



Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

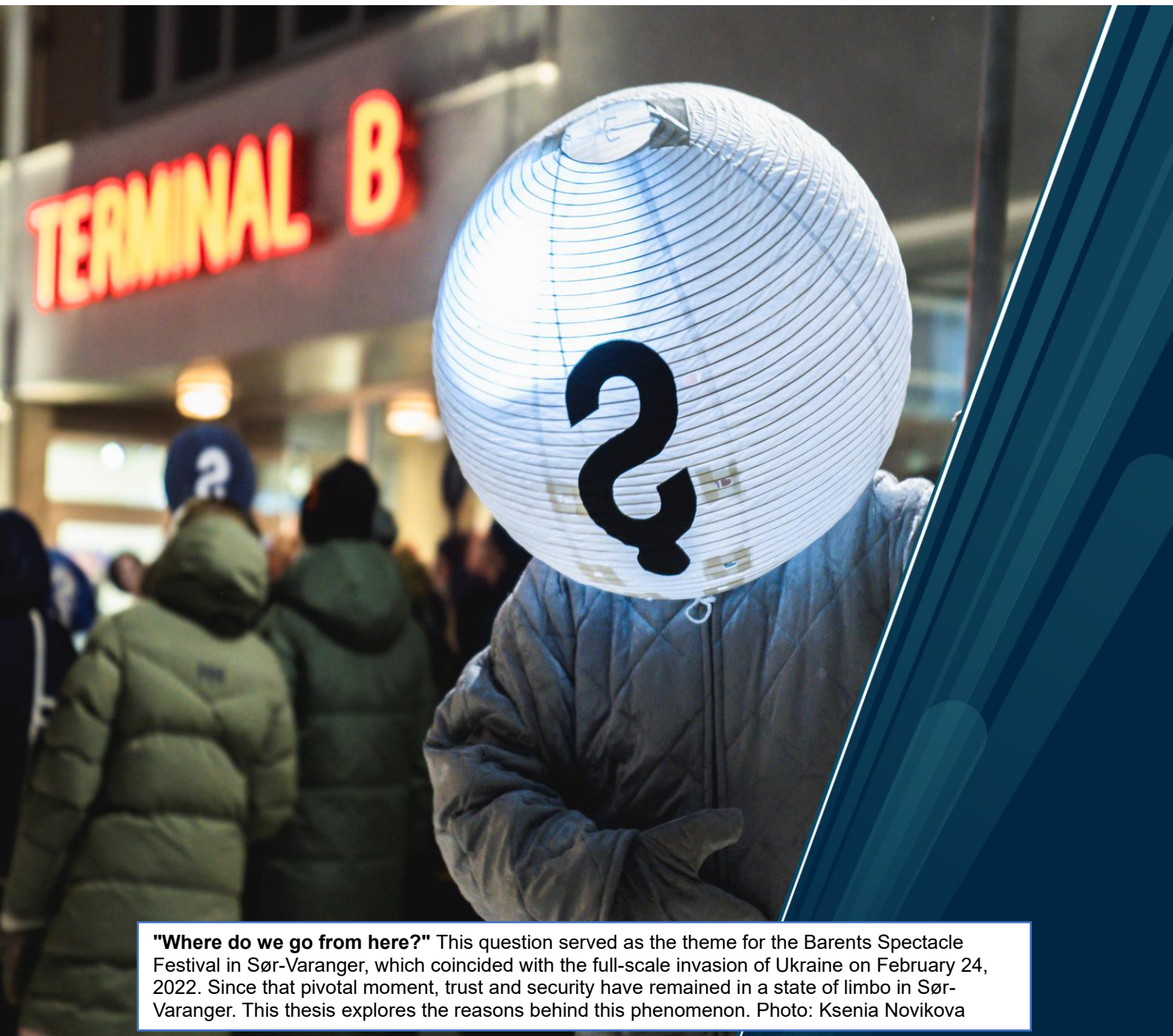
SØR-VARANGER MUNICIPALITY:

Security and trust in limbo following the Ukraine war.

Anja Kristine Salo

Master's thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation SVF-3901

May 2024



"Where do we go from here?" This question served as the theme for the Barents Spectacle Festival in Sør-Varanger, which coincided with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Since that pivotal moment, trust and security have remained in a state of limbo in Sør-Varanger. This thesis explores the reasons behind this phenomenon. Photo: Ksenia Novikova

Table of Content

Acknowledgments

Abstract

Section 1

1.Introduction	1
1.1 Relevance and significance of the study	2
1.2 Literature review.....	3
1.3 Research Objective and Research Questions.....	5
1.4 Scope and Focus of the research.....	5
1.5 Thesis Outline.....	6
2.Theoretical Framework	
2.1 Security – a contested concept.....	7
2.2 Security and trust – two interrelated concepts?.....	9
2.3 Securitization theory.....	11
2.4 Human security.....	13
2.5 Concluding remarks.....	15
3.Methodology	
3.1 Matrix structure.....	16
3.2 Data collection methods.....	17
3.2.1 Discourse analysis	17
3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews.....	18
3.3 Data collection.....	19
3.3.1 Selection of speeches from det government.....	19
3.3.2 Selection of media content	21
3.3.3 Selection of informants and interviewees.....	21
3.4 Categorization of the data material.....	23
3.5 Limitations and research validity.....	24
3.6 Ethical considerations and other challenges.....	25
3.7 Reflexivity	26
4. Historical context	
4.1 Experiences from World War II shaped Norwegian discourses.....	29
4.2 Cold War: Communist threat and increased surveillance.....	30
4.3 Post Cold War: Barents excitement and cooperation.....	31
4.4 Great Power Ambition, Anti-Western Rhetoric and Hybrid War.....	32
4.5 Concluding remarks.....	33

Section 2

5. Individual Insecurities

5.1 Local Norwegian insecurities.....	34
5.1.1 Fear of Russia`s real intentions.....	35
5.1.2 Fear due to insufficient information.....	37
5.1.3 Fear of an identity crisis.....	37
5.1.4 Fear of being considered a security threat.....	38
5.1.5 Fear of a societal crisis.....	40
5.2 Local Russian insecurities	
5.2.1 Fear of “Russophobia”.....	41
5.2.2 Dual citizenship: a threat in Norway and in Russia.....	43

6. State Insecurities	
6.1 “The threat-deterrence” discourse.....	45
6.1.1”The Frontline defender” discourse”.....	49
6.2 “The cooperation-reassurance” discourse.....	50
6.2.1 “The High North-Low Tension” discourse.....	51
7. Societal Insecurities	
7.1 “The threat-and-shame discourse”.....	52
7.2 “The cooperation” discourse.....	57
7.2.1“The Frontline defender” discourse.....	58
7.2.2 “Russophobia” discourse.....	61
Section 3	
8. Discussion: Security and Trust in Limbo?	
8.1 Employing a matrix analysis.....	61
8.1.1 The threat/deterrence discourse.....	62
8.1.2 The cooperation/reassurance discourse.....	63
8.2 Securitization – how was Sør-Varanger impacted?.....	64
8.2.1 Securitization of Russia, Russians, and cooperation.....	65
8.2.2 Securitization of Sør-Varanger municipality.....	66
8.3 Human Security: impact of dominance-non-dominance?.....	67
8.4 Trust-rifts across the Matrix.....	68
8.4.1 Distrust on the state level.....	69
8.4.2 Distrust between individuals on the societal level.....	69
8.4.3 Distrust between the local and state level.....	70
8.5 Concluding remarks.....	71
9. Conclusion and further research	
9.1 Revisiting research question and the research design.....	72
9.2 Revisiting the main findings.....	73
9.3 Relevance for further research.....	75
9.4 Final remarks.....	75

