

(In)Visible Queerness in Conflict:

Examining the discursive construction of LGBTQI+ people during the Russian invasion of Ukraine

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Honours 2023

Department of Government and International Relations

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Words: 18,929

Declaration

This thesis has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Bachelor of Arts/Advanced Studies (Politics and International Relations) (Honours) in Government and International Relations. The work is substantially my own and where any parts of this work are not my own, I have indicated this by acknowledging the source of those parts of the work and enclosed any quoted text in quotation marks.

Abstract

This thesis analyses the constructions of members of the LGBTQI+ community in Ukrainian and Russian news media during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. This thesis approaches the research question through a queer discursive lens, which is attentive to how power dynamics influence the (re)production of discourses. This thesis synthesises security concepts through this queer discursive theoretical lens to develop a greater understanding of how discourses contribute to the othering of queer people in conflict. A critical thematic analysis of 55 total Ukrainian and Russian news media articles was undertaken. This thesis finds that in the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, news media from both states constructs queer people in ways that deprive them of their individual identities and contribute to the naturalisation of their insecurity. This thesis argues that despite differences in their specific constructions, each of the representations of LGBTQI+ people in Russian and Ukrainian news media signify power dynamics that essentialise queer identities in ways which benefit both Russia and Ukraine.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation, and recognise their continuing connection to Country, culture and enduring knowledges. I acknowledge that I have written and researched this thesis on the traditional countries of the Gadigal people and the Cammeraygal people of the Eora Nation. I would like to pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

I would like to thank both of my supervisors. Thank you to Dr. Keshab Giri for his enthusiasm and advice when introducing me to the Honours process; and an immense thank you to Dr. Chris Pepin-Neff for their unwavering patience, support and kindness throughout the bulk of the research process over the past six months. From broadening my investigation into the literature, to helping to develop my methodology, to overseeing the entire writing process, Dr. Pepin-Neff's guidance has been invaluable. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their immense love and support throughout the completion of my thesis, whether that has been in the form of a much-needed hug, a long venting session, or lending a fresh set of eyes in the editing process.

Abbreviations

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CTA	Critical thematic analysis
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence
ICD	The International Classification of Diseases
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and others
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
The Fundamentals	The Fundamentals of the State Policy for Preserving and Strengthening Traditional Russian Spiritual and Ethical Values
The West	Countries in the European Union, the US, the UK, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand
UK	The United Kingdom
US	The United States (of America)
WWII	World War Two

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The largest land war in Europe since WWII started before daylight on the morning of 24 February 2022 (Lister, John and Murphy 2022). Russia launched an assault on four fronts from the borders of Russia and Belarus, Russian-annexed Crimea and the Russian-separatist-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk regions (Bourke, Mannix and Dye 2022). Missiles struck several Ukrainian cities and military bases, including the capital of Kyiv, and Russian soldiers breached the Ukrainian border (Bourke, Mannix and Dye 2022). At the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed and justified Russia's "special military operation" into Ukraine via a televised broadcast (Fisher 2022). Putin's televised address implicated the identities and livelihoods of LGBTQI+ people in the invasion immediately. Putin referred to queerness¹ as part of the "attitudes that are directly leading to *degradation and degeneration*, because they are *contrary to human nature*" (Fisher 2022, own emphasis). The invasion of Ukraine, Putin said, would mean that such "degradation and degeneration" of Russia was "not going to happen" (Fisher 2022). The eradication of queerness from both Russia and Ukraine became an instant justification of war, one which has continued to be used for almost two years.

Putin's televised address on 24 February 2022 is emblematic of a global anti-queer wave, and exemplifies the significance of the discursive construction of queer people. The case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine therefore invites investigation into discourses which may render LGBTQI+ people both visible and invisible. Homophobia has been weaponised and intertwined with Russian imperial nationalism to legitimise Russia's violence against Ukraine (Kuzio 2022; Kratochvíl and O'Sullivan 2023, p. 360; Reid 2023; Strakhov 2023). At the same time, there is an unquestionable hypocrisy to the West's condemnation of Russia. Both the UK and the US continue

¹ I interchange 'queer' with 'LGBTQI+' throughout my thesis. A contemporary reclaiming of a term often used derogatorily or as a slur, 'queer' represents ongoing resistance against cisheteronormativity. 'Queer' is also used in reference to theory.

to draft and pass prolific anti-LGBTQI+ laws, with a notable rise in anti-queer rhetoric in political spaces (see Dunne 2023; Rosky 2022; Shaw 2023). Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also appeared to contribute to an uptick in pro-LGBTQI+ sentiment in Ukraine, despite the nation's conservatism and lack of legal recognition or protections for LGBTQI+ people (Burgess 2023; Shevtsova 2022, p. 11). This seemingly increased Ukrainian tolerance to the queer community must be considered in the context of Ukraine's anti-Russian defence. Nonetheless, it is clear that war is being waged against LGBTQI+ people on multiple fronts. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is demonstrative of how war relies on, and contributes to, particular discursive constructions of the queer community.

The research question motivating this thesis asks: *How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* I employ a thematic analysis of 55 total English-language Ukrainian and Russian news media articles dated from the 24 February 2022 until June 2023 to address this question. I find that in the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, queer people are constructed in ways which weaponise or coopt their (in)visibility to benefit state power. Both covert and overt power is exercised in the invasion, which contributes to the essentialisation of LGBTQI+ people and the naturalisation of conditions of insecurity.

In Chapter 2, I examine literature which relates to the discursive construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community in both Russian and Ukrainian news media. I also interrogate concepts of power and security through a queer lens to address the research question. I investigate how the significant role of discourses in representing fluid, gendered identities leads to the distinction of covert power dynamics, which diminish queer visibility in contexts of war. I also examine the concepts of state-sponsored homophobia, homonationalism, and Hansen's (2000) "silent security dilemma" to reveal how security policies rely on, and contribute to, the othering of queer people. Further, I critically analyse the existing scholarship on both Russia and Ukraine, and apply these security concepts to this scholarship. I find that state-sponsored homophobia in

Russia, and both homophobia and performative protection in Ukraine, each silence LGBTQI+ individuals' expressions of their identities and security problems. I stress the contemporaneity of Russia's invasion of Ukraine to position the uniqueness of the qualitative analysis in this thesis.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the methodology of critical thematic analysis (CTA). I explain how CTA organises and makes sense of discourse to delineate how English-language Ukrainian and Russian news media constructs members of the LGBTQI+ community during the ongoing Russian invasion. I elaborate on the effectiveness of applying a queer discursive approach to the research question, emphasising the multiplicity and fluidity of discourses (Doty 1993, p. 6; Walton 2012, pp. 186-187). Critical thematic analysis accommodates this approach, and is attentive to the role of power relations in the (re)production of discursive themes (Lawless and Chen 2019, p. 104). In this chapter, I explain the case selection process and detail the coding process in adherence with Lawless and Chen's (2019) two-step coding framework. I then establish the final core themes, which represent my findings in this thesis, as *Dangerous Others*, *Western Others*, *Vulnerable Others*, and *(Im)Moral Others*, and outline the sub-codes which constitute these themes. I also explain the significance of 'Others' in the name of each theme, highlighting that each of the (sometimes widely) varying representations of queer people still contribute to their othering (see Butler 1993a, p. 3; Giuliani 2016, pp. 98-99).

There are four analysis and discussion chapters (4-7). In these chapters, I examine textual data from both Ukrainian and Russian articles through each of the core themes emergent from the critical thematic analysis: *Dangerous Others* (Chapter 4), *Western Others* (Chapter 5), *Vulnerable Others* (Chapter 6) and *(Im)moral Others* (Chapter 7). I discuss the significance of each core theme, and examine how they emerge in both Russian and Ukrainian news media through an examination of their sub-codes. Chapter 4 demonstrates how LGBTQI+ people are constructed as *Dangerous Others* in Russian news media, and that these discourses are reproduced in Ukrainian news media. Chapter 5 analyses how both Russian and Ukrainian news media silence diverse queer

identities by constructing LGBTQI+ people as *Western Others* and as separate from both states. Chapter 6 examines the construction of LGBTQI+ people as *Vulnerable Others* exclusively by Ukrainian news media, and highlights how queer individuals are also made vulnerable when they are not represented at all and rendered invisible. Chapter 7 reveals how Russian news media constructs LGBTQI+ people as *Immoral Others*, whilst Ukrainian news media constructs them as *Moral Others*. These analysis chapters demonstrate the multiple constructions of LGBTQI+ people through both Russian and Ukrainian news media.

Chapter 8 concludes this thesis. I argue that though there are differences in how Ukrainian and Russian news media construct LGBTQI+ people, all of these constructions signify a similar distribution of power that essentialises queer people down in a way that ultimately reduces them. I find that Russian news media represents LGBTQI+ people as a threat which needs to be controlled and eliminated through Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I also find that Ukrainian news media constructs LGBTQI+ people in both homophobic and positive ways. The varying representations of queerness in both samples reaffirms the knowledge that discourses are unstable and numerous, leading to the (re)production of discourses which may be in tension (Doty 1993, p. 6; Hansen 2014, pp. 20-22; Shepherd 2008, p. 32). In the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these numerous discourses all result in the disempowerment of members of the LGBTQI+ community.

My thesis examines the effects of war on LGBTQI+ people, and how news media reinforces these effects through discourse. I illuminate the way in which power dynamics that essentialise queer people are signified in discourse. My thesis provides a unique contribution to the literature and future conflict and discursive studies concerning queerness in war, by synthesising and applying existing security scholarship and queer theory to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I critically interrogate power and security through a queer lens to address the research question: *How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* Covert power dynamics are identified in this analysis by investigating the central role of discourses in constructing multitudinous, gendered identities. These power dynamics lead to the diminishing of queer visibility in contexts of war, where binary gender and heterosexuality are privileged. Whilst state-sponsored homophobia criminally delineates and aims to eliminate the ‘queer Other’, homonationalism performatively protects this same ‘Other’. The silent security dilemma also highlights how overt and covert power dynamics ensure queer subjects of security do not express their security problem/s in fear of consequence. Each of these concepts contributes to an understanding of how members of the LGBTQI+ community are discursively constructed as ‘Other’ in both Russian and Ukrainian news media.

2.1 Queer Theory + Power

The lens of queer theory exposes and deconstructs covert power relations. Its capacity to do so is constituted by its indefinability. Though queer theory is widely considered to be grounded in poststructuralism, ‘queer’ itself is a “deliberately ambiguous term” (Monaghan 2016, p. 7). Many queer theorists, such as Berlant and Warner (1995, pp. 343-344), argue that queer theory *cannot* be defined; to do so would only succeed in sanitising and reducing queer theory to what it is not. By being “explicitly anti-normative”, as expressed by Cooper-Cunningham (2022, p. 311), queer theory disrupts the cisheteropatriarchy and resultant privileged binaries, as influenced by covert power dynamics. It conceptualises identity/ies as “fundamentally fragmentary, endlessly multiple and constantly deferred”, and retains the view, as per Butler (1999, p. 33), that gender is “performatively constituted” (Foucault 1972, p. 15; Walton 2012, pp. 186-187; Woodward 1997,

p. 119). Queer theory's commitment to this antinormativity invites unique considerations for how and why gendered subjects, including LGBTQI+ people, may be constructed in particular ways.

Queer theory is attentive to how power renders individuals vulnerable or invisible to political states through a performance of policy actions (Novitskaya 2021, p. 58; see also Lind 2014, pp. 601-602; Weiss and Bosia 2013). The 'three faces of power' provide insight into this. Dahl's (1957, pp. 202-203) first face of power describes overt decision-making, where "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do". This abstraction of power represents it as an observable phenomenon which can be successfully exercised through wielding instruments such as force or inducement (Dahl 1957, p. 214). The drafting and passing of anti- or pro-LGBTQI+ legislation is an example of the first face of power.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962, p. 948) define the second face of power as covert agenda-setting. This conception acknowledges that the "rules of the game" are determined by particular groups, and nondecisions² help to sustain a mobilisation of bias³ (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, pp. 43-44). Sociopolitical or news media discourses may contribute to agenda-setting, discursively constructing subjects, such as queer people, in ways which "delineate or legitimise" state actions or identities (Butler 1999, p. 33; Hansen 2014, p. 21). Queer theory is particularly useful, as previously alluded, for exposing these covert power dynamics.

The third face of power is latent, and shapes the "perceptions, cognitions, and preferences" of one actor before entering a formal decision-making arena (Lukes 2005, p. 27). Seemingly without conflict, this actor accepts "their role in the existing order of things" (Lukes 1974, p. 24). According to this definition, internalised homophobia might be conceptualised as the outcome of

² Bachrach and Baratz (1970, p. 44) define 'nondecisions' as decisions which result "in the suppression...of a latent...challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker".

³ The mobilisation of bias is defined by Bachrach and Baratz (1970, pp. 43-44) as "a set of [norms and conditions]...that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain [actors] at the expense of others".

latent power shaping “perceptions”. Each of these three faces of power should be considered when analysing how LGBTQI+ people are constructed in Ukrainian and Russian news media during war.

2.1.1 Discourse and Identity

The application of queer theory to the research question prompts a critical interrogation of temporarily fixed discursive identities, whilst simultaneously opposing their regulation. Queer theory views both discourse and identity as inherently unstable, and discourses as capable of (re)producing identities to construct meaning (Doty 1993, p. 6; Hansen 2014, pp. 20-22; Hansen 2006, p. 1). Such instability renders representations of subjects, including LGBTQI+ individuals, multiple and fluid. These discursive representations, though “inherently open-ended and incomplete”, can be analysed when partially fixed in time and context (Doty 1993, p. 6; Shepherd 2008, p. 21). My thesis therefore analyses discourses concerning LGBTQI+ individuals which have been partially fixed in news media articles.

