Levels	Responsibility Frame	Economic Frame	Securitization Frame	Total
Federal Level	108 32,3%	59 17,7%	167 50%	334 100%
State-Level Actors	66 56%	21 17,8%	31 26,3%	118 100%

Plagiatserklärung der WWU