Bibliography

Appendix

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the support and guidance of several instrumental individuals who contributed to writing process and final product. I cannot thank these people enough! To my wonderful friend and advisor, Mikkel Berg-Nordlie, for his suggestions and endless support throughout the writing process. I would also like to acknowledge his unfailing and amazing ability to give feedback in the most encouraging way. To my supervisor, Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, for helping me construct a matrix design that made it possible to identify blind spots between state and human security, as well as pushing me across the finish line with her profound expertise in the field. To Amy Brox Webber, for participating in the original conversations that sparked the topic. To Ellen Elisabeth Hewitt and Kine Olsen for editorial support. To Kim Holmén, for helping me step out of my bubble and offering inspirational thoughts and perspectives throughout the process. To my amazing husband, Amund Trellevik, who made the journey a smooth sailing by taking care of our family and providing intellectual and emotional support. To my beloved Vinjar, for constantly reminding me of what truly matters in the world. To my outstanding mother, Kari Sjøveian, for her emotional and loving support, and for always being ready to listen to my thoughts through both the ups and downs. And finally, to the Sør-Varanger community, whose influence was crucial in shaping the skills, interest, and background necessary for undertaking this work.

Thank you!

ABSTRACT

With Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia reached a new low. Russia is increasingly described as an existential threat. To protect Norwegian national security, sanctions were imposed, cooperation halted, and surveillance capacities strengthened. These measures significantly affected the Norwegian border community of Sør-Varanger, prompting the question: were the national authorities and the local community aligned regarding perceptions of insecurity and measures to increase security? This thesis unpacks in what ways, if at all, Norwegian national security discourses correspond to the security perceptions of the local people in the border community of Sør-Varanger, often referred to as the "frontline of Norwegian sovereignty". The thesis offers knowledge on how local citizens, including the Russian diaspora, evaluate and manage their security situation following the Ukraine war.

Using a "matrix" design, security articulations were traced at the individual (through semi-structured interviews), societal (through local media outlets) and state (through government speeches) levels. Relevant insights from human security and securitization theories helped me analyse the data across the different levels intersecting with each other. The concept of trust – a key feature of security – was deployed across the data clusters to help determine levels of security. The research design enabled me to answer how national security discourse impacted security perceptions and trust in the strategic border area between Russia and Norway amid a tense geopolitical environment.

The thesis demonstrates that impacts from the Ukraine war extend to the Arctic, significantly impacting trust and security perceptions in the border municipality. Moreover, it showcases that solely addressing state and societal insecurities are inadequate because they do not capture the concerns of those who remain silent as a security mechanism. Failing to include human security concerns can prove detrimental given Russia's use of hybrid threat activities where existing vulnerabilities and conflicts are exploited to exacerbate discord. Trust is essential to societal resilience, and inclusive moral communities plays a significant role. To counter the trust deficit revealed in the thesis, acknowledging the root causes of human insecurities are key. By uncovering blind spots, the state and society is better equipped to implement inclusive strategies to restore social cohesion.

Keywords: Russia, Norway, Sør-Varanger, Securitization, Human Security, Security, Trust

1. INTRODUCTION

In February 2023, one year after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, I was moderating a debate addressing the bilateral cooperation on fisheries between Norway and Russia in Sør-Varanger, a municipality situated at the border between Norway and Russia in the North. Since I had lived and worked in Sør-Varanger for seven years I instantly noticed that something had changed. There were almost no questions from the audience even though we debated a topic I knew was important to most people in the municipality, namely the newly imposed restrictions on Russian vessels due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Usually, people took active part in debates, contributed by expressing opinions or asking critical questions, but this time the audience kept quiet. After the debate I asked several people why they thought the public remained silent. “People are more careful stating their opinions, especially if they contradict the mainstream narrative these days”, they told me. According to them, opinions shifted from public forums and columns to private discussions among close friends and family. This made me curious; what might be the insecurities of local citizens in the border municipality after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine? After all, Norway is a liberal democracy where freedom of speech is celebrated.

With Russia`s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia reached rock-bottom. Since Norway is a small state and Russia is one of the great powers, the relationship between the two states has always been asymmetrical (Rowe, 2018, p. 18). As a result, Norway has sought to balance deterrence with reassurance vis-a-vis its big eastern neighbour since the Second World War. On the one hand, the NATO alliance has been a cornerstone in Norwegian security thinking since 1949. On the other hand, Norway has emphasised the importance of good neighbourly relations with Russia.

Reassurance has been signalled through concrete political actions, such as self-imposed restrictions (Wilhelmsen, 2023). Moreover, since the establishment of the Barents cooperation in 1993, people-to-people cooperation has served as an important reassurance tool towards Russia (Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023, p. 4). Norway has contributed extensively to the bridge-building policy between the great powers as low tension in the High North has been vital to Norwegian security doctrine (Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018, p. 387). After Russia's annexation of Crimea ten years ago, in 2014, the Norwegian discourse centred around the necessity for continued cooperation between people in the North, as a vital reassurance measure vis-a-vis the escalating geopolitical tension between Russia and the West (Onsager & Stuvøy, 2022, p. 352). However, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to a fundamental shift in Norwegian

rhetoric. The war has made contact and reassurance initiatives towards Russia almost impossible (Wilhelmsen, 2023, p. 6). As a result, bilateral contacts have been reduced to a minimum and most of the cross-border cooperation between people in the North has been halted. Citizens are asked to be more vigilant and attentive to threats such as influence campaigns, sabotage operations, espionage, and tools known as hybrid warfare (Støre, 2022a). At the same time, the government stresses the importance of treating Russians in Norway with respect and dignity, encouraging Norwegians to distinguish between the Russian state and its inhabitants (Støre, 2022a). Nevertheless, in the border municipality Sør-Varanger, the political situation has sharpened. Polarisation and distrust between citizens are emerging because of the ongoing war. Various discourses are emerging, some shaped by Russian discourse, others by Western discourse, and still others by local experiences and historical memory. The head of Police in Finnmark has suggested closing the harbour to Russian vessels and there are also discussions on closing the border and removing Russian road signs. Moreover, the commemoration of the Soviet liberation of Finnmark has proven especially controversial in a municipality with a mixed population of individuals without Russian affiliation and individuals with Russian affiliation.