Through the lens of queer theory, gender and sexuality are treated as socially constructed and performed concepts. Wittig (1980, pp. 107-110) asserts that there is a heterosexual social contract, which presumes the “sociosexual opposition” of the binary ‘man’ and ‘woman’ as a priori to human nature and culture, and argues for a rejection of this contract (de Lauretis 1987, p. 177). Stryker, Currah and Moore (2008, p. 12) reverberate this notion, arguing that gender (and by extension sexuality) should be accepted as fluid and “capable of supporting...rapidly proliferating” identities. In an investigation which positions LGBTQI+ people as gendered subjects, this idea of multiple identities must be foregrounded, so as not to lack consideration for how such flux and multiplicity may be diminished through discourse, as well as (re)produced by it.

Queer theory is attentive to the power relationships which contribute to the naturalisation of institutions and particular identities over others. It exposes the “political processes that are naturalised through practices of power” by investigating “contesting truths” (Aladjem 1991, p. 280; Shepherd 2008, p. 33). These ‘contesting truths’ are antinormative; the product of refusing the existence of a singular, ‘natural fact’. Butler (1999, p. 189) resounds this notion, maintaining that “the very terms through which identity is articulated” are political. Fluid (‘contesting’) definitions of ‘gender’, for example, can lead to a more nuanced understanding of gender-specific harms. This is counter to Ward’s (2016, p. 282) concern that such definitions fail to preserve an attendance to the experience of women and girls. Shepherd and Sjoberg (2012, p. 12) also highlight how both rejecting the gender-sexuality binary, and becoming more cognisant of how it is perpetuated in sociopolitical and security discourses, can lead to important insights into cisgender-heterosexual privilege and the erasure of LGBTQI+ identities.

2.1.2 War and Conflict

The erasure of queerness is a casualty of war. Queer theory reveals how binary gender and sexuality are privileged in contexts of conflict, diminishing the visibility of LGBTQI+ people in sociopolitical discourses. However, critical studies relating to the (in)visibility of the LGBTQI+ community are limited, with much of the literature focusing on gender-based violence (GBV) (Loken and Hagen 2022, p. 3). Hagen (2016, p. 315) found that the binary categorisation of gender is a key variable which has resulted in the exclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals from discussions and research about gender, conflict and GBV. This finding reverberates claims made by Peterson (1999, pp. 40-42) in their work on political identity and heterosexist nationalism, whereby they assert that the hierarchical dichotomy of gender has been entrenched into the fabric of states. “The continued silence” about GBV – specifically homophobic and transphobic violence – against LGBTQI+ individuals in environments of conflict, however, “is alarming” (Hagen 2016, p. 313).

This silence is prominent throughout literature not only concerned with GBV, but the (non)treatment of LGBTQI+ people as gendered subjects more broadly.

Queer theory's attention to covert power relations exposes how gendered subjects or identities may be affected in contexts of war. Loken (2021, p. 22) asserts that war "disrupts and reconstitutes gender structures" such that gender and sexual identities are displaced. Hence, violence which specifically targets LGBTQI+ individuals – or those who "deviate" from "normal" gender expectations – often becomes especially pervasive within environments of conflict, in an attempt to "correct" this "deviance" and affirm dominance (Loken and Hagen 2022, p. 8; McEvoy 2015, p. 146; Serrano-Amaya 2018, p. 10). This is particularly relevant to my thesis which is specifically situated within the marked environment of conflict of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Weber (2016, p. 48) also emphasises that states employ "exclusionary policies" to position hierarchical, cisgender-heterosexual binaries as idealistic against "deviance" (Beauchamp 2009, p. 357; Ward 2015, p. 52). Further, Hagen, Daigle and Myrntinen (2021, p. 307) acknowledge that the insecurity of war and armed conflict can lead to social returns to "traditional" beliefs and ideologies, a phenomenon which Myrntinen, Naujoks and El-Bushra (2014, p. 9) term "golden age-ism". These concepts reiterate the idea, inherent to a queer discursive approach, that power is covert.

Invisibility can be weaponised. By constructing LGBTQI+ individuals as abject and 'Other', states may successfully exercise covert power and exclude them from positive policy-making. Kristeva (1982, p. 154) defines the "ab-ject" as an unidentifiable and threatening absence. Humphrey (2002, p. 24) builds on this definition by insisting that becoming abject is a social transformation, one which can happen to both individuals and groups. Scarry (1985, pp. 29-31) also highlights that abjection is "world-destroying"; the self is broken physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. Giuliani (2016, pp. 98-99) argues that parallel to abjection, is the constructed "monstrosity" of the "Other". Giuliani (2016, p. 98) asserts that this "Other" is

discursively created antithetical to the accepted ideal, and may be created on the basis of race, gender, class, or otherwise. These ideas can be linked back to Graham's (2002, p. 12) claim that monstrous individuals or communities "mark the fault-lines" of the boundaries of humanity.

The existence of abject beings and 'monstrous Others' also allows for the production of privileged subjects (Butler 1993a, p. 3). LGBTQI+ individuals and their communities specifically become abject through oppression, and are often socio-politically constructed as the 'monstrous Other' in opposition to the white, cisheteronormative, privileged ideal. As the "totalising event" of war prioritises and "highly idealises" specifically dominant, masculine bodies, as argued by Väyrynen (2013, p. 139) and Tosh (2004, p. 49), it may consequently alienate 'Others', such as LGBTQI+ individuals. Queer theory thus illuminates how discourses diminish and erase gendered subjects, including LGBTQI+ people, as a part of war.

2.2 Queer (In)Security + The Other

2.2.1 State-Sponsored Homophobia

State-sponsored homophobia is the performative, politically-driven process of identifying and eliminating the 'LGBTQI+ Other'. Novitskaya (2021, p. 58) defines state-sponsored homophobia as legislative and policy-based efforts by the state to criminalise and silence those who do not fit the cisgender-heteronormative ideal. This reliance on the "scapegoating of an 'other'", as argued by Weiss and Bosia (2013, p. 2), hinges on the performative delineation, through discourse, of LGBTQI+ individuals as deviant (Butler 1993b, p. 17). There is a clear exercise *of* power through such discourse, but power is also given *to* discourses through their declaration. Weiss and Bosia (2013, p. 2) emphasise that this process, through state-sponsored homophobia, is integrated "into questions of collective identity" which fuel nationalist sentiments. State-sponsored homophobia thus creates, and aims to eliminate, the 'monstrous Other' in order to uphold the cisgender-heterosexual state.

Queer theory reveals how state-sponsored homophobia exercises both the first and second faces of power. The overt, material power of the state limits the sexual and gender autonomy of LGBTQI+ individuals. This overt, state-sponsored homophobia is executed in a diverse range of states, as highlighted in a quantitative study by Tschantret (2020, p. 1464). However, discursive power is also exerted through both movements against, and in support of, the state in response to its material power (Valocchi 2005, pp. 761-762). Richter-Montpetit and Weber (2017, p. 6) highlight how state-sponsored homophobia is part of a broader “transnational production of homophobia”, as LGBTQI+ rights are stigmatised and weaponised to aid hegemonic projects, often reliant on covert power. Additionally, heterosexual/homosexual and gender binaries become further entrenched in LGBTQI+ rights movements. The pervasiveness of identity politics in rights-based discourse has resulted in “homonormativity” and the “hierarchisation” of certain queer identities over others (Duggan 2002, p. 179; Richardson 2005, p. 515; Vitulli 2010, p. 156). It becomes clear then, that state-sponsored homophobia is perpetrated as part of domestic and international policy utilising two faces of power, and is not merely a tool of war.

2.2.2 Homonationalism

Homonationalism is a reactionary political policy which performatively presents states as progressive regarding LGBTQI+ rights. In doing so, homonationalist states are positioned as the progressive ideal opposite to outwardly homophobic states (Kahlina 2015, p. 74). Puar (2013, p. 337) defines homonationalism as the “entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states”. That is, outwardly performed tolerance toward LGBTQI+ individuals becomes folded into the “national imaginary”, so as to create a “spatial and temporal boundary” between the ‘progressive, civilised state’ and the ‘homophobic state’ (Kahlina 2015, p. 74; Sloomaeckers 2019, p. 256). The LGBTQI+ community is both discursively victimised and ‘protected’ to the benefit the nation state, and covert power is thus exercised.

Homonationalism does not result in the rejection of heteronormativity within a state. Slootmaeckers (2019, p. 256) and Chambers (2007, p. 673) both underline that the othering of LGBTQI+ individuals still occurs if and when they come out (“declare their deviance from the norm”). In Bauman’s (1991, p. 66) terms, these ‘Others’ become socially and culturally excluded “strangers”; constructed as being “outside the ‘normal’ divisions and categories” of society. Despite this continued othering, LGBTQI+ individuals are tolerated under homonationalism *if* they do not challenge the state’s heteronormativity (Duggan 2003). Performativity, therefore, is key to the policy of homonationalism. Additionally, Hansen (2021, pp. 62-63) draws on Mouffe’s (1993, p. 3) theory of antagonistic democracy⁴ to argue that homonationalism manifests an apparent “excess of consensus” regarding LGBTQI+ rights. Homonationalism thus essentialises and regulates queer identities, and, in doing so, (re)produces harmful and limiting discourses regarding the LGBTQI+ community.

2.2.3 The Silent Security Dilemma

Queer subjects of security do not get the opportunity to express their identity without penalty. Both material and covert power exercised in times of conflict contribute to the othering of LGBTQI+ individuals; “their transgression of... gendered [and sexual] norms” has led to their “inscription within ...[a targeted] gendered collectivity” (Hansen 2000, p. 291). Hansen’s (2000) articulation of the ‘silent security dilemma’ explains the othering and subsequent silence of these queer subjects. It conceptualises “security as silence”, highlighting how potential subjects of security may have little to no chance of expressing their security problem, and even if such expression is possible, it may only invite a further threat to the subject (Hansen 2000, p. 294). Silence, therefore, is an integral security consideration, and my thesis must be cognisant not only of what discourses emerge from texts, but of any discourses which *do not* emerge.

⁴ The theory of antagonistic democracy states that “democracy is in peril when a healthy confrontation of political views is ‘hindered by an apparent excess of consensus’” (Hansen 2021, p. 62; see Mouffe 1993, 2005, 2018).

Queer theory and the silent security dilemma both recognise that one subject can be demarcated through the articulation of another subject. Butler's (1997, p. 27) claim that "one can be interpellated...through silence" is reverberated by Hansen (2000, pp. 304-306); the consequence of a successful fixation of meaning through articulation is "the exclusion of other possible constructions of meaning". Subsequently, Hansen (2000, p. 304) defines security as "a practice" through which subjects are constructed "as threats or as being threatened", through simultaneous discourse, bodily acts and silence. Though queer theory seeks to disrupt binary divides, this threat/threatened dichotomy can be linked to previously articulated ideas about the privileged subject/'object Other'. The silent security dilemma, then, echoes and deepens the understanding of how queer subjects are othered in both the phenomena of state-sponsored homophobia and homonationalism.

2.3 Russia

The interpretation of criminal queerness by Russia deprives queer people of their individual identities and their security. LGBTQI+ individuals have become an "invisible" minority in Russia, as termed by Baer (2009, pp. 44-49), due to the ongoing policy of state-sponsored homophobia. Overt power is exercised to criminalise queer people in Russia through legislation such as the 'homosexual propaganda law'⁵ passed in 2013, which bans positive and neutral "public messages about homosexuality" (Gulevich et al. 2018, p. 1840). The conspicuousness of such laws has contributed to growing social intolerance to LGBTQI+ individuals. Consequently, cisheteronormativity continues to become more deeply entrenched in Russia as the "rules of the game" continue to be determined by the elite (politicians and Orthodox religious leaders) (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, pp. 43-44). Soboleva and Bakhmetjev (2015, p. 286) found in their

⁵ Officially named (in English) the federal law 'for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating a Denial of Traditional Family Values', this legislation was signed by Russian President Putin on 30 June 2013, and an expansion of the law was later signed 5 December 2022 (Gulevich et al. 2018, p. 1840; Mackinnon 2022; The Telegraph 2022).

interviews with LGBTQ+ Russians that participants viewed their homosexuality as a threat to social stability and morality, and held self-blame for their inability to conform to ‘traditional’ cisgender-heterosexual Russian social norms. It appears then, that latent power dynamics may be shaping the cognitions of queer subjects so that they accept “their role in the existing order of things” (Lukes 1974, p. 24).

State-sponsored homophobia in Russia can be traced to the ongoing contemporary construction of the state’s national identity. Queer subjects have been othered and “posed as a convenient enemy destroying the old ‘Orthodox’, traditional, ‘truly Russian’ values” (Isaev 2013, p. 103). Convenient certainly, for a nation which, post-Soviet Union collapse, has been plagued with a loss of identity (Chafetz 1996). Gulevich et al.’s (2018, p. 1853) quantitative studies suggest that this othering of queer subjects has been successful, revealing that Russian national identity is a “strong positive predictor of perceived threat of homosexuals”. Also part of this national identity is the conception of Russia as anti-West, as well as anti-queer. Russia and its state-sponsored homophobia is often positioned as antithetical to ‘Gayropa’ – Russian conservatives’ term for (Western) Europe as pro-LGBTQI+ rights (see Buyantueva and Shevtsova 2019; Essig and Kondakov 2019; Shevtsova 2020; Wilkinson 2014). Russian media has also perpetuated the state’s political discourses, (re)producing this discursive national identity. Edenborg’s (2021, p. 82) discourse analysis of media reporting on the “anti-homosexuality laws” in 2013 concluded that state-aligned media vilified LGBTQI+ rights in efforts to position Russia as “a global leader of “traditional values””. Discursive power then, has been, and continues to be, integral to the shaping of Russian national identity.

Framed through the silent security dilemma, it is clear that queer subjects in Russia have little opportunity to express their identities and security problems. Doing so would only place them in a more vulnerable position against the threat of the Russian state (Hansen 2000, p. 294). Buyantueva’s (2018, pp. 467-469) semistructured, in-depth interviews support this conception,

indicating that LGBTQI+ Russians are fearful of the increasingly hostile environment of their nation. Suchland (2018, p. 1075) also suggests that Russia's state-sponsored homophobia is a "symptom" of Russia's post-Cold War imperialist project – one that is entangled with Eurocentrism. Russia's political homophobia then, may be understood as driven, in part, by an ethno-nationalist aspiration toward a Eurocentric 'whiteness' and a cisheteropatriarchal state. The naturalisation of such hierarchy by states is a colonial tool (Patil 2018, p. 20). The erasure of diverse identities is a violent tactic of control, and provides further reason for queer security subjects to remain silent in fear of detrimental consequence.

Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine has continued to threaten queer individuals. From the outset of the invasion, Putin has clearly substantiated Russia's state-sponsored homophobia through his public addresses⁶. In his annexation speech, Putin equated the teaching of "other genders" and offering of "sex-change surgeries" with social "degradation and extinction" (The Telegraph 2022). Such discourse continues to contribute to and demonstrate both overt and covert power dynamics, which silence queer people in Russia. Mckinnon (2022) has also suggested that Putin's continued violent campaign against LGBTQI+ rights in Russia and his invasion of Ukraine are "two sides of the same coin". Vernon (2023) echoes this, stating that the timing of an expansion of the 'homosexual propaganda law', passed 5 December 2022, indicates Russia's war is not just against Ukraine, but against the "pure Satanism" of Western values and LGBTQI+ rights (Jones 2022; The Telegraph 2022). Such action links back to Russia's post-Cold War imperialist project (see Suchland 2018, p. 1075). But LGBTQI+ activist Voskresensky (cited in Vernon 2023) maintains that "the war is lost" for Russia. The scapegoating of LGBTQI+ people in an effort to convince the public that there are still 'valid' reasons for the war, suggests quite the opposite: that

⁶ Such addresses include the announcement of the invasion of Ukraine ("special military operation") on 24 February 2022, and on 30 September 2022 when Putin announced the annexation of four Ukrainian regions (see Bloomberg News 2022; The Telegraph 2022).

Russia's continued invasion is unfounded. However, this does not eliminate the threat for queer people in Russia.

2.4 Ukraine

Scholars disagree over whether Ukraine is, or is not, a homonationalist state, opening an interesting avenue of enquiry. There is compelling evidence that Ukraine as a nation should be described as homophobic. Despite decriminalising homosexuality in 1991 after gaining national independence, and being the first formerly Soviet state to do so, homophobia within Ukraine increased throughout the 2000s (Bonacker and Zimmer 2020, p. 164). Influenced by political discourse, Orthodox churches frame LGBTQI+ individuals as a “common enemy” and increased hate speech has been identified, particularly from alt-right organisations (Martsenyuk 2012, p. 61). Ukrainian socio-political sentiments also tend to regard homosexuality as a choice (the common use of *гомосексуалізм*, “homosexualism”, indicates an ideology) or as a curable illness (Bonacker and Zimmer 2020, p. 164; see Martsenyuk 2012). Consequently, Leksikov and Rachok (2019, pp. 34-35) argue that Ukraine has not normalised tolerance against LGBTQI+ individuals by the state, or by right-wing political actors. Therefore, Ukraine seemingly does not meet either condition which renders it a homonationalist state.

Alternatively, Ukraine does seem to perform tolerance toward LGBTQI+ individuals when politically convenient. Teteriuk (2016) notes that the conservative treatment of the LGBTQI+ community began to diminish after governmental changes in 2014 in the wake of the 2013 Euromaidan protests, and with the introduction of workplace anti-discrimination laws. Bonacker and Zimmer (2020, p. 169) argue that these pro-LGBTQI+ steps were “political decisions of a largely pragmatic nature”, spurred by Ukraine's visa-free regime with the European Union (EU). This suggests that the LGBTQI+ community was simultaneously othered and ‘protected’ (through some laws) in a way specifically beneficial to the Ukrainian state. Additionally, Ukraine has sought

to distance itself from Russia and its post-Cold War imperialist project since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the beginning of the war in Donbas. The consequent reactionary and performative positioning of Ukraine as a more progressive state in opposition to Russia does align with elements of homonationalism (Kahlina 2015, p. 74).

Discursive power in Ukraine contributes to both agenda-setting and the influencing of social attitudes regarding LGBTQI+ people. The othering of LGBTQI+ people in Ukraine is perpetuated by the significant dissemination of discursive power. Soroka et al. (2022, p. 21) found an extensive propagation of homophobic discourses within Ukraine, including pathologising and criminalising narratives. These discourses are often perpetrated by "state-owned media interests" exterior to Ukraine, such as those of Russia (Soroka et al. 2022, p. 21). This demonstrates Russia's continued influence on Ukrainian society. Martsenyuk (2012, pp. 52-54) also found that hateful political discourses influenced increasingly homophobic public attitudes, in a multi-methods study which employed both quantitative data analysis of public surveys and in-depth interviews with Ukrainian LGBTQI+ activists. LGBTQI+ rights have also been instrumentalised by Ukrainian political parties. Shevtsova (2020, p. 508) suggests that this is partially driven by the EU's norm diffusion, which in turn influences public sentiments. Two opposing agendas have thus been observed in Ukraine, each setting different "rules of the game" regarding LGBTQI+ people (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, pp. 43-44).

Pro-LGBTQI+ sentiment in Ukraine appears to have increased in the context of Russia's ongoing invasion of the country. Burgess (2023) argues that "the war has become a catalyst for change" for LGBTQI+ rights according to Ukrainian activists. As Ukrainians distance themselves from Russia, they also appear to be distancing themselves from Russia's state-sponsored homophobia. Wareham (2022) also explores how LGBTQI+ individuals are fighting in the Ukrainian army, and how the fear of Russian occupation is much stronger than concerns about homophobia within the army. Despite this media analysis, there is limited academic literature

which examines the construction of LGBTQI+ people through discourse in Ukraine in the context of Russia's ongoing invasion. This can be attributed to the contemporaneity of the conflict and its ever-developing nature. However, Shevtsova's (2022, p. 11) study of LGBTQI+ migration and the responses of CEE states to Ukraine's invasion found that Polish public discourse shifted so much against Russia that tolerance to LGBTQI+ individuals and events increased. This "solidarity" with Ukraine against the "common enemy" of Russia echoes Ukraine's alignment with the West, demonstrating how politically advantageous decisions may appear homonationalist (Shevtsova 2022, p. 11). The limited evidence which suggests that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has contributed to growing tolerance toward queerness indicates an avenue for further investigation.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I critically interrogated power and security through a queer lens to address the research question: *How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* I found that in both Russia and Ukraine, queer people are made invisible; sometimes by being kept off the agenda and sometimes by being put on the agenda. Existing research demonstrates that both state-sponsored homophobia and homonationalism rely on the othering of queer subjects. Queer theory has been shown to excavate the covert and overt power dynamics which contribute to this othering. This demonstrates the usefulness of a queer discursive approach to my thesis, which focuses on the construction of queer subjects. I also found, through an application of the silent security dilemma and an interrogation of homonationalism, that both homophobia (Russia and Ukraine) and performative protection (Ukraine) silence LGBTQI+ individuals' expressions of their identities and security problems. In the ensuing analysis, I build upon this knowledge by examining the contemporary and ongoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

In the following chapter, I introduce and explain how critical thematic analysis will be used to build upon the findings in this chapter, by identifying and analysing how the (re)production of discourses concerning LGBTQI+ people in Ukrainian and Russian news media may challenge or legitimise these states' identities and actions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this thesis, I applied a queer discursive approach to Lawless and Chen's (2019) Critical Thematic Analysis method in order to comparatively analyse two datasets: a sample of Ukrainian news articles and a sample of Russian news articles. I inductively coded and organised textual data from each set, allowing for an analysis of emerging discursive themes to answer the descriptive research question: *“How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?”*

This open-ended research question is firmly grounded in a queer discursive epistemology (see Chapter 2) by prompting inductive, exploratory research (Clark, Foster and Bryman 2019, p. 18). By asking ‘how’ members of the LGBTQI+ community are ‘constructed’, this research question accommodates for the epistemological beliefs that identities are discursively constructed and that there are “no objective and universal truths” (Foucault 1972; Sullivan 2022, p. 39). News media was specified in the research question because this medium plays a significant role in disseminating and (re)producing sociopolitical discourses (Fairclough 1995, pp. 17-18). News media contributes to agenda setting by constructing and foregrounding news values such as superlativeness, negativity and proximity; each of which may perpetuate existing state or group ideologies (Bednarek and Caple 2014, p. 136). Acknowledging news media’s power to privilege certain discourses contributes to how my thesis examines the possible silencing or exclusion of other discursive identities and groups – such as LGBTQI+ individuals (Wiedlack 2017, p. 253).

There are two main subjective elements which I considered in approaching this analysis. The first is positionality; the influence of a researcher’s “multiple overlapping identities” on their interpretation of data (Kezar 2002, p. 96). Positionality impacts researcher bias, and may be

countered with an understanding of “situated knowledges”⁷ and reflexivity; exercising an “immediate, continuing, dynamic and subjective self-awareness” (Finlay 2002, p. 533; Haraway 1988, pp. 583-584; Mason-Bish 2019, p. 265). As a queer person, I am situated as an invested party in research concerning LGBTQI+ individuals and our communities. However, I must “retain...sensitivity” as a researcher outside of, and with no cultural connection to, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, or either country (Haraway 1988, p. 583; Phillips and Hardy 2002, p. 8). The second element is that the personal responsibility I have for the development, interpretation and analysis of the codes inherent to this method generates implicit bias (Clark, Foster and Bryman 2019, p. 125). In order to address some of the subjectivity bias that is inherent to this analysis, I systematically selected articles at a rate of each fourth article from 95 Ukrainian results, and each fifth article from 170 Russian results. This case selection process will be further discussed later in this chapter.

3.1 Critical Thematic Analysis as a Queer Discursive Method

3.1.1 Why Critical Thematic Analysis?

Critical thematic analysis, as defined by Lawless and Chen (2019), is a flexible, inductive framework which can be used to analyse discourse. Existing within the critical paradigm of research, CTA is particularly cognisant of how themes which emerge from discourses may be affected by power relations (Lawless and Chen 2019, p. 104). As previously highlighted, attentiveness to power relations is integral to a discursive, queer theoretical approach (Foucault 1972, p. 15). Lawless and Chen’s (2019) CTA thus lent itself well to my thesis.

My research question required a method which organises and makes sense of discourse to illuminate how Ukrainian and Russian news media have constructed members of the LGBTQI+

⁷ Haraway (1988, p. 593) defines “situated knowledges” as the understanding that all knowledge is positional, and that “only partial perspective promises objective vision”.

community during the ongoing invasion. The queer theoretical approach underscoring my research (see Chapter 2) understands that discourses and identities are intrinsically unstable and “fundamentally fragmentary, endlessly multiple and constantly deferred” (Doty 1993, p. 6; Walton 2012, pp. 186-187). Both Doty (1993, p. 6) and Shepherd (2008, p. 21) recognise that though discourses are “inherently open-ended and incomplete”, they can be analysed when partially fixed in time and context. The ‘coding’ in CTA is not presumptuous about the existence of reality, as it actively considers words and textual elements in context to inductively recognise emerging themes (Lawless and Chen 2019, p. 96). Meaning is thus derived from a temporarily fixed arrangement of discursive information – Ukrainian and Russian news articles – by reflecting on the influence of sociopolitical and cultural context (Lawless and Chen 2019, p. 96; Shepherd 2010, p. 156).

3.1.2 Process

Lawless and Chen’s (2019) CTA adheres to a two-step framework. First, the researcher must conduct ‘open coding’, an inductive process whereby the researcher must be guided by the themes which emerge from their sample to determine a number of sub-codes (Lawless and Chen’s 2019, p. 98). This framework draws on Owen’s (1984) concepts of recurrence (of salient meaning) and repetition (of words and phrases) to determine what can be considered ‘emerging themes’ (Lawless and Chen 2019, pp. 95-96).

The second step of CTA is ‘closed coding’, which involves the “interlinking” of sub-codes to theoretically-informed concepts and dominant societal discourses (Lawless and Chen 2019, p. 98). This two-step coding process helps reveal the pluralistic “discursive logics” which organise and produce the discourses, and unveil any “instability and tension” between these logics (Shepherd 2021, pp. 32-33). Braun and Clark’s (2019) idea of iterative coding, where stages may be circled back to in order to develop understanding, was also employed.

3.2 Case Selection

A total of 55 articles⁸ from English-language Ukrainian and Russian news articles were selected for analysis. Two separate searches were conducted of the Dow Jones Factiva database, one for each nation, using the Boolean search terms *LGBT* OR homosexual OR gay OR queer OR “traditional family” or gender**. The search terms included common alternatives to “LGBTQI+”, as well as “*traditional family*” in reference to the language Putin has publicly used to denounce queer individuals (see Taylor 2022). The searches were narrowed to articles published between 24 February 2022 and 22 June 2023. The date range begins with the day that Putin officially declared the invasion of Ukraine, to the day this search was undertaken, in an effort to produce as many results as possible for sampling during the time since the invasion began.