This thesis aims to investigate how the war in Ukraine, in terms of security rhetoric and policy measures, has spread to the Arctic. The analytical focus will be directed towards securitization, the process of presenting an issue as an existential threat (Hansen, 2000, p. 288), and human security, which essentially is a study of how conflicts directly or indirectly affect human beings (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 172). By exploring how human security is affected on the local level in Sør-Varanger in the wake of the Ukraine war, the study intends to contribute to the understanding of how top-down and bottom-up dynamics interact, and which consequences it might have on the level of trust between local citizens and between the local and governmental level.

1.1 RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

”If Norway is a body, Sør-Varanger is the most crucial acupuncture point”, a local citizen told me in one of the breaks during the Kirkenes Conference in February 2023. “Here, Norway meets the world. It constitutes a geopolitical centre as it facilitates the border between NATO and Russia in the North. The border is a delimitation between liberal democracy and authoritarianism”, he went on. Politics are framed by the government in the capital but experienced locally. Sør-Varanger is a sparsely populated Norwegian municipality bordering Finland and Russia in the North. Among the 10.000 inhabitants are approximately 400 either

Russian immigrants or Norway-born to Russian immigrant parents (SSB, 2024). Located above the 69th parallel, the area has arctic climate conditions and is the northernmost Schengen border (Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023, p. 4). Norway shares a 198 km long border with Russia here. The municipality has long-standing traditions of close cooperation and interaction with Russia. The area was liberated by the USSR in October 1944, one year before the rest of Norway was liberated, and the Soviet military withdrew in September 1945, proving friendly intentions and receiving great appreciation from the local citizens in the area (Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023, p. 10). Kirkenes, the main city in the municipality, was perceived by Norwegians as the capital of the Barents Region from 1993 onwards, with extensive cross-border cooperation with Russia on both so-called people-to-people and business levels, replacing cold war confrontations and the Iron Curtain with collaboration (2023, p. 4).

From a military standpoint, the Kola Peninsula—located on the Russian side of the border—is heavily fortified. It hosts the Northern Fleet's base, which is recognized as Russia's most critical nuclear weapons facility (Zysk, 2020, p. 22). According to Zysk, the critical importance of protecting the strategic submarines and their operational area remains the top priority for the Northern Fleet. Therefore, the Bastion defence concept aims to ensure the survival and freedom of action of the submarines through layers of defence. In a crisis, Russia would likely aim to take control over maritime areas and other operational domains in parts of the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea (Zysk, 2020, p. 11). Therefore, border police, intelligence and the defence sector are important employers in Sør-Varanger municipality, proving why this area is of strategic importance not only to the Norwegian state but also to NATO allies. As a result of neighbouring Finland entering NATO, the role of Sør-Varanger within a security policy framework will become even more important (Røine & al., 2023, p. 5). The case of Sør-Varanger is an example of how a war happening somewhere else in Europe, nevertheless, taint relations across borders and between people living in the High North.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis surveyed literature related to recent Norwegian discourses on Russia, as well as research related to the historical Norwegian balance of deterrence and reassurance. To better understand the special characteristics of the area and its historical background, as well as the interaction between the local level and the state level, articles related to these issues have been included. Moreover, since historical discourses are part of the local identity, literature related to collective historical memory on Norwegian-Russian relations were added, as well as more

direct security-trust related topics. Olafsbye described in her master's thesis the relationship Norwegians had with Russians in Sør-Varanger and how the cultural differences constituted a symbolic border in the society (Olafsbye, 1998). Schwencke Fors and Viken described how the border impacted everyday life of people living on both sides of the Norwegian-Russian border (Fors, 2018). Paulgaard & Soleim (2023) explored local consequences of a global crisis and how place-based experiences and collective memories stimulated the local mobilisation in Sør-Varanger during the refugee crisis in 2015.

The scientific article "Crimea will forever be Russian-" dissenting Norwegian media discourses on Russia's annexation of Crimea" addressed how European audiences have been receptive to Russian narratives of Crimea being part of Russia (Myhre et al., 2024). Borge and Horne illustrated in their research how Norway prioritized collaboration on common interests following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, which made the Barents Region somewhat immune to international conflicts (Borge & Horne.H, 2020). Researchers at OsloMet conducted a survey where they asked people about their Russia-friendliness (Aasland & Myhre, 2023). This research demonstrated that Norwegians, regardless of living in Oslo or Sør-Varanger, have the same attitudes towards Russia, including support of Norway's current security policy. Moreover, Norwegians in general want to preserve good neighbourly relations with Russia. More recently, researchers explored how "border conviviality" has been affected by the new geopolitical context. More precisely, they investigated how people-to-people cooperation was created, changed, and challenged in Kirkenes in the months following the Russian full-scale invasion, concentrating their focus upon how people live, work, and collaborate (Gubrium et al., 2024).

Other sources of research relevant to the thesis has involved Russian hybrid operations and influence campaigns. Myklebost (2023) explored in her research how memory diplomacy and Norwegian-Russian patriotic memory tours initiated by Russian state-affiliated actors, aimed to export military-patriotic perspectives and symbols across the border as part of a Russian influence campaign. The article argues that these tours (2011-2019) celebrating the heroic story of Red Army soldiers and Norwegian partisans in Soviet intelligence service during WWII, linked the Soviets' role in the victory over Nazi Germany to an alleged contemporary fascist threat spreading from Ukraine and the Baltics. Østhagen (2023) and Hoogensen Gjørsv (2024) have in their working papers described concrete hybrid threat activities that have been taking place in Northern Norway since the full-scale invasion. Most of them are either attributed to Russia or suspected to originate from Russia intending to destabilize the target country.

However, there is limited knowledge on how local citizens, including the Russian diaspora, in Sør-Varanger consider their security situation following the war in Ukraine. It constitutes a research gap that needs academic investigation, to understand the connection between the local insecurities and the wider political challenges for Norway and the world. The military and strategic importance of this geographical area points to why a study of Sør-Varanger is relevant to peace and conflict studies.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis aims to address how top-down political decisions are experienced locally. It aims to analyse vernacular perceptions of (in)security and mapping human (in)securities from the bottom-up. The goal is to uncover the richness and texture of localised security imaginaries (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 226). The issue intrigued me because of the unknown consequences if local considerations are not sufficiently taken into consideration. According to the Norwegian Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Intelligence and Security Services, the “Lund Commission” concluded that the Norwegian Police Security Service was involved in widespread illegal political surveillance of individuals and organisations belonging to Norway’s political left during the Cold War period. Many of these individuals lived in Northern Norway, and especially in the border area. Documents from the early 2000s given to individuals showed that they had been under surveillance for being perceived as too friendly towards Russia. They were viewed as potential internal threats that needed to be closely monitored (EOS-utvalget, 2024). I found it interesting to examine whether historical memories like these influence the current situation. What could be the consequences if people are suppressing their opinions? Can the failure to ensure a truly democratic agenda where all the different opinions are openly addressed and acknowledged, turn into a national weakness that other states, such as Russia, can exploit?