The final sample was selected using a combination of purposive (non-probability, selective) and systematic sampling. The initial searches displayed 107 (Ukraine) and 215 (Russia) results. However, duplicate results and results deemed irrelevant to this thesis due to a lack of engagement with the search terms were removed. The results were narrowed down to 95 articles (Ukraine) and 170 articles (Russia). Systematic sampling was applied to these narrowed results in order to produce sample sizes which were more balanced; every fourth article was chosen for my Ukrainian sample, and every fifth article for my Russian sample. The final sample sizes were 21 articles (Ukraine) and 34 articles (Russia). Though not without limitations, the combination of purposive elimination of results and systematic sampling remained the most practical approach within the boundaries of this research project.

English-language news media was intentionally selected for two reasons. Most significantly, the ‘hypercentrality’ of the English language in international communication and the ‘world system’ due to globalisation renders English-language news media distributed by Ukrainian

⁸ See Appendix A

and Russian outlets as politically charged (Cormack 2005, p. 118; de Swaan 2001, p. 20). The phenomenon of English as lingua franca in protests globally has been noted as a clear strategy to attract international support to causes, such as LGBTQI+ rights (Beĳar 2015, pp. 340-341). The West also uses English language to communicate with Russian and Ukrainian LGBTQI+ activists, and represent them in the media; Tilda Swinton’s social media post in 2013, holding a pride flag in front of the Kremlin and captioned “In solidarity. From Russia with love.”, symbolises such efforts (Peeples 2013). However, it must be understood that Western intervention often disregards the dynamic and heterogeneous desires of LGBTQI+ activists and communities in non-English-speaking countries (Rivkin-Fish and Hartblay 2014, pp. 103-108). My thesis attempts to capture this complex intersection of language. More practically, English-language news media did not need to be translated. The translation of originally Ukrainian or Russian texts would have resulted in their “(re-)narration” and the (re)construction of initial discourses (Baker 2014, p. 159).

Beyond searching for English-language newspapers in each state, I did not search for specific outlets. The final Russian sample consisted of articles from Interfax, a non-governmental Russian news agency and TASS, the largest state-owned news agency in Russia. The final Ukrainian sample consisted of articles from the Kyiv Post, The Kyiv Independent, Ukrainska Pravda, and SeeNews, all privately owned newspapers, the latter three of which are exclusively online.

3.3 Data Analysis

Four core codes (themes) were established from the samples by following Lawless and Chen’s (2019) two-step CTA method: *Dangerous Others*, *Western Others*, *Vulnerable Others* and *(Im)moral Others*. The organisation of textual data from news media under these core codes helps to answer the research question by clearly delineating the dominant discourses through which members of the LGBTQI+ community are constructed.

Following the first step of Lawless and Chen’s (2019) CTA method, I employed an inductive ‘coding whilst browsing’ strategy to annotate both of the samples. Emerging themes were identified according to recurrence of salient meaning and repetition of words and/or phrases (Lawless and Chen 2019, pp. 95-96; Owen 1984). Thus, preliminary codes from this first coding session included repetitive phrases, such as ‘*traditional family values*’, and descriptions, such as ‘*protecting Russians*’, ‘*anti-West*’, and ‘*queerness as human rights*’, among others. Influenced by Braun and Clarke’s (2019) iterative coding process, I undertook ‘step one’ of CTA twice more. Further familiarisation with the articles in each sample allowed for more thorough annotation and the ability to connect particular preliminary codes back to sections of previously read articles to which they hadn’t yet been assigned. These preliminary codes (of which there were originally over 40) were then combined into sub-codes. The second step of the coding process included the interlinking of these final sub-codes under core codes informed by the queer discursive approach. This process of forming core codes was also iterative, with repetitive referral back to the sub-codes and articles to develop a deeper understanding (Braun and Clarke 2019). The organisation of these core codes and their sub-codes is articulated in Table 1.

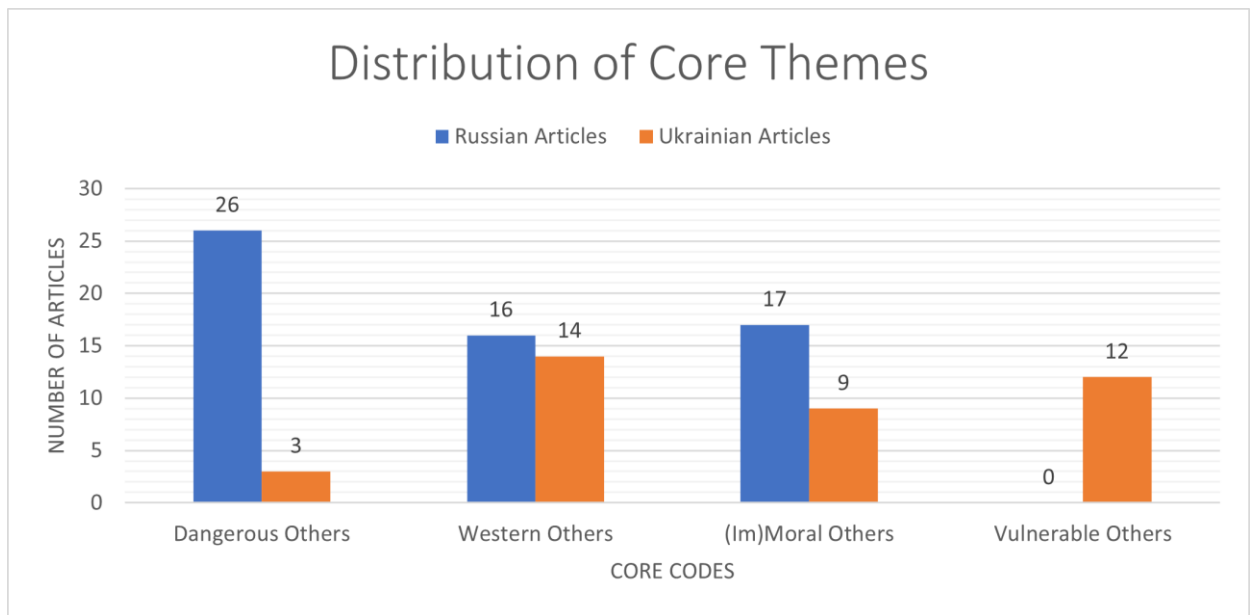
Table 1: Core codes and corresponding sub-codes

Core Codes	Sub-codes
Dangerous Others	Queerness as Criminal
	Queerness as Illness
	Queerness as a Choice
	Protecting Russians from Queerness
Western Others	Pro-West
	Human Rights
	Anti-West
	Russian Authority
Vulnerable Others	The Russian Threat
	Ukrainian Homophobia
	Legislation
(Im)moral Others	Missing Voices
	Traditional Values
	Religion
	Queer People as Good Citizens
	Protecting Queer People

Each of the four core codes contains the descriptor ‘Others’ to acknowledge the consistent marginalisation and alienation of LGBTQI+ people across the sample. Without ‘Others’, each of the core themes highlight that queer people are constructed as dangerous, Western, vulnerable, and immoral or moral. However, during the coding process of CTA, it became evident that despite the emergence of these varying (and sometimes conflicting) logics and representations of queer individuals, each of these representations still contributed to the othering of members of the LGBTQI+ community (see Butler 1993a, p. 3; Giuliani 2016, pp. 98-99). This will be further explored in the subsequent analysis chapters.

Coding the Ukrainian and Russian samples together was a conscious choice, despite the differentiation between each nation’s media in this comparative thesis. It allowed both similarities and differences between the media emanating from each state to be noted, as well as the repetition of any particular discourses (predominantly Russian discourses repeated by Ukrainian media). Additionally, I was able to note silences where they occurred in one sample compared to the other, allowing for a deeper analysis of the power relations rendering some discourses to be highlighted or hidden (Foucault 1978, p. 27; Hall 1997, p. 44). The final core codes did not equally emerge from both the Russian and Ukrainian samples, as seen in Figure 1. Notably, while predominantly Russian news media constructed LGBTQI+ people as Dangerous Others, it was only Ukrainian news media which constructed them as Vulnerable Others. The significance of these differing constructions will be explored further in the following analysis Chapters 4-7.

Figure 1: Column graph comparing the number of Russian and Ukrainian articles contributing to each core theme



My thesis now moves forward with an examination of textual data from both Ukrainian and Russian samples under each of the four core codes – *Dangerous Others* (Chapter 4), *Western Others* (Chapter 5), *Vulnerable Others* (Chapter 6) and *(Im)moral Others* (Chapter 7). The occurrence of words, phrases and inclusions will be referenced with multiple articles, and larger quotes will also be displayed and referenced from more specific articles. The significance of each of these core themes and their sub-themes in the construction of LGBTQI+ individuals by news media emanating from each state will be analysed, compared and situated amongst existing literature (see Chapter 2) on political homophobia and homonationalism.

Chapter 4: Dangerous Others

I answer the research question in this chapter by analysing the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as *Dangerous Others* in Russian and Ukrainian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I examine how four sub-themes (salient discourses) construct queerness as a threat and position LGBTQI+ people as ‘Other’ outside of the socio-political norm. The four sub-themes which emerged from an application of CTA to the data set of 55 total Russian and Ukrainian articles were: ‘queerness as criminal’ (4.1.1), ‘queerness as illness’ (4.1.2), ‘queerness as a choice’ (4.1.3) and ‘protecting Russians from queerness’ (4.1.4). A total of 29 Russian and Ukrainian articles accounted for the core theme of Dangerous Others. In this chapter, I examine how the construction of LGBTQI+ people as Dangerous Others silences the identities and security needs of queer individuals, linking them back to the previously explored literature (see Chapter 2). I also demonstrate how Ukrainian news media reproduces dominant discourses from Russian news media, and investigate the harms of this reproduction on queer people (see 4.2).

4.1 Russia

4.1.1 Queerness as Criminal

My application of CTA found that Russian news media constructs queerness as criminal, contributing to the deprivation of identity and security from LGBTQI+ people, and their construction as Dangerous Others. Anti-LGBTQI+ legislation is referenced frequently across the Russian news media sample; specifically, the expansion of the ‘homosexual propaganda law’ (Interfax 2022a, 2022g, 2022k, 2023a, 2023e; TASS 2022a, 2022b, 2022d, 2022g, 2022h, 2022k, 2023c). Quotes from this law are reproduced across the Russian news media sample, including the entirety of Article 6.21, enshrined in the Russian Code of Administrative Offences:

The law bans “the propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations or preferences expressed in the dissemination of information aimed at forming non-traditional sexual preferences, the attractiveness of non-traditional sexual relations or preferences, a distorted idea of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations or preferences, or forcing information on non-traditional sexual relations or preferences that arouses interest in such relations.” (Interfax 2022a)

This quote reproduces the phrases “non-traditional sexual relations” to refer to queerness and queer people (Interfax 2022a). The law itself also associates the crime of “paedophilia” with queerness, collectively referring to both as “perversions” (TASS 2022b, 2022k). The resultant positioning of queerness as paedophilic and “distorted” contributes to the construction of LGBTQI+ individuals as Dangerous Others (Interfax 2022a). Simultaneously, anti-LGBTQI+ laws in Russia contribute to this construction, and this construction substantiates the introduction of these laws.

The sample of Russian news media frames this legislation as logical and administrative. As reproduced in some of the sampled articles, the law “introduces liability for demonstrating non-traditional relations to minors or information inducing gender reassignment surgery” (Interfax 2023f; TASS 2022k). Another article specifies that this law makes illegal information “which can cause minors to wish to change sex” (Interfax 2023f). By disseminating the idea that the need for gender-affirming healthcare is a thing which can be ‘induced’, these articles imply that queerness is manipulative. This implication of the dangerous, manipulative agenda of queer people supports the construction of anti-queer legislation as logical, and legitimates the expansion of Russia’s “exclusionary policies” (Weber 2016, p. 48; see also Beauchamp 2009, p. 357; Ward 2015, p. 52). By representing queerness and gender diversity as a threat to minors, laws such as the ‘homosexual propaganda law’ are legitimised in their attempts to “correct” deviance and affirm the dominance of cisheteronormativity (see Loken and Hagen 2022, p. 8; McEvoy 2015, p. 146; Serrano-Amaya 2018, p. 10). This ‘correction’ is presented as the logical response to a ‘threat’ against a vulnerable population, such as children. The construction of the ‘queer Other’ as criminal and deviant thus contributes to the upholding of cisgender-heterosexuality as the ideal and logical norm.

Through the CTA, I also found that the discussion of legislation in Russian news media stresses the overt power held by the Russian government. This power is used not only against members of the LGBTQI+ community, but also those perceived to be allies⁹. Some articles emphasise this by clearly stipulating the monetary consequences of the ‘homosexual propaganda law’ and referencing the strong support of anti-queer laws by members of the Russian Federation. Multiple articles specify the “fine of up to 1,000,000 rubles” for violations of Article 6.21(2)¹⁰ of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses, and report on those who have already been held liable for this offence (Interfax 2022a, 2023f; TASS 2022a). Some of the articles also reproduce the statements of Russian parliamentarians, such as Justice Minister Konstantin Chuychenko, Alexander Khinshtein, head of the Russian State Duma Information Policy Committee, and State Duma Deputy Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin (see Interfax 2022a, 2022c, 2022g; TASS 2023c). The combination of overt, legislative efforts to attribute illegality to queerness and the reproduction and discursive support for these efforts demonstrates Russia’s state-sponsored homophobia.

4.1.2 Queerness as Illness

I found across the sample that queerness is discursively constructed as an illness. This construction by Russian news media contributes to the representation of LGBTQI+ people as a threat to the nation’s population. Queerness is pathologised, such as through the dissemination of a comment from Russian Deputy Health Minister Oleg Salagai, who said “there is no doubt that this state [referring to being transgender] is a disease” (Interfax 2023e). Such pathologising discourses delineate queer subjects as a threat (see Hansen 2000, p. 304). In doing so, queerness is constructed as a national health issue which needs to be addressed. Such construction is certainly not unique to Russia, but is clearly in opposition to international health standards; “gender identity disorder”

⁹ The word “perceived” is used here to indicate that there may be people or entities who face legal consequences under the ‘homosexual propaganda law’ who are not truly queer allies.

¹⁰ Liability for dissemination among minors of information “demonstrating non-traditional sexual relations or preferences, including description, images of non-traditional sexual relations or preferences” (Interfax 2022a).

was removed as a diagnosis from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 2019 (Haynes 2019). Yet, Russian news media's representation of queerness and gender diversity as a disease, similarly to its representations of queerness as criminal, further reproduces the idea that queerness is a threat to children. Minister Chuychenko is quoted as saying "we believe that these people [transgender individuals] have also adopted children" (TASS 2023c; see also Interfax 2023e). This discourse implies that the government is concerned about the welfare of children under the care of transgender people. Queer people are thus constructed as Dangerous Others who pose a health risk to vulnerable minors.

Through the CTA, I also found that the medical treatment of queerness and gender diversity in the Russian news media sample silences the needs of the LGBTQI+ community. Despite constructing the threat of queerness as a disease, some Russian news media claims that gender diversity is not a pressing medical issue (see Interfax 2023e; TASS 2023c). There is a dissonance between this representation and the previously outlined construction of queerness as a contagious illness harmful to children. However, by also insisting that "such a medical problem is not widespread and there are only isolated cases where we can talk about the person having a real illness", the Russian Federation's support for bans on medical, gender-affirming care is affirmed (TASS 2023c). Consequently, the importance of gender-affirming care to transgender individuals is disregarded. The only time medical intervention will be authorised in Russia, as reproduced by Interfax (2023e), is when it is "part of the treatment of congenital physiological anomalies in sex formation in children". Not only are the security issues of LGBTQI+ individuals being silenced through discursive and covert power dynamics, but medical treatment is pushed to uphold a gender/sexual binary, also silencing the wants and needs of intersex people.

4.1.3 *Queerness as a Choice*

My application of CTA to the Russian news media sample found that there was a common discursive framing of gender and sexuality as choices which individuals make. This contributes to the construction of LGBTQI+ people as Dangerous Others. The repeated referral to queerness as a “preference” erases the very real (and sometimes life-threatening) issues faced by the LGBTQI+ community (Interfax 2022a, 2022c, 2022f, 2023a). Additionally, the use of the term “transsexualism” implies an ideology, and thus that transgender people have made a choice to subscribe to this ideology (Interfax 2023e; see also Bonacker and Zimmer 2020, p. 164). The reproduction of comments from Russian politicians also lends discursive power to the construction of queerness as a choice. In the context of an argument made in 2022 that any new NATO Secretary General succeeding Jens Stoltenberg should be a woman, and/or from a new NATO member state, this article reproduces comments from Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zakharova (see also Erlanger 2022; Gray 2023):

Nothing prevents Boris Johnson from suddenly discovering an inner woman. Trendy, bold, his style... Even if NATO will choose from people calling themselves women, they can always suddenly discover an inner man or some other gender... (TASS 2022)

The blatantly transphobic accusation is made that queer identities can (and will) be weaponised in political landscapes in order to manipulate leadership outcomes. This accusation contributes to the construction of LGBTQI+ people, and queerness more generally, as ‘monstrous Others’ (see Giuliani 2016, pp. 98-99). These discourses communicate that those who delineate themselves as ‘monstrous Others’ by making the choice to be deviant (regarding their gender and sexuality) participate in their own exclusion from national policy-making.

4.1.4 Protecting Russians from Queerness

Using CTA, I found that news media within the Russian sample represents queerness as a threat to Russian national identity. Queerness and gender diversity is repeatedly referred to as “non-traditional” in the Russian news media sample (Interfax 2022a, 2022h, 2023a; TASS 2022a, 2022d, 2022k). In turn, Russia is upheld as a nation which preserves ‘traditional’ relations and family dynamics. News media in the sample also lauds Russian government policies for “strengthening” these “traditional Russian spiritual and moral values” which “retain civic identity”, and protect “historical memory and...historical truth” (Interfax 2022h, 2023c). In being excluded from these ‘traditional’ notions, LGBTQI+ people are framed as Dangerous Others who could cause the breakdown of national identity. The grouping of “gender-oriented approaches and LGBT agenda” with “drug-liberalism, the cult of consumerism and overindulgence” by TASS (2023d) draws a clear association between queerness and threats to public well-being. This is evidence of how discursive power contributes to the reproduction of queerness and gender diversity as a security threat. The convenient construction of LGBTQI+ individuals as Dangerous Others further entrenches a cisheteropatriarchal Russian state identity (see Isaev 2013, p. 103; Peterson 1999, pp. 40-42). This construction not only strengthens this state identity, but contributes to queer people’s own insecurity.

I found that the alignment of queerness with propaganda by news media in the Russian sample discursively represents LGBTQI+ identities as political choices. Queerness is strategically placed on the agenda as a dangerous politik, which contributes to the legitimation of Russia’s battle against queer people as Dangerous Others. Many articles from the Russian news media sample reproduce language from the ‘homosexual propaganda law’, referencing “LGBT, pedophilia, gender reassignment propaganda” (TASS 2022k; see also Interfax 2022c; TASS 2022c, 2022d, 2022h, 2022j). Once again, there is a clear alignment of LGBTQI+ identities with pedophilia, delineating these identities as both criminal and immoral. The covert power of these discourses

which articulate and (temporarily) fix queer, Dangerous Others silences positive representations of queerness (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, p. 948; Hansen 2000, pp. 304-306). Through CTA then, I found that Russian news media constructs Russia as able to defend against “obviously harmful” “non-traditional values” in order to safeguard “traditional family values” and protect citizens and their rights (Interfax 2022c, 2023c; TASS 2023b). This defence, as represented in a number of articles from the sample, is predominantly legislative (Interfax 2022f, 2022g; TASS 2022g). Russian news media thus appears to effectively contribute to agenda-setting through its reproduction of discourses which construct LGBTQI+ people as Dangerous Others (see Bachrach and Baratz 1962, p. 948; Butler 1999, p. 33; Hansen 2014, p. 21). Russia’s ‘defensive’ actions, such as its proliferation of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation, are consequently legitimised.

My application of CTA also found that Russian news media represents Russian state security and sovereignty as threatened by queerness. This may contribute to Russia’s attempts to validate its ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Discourses reproduced through Russian news media simultaneously fold Ukraine into the Russian national imaginary and insist that “Russia simply defends its right for existence and free development” (Interfax 2022b). This is further demonstrated by this article which states:

"[Ukrainian people] cannot survive alone, it is an obvious fact...Russia, who created the modern Ukraine, can be the only true, serious guarantor of Ukrainian statehood, sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Interfax 2022b)

Ukraine is thus constructed as a vulnerable nation, and Russia as its creator and saviour. Russia is constructed as the defender, then, against “any external expansion of ideas and values and any destructive informational-psychological influence”, including “alien ideas of gender diversity” (Interfax 2023c; TASS 2023e). Putin’s speeches are also reproduced in the Russian news media sample; the invasion (and ‘saving’) of Ukraine will “protect our children from degradation and degeneration” and ensure the “intellectual, moral and psychological security of society” (Interfax 2023d; TASS 2022f). Consequently, the invasion of Ukraine is framed as a necessary and helpful

security measure. This discursively validates Russia's post-Cold War imperialist project (see Suchland 2018, p. 1075). LGBTQI+ people, through their delineation as Dangerous Others by Russian news media, thus become convenient scapegoats which are used to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

4.2 Ukraine

My use of CTA found that some of the Ukrainian news media sample reproduces anti-LGBTQI+ discourses that are disseminated in Russian news media. Despite not uniquely emanating from Ukrainian news media, these reproductions do contribute to the construction of queer people as Dangerous Others. A few of the Ukrainian articles reported on the Russian 'homosexual propaganda law', and Russian discourses about LGBTQI+ people, without any criticism or denouncement (See Kyiv Post 2023; The Kyiv Independent 2022, 2023a; Ukrainska Pravda 2023b). For example, this article quotes a transphobic comment from Russian Speaker of the Duma, Volodin:

“In recent times in our country, there have been 2,700 decisions relating to sex change,” [Volodin] told a meeting of the Council of Lawmakers. “A man gets up in the morning and decides he is no longer a man, but a woman,” he said. (Kyiv Post 2023)

This quote represents queerness as a choice which can be manipulated for political gain, and reproduces the transphobic rhetoric that transgender women are just men 'dressing up' as women (see GLAAD 2020; Montiel-McCann 2022, pp. 11-12). This consequently represents transgender individuals, and more broadly queer people, as deceitful and dangerous. The reproduction of these discourses contributes to a negative sociopolitical construction of queer people and threatens their security. The continued influence of Russia on Ukrainian news media results in the dissemination of discourses which construct LGBTQI+ individuals as Dangerous Others, despite Ukrainian news media's lack of uniquely homophobic discourses.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I found that members of the LGBTQI+ community are constructed as Dangerous Others predominantly by Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I also found that Ukrainian news media does reproduce discourses from Russian news media, despite not contributing uniquely to the construction of queer people as Dangerous Others. Queer individuals are discursively delineated as criminal through the dissemination of sections from anti-LGBTQI+ laws such as the 'homosexual propaganda law'. By associating queerness with paedophilia, such laws are positioned as a logical correction of criminal deviance. Russian news media also constructs queerness as an illness which threatens vulnerable populations, silencing the real medical needs of the queer community. Despite literature suggesting the proliferation of similar discourses in Ukraine, this was not identified in the Ukrainian articles in the sample (see Bonacker and Zimmer 2020, p. 164; Martsenyuk 2012). My analysis did find that some articles construct queerness as a choice which can be weaponised, further erasing the genuine issues faced by LGBTQI+ individuals. Finally, Russia's performatively defensive actions, such as its proliferation of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation, are legitimised as protecting Russians, through the framing of queerness as a threat to Russian national identity, security and sovereignty. Together, each of these sub-themes contribute to the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as Dangerous Others. These discourses in Russian news media articles, and the reproduction of these discourses by Ukrainian news media articles, deprive queer people in both Russia and Ukraine of identity and security.

Chapter 5: Western Others

In this chapter, I analyse the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as *Western Others* and in doing so answer the research question: *How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* I examine how four sub-themes (salient discourses) position queerness as external to both Russia and Ukraine, linking them back to previously explored literature on national identity and homonationalism (see Chapter 2). The four sub-themes which emerged from my application of CTA to the data set of 55 total Russian and Ukrainian articles were: ‘anti-West’ (5.1.1 and 5.2.3), ‘pro-West’ (5.2.1), ‘human rights’ (5.1.2 and 5.2.2), and ‘Russian authority’ (5.1.3). A total of 30 Russian and Ukrainian articles accounted for the core theme of Western Others. In this chapter, I demonstrate how discourses are dynamic; the construction of Russia as anti-West, and Ukraine as anti-Russia, may construct Ukraine as pro-West.

5.1 Russia

5.1.1 Anti-West

My application of CTA to the sample found that Russian news media positions Russia as both anti-West and anti-LGBTQI+ rights, contributing to the construction of queer subjects as Western Others. Russia is discursively constructed as vehemently anti-West in Russian news media that has been produced during the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many of the sampled Russian articles present the collective West as a dangerous threat, not only to Russian sovereignty, but to the international system (see Interfax 2022b, 2023d; TASS 2022e, 2023a, 2023e). This presentation and reproduction of anti-West discourses does align with existing literature on Russia’s national identity (see Gulevich et al. 2018; Isaev 2013; Shevtsova, M 2020; Wilkinson 2014). The discursive representation of the West as threatening non-Western sovereignty is demonstrated through the quoting (and thus reproduction) of Putin’s words in this article:

The West parlayed its power over the world in its game, but “this game is, without doubt, dangerous, bloody and dirty... it denies sovereignty of countries and peoples, their identity and uniqueness; it disregards interests of other states”. (Interfax 2022b)

This quote represents Russia as protecting individual states’ sovereignty as well, which is particularly ironic in the context of the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, by framing the West as a dangerous collective, Russian news media produces the opportunity for other discourses to position anything associated with the West as dangerous too.

Within the Russian sample, there is a notable association of the West with Nazism, which contributes to the construction of LGBTQI+ people as dangerous, Western Others. I found that queerness is discursively constructed as a tool of a dangerous ideology, or as a dangerous ideology itself – one “of degradation and degeneration” (Interfax 2023d). Rhetorics of queer ‘ideology’ have been discussed in existing literature on Ukraine (see Bonacker and Zimmer 2020, p. 164). The Russian sample also reproduces discourses from Russian Secretary of the Security Council, Patrushev, positioning the Russian Federation as defenders against a Nazi-like collective West which is trying “to destroy the foundations of all-Russian and ethnic identity...[with] alien ideas of gender diversity and historical revisionism” (TASS 2023e). This discourse clearly constructs the West as a dangerous threat to Russia. However, a couple of articles also disseminate beliefs that the West is creating “insane pseudoscientific theories” and “measuring and calculating humans the way Nazi scientists used to do” (TASS 2022e, 2023a, 2023e). There is a strong discursive equation of queerness with the West, and the West with Nazism, which implies queerness is part of Nazism, or at least as dangerous as it. My use of CTA reveals that not only does Russian news media construct LGBTQI+ individuals as a threat to Russia, but also as persecutors against the citizens of all non-Western nations.