I ended up with the following research question:

- In what ways, if at all, do Norwegian national security discourses correspond to the security perceptions of the people in the border community of Sør-Varanger, often referred to as the “frontline of Norwegian sovereignty”?

1.4 SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis addresses the issue of Security from an individual, societal and state level. To narrow the scope, it examines Sør-Varanger municipality in the period between February 2022 until August/September 2023. The aim is to understand how the national securitization

of Russia and the border area following the Ukraine war influenced the society and the human security of ordinary people living there. Insecurities were mapped through in-depth interviews with local citizens in Sør-Varanger, both individuals with Russian affiliation and individuals without Russian affiliation. To get a broader understanding of how national security policy impacted the local community and the societal level, the project collected data from the local media sources iFinnmark, Sør-Varanger Avis and NRK Troms and Finnmark. Finally, discourse analysis of speeches from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Prime Minister's Office was conducted to explore how Russia, Russians and the local community was represented. The study revealed that crucial human security concerns were absent in both the media content and the government speeches, proving how the human security approach can provide interesting insights that would otherwise have been left in the blind zone.

1.5 THESIS OUTLINE

This master's study is presented in nine chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction and outlines the main research aspects of the study. It is devoted to explaining why this area is worth studying, what the scope and focus of the research will be as well as introducing previous research on the topic.

The second chapter deals with the theoretical framework of the thesis, introducing the reader to the concept of "securitization", a theory that emphasises the power of discourse and speech acts (Hansen, 2000). The theory is known for widening the security approach, but is nonetheless more top-down and less concerned with individual security perspectives. Thereafter, the chapter examines the concept of "human security", known as a bottom-up approach to security. This chapter provides an overview of how these approaches intertwine and sometimes collide, and the necessity to acknowledge the importance of both in a tense geopolitical situation.

Chapter three addresses the methodological framework. This chapter describes the methodology I used, methods of data collection, types of data, principles for informant selection and the relevant strategies in the field. Additionally, it briefly describes my own role, ethical considerations, and some of the limitations and challenges I faced structuring the thesis.

The fourth chapter provides important background information. It touches upon the historical context of Norwegian policy towards Russia and how Norway has balanced deterrence and

reassurance towards its eastern neighbour. Moreover, it describes the characteristics of the municipality and provides a historical introduction to this specific area. Finally, it describes how the Russian discourse has changed and Russian hybrid threats activities have impacted the Norwegian approach to Russia.

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapter deals with the empirical data. Chapter five describes the insecurities mapped through semi-structured interviews in Sør-Varanger. Chapter six describes discourses found through scrutinizing the government speeches. Finally, chapter seven describes societal discourses mapped through scrutinizing the local media coverage.

Chapter eight is devoted to analysing and discussing how the different levels (individual, societal and national) intersected. Human security and securitization will be used as theoretical lenses to analyse the dynamics between the levels. Moreover, trust will be used as measuring tool to explore the transformation in perceptions of security.

Chapter nine concludes the main arguments and findings from the study and provides thoughts and proposals for future research on the topic.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this thesis, the concept of security is used to demonstrate how security perceptions at various sub-state levels (individual and societal) influence the resilience of national security and visa-versa. The analysis focuses on trust as a crucial element in shaping these security perceptions. This chapter thus begins with a brief introduction to the multifaceted concept of security, which is subject to various interpretations. It then explores the interconnection between security and trust, followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework. This includes a discussion of the principal arguments and critiques associated with the two central theories under consideration. The chapter concludes by elucidating the rationale behind the combined approach of securitization and human security.

2.1 SECURITY – A CONTESTED CONCEPT

According to Barry Buzan, security is essentially about survival. It is “the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames an issue either as a special kind of politics or above politics” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23). Ken Booth claims that security denotes the absence of any form of threat, distinguishing between mere survival—simply being alive—and security, which he associates with the quality of living (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 36). Linda Basch further expands the definition of security as the

liberation of individuals and groups from various constraints—be they social, physical, economic, or political—that inhibit their ability to act freely (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006, p. 211)”. From these perspectives alone, it is evident that security can be understood in diverse ways. One view prioritizes the imperative of survival, while another underscores the aspiration to live without fear or threat, enhancing quality of life. Often the former has been associated with state-centric notions of security and sovereignty, whereas the latter is frequently associated with the well-being of individuals at the forefront, whom the state is meant to safeguard. These interpretations are deeply interconnected; many argue that individual security cannot be realized without the foundational survival of the state, and conversely, a state cannot truly survive without ensuring the security of its citizens.

Security also hinges on the concept of identity—our understanding of who we are and against what we seek protection, both as individuals and as part of political entities. Booth contends that it is within the community that security finds its actual foundation (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 40). However, the situation becomes complex when multiple identities intersect. In Norway, for instance, while most may identify primarily as Norwegians, we also hold minority, local, and personal identities that can be just as influential. The interplay of these identities, especially in times of conflict and the sharpening of enemy images, influence trust, as identities are often based on historic enmity which feed fear and worst-case forecasting (Bilgic, 2013, p. 61). This emerged as a significant theme in this thesis.

Hoogensen & Stuvøy (2006) suggest that security can be viewed through the lens of power dynamics, framed by the demarcations between "us" and "them" (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, p. 215). They argue that “Relations of dominance and non-dominance determine who defines norms and practices and who must follow them; who is important and who is not; who defines the parameters of the debate and who does not; who is valuable and who is not” (2006, p. 219). In Sør-Varanger municipality, for example, around 400 individuals are either Russian immigrants or Norwegian-born citizens with Russian immigrant parentage with many holding dual citizenships (SSB, 2024). Utilizing Hoogensen and Stuvøy's framework, it becomes fascinating to examine the interplay between dominant and non-dominant groups within a security paradigm that is increasingly polarized into categories of "us" and "them."

Hoogensen argues that security encompasses both negative aspects, such as the identification of threats and recognition of vulnerabilities, and positive dimensions, including the enhancement of enabling environments and capabilities (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006, p. 220). Consequently, the concept of security extends beyond mere threat detection to

encompass the creation and strengthening of safer, more inclusive environments (2006, p. 222). This broader interpretation of security suggests that there is room for manoeuvre, even amidst pronounced societal divisions. Democratic spaces that are secure, inclusive, and foster the rebuilding of societal trust could present themselves as viable pathways. The next subsection will delve into the intricate relationship between security and trust.

2.2 SECURITY & TRUST – TWO INTERRELATED CONCEPTS?

According to Booth and Wheeler, trust is basic to all society as social life would be impossible without it. “Trust exists when two or more actors, based on mutual interpretation of each other`s attitudes and behaviour, believe that the other(s) now and in the future, can be relied upon to desist from acting in ways that will be injurious to their interest and values(...)Trusting relationships are made possible by the following linked pairs of properties: a leap in the dark/uncertainty, empathy/bonding, dependency/vulnerability and integrity/reliability”(Booth & Wheeler, 2008, p. 230). This conceptualization demonstrate that trust and insecurity are inherently intertwined, as the notion of trust would lose its significance in the presence of absolute certainty within a relationship. Thus, a broad definition of trust could be framed as "a bet on the future contingent actions of others"(2008, p. 232). This understanding of trust underscores the importance of values and interests and highlights how they shape decisions, emphasizing that trust involves weighing potential risks and benefits based on these foundational principles. In a climate of geopolitical tension, trust is put to the test, affecting not only the relationships between states but also the interpersonal dynamics among citizens within those nations.