5.1.2 Human Rights

Using CTA, I found that Russian news media reproduces political discourses which denounce the Western conception of human rights, including LGBTQI+ rights. The representation of human rights as Western and as threatening to Russia's national identity and sovereignty is symptomatic of, and contributes to, Russia's state-sponsored homophobia. The discursive construction of a convenient Western enemy (which will destroy Russia's civic identity and traditional values if left unattended) is demonstrated in this article:

...attempts to use the human rights doctrine to play geopolitical games destroying sovereignty of States and to justify Western political, financial, economic and ideological dominance should cease...it is important to protect and preserve such fundamental principles of international accord as sovereign equality and non-interference in the affairs of other states...Russia is ready for such work. (TASS 2023d)

This quote also reveals how a construction of the West as destructive allows Russia to be presented as a global advocate for preserving sovereignty. By suggesting that human rights, of which LGBTQI+ rights are folded into, can be (and are) weaponised by Western states to infringe upon the sovereignty of non-Western nations, Russian news media contributes to the construction of queer subjects as distinctively Western Others.

I also found that Russian news media in the sample represents Russia as a state which does abide by, albeit not Western conceptions of, the principles of human rights. There is an exclusion of "the rights of LGBT community" from the discursive representation of human rights and principles supposedly upheld by Russia (TASS 2022i). Queer individuals are thus constructed as Western Others which have no place in the Russian state. My CTA of the sample also demonstrated the contrasting representations of the West and Russia. While the West "in its Russophobic frenzy, openly defies its own basic principles", Russia "has been consistently following the democratic path taking into account its historical experience and traditions" (TASS 2022i, 2022j). Russian news media in the sample thus concurrently represents the West (and thus 'Western' things, such as LGBTQI+ individuals and their rights) as failing to uphold human rights principles, and Russia

as a global protector of these same principles (see Interfax 2022d; TASS 2022e, 2022i, 2022j). These constructions contribute to the discursive depiction of Russia as a “global leader” of ‘traditional’ human rights and international security (see Edenborg 2021, p. 82). The representation of a very specific conception of human rights in Russian news media thus allows for LGBTQI+ individuals to be constructed as Western Others which should be excluded from Russian protections.

5.1.3 Russian Authority

I found that the sampled Russian news media articles represent the Russian state as both morally and politically authoritative. The discursive construction of Russia as an authoritative state facilitates the representation of members of the queer community as a Western ‘problem’ to be dealt with. For example, this article represents the Russian state as magnanimous compared to the ‘intolerant’ West:

Russia has not considered and does not consider itself a West’s enemy, and offered to live in accord back in the day, but was met with rejection. (Interfax 2022b)

Some of the articles also reproduce discourses which frame Russia as trustworthy and relying on “experts” (Interfax 2022c, 2022f). These discourses of expertise (both political and intellectual) support the representation of Russia’s actions as logical (see Chapter 4.1). These logical actions include the unanimous vote by State Duma members to pass the ‘homosexual propaganda’ law and the removal of websites for “violating [this law] after refusing to remove prohibited content” (TASS 2022d, 2022h). By representing Russian national identity as both morally and intellectually authoritative, queer subjects become conveniently intertwined with the West as a threat to this authority (see Isaev 2013, p. 103). This discursively constructed queer, Western threat is represented as not only a problem which *should* be dealt with by Russia, but which the Russian state is more than capable of dealing with.

The discursive assertion of Russian authority, as found in the Russian news media sample through my application of CTA, contributes to the justification of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The need to address (and erase) the queer, Western Other also becomes part of this justification. TASS (2022j) states that the invasion of Ukraine represented Russia's "readiness to defend its right to its own identity" against "aggressive globalism, embodied in US hegemony, NATO's expansion, the policy of liberal interventionism and LGBT propaganda". The presentation of queer rights as propaganda, and the association of this 'LGBT propaganda' with other negatively framed examples of Western influence, reifies LGBTQI+ subjects as dangerous, Western Others. Russia is then discursively represented as the 'solution' to these issues; for itself and for Ukraine as well. These representations in the Russian news media sample resonate with existing assertions that in war, cisheteropatriarchy is prioritised and gendered subjects, including LGBTQI+ people, are alienated or erased (see Väyrynen 2013, p. 139; Tosh 2004, p. 49). The referral to the invasion of Ukraine as a "special operation" by some of the articles in the sample also diminishes the harm and scale of the conflict, and further contributes to the construction of Russia as a "great country" and 'saviour' to Ukraine (Interfax 2022b; TASS 2022i, 2022j). Articles from the Russian sample therefore demonstrate how news media constructs queer subjects as Western Others, and queer rights (or 'propaganda') as an issue which is remedied by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

5.2 Ukraine

5.2.1 Pro-West

Using CTA, I found that there is some representation in the Ukrainian news media sample of the collective West as a welcome ally to Ukraine. There is a representation that "Ukraine expressed gratitude" to the West, including EU Member States, for providing military assistance to the resistance against the Russian invasion (SeeNews 2022b). This clearly demonstrates how Ukraine's alignment with the West is being amplified by Russia's invasion. Comments from Ukrainian politicians are also reproduced. A positive message of the importance of upholding human rights and freedom of expression from Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, is demonstrated by this article:

Russian aggression has shown Ukrainians where intolerance can lead. “Our people are adopting European values,” said Dmytro. “Freedom is also the freedom of personal choice. Freedom to be yourself.” And what are Ukrainians fighting for if not that? (Mendel 2023)

However, this message regarding human rights is heavily contextualised by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the positioning of Ukraine as defensive against the ‘aggressive’ Russian state. Additionally, there is an implication that some human rights, including LGBTQI+ rights, are European values, not necessarily Ukrainian values. The discourses emanating from the Ukrainian news media sample suggest then, that Ukraine could be adopting Western European values for political security reasons (homonationalism). Mendel (2023) wrote in the *Kyiv Post* that “Ukraine’s aspiration to join the EU will require global thinking and openness”. The mention of Ukraine’s security aspirations further suggests that queer people (and their rights) may be convenient subjects through which to construct Ukraine’s identity as a progressive, West-aligned nation. Thus, the representation of Ukrainian-Western solidarity against the Russian ‘common enemy’ still contributes the construction of LGBTQI+ subjects as Western Others.

5.2.2 Human Rights

I found that LGBTQI+ rights are constructed as European or as a reward for military service in the Ukrainian news media sample. Queer people are thus still othered, and represented as deserving of rights due to the value they serve in the context of an ongoing invasion. Many of the articles reproduce discourses calling for the continued support of the LGBTQI+ community and “respect for international law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities and LGBTI persons”, but still associate human rights with “European values” (Mendel 2023; SeeNews 2022b; see also Matiushenko 2022; Ukrinform 2022). Ukrainian news media also disseminates discourses which frame human rights (including LGBTQI+ rights) as a reward for military service in the defence against Russia. A bill for legalising same-sex civil partnerships is discussed in many of the articles in the sample as reactive because “our defenders die for the sake of these values”

(Shashkova 2023; Shmigel 2023; The Kyiv Independent 2023c, 2023b). Additionally, *Ukrainska Pravda* (2023a) reported on a case against Ukraine in the European Court of Human Rights which ruled that Ukraine was violating the European Convention on Human Rights by not protecting same-sex couples. There is clearly a reactionary and performative positioning of Ukraine as a progressive state in alignment with the West and in opposition to Russia, despite the lack of legal protections for LGBTQI+ people in the country (Kahlina 2015, p. 74; Shevtsova 2022, p. 11). Ukrainian news media discursively supports the human rights of queer subjects, seemingly only in opposition to Russia's invasion, constructing them as Western Others.

5.2.3 *Anti-West*

The Ukrainian news media sample also constructs queer Western Others as negative, or neutral, subjects. I found criticism of calls from Western leaders and politicians, such as French President Emmanuel Macron, for Ukraine to make some concessions to Russia in exchange for peace (SeeNews 2022a). Western aid is also criticised, in that Ukraine wishes “it was provided much earlier, and it is still too little” (SeeNews 2022a). These critiques of the West, though not *anti-West*, represent the West as separate to Ukraine, and consequently lend this construction to queer subjects which become ‘Other’. However, there is also some dissemination of anti-West discourses, referencing the “‘pro-LGBT’ lobby that...was bankrolled by the West”, and “the infiltration of Western anti-family ideology” (AFP 2023b, 2023c; *Ukrainska Pravda* 2023b). These discourses are much more explicit in their association of the (dangerous) West and LGBTQI+ subjects. There is evidently a harmful construction of queer subjects as ‘monstrous Others’ (see Giuliani 2016, pp. 98-99; Graham 2002, p. 12). Temporarily fixed within Ukrainian news media articles, the cyclical articulation of queerness as Western, the West as an issue, and queerness as an issue can be observed (see Butler 1997, p. 27; Hansen 2000, pp. 304-306). There is a clear construction of LGBTQI+ individuals as Western Others in both seemingly positive (homonationalist) and negative (homophobic) ways in Ukrainian news media, demonstrating the

instability of discourse.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I found that members of the LGBTQI+ community are discursively constructed as Western Others by both Russian and Ukrainian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The strong anti-West discourses in Russian news media contributes to the representation of queerness and queer subjects as threats to not only Russian sovereignty, but the whole international system. My analysis also found that Russian and Ukrainian news media disseminate different discourses regarding human rights, and LGBTQI+ rights as part of human rights. While Russian articles construct human rights as Western and therefore dangerous, Ukrainian articles present human rights as a reward for military service against the invading Russia. Russian news media also justifies the invasion of Ukraine by representing queer subjects as a Western problem that needs to be handled by Russia's authoritative strength. Despite demonstrating allyship with the West, Ukrainian news media also reproduces homonationalist discourses. Despite a performed tolerance, queer subjects are still othered as they are constructed as separate to Ukrainian general society (see Bauman 1991, p. 66). Additionally, my analysis demonstrated the instability of discourses, identifying multiple negative and positive representations of queer subjects. Examined together, each of the preliminary codes contribute to the construction of LGBTQI+ people as Western Others. It is evident that both Russian and Ukrainian news media both silence the diverse identities of queer subjects in the construction of queerness as Western (and separate from both states).

Chapter 6: Vulnerable Others

In this chapter, I answer the research question by analysing the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as *Vulnerable Others* in Russian and Ukrainian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I examine how four sub-themes (salient discourses) contribute to the performance of Ukrainian and Russian identities and affect the security of queer individuals (see Chapter 2). The four sub-themes which emerged from my application of CTA to the data set of 55 total Russian and Ukrainian articles were: ‘the Russian threat’ (6.1.1), ‘Ukrainian homophobia’ (6.1.2) and ‘legislation’ (6.1.3). A total of 13 Ukrainian and Russian articles accounted for the core theme of Vulnerable Others. In this chapter, I also consider ‘missing voices’ (6.1.4), examining how queer individuals with diverse experiences are also made vulnerable when they are not represented within news media. Additionally, I demonstrate that the construction of Vulnerable Others was overwhelmingly found in the Ukrainian news media articles.

6.1 Ukraine

6.1.1 The Russian Threat

Using CTA, I found that there is an emphasis in the Ukrainian news media sample on the Russian threat to Ukraine, which simultaneously constructs Russian and Ukrainian state identities. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is described as an “unprovoked and unjustified” “all-out war of aggression” (SeeNews 2022a, 2022b). Russia is thus constructed as an irrational state. However, Russia’s aggression and invasion is also framed as unsurprising to Ukraine, as exemplified in this article:

We in Ukraine are not surprised by this brutal campaign. We have a deep knowledge of Russia and have watched for centuries as Russian intellectuals and state-controlled media incited hatred toward our nation. (SeeNews 2022a)

Russia is therefore represented as a known irrational actor, which has drawn on, and continues to draw on, discursive power to threaten Ukraine (see Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 1970). By

representing the Russian state as aggressive and hostile, the Ukrainian sample consequently delineates Ukraine (and its citizens) as inevitably vulnerable (Hansen 2014, p. 21; see Butler 1997, p. 27). In the sample, there are also criticisms of ally states to Russia, or states which have proposed Ukrainian concessions to Russia, as being “enablers of Russian imperialism and war crimes” (SeeNews 2022a). The representation of Russia as an imperial state correlates with existing literature on Russia’s post-Cold War imperialist project (see Suchland 2018, p. 1075). Ukrainian news media frames the Russian state as a known, irrational and imperial aggressor, and in doing so presents the Ukrainian state as rational and resistant.

I also found that the construction of Russia as a specifically homophobic threat by articles in the Ukrainian sample builds upon the representation of Russia as an immediate but known threat to Ukraine. LGBTQI+ subjects are constructed as Vulnerable Others, threatened by Russia both on account of being Ukrainian, and of being queer. Ukrainian news media references Russia’s rife “homophobic propaganda”, inverse to Russian media’s delineation of ‘homosexual propaganda’ (Mendel 2023). This represents Russia as a state relying on discourse to construct and alienate the vulnerable, ‘queer Other’. Further, illustrations of “Russians brutally torturing Ukrainian LGBT people in the occupied territories” contribute to the construction of Russia as violently homophobic (Mendel 2023). This violent homophobia renders LGBTQI+ subjects the threatened (and vulnerable) ‘Other’ against the Russian threat (see Hansen 2000, p. 304). Russia is also constructed as an imperial force: “a revanchist country bent on remaking the entire world through force” (SeeNews 2022a). This imperial construction is presented alongside discourses which state that Russia (and Russian media) are routinely condemning “the West more broadly, and a variety of minority groups – including Jews and the LGBTQ community” (SeeNews 2022a). The coalescence of imperial force and anti-LGBTQI+ actions echoes Suchland’s (2018, p. 1075) suggestion that Russia’s state-sponsored homophobia is a “symptom” of Russia’s post-Cold War imperialist project. Queer subjects are constructed as Vulnerable Others through the demarcation

of Russia as an imperial, homophobic threat by Ukrainian news media.

6.1.2. Ukrainian Homophobia

My application of CTA found that queer individuals are constructed as Vulnerable Others in the face of direct and legislative homophobia in Ukraine. Particularly, examinations of the rights of queer soldiers fighting for Ukraine against Russia in Ukrainian news media reveal how queer subjects' security is constantly threatened. The experience of homophobia against a queer Ukrainian soldier is described in this article:

After Dmytro Stasishen, a 25-year-old junior lieutenant in the army, came out as bisexual on Instagram, his commanders asked him to transfer to a different unit, and his mother received threats if her son didn't "stop shaming the Armed Forces of Ukraine". (Mendel 2023)

This anecdote demonstrates how speaking their identity (or security issues) can invite threats to the security of queer individuals (Hansen 2000, p. 294). I also found that Ukrainian news media in the sample states that the partners of LGBTQI+ soldiers hold no rights (post-mortem or otherwise), and highlights that Ukraine violates the European Convention on Human Rights due to a lack of legal recognition and protection for same-sex couples (Balachuk 2023; Shmigel 2023). This contributes both to the construction of queer individuals (and soldiers) as Vulnerable Others, and the presentation of Ukraine as a homophobic nation in alignment with existing literature (see Chapter 2.4). Thus, members of the LGBTQI+ community are represented as Vulnerable Others whose security is threatened internally by Ukraine, not just externally by Russia.

I also found that Ukrainian news media constructs Ukrainian homophobia as something driven by Russian influence. This construction shifts the 'blame' for homophobia away from Ukraine, and onto Russia and its extensive discursive power within Eastern Europe (see Soroka et al. 2022, p. 21). Mendel (2023) did note in the *Kyiv Post* that "Ukraine is a conservative country, and many stereotypes and hateful attitudes persist". Despite this acknowledgement, there remains a representation of Ukraine as progressive even in the face of its own homophobia. By reproducing

the discourse that homophobia in Ukraine is “a remnant of Russian and Soviet influence”, Ukrainian news media presents the view that this homophobia needs “to be discarded” (The Kyiv Independent 2023c). In constructing homophobia as a Russian problem which needs to be solved, the real security needs of LGBTQI+ people are silenced (Hansen 2000). Additionally, the same articles which acknowledge Ukraine’s homophobia, also state that “Russia’s own bigotry and violence during the war has made Ukrainians increasingly averse to hateful attitudes toward the LGBT community” (Mendel 2023). Again, there is the representation of homophobia as a uniquely Russian problem which Ukraine has unfortunately inherited and is working to remedy. LGBTQI+ people are constructed as Vulnerable Others who are threatened by Russian-imported homophobia in Ukraine. However, by diminishing the responsibility of Ukraine in its own homophobia and legislative choices, queer subjects (and their security issues) are further silenced.

6.1.3 Legislation

In the Ukrainian sample, LGBTQI+ people are constructed as Vulnerable Others who should be protected by new legislation. The progression of draft laws to amend anti-LGBTQI+ legislation is mentioned throughout the sample. However, these laws are limited to those regarding “same-sex relationships” and civil unions – notably not ‘marriages’ (Shmigel 2023). Additionally, there was some specification that these draft laws were proposed “with explicit reference to the LGBT soldiers who are currently defending Ukraine on the front lines” and the (non-existing) rights of their partners in comparison to legally married (heterosexual) couples (Mendel 2023). The focus on soldiers demonstrates how the invasion may be considered a “catalyst for change” regarding LGBTQI+ rights in Ukraine (Burgess 2023). This positive ‘catalyst’ is also represented in the Ukrainian draft laws (reproduced by news media) which specify that same-sex couples be given the same:

...rights and obligations as heterosexual couples when it comes to property ownership, inheritance, social protection, and rights in case of the death or disappearance of a partner serving in the armed forces. (The Kyiv Independent 2023c)

However, this ‘progression’ during a war suggests that such legislative action is performative and politically advantageous, and therefore potentially homonationalist (see Kahlina 2015, p. 74). The discussion of amending legislation to legalise same-sex civil unions, driven by the invasion and protections for soldiers, constructs Ukraine as progressive and LGBTQI+ people as Vulnerable Others.

Using CTA, I also found that queer individuals are constructed as Vulnerable Others through the expression of explicitly anti-queer Russian legislation. Ukrainian news media reproduces Russian reports on Russian anti-LGBTQI+ legislation, such as is demonstrated in this article which reports that:

Russian internet regulator Roskomnadzor will be able to block sites in Russia without due process that contain information about LGBTQ people and expressions of what Russia deems “nontraditional sexual relations”. (The Kyiv Independent 2022)

The specific mention that Russia is neglecting ‘due process’ comes across as a critique, constructing the Russian state as unfair and threatening to individual rights. However, as previously discussed in Chapter 4.2, many of the articles in the Ukrainian sample did report on Russian legislation, including the ‘homosexual propaganda law’, without critique (See Kyiv Post 2023; The Kyiv Independent 2022, 2023a; Ukrainska Pravda 2023b). The reproduction of anti-LGBTQI+ discourses and platforming of Russian legislation contributes to a negative construction of queer people as dangerous or threatening (see Chapter 4). Queer individuals’ own security is therefore threatened on account of the discursive reproduction of queerness as a security threat which must be addressed with legislation. Thus, the expression of Russian anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in Ukrainian news media both constructs queer subjects as Vulnerable Others, and makes them vulnerable through the dissemination of harmful discourses.

6.1.4 Missing Voices

When analysing the construction of LGBTQI+ individuals as Vulnerable Others using CTA, I also considered ‘missing voices’. Throughout both the Ukrainian and Russian samples, there is a clear absence of diverse identities. However, this is particularly notable in the Ukrainian sample, in which there are many articles which construct queer people as requiring protection from the Ukrainian state (see Mendel 2023; Shashkova 2023; The Kyiv Independent 2023c; Ukrinform 2022). As can be observed in previous analysis, queer subjects have been constructed by and through discourses emanating from the state and state media. There is no dissemination of discourses which originate with queer people themselves, including direct quotes from queer individuals reproduced in Ukrainian news media. Despite being constructed as a progressive nation, information about Ukraine’s ‘progression’ is being reproduced from politicians *about* queer rights, not *from* queer citizens themselves. The identities and security problems of LGBTQI+ people are thus being silenced through Ukraine’s arguably performative protection (Hansen 2000, p. 294). Additionally, LGBTQI+ people are othered in Ukrainian news media through the demarcation of heterosexual relationships as “traditional couples” (Shashkova 2023). This erases and silences queer identities and experiences (Butler 1997, p. 27; Hansen 2000, pp. 304-306). There are evidently missing voices of queer individuals with diverse experiences across this Ukrainian news media sample. Vulnerable too, then, are the queer individuals who are not represented at all within news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

6.2 Conclusion

In this chapter, I found that members of the LGBTQI+ community are constructed as Vulnerable Others exclusively by Ukrainian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Queer subjects are constructed as vulnerable to the Russian irrational, imperial and homophobic threat. Additionally, Ukrainian news media both acknowledges Ukraine’s homophobia, and represents this homophobia as Russian-imported. Whilst LGBTQI+ people are represented as Vulnerable

Others threatened by Russia and Ukraine, the discursive construction of Ukraine as not responsible for its own homophobia and legislative choices further silences queer subjects and diminishes their security. I found that both Ukrainian and Russian legislation was discussed in Ukrainian news media. Ukraine is constructed as progressive, as its new legislation seeks to ‘protect’ the queer Vulnerable Others. However, the reproduction of Russian anti-LGBTQI+ legislation without critique both constructs queer subjects as Vulnerable Others, and makes them vulnerable through the dissemination of harmful discourses. Whilst many voices are undoubtedly missing in both Ukrainian and Russian news media, this phenomenon in the Ukrainian sample is particularly notable due to the construction of Ukraine as progressive. Rather, I found that by reproducing discourses from politicians, LGBTQI+ people are both constructed as Vulnerable Others, and made vulnerable through the silencing of their diverse identities and security problems. Together, each of these sub-themes contribute to the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as Vulnerable Others.

Chapter 7: (Im)Moral Others

In this chapter, I analyse the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as *Immoral* and *Moral Others* and in doing so answer the research question: *How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* I examine how four sub-themes (salient discourses) each contribute to contrasting representations of queer people, and investigate these representations in reference to existing literature (see Chapter 2). The four sub-themes which emerged from my application of CTA to the data set of 55 total Russian and Ukrainian articles were: ‘traditional values’ (7.1.1), ‘religion’ (7.1.2), ‘queer people as good citizens’ (7.2.1) and ‘support for queer people’ (7.2.2). A total of 26 Russian and Ukrainian articles accounted for the core theme of (Im)Moral Others. In this chapter, I examine how Russian news media constructs LGBTQI+ people as Immoral Others through the representation of them as opposing Russian traditional values and Orthodox religion. I also analyse how Ukrainian news media constructs queer people as Moral Others by demarcating them as good citizens and demonstrating support.

7.1 Russia

7.1.1 Traditional Values

My application of CTA to the Russian news media sample found that LGBTQI+ people are constructed as Immoral Others partially by their delineation as opposing ‘traditional values’. This construction relies on the concurrent representation of Russia as a state which upholds traditional and traditional family values (see Butler 1997). These traditional values are discursively equated to an elevated level of morality. Traditional values are described as those which “strengthen civic unity and manifest themselves in a unique and original way in the spiritual, historical, and cultural development of Russia’s multiethnic population” (Interfax 2022h). Russia is then represented as a guardian of these values. I found that Russian news media asserts that “Russia consistently stands

for the protection of traditional family values” and preserves and popularises “traditional Russian spiritual and moral values” and an “all-Russian civic identity” (Interfax 2023c; TASS 2022h). Some articles in the sample also directly encompass heteronormative ideas of family and relationships in their representation of traditional values. The representation of the centrality of children to the ‘traditional’ family is demonstrated in this article, which reproduces comments from the Belarusian president, a strong ally of the Russian state:

“Media, film production, cultural projects, the advertising industry ought to work to revive the traditions of a large, friendly, full, conventional family” the president said. (Interfax 2023b)

Of particular note is the representation of a “full, conventional” family, which alludes to the heteronormative nuclear family (Interfax 2023b). This implication is reinforced by the dissemination of the idea that Russia should protect “the institution of marriage as a union of man and woman” (Interfax 2023c). There is an evident equation of morality with the heteronormative nuclear family in the Russian news media sample. The representation of Russia as a state which defends these traditional (moral) values contributes to the consequent delineation of queerness as immoral.

I found that LGBTQI+ people are represented as opposing these moral, traditional values, and constructed as Immoral Others. Across the Russian sample, the representation (and thorough criticism) of ‘non-traditional’ values and sexual relations demarcates queerness as ‘Other’ through silence (Butler 1997, p. 27). There is only traditional (and subsequently non-traditional) and nothing else, reproducing cisheteronormativity as the norm. Calls for the prohibition of “propaganda for non-traditional values”, “nontraditional sexual relations” and “the rejection of family values” are reproduced along with the representation that these things are “ruining [Russian] society” (Interfax 2022g; TASS 2022a, 2022f). Russian news media reproduces the idea that these ‘non-traditional’ values (including queerness) bring ‘ruin’ to moral societies such as Russia in the same ways as other social issues, as demonstrated in this article:

Moscow opposes “the imposition of gender-oriented approaches and LGBT agenda as well as drug-liberalism, the cult of consumerism and overindulgence – to the detriment of family values” (TASS 2023d).

The specific mention of queerness and queer people, by referencing “gender-oriented approaches” and the “LGBT agenda”, represents queerness as a threat to public well-being (TASS 2023d; see also Chapter 4.1). Queerness is thus presented as a specifically immoral threat, as the Russian state, and therefore its citizens, are constructed as moral. It is through the equation of Russian state morality with traditional (cisheteronormative) values, that LGBTQI+ people are constructed as non-traditional and therefore Immoral Others.

Through the CTA, I also found that Russian news media folds traditional values (and therefore morality) into the representation of Russian national security. LGBTQI+ people are therefore constructed not only as immoral in the face of Russia’s morality, but as national security threats (see also Chapter 4.1.4). Queerness is represented as a threat to “intellectual, moral and psychological security of [Russian] society” (TASS 2022f). Part of Russia’s national security strategy is the Fundamentals of the State Policy for Preserving and Strengthening Traditional Russian Spiritual and Ethical Values (the Fundamentals), which represents the reinforcement of a Russian ideological identity (see Gololobov 2023; Ignatov 2023). The definition of traditional values upheld by the Fundamentals, and thus the equation of morality with security in Russia, is reproduced in this article which states that:

The Fundamentals define “traditional values” as “moral benchmarks forming the mindset of Russian citizens, passed from one generation to another, and lying in the foundation of the common Russian civic identity and the country’s unified cultural expanse”. (Interfax 2022h)

The description of these “moral benchmarks” is broad, however can be understood collectively with the other constructions of traditional values as moral and cisheteronormative in Russian news media. Non-traditional values or sexual relations (as previously explained: queerness) are thus represented as contributing to the “decline in the vital importance of the institution of the family

and traditional values” and “undermining the Russian Federation’s cultural sovereignty, destroying traditional Russian spiritual and moral values” (Interfax 2023c; TASS 2023b). Queerness is evidently represented as a destructive force to Russia’s morals. In constructing Russia’s national security agenda as moral, LGBTQI+ people are constructed as the immoral threat to this security agenda by Russian news media.