According to Hosking (2017), trust is a feeling based on positive expectations and relations, which are not always calculable but affective. He states that trust is “(a) attachment to a person, collective of persons or institution, based on well-founded but not certain expectation that he/she/they will act for my/good and (b) the expectation, based on good but less than perfect evidence that events will turn out in a way not harmful to me/us” (Bilgic et al., 2019, p. 4). Radoilska consider trust to be a belief responsive to evidence (Radoilska, 2014). This means that people choose to trust based on past experiences and based on their own interests. The significance of historical experiences is pertinent to this thesis, as we will see Section two.

At the societal level, trust pertains to the degree of confidence that individuals have regarding the moral integrity and reliability of their fellow citizens. Social trust is constructed based on

communal identity articulations and can be divided into generalized trust and particularized trust (Bilgic et al., 2019, p. 4). Generalized trust is inclusive, embracing individuals who may be perceived as sociocultural and ethnically distinct from oneself, and recognizing them as part of an extended moral community deemed trustworthy (Bilgic et al., 2019, p. 4). Particularized trust, as described by Bilgic, Hoogensen Gjørsv and Wilcock, refers to the exclusive trust that is reserved for members of a clearly delineated group. This form of trust arises from a sense of familiarity and perceived commonality, with identity markers like ethnicity and nationality playing a significant role. The extent to which particularized trust is extended depends on the inclusivity of the moral community in question (2019). This underscores the critical role of an inclusive moral community in expanding the boundaries of trust, thereby fostering a more cohesive society. Considering that this study focuses on a border municipality where Russian citizens represent a significant minority group, distinguishing between the two types of trust—generalized and particularized—is analytically useful. In a highly politicized environment fraught with tension, where discourses reflecting fear, insecurity and security increasingly engage identity. Factors such as loyalty and shared values become pivotal in shaping perceptions of trustworthiness – and thereby security within society. Social psychology literature suggests that trust is built through the development of identifications and ties, which foster a strong group identity. To overcome the security dilemma of whether to trust or not, it is crucial that individual identities merge into a collective "we" (Booth & Wheeler, 2008, p. 233).

Ahmed posits that trust and distrust are shaped by identities and emotions, which are in turn influenced by historical memories and experiences capable of eliciting affective reactions of othering (Ahmed, 2004). “Repeated negative association with the object works to reproduce and essentialize the object as “other”, leaving them less trustworthy” (Bilgic et al., 2019, p. 5). By analysing discourses pertaining to Russia and Russians at both the state level and local level, this thesis explores how the heightened threat discourse have impacted perceptions of security and trust. In Sør-Varanger, a collective Barents identity was fostered in the 1990s with the objective of cultivating trust across the border (Gubrium et al., 2024, pp. 3-4). Nonetheless, the empirical data collected indicate that this identity has been significantly challenged by the onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The following subsections of the thesis will outline the array of security theories applied to comprehend the challenges encountered by the border community in the wake of Ukraine's full-scale invasion.

2.3 SECURITIZATION THEORY

Securitization theory, often referred to as the Copenhagen School, is one of the pioneers of deepening the concept of security to allow for the analysis of different issue areas, including environment and economics. Moreover, it recognizes identity as a significant factor in how a group such as a society “make security” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 204). The different issue areas become “referents” or the target to be securitized (i.e., that which needs to be secure). When an issue is securitized, it is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures to be combated (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24). Buzan et al. describe securitization as a “critical term for how fields hitherto unrelated to security concerns become securitized by actors who attach a typical national security value to them. This allows specific fields to be prioritized as urgent matters and dealt with through exceptional means, bypassing regular procedures” (Brown & Grävingsholt, 2016, p. 2). The Copenhagen School and securitization theory gained prominence for both widening the scope of what issues could be relevant to security, and shedding light on the possible similarities and differences between state and societal security. Societal groups, defined by specific identities, could claim to be threatened even when the state was not (Hansen, 2000, p. 290). Buzan et al’s concept of securitization is presented as a framework that enables security analysts to explore how a logic of urgent action can be applied to a spectrum of issues, encompassing both military and non-military concerns (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 119). They developed a framework that assists researchers in examining the conditions under which war is legitimized as well as war’s subsequent social impacts (Wilhelmsen, 2017b).

For successful securitization, discourse plays a crucial role. Specifically, “speech acts” within certain discourses have a unique rhetorical structure that creates a state of exception, shaping a collective perception of a threat that the audience either “approves” or “rejects”(Hansen, 2000, p. 288). If accepted, the speech act results in the securitization of the issue. The audience can be a general or specific population within the state, or state level actors such as policy communities, other states, etc. This speech act targeting a given audience attempts to convince them to accept deviations from established norms that the agent—such as a state— would otherwise be bound by (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 25). This thesis employs discourse analysis to identify patterns of securitization. The objective is to uncover how “speech acts” have rationalized the implementation of emergency measures and to assess their social implications on the local level.

In the study of securitization, it is important to examine how security measures both affirm and shape the identities portrayed within the securitized discourse (Wilhelmsen, 2017a, 2017b). Fassin (2001) argues that for a discourse to resonate effectively, it must tap into pre-existing stereotypes related to race, culture, or religion. These stereotypes facilitate the creation of symbolic social boundaries and a collective sense of identity, delineating "us" from "them." It redefines the inside from the outside and represents sorting the population between who is included and who is excluded (Fassin, 2001, p. 214). The excluded often become the targets of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and hatred. Within national discourses, there is an ingrained perception of what and who poses a threat to the state and the dominant society within the state (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 103). This perception aids in the demarcation of lines between 'us' and 'them,' potentially reinforcing one identity at the detriment of another. These discourses offer clear signals regarding who is considered part of the in-group and who is not, delineating who is deemed trustworthy and who is not.

Moreover, political action serves a dual purpose: it reassures citizens that they can maintain their daily routines, while also integrating the concept of resilience into security policies. This integration occurs because the continuation of everyday life is considered a crucial component of national security strategy (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p.222). From this perspective, either the entire society can be subject to securitization, or specific groups within the population may be identified as relevant to security if the state recognizes them as having significant security implications. Taking Sør-Varanger municipality's location by the Russian border - and its mixed population - into consideration, this point is valuable to acknowledge.

However, securitization may also arise from an intersubjective contest among various securitizing actors and their audiences over the degree of difference and danger attributed to a particular entity (Wilhelmsen, 2017a). Thus, securitization can take place within the societal fabric, where it is both enacted and challenged by individuals and communities.

Nevertheless, securitization theory has been less open to allowing for individual perspectives. Scholars like Buzan have suggested that identity or societal security is more appropriate for addressing non-state-centric threats. This is because "individuals are not free standing, but only take their meaning from the societies in which they operate" (2006, p. 215). As much as this is true, societies rarely represent the identities and security perspectives of all the individuals within society. Acknowledging dissent or resistance to societal identities

introduces another dimension to the security dynamic: human security. The subsequent sub-chapter will introduce the reader to the characteristics of this security approach.

2.4 HUMAN SECURITY

Traditional security studies have faced criticism for their state-centric focus, often overlooking the voices of citizens and their lived experiences of insecurity in contemporary security policy debates (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 177). Engaging with specific historical contexts, charting local experiences of security and insecurity, and examining how these relate to elite narratives and political actions can serve to expand the security discourse (2021, p. 217). By empirically investigating security and prioritizing the human or individual dimension, it becomes possible to discern which groups are secure and which are not, thereby giving a platform to structurally marginalized actors. The aim of a human security perspective is to foster more informed theorizing and policymaking in the realm of security (2021, p. 224). A bottom-up approach to studying security issues enriches the concepts of human security, everyday security, and societal security by incorporating the diverse perspectives, experiences, and narratives of non-elite actors, thereby re-privileging otherwise marginalised groups (2021, p. 221).

The 1994 UNDP report popularized the definition of human security used most frequently today, formulated as “freedom from fear and freedom from want”. People should be secured from threat of violence, poverty, and destruction (2021, p. 168). Furthermore, the report underscored that human security is a universal concern centred on the protection of human life and dignity, rather than on the use of armaments to protect the borders. Andrew Mack restricts the definition of human security to more traditional definitions of security associated with war, stating that human security addresses the "effects of conflicts, whether direct or indirect, on human beings"(2021, p. 172). Simultaneously, however, the 1994 report takes a broader perspective, pointing out that military and non-military sources of insecurity frequently intersect and are interrelated (2021, p. 169). In policy discourse, human security is acknowledged through the recognition that lasting stability cannot be achieved until people are protected from violent threats to their rights, safety, or lives. Human security covers all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life, and dignity, which requires multiple actors from individuals to societies and states to develop and maintain (2021, p. 171) The broader human security theoretical framework is highly relevant to the thesis, as it aims to shed light on the consequences of a relatively distant war on a local community not directly impacted by the war itself, but where impacts on identity, societal and human security are nevertheless felt.

Human security is instrumental in “identifying the ways in which insecurities develop as a result of relationships of dominance/non-dominance, how they manifest themselves according to context and what steps are needed to address these problems, whether these be initiatives taken by those affected or state-based domestic and foreign policies” (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006, p. 219). Focusing on the security concerns of non-elite actors shifts the emphasis away from the interests of the elite and the state alone. Human security is argued to be a people-centred approach to security that challenges the state’s privileged position (Williams, 2018). “The notion of human security claims to bring the focus of security to the level of the individual, thereby recognizing the constraints of a solely state-oriented security perspective and acknowledging the importance of security at non-state levels” (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006, p. 210). This thesis adopts human security concerns as its foundation while also acknowledging the interplay between human security and state-level security issues. This interdependence is precisely why integrating Securitization Theory with Human Security Theory is advantageous for the thesis and will serve as its theoretical lens.

According to Hoogensen and Stuvøy, human security “focuses on the exertion of security as a process of social interaction and takes account of security as a social concept that is both experienced and realized through social practice. The analytical focus is on security experienced by people in the social field, in non-state domains. The task is to make a discursive space in which the structurally excluded actor can speak”(Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006, p. 224). By focusing on the non-dominant local spheres, (in)securities that are not traditionally visible to the state can be uncovered, challenging the state’s perception of security (2006, p. 223). In chapter 5 of the thesis, insecurities experienced by members of the local population are contrasted with those perceived by the Norwegian state. Anonymous interviews revealed that certain insecurities went unaddressed by both the authorities and the media. This discrepancy suggests the presence of blind spots, which human security theory can assist in uncovering.

Since humans react to specific situations, broad, top-down security definitions fall short because they fail to address and consider the local context (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006, p. 211). Furthermore, it is essential to conduct a thorough analysis of the interactions and relationships between minority (non-dominant) groups and majority (dominant) groups to gain a deeper insight into the societal power dynamics and intergroup relations: “Minorities perceive security threats differently from their majority counterparts, or the other way around, and these different perceptions constitute ‘real’ security threats”(2006, p. 212).

Human security has faced criticism for not fully realizing its normative, progressive aspirations. Some argue that human security is only superficially recognized within the realm of security policy, often overshadowed by what are deemed more "important" objectives (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 174). Moreover, human security has been criticised of being co-opted for state security purposes. The concept has been implicated in what some term "virtuous imperialism" (Williams, 2018, p. 232). Critics contend that states in the Global North have conducted humanitarian operations with the primary aim of curbing refugee flows and terrorism from reaching Western borders. States have also been accused of exploiting the insecurities of minority groups in strategic areas. For example, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was framed as a protective measure for ethnic Russians facing discrimination and potential ethnic cleansing, using human security concerns to legitimize emergency security measures (Tolz & Hutchings, 2023). Both examples show how states may utilize humanitarian motives to justify interventions based on state security motives. Nevertheless, human security highlights its vital role in revealing the insecurities experienced by various population segments, uncovering insights that might otherwise be obscured from public view. Articulating these insecurities is the first step toward addressing their underlying causes. By acknowledging these concerns, society will be better equipped to implement inclusive strategies that can alleviate insecurities to restore social cohesion.

2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is often an assumption of a direct correlation between trust and security. State actors, who have the privilege of shaping and disseminating political discourse, play a pivotal role in fostering societal trust and cultivating resilient political communities. However, through the lens of security discourses, state actors may also engender particularized distrust towards minorities by portraying them as ominous entities, thereby creating a source of insecurity (Bilgic et al., 2019, p. 5).

This thesis seeks to illustrate how the discourse of a "trusting self" can enhance security and trust within the majority population while concurrently fostering distrust towards the "other," thereby inflicting insecurity upon the minority. By integrating perspectives from both the top and bottom levels, the aim is to elucidate the effects of national security discourse at the local level. By amplifying the voices that form the "audience" of these political speech acts—those from non-elite level—the thesis exposes how everyday relations become securitized through the circulation of unease (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 222). Given Russia's renewed status as a major threat and Sør-Varanger's location directly adjacent

to the Russian border, the society could easily become subject of securitization. By utilizing the theoretical framework, the thesis identifies how insecurities emerge in response to dynamics of dominance and non-dominance, demonstrating the inadequacy of allowing security definitions to be defined by dominant voices alone.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to address the research question. Moreover, it discusses critical considerations regarding reflexivity and positionality, the limitations and validity of the research, and the ethical challenges encountered during the study.