7.1.2 Religion

I found that Russian news media correlates morality with religion, contributing to the construction of LGBTQI+ people as Immoral Others. Orthodox Christianity is represented as central to Russian national identity, and thus central to the representation of Russia as a moral state. In discussions about traditional (moral) values in the Russian sample, there is a comment that “a special role in the establishment and strengthening of traditional values belongs to the Orthodoxy” (Interfax 2022h). There is a clear attribution of “traditional morality” in Russia to the Orthodox Church and its “Christian values” (Interfax 2022e). Orthodox religion is also tied to Russian politics by quoting Putin, such as in this article:

“I would like to tell [adults]: look at the Holy Scriptures, the main books of all other world religions, everything is said there, including the fact that the family is the union of a man and a woman. Yet even these sacred texts are now being questioned,” [Putin] said. (Interfax 2023d)

This article clearly associates religion with high morality and cisheteronormativity, and in doing so constructs queerness not only as a slight or threat against the Russian state, but as against spirituality or God. LGBTQI+ people are thus constructed as Immoral Others who pose a threat to an entire moral belief system.

I found a discernible representation of Orthodox Christianity as threatened across the Russian news media sample. The simultaneous discourse of queerness as anti-religious and immoral contributes to a threat/threatened dichotomy in which the Russian state is upheld as the moral party (Hansen 2000, p. 304). The “discreditation of the Russian Orthodox Church” is

presented as a “destructive influence” on Russian society (TASS 2022e). The association of Orthodoxy with the Russian state constructs this ‘destructive influence’ as detrimental to Russian statehood. This destructive influence also includes the consideration of a “gender-neutral god” by other Christian religions, strengthening the representation of Orthodoxy as cisheteronormative and patriarchal (Interfax 2023d). There are also representations of the West as the driver behind the ‘threat’ of non-traditional values and sexual relations (queerness) (see also Chapter 5.1). Putin is quoted in this article as saying:

Just look at what they are doing to their own people – destruction of the family, cultural and national identity, perversion and bullying of children, up to pedophilia, are declared a norm of their life, and priests are forced to bless same-sex marriages. (Interfax 2023d)

The idea that “priests are *forced* to bless same-sex marriages” suggests that LGBTQI+ people maintain a collective, overt and negative power over religious institutions (Interfax 2023d, own emphasis; see also Dahl 1957, pp. 202-203). This suggestion constructs LGBTQI+ people as a threat to Orthodoxy, and consequently to the Russian state. The representation of Orthodox Christianity as intertwined with Russian national identity, and as under threat, contributes to the construction of LGBTQI+ people as Immoral Others.

7.2 Ukraine

7.2.1 Queer People as Good Citizens

I found that LGBTQI+ people are represented as good citizens in some of the Ukrainian news media sample. Specifically, LGBTQI+ people fighting in the Ukrainian army against the Russian invasion are applauded. There are references to “Ukrainian LGBTQ servicemen and women” and “LGBT representatives” “protecting the country” (Shashkova 2023; Shmigel 2023). Queer soldiers are positioned as guardians of Ukraine, opposite to the previously examined construction of queer people as threats to Russia in Russian news media. However, it should be noted that there is often still a supposition of the gender binary in these representations of members of the

LGBTQI+ community (see Wittig 1980, pp. 107-110). The favourable construction of “soldiers identifying as part of the LGBT community” also includes the representation of “the importance of granting legal rights” and “official recognition” to LGBTQI+ individuals in Ukraine (Shmigel 2023; The Kyiv Independent 2023c; see also Chapter 6.1.3). Thus, queer soldiers are discursively delineated as representing the whole Ukrainian LGBTQI+ community. The morality of LGBTQI+ people is also constructed through the praise of soldiers, such as in this article:

In the months since Russia launched its all-out invasion last year, LGBT Ukrainians in the armed forces have been seizing the chance to show that they can be just as brave, self-sacrificing, and patriotic as anyone else. (Mendel 2023)

The representation of LGBTQI+ individuals as “self-sacrificing” and “patriotic” to Ukraine constructs them as moral in the face of the invading (and thus immoral) Russian state (Mendel 2023). However, the demarcation of LGBTQI+ individuals as a group only just receiving recognition still constructs queerness as ‘Other’ (outside the norm). Queer people are thus constructed as Moral Others by Ukrainian news media through the representation of LGBTQI+ soldiers as good citizens.

7.2.2 Support for Queer People

Using CTA, I found that Ukrainian news media demonstrates some support and positive outcomes for LGBTQI+ people in Ukraine. Specifically, the positive outcomes for queer people due to the war are highlighted in Ukrainian media, echoing the opinions of some external media that the war has been a “catalyst for change” regarding LGBTQI+ rights (see Burgess 2023). Comments that one of the “positive side effects” of the war “is a shift in attitudes toward the LGBT community” in “the right [positive] direction” demonstrate that LGBTQI+ individuals and their rights are represented as moral, and therefore deserving of positive support (Mendel 2023). The discussion of draft legislation to amend the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals and recognise queer relationships also demonstrates support, with Shmigel (2023) highlighting in the Kyiv Post that one of the bills “has the support of, and was developed in consultation with, independent LGBT stakeholders”.

The dissemination of this point in news media discourse represents Ukraine as collaborative with LGBTQI+ people, consequently suggesting that both the state and queer people are moral. Though news media reproduces the idea that the “war in Ukraine has caused a wave of sympathy, support and funding”, including for LGBTQI+ people, there is still a suggestion that LGBTQI+ people are ‘Other’ (Matiushenko 2022). My thematic analysis found that positive discourses regarding queerness and LGBTQI+ people are also less salient than negative ones in Ukrainian news media. Nevertheless, the demonstration of support for queer people in Ukrainian news media contributes to the construction of LGBTQI+ individuals as Moral Others.

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I found that members of the LGBTQI+ community are constructed as Immoral Others predominantly by Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, Ukrainian news media constructs queer individuals as Moral Others. LGBTQI+ people are discursively delineated as Immoral Others in Russian news media through the representation of traditional values and religion. My analysis found that there is an equation of morality with heteronormative traditional values by Russian news media, which consequently delineates queerness as immoral. The folding of these moralised traditional values into Russia’s national security strategy also constructs LGBTQI+ people as an immoral threat to state security by Russian news media. I also found that the association of Orthodox religion with morality and cisheteronormativity contributes to the construction of queerness not only as a threat to the Russian state, but to an entire moral belief system. In the Ukrainian news media sample, LGBTQI+ people are represented as good citizens through the praise of queer soldiers fighting against the invading Russian state. Additionally, the dissemination of positive outcomes for LGBTQI+ people during the war discursively represents the queer community as moral, and therefore deserving of support. Together, each of these sub-themes contribute to the construction of members of the LGBTQI+ community as either immoral or moral. These discourses in Russian news media articles and

Ukrainian news media articles, despite contrasting in positivity, both contribute to the othering of LGBTQI+ people.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The study of war, and the study of power, is the study of people. My thesis examined the discursive representation of queerness in news media during an ongoing conflict, answering the research question: *How are members of the LGBTQI+ community being constructed through Ukrainian and Russian news media during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* Using a critical thematic analysis of a unique dataset of 34 English-Language Russian articles and 21 English-language Ukrainian articles, I found that both Ukrainian and Russian news media construct LGBTQI+ people in ways which deprive them of their individual identities and threaten their security. I found that in the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the representation of queer people in news media signifies power dynamics which essentialise queer identities in ways that benefit either state.

In this thesis, I identified overlapping constructions of LGBTQI+ people in Russian news media during the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. I discussed how these constructions are symptomatic of Russia's state-sponsored homophobia. The (re)production of particular identities through discourse also contributes *to* this state-sponsored homophobia (Doty 1993, p. 6; Hansen 2014, pp. 20-22). I found that members of the LGBTQI+ community were constructed as *Dangerous, Western and Immoral Others* by Russian news media. Each of these core discursive themes contributes to the broader representation of queerness as an existential threat to Russian national identity, security and sovereignty. I found that the LGBTQI+ community was constructed as *Dangerous Others* through their discursive delineation as criminals, as an ill population, and as individuals who make politically manipulative choices. Each of these representations underwrite the discursive delineation of queerness as a danger which the Russian state and its citizens must be protected from. The dual dissemination of anti-West discourses and the construction of LGBTQI+ people as *Western Others* in Russian news media reinforces the representation of queer subjects as threats to the entire international system. Russian news media also frames LGBTQI+ people as *Immoral Others* who not only threaten the pillars of Russian morality entrenched in

traditional values and Orthodox religion, but the Russian national security strategy of which these things are a part. Each of these core themes position members of the LGBTQI+ community as a threat. These discourses thus “legitimise” the actions of Russia (Butler 1999, p. 33; Hansen 2014, p. 21). The invasion of Ukraine is discursively justified through the representation of LGBTQI+ people as a threat which needs to be controlled and eliminated by Russian authority.

I also identified the conflicting constructions of LGBTQI+ people in Ukrainian news media during the ongoing invasion by Russia. I argued that while there were notably homophobic discourses disseminated in the sample, there were also discourses examined which suggest a Ukrainian shift toward homonationalism. I found that members of the LGBTQI+ community were constructed as *Dangerous*, *Western*, *Vulnerable* and *Moral Others* by Ukrainian news media. I found that Ukrainian news media reproduced anti-queer discourses from Russian news media which construct LGBTQI+ people as *Dangerous Others*. Queer individuals are delineated as both criminals and individuals which may weaponise queerness as a ‘choice’. Members of the LGBTQI+ community are also constructed as *Western Others* in Ukrainian news media; separate from general Ukrainian society, but tolerated within the conditions of Western allyship against Russia’s invasion. Ukrainian articles also presented human rights as a reward for military service against the invading Russia.

LGBTQI+ people are constructed as *Vulnerable Others* exclusively in Ukrainian news media, but in numerous ways. I found that queer people were constructed as vulnerable to both Russia as an irrational, imperial and homophobic nation, and ‘Russian-imported’ homophobia in Ukraine. Though pro-LGBTQI+ draft legislation is represented as a protective measure toward the queer (vulnerable) community, these actions simultaneously appear homonationalist due to the reproduction of Russian anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in Ukrainian news media. Additionally, LGBTQI+ people are made vulnerable through a lack of representation in Ukrainian news media, and consequent silencing of their diverse identities and security problems. Ukrainian news media

also frames queer individuals as *Moral Others* through their discursive delineation as good citizens for fighting as soldiers against the invading Russian state. The latter two core themes suggest that Ukraine's reliance on Western allyship against Russia and the contributions of queer soldiers to the resistance underpins the constructions of LGBTQI+ people as vulnerable and moral, and their (conditional) entrance as "worthy of protection" by Ukraine (Puar 2013, p. 337).

I argue that Russian and Ukrainian news media ultimately differ in their constructions of members of the LGBTQI+ community. However, each of the core discursive themes - *Dangerous*, *Western*, *Vulnerable*, *(Im)Moral* – similarly contribute to the othering of queer people, and signify a distribution of power that essentialises queer people down in a way that reduces them. The varying representations of queerness in both samples reaffirms the knowledge that discourses are unstable and numerous, leading to the (re)production of discourses which may be in tension (Doty 1993, p. 6; Hansen 2014, pp. 20-22; Shepherd 2008, p. 32). In the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these numerous discourses all result in the disempowerment of members of the LGBTQI+ community.

I have used the case study of Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine to build on state-sponsored homophobia and homonationalist literature using a queer discursive lens. I found that Russian news media (re)produces discourses which perpetuate Russia's state-sponsored homophobia. I also found that Ukrainian news media both (re)produces homophobic discourses and disseminates positive discourses which suggest Ukrainian homonationalism. The construction of queer people as 'Other' is necessary to each of these findings, resonating with existing literature on the formation of the 'Other' (see Butler 1993a, p. 3; Giuliani 2016, p. 98; Weiss and Bosia 2013, p. 2). My synthesis of the concepts of state-sponsored homophobia and homonationalism with Hansen's (2000) 'silent security dilemma' allows for this othering to be understood as a security issue for queer people in multiple ways. LGBTQI+ people are threatened by nations seeking to delineate and eliminate them as the 'queer Other'. Additionally, homonationalist, or

other seemingly positive, discursive representations, also silence queer individuals' voices and identities. Consequently, the genuine security needs of queer people are made invisible. By considering the specific case of Russia and Ukraine through security scholarship and queer theory, I provide an analytical framework that may also be considered and applied to research beyond the context of war.

My research has three implications for the way queer people are understood through discourse during war. Firstly, in Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, both Ukrainian and Russian news media have constructed queer people in ways which indicate a weaponisation or co-option of their (in)visibility at the expense of their security. These discourses legitimise both Russian and Ukrainian actions (or non-actions) which foster conditions of insecurity. News media is just one means through which these othering discourses in war are (re)produced. Future investigations should focus on other mediums through which the security of queer people has been threatened through Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the experiences of queer individuals in this case. Secondly, sociopolitical discourses appear to disempower LGBTQI+ people in conflict whether they are rendered invisible or visible, and should be examined beyond the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Lastly, the distribution of power in war ultimately essentialises people down to salient but elementary identities which may benefit one or more of the warring states. This finding should be considered when seeking to understand other conflicts, even beyond an examination of queer identities. Centering LGBTQI+ people in conflict is hard, and both overt and covert power dynamics push people to the margins. The erasure of queer individuals and their experiences through discourse and war is precisely what makes studies like this one all the more important.

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Appendix A: Dataset Bibliographies

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