3.1 MATRIX STRUCTURE

To investigate how national discourses on Russia pertaining to the war in Ukraine impacted local perceptions of security and trust, I conducted what I call a “matrix” framework where one can visualize three levels (individual, societal and state) along an X-axis, and three data sources along a Y-axis (semi-structured interviews with local residents, local editor-controlled media and speeches by government officials). I visualize these three levels and data sources overlapping each other, creating a matrix demonstrating how the different levels and data sources intersect, impact, or influence each other. In this way I can identify data clusters and tease out the initial apparent impacts of data (speeches, media) on different levels (individuals, local society, state), and identify the prevailing discourses in each. The theories of human security and securitization then serve as analytical lenses to examine what is happening in these data clusters, and how the data reflect and/or impacts various (individual, societal, national) security perceptions which may or may not coincide or complement each other. I use the variable of trust — a central feature of security — to identify changes in security perceptions, reflected by prevailing discourses, at different levels. The matrix’s design aims to reveal potential blind spots at each level and/or disconnects and symmetries between data clusters, thereby highlighting the alignment—or lack thereof—between human and state security in the context of the Russian escalation of war in Ukraine.

To provide the data for this study, I selected six government speeches between February 2022 and June 2023. I tracked local media responses within a two-week window following each speech to examine the media interpretations and influence of the speeches on the local discourse. Subsequently, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of local inhabitants to triangulate the findings from the textual materials representing speech acts. These interviews provide insights into the consequences of these speech acts

(whether these local actors were considered the target audience or not) and brought to light certain anxieties that were either absent or poorly represented in media coverage. The subsequent subsection, I will detail information about the methodological tools utilized in this thesis.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.2.1 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

I utilized discourse analysis of both government speeches and media content to comprehend how the government depicted the threat from Russia, Norway's scope of action, and the proclaimed necessary security measures following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

A *discourse* is a particular way of describing the world, or parts of the world, that the speaker posits as taken for granted and therefore does not question (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). It represents a collective understanding of a social phenomenon. According to Foucault, discourses are “series of practices, representations, and diagrams of power through which different regimes of truth, are (re)produced” (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021). They represent the realm where identities are constructed, social relations established, and ethical-political outcomes made possible (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2021, p. 100). Discourses highlight the relationship between power and knowledge in society and reveals the way we talk about and understand the world (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). When a particular discourse presents a version of the world, it often excludes other interpretations of reality. However, various discourses frequently conflict with each other. Even if one discourse appears dominant, it can be contested by alternative discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). The fact that discourses often collide is interesting given that this study aims to explore whether the national discourses were accepted or challenged by possibly competing local discourses.

Within each discourse there is a particular dramaturgy that includes a simplified description of a situation, choice of action and consequences (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). Discourse analysis reveals what is possible to say and not say to maintain a distinct identity and remain a member of the in-group (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 40). Discourses informs the identities of the in-group and out-group, what one can say and do to remain part of the 'we', as well as the effects of the discourse on society. Discourse formation happens within arenas which are sought out by actors who wish to make the views they deem as strategically beneficial, dominant with the audience (Berg-Nordlie, 2018, p. 2). Through speech acts, actors describe how the political community should relate to

“the other”. They often connects history to the present, and gives signals towards the social order of the future (Bilgic et al., 2019). For instance, by contrasting the “threatened self” to the “threatening other”, the actor can provide a positive self-image, that can remove existential anxiety (Bilgic et al., 2019).

As discourses establish the frameworks within which the population of Norway, and thereby also the local community of Sør-Varanger, should operate to maintain their place in the national 'we', this study aims to examine the dramaturgy, or the speech acts, articulated by state representatives following the invasion of Ukraine. What scope of action is projected by the authorities, and how does this, in turn, affect the local population? Did the population conform to these signals, or did they challenge them through local competing discourses? To get a profound understanding of how the war influenced perceptions of trust and security in Sør-Varanger, thus, discourse analysis was critical to the research.

3.2.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

To triangulate the findings from the discourse analysis, I conducted semi-structured interviews, where people anonymously could articulate their concerns without being recognized or labelled in any way. These interviews were conducted in August-September 2023. Sør-Varanger is home to a diverse array of minority groups, such as the Skolt Sámi, Northern Sámi, Kvens/Norwegian Finns, and immigrants from various countries, including Ukraine and Russia. However, since the prevailing threat image was centred around Russia, this master's thesis has a special focus on the Russian minority. Consequently, the thesis includes interviews with both members of the majority population (which I will refer to as “Norwegian”), who lack ancestral or familial ties to Russia, and individuals from the Russian community who possess such connections. The aim was to show different perceptions and side-effects of the new security situation (Roulston, 2010, p. 84). Further details on the selection of informants and a discussion regarding the limitations of the informant group will be presented in section 3.3.3.

Mixing discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore how local interpretations and perceptions of security and trust interacted with signals from the government. In the following sub-chapter, I will describe how I collected and categorized the data.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

3.3.1 SELECTION OF SPEECHES FROM THE GOVERNMENT

I utilized regjeringen.no, the Norwegian government's official online portal, to search for speeches delivered by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJPS) using the keywords "Russia" or "Russians." During the specified timeframe, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre delivered 38 speeches (including press conferences and parliamentary addresses) that pertained to Russia. Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt was responsible for 29 speeches on the subject. The Minister of Justice, Emilie Enger Mehl, gave nine speeches related to Russia or Russians.

To contribute to the matrix outlined in section 3.2.1, I selected six government speeches. The initial speech (#1) I analysed was delivered by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs on the 23rd of February, just one day before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Huitfeldt, 2022). She spoke at the Kirkenes Conference, held in the administrative centre of the municipality. I selected this speech because it was delivered immediately prior to the war and provided insight into the national government's discourses directed at the specific local community under study. The day following Huitfeldt's address, on February 24, 2022, Russia declared a "special military operation" aimed at "demilitarizing" and "denazifying" Ukraine, signalling the onset of a significant international conflict.

The second speech (#2) I examined was a parliamentary address given by the Norwegian Prime Minister, on March 3rd, 2022 (Støre, 2022b). This address was selected to understand the impact of the full-scale invasion on established discourses about Russia. By this point, Norway, in alignment with European and Western allies, had agreed upon sanctions against Russia. Additionally, Norway had halted investments through the Government Pension Fund Global. Certain Russian financial institutions had been disconnected from the SWIFT banking network and Russia was excluded from various European collaborative platforms (Gjerstad et al., 2022). In a significant policy shift, Norway had also supplied Ukraine with military equipment and weaponry, deviating from a long-standing policy dating back to 1959, which prohibited the export of arms to states engaged in conflict (Regjeringen, 2022).

The third speech (#3) was held by the Minister of Justice and Public Security on October 17th, 2022, during a press conference concerning a series of hybrid incidents (a definition of hybrid threat will be given in chapter 4) (Mehl, 2022). Russian individuals were detained for allegedly gathering information on sensitive sites and for the illegal operation of drones in Troms and Finnmark county. This statement was pivotal as it directly addressed

hybrid activities and the detention of Russians in the High North. Furthermore, it highlighted individuals residing in Norway with Russian affiliations as potential security risks. Given that trust and security perceptions are central to my thesis, it was crucial to analyse how these specific events on Norwegian soil shaped the national discourse. During this period, Europe was confronted with several serious hybrid incidents, with the most notable being the Nord Stream pipeline explosions on September 26th (Henley, 2022). The explosion was suspected to be the result of deliberate sabotage by Russia, underscoring the escalating tensions between Russia and the West.

The fourth speech (#4) I analysed was a parliamentary address by the Prime Minister on October 25th, 2022, where he described the evolving phase of the war and its implications for Norwegian security (Støre, 2022a). This statement was selected for its more comprehensive perspective on the security landscape. It reinforced the emerging security discourse in Norway as the conflict in Ukraine contributed to growing unease. At this juncture, President Putin had declared the first Russian mobilization since World War II, and the introduction of kamikaze drones had marked a new chapter in warfare (Bloomberg, 2022). The Russian government continued to portray the West as hostile, and even brandished the threat of nuclear weapons (Farberov, 2022). The conflict had escalated beyond a threat to Ukraine alone, now posing a direct challenge to Western security, necessitating immediate and decisive responses. In reaction to these developments, the European Union imposed new sanctions, including a prohibition on Russian fishing vessels from visiting European ports (Holmes & Sollerman, 2022). Nevertheless, to safeguard the joint Norwegian-Russian management of the cod stock in the Barents Sea, Norway carved out exceptions to this ban, keeping the ports of Tromsø, Båtsfjord, and Kirkenes accessible to Russian vessels. Coinciding with Prime Minister Støre's address, a Russian national, posing as a Brazilian academic, was arrested in Tromsø on espionage charges (Nilsen, 2022). This incident highlighted the Norwegian government's vigilance regarding foreign intelligence activities in the significant Arctic Region.

The fifth speech (#5) reviewed was delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Kirkenes Conference on March 2nd, 2023 (Huidtfeldt, 2023). Given that the Foreign Minister had delivered a similar address at the same conference a year earlier, I decided to include both speeches in the survey to trace the evolution of the discourse over the span of a year and to understand how the government was engaging with the border region. At this point, the conflict in Ukraine persisted with no end in sight, and Norway maintained its sanctions

against Russia. The government emphasized the necessity of fortifying Norwegian defence capabilities in response to the new security landscape.

The sixth and final speech (#6) I analysed was the Prime Minister's statement during a press conference on June 6th, 2023 (Støre, 2023). At this time, eastern Finnmark was grappling with the local effects of the sanctions imposed on Russia. To mitigate these impacts and avert further unemployment in the strategically vital border region, the government unveiled an assistance package worth 105 million Norwegian kroner, designed to foster growth and enthusiasm in the border municipality (Regjeringen, 2023). This speech was a critical addition as it shed light on the security discourse concerning Sør-Varanger, the specific area of my thesis.

Each speech in the sample conveyed significant messages to the Norwegian public, which were then interpreted by local media and the residents of Sør-Varanger, providing a rich context for understanding the local reception of national security discourses.

3.3.2 SELECTION OF MEDIA CONTENT

To understand how the national discourse permeated local newspapers and, in turn, influenced the local populace's sense of security and trust, it was essential that the media sample corresponded with the timing of government statements. Since reactions to statements often came several days after the speeches were made, the scope included a two-week window following each government address. This approach enabled me to track the evolution of reactions, shifts in local discourses, and the direct impacts of the war in Ukraine on the local community.

The media sample was curated using the media database Atekst, employing the keywords "Russia" or "Russians" to align with the national speeches. I selected three local media outlets for analysis: NRK Troms and Finnmark, Sør-Varanger Avis, and Finnmarken. These sources, all publishing in Norwegian, address the local segment of the population my study aims to explore. NRK Troms and Finnmark is the regional branch of the national broadcaster that serves the two northernmost counties in Norway. 'Finnmarken' is a newspaper offering coverage of Finnmark County, whereas 'Sør-Varanger Avis' specifically targets the municipality of Sør-Varanger.

3.3.3 SELECTION OF INFORMANTS AND INTERVIEWEES

To minimize bias from my personal network, I deliberately included a significant number of individuals in the sample with whom I had no prior relationship (Silverman, 2000). Of the 22

participants, I was well-acquainted with three. Six were acquaintances from my previous employment. The remaining participants were individuals I had no connection with. Nonetheless, given the small size of the Kirkenes community and the fact that I lived in the community for some time, I was familiar with several interviewees by reputation, though I had never interacted with them directly before.

To enlist participants for the study, I circulated information about the research within my Kirkenes network, encouraging them to pass it on. This approach prompted interested parties to contact me directly for involvement. Furthermore, I utilized snowball sampling as a supplementary strategy, wherein participants recommended colleagues or acquaintances likely to provide relevant insights for the research. The objective was to assess a range of viewpoints and beliefs present in the community, including both majority and minority opinions (Roulston, 2010, p. 86). As the study has a special focus on human security, I endeavored to pay special attention to include marginalized voices in the sample—individuals affected by the new security atmosphere, but who are seldom represented in official media channels. Because of Russia's renewed status as a major threat and the municipality's location directly adjacent to the Russian border, I was particularly curious to comprehend how individuals with Russian affiliation perceived their security situation. Furthermore, I made sure to include individuals without Russian affiliation who, for various reasons, have been reticent to engage in the public discourse. My aim was to delve into their concerns and apprehensions, seeking to understand the underlying reasons for any fears and their perspectives on the unfolding events.

The data collected during the fieldwork was recorded using a mobile phone. To ensure the future possibility of storing the data in archives, I transcribed the empirical material. I anonymized the material to protect the informants' identities and maintain confidentiality. Some informants initially expressed reservations about being recorded and showed a preference for informal conversations. However, once I assured them that the recordings would be securely deleted and their anonymity strictly preserved, they consented to participate. Despite these precautions, I am aware that the presence of the recording device may have influenced some interviewees to be more guarded or to potentially embellish their responses. In total, the fieldwork yielded 29 hours of recorded interviews. I conducted 22 semi-structured interviews, evenly distributed between 11 female and 11 male participants. I will provide more information about informed consent in section 3.5.

3.4 CATEGORIZATION OF THE DATA MATERIAL

To gain an overview of all the government speeches in the period, their content, including their main messages, I developed a custom database. Within this database, I categorized the various discourses under two main headings: "Cooperation-Reassurance" and "Threat-Deterrence". This overview provided comprehensive insight into key events in the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia in the period covered by the study. The categories of "cooperation-reassurance" and "threat-deterrence" were selected based on their prior use in scholarly research, as seen in the works of (Nilssen, 2015; Rowe, 2018). Adopting these established categories enabled the study to discern patterns of continuity or change, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge in a way that may prove valuable for future research. Additionally, the interplay of deterrence and reassurance has been historically significant in Norway-Russia relations and will be discussed more in-depth in chapter 4. As the categorization process unfolded, a sub-category under the threat discourse emerged, the "Sør-Varanger as Front Line of Defence." Given the centrality of this area to the study, it was imperative to monitor and analyse this discourse closely.

All news articles, editorial content, and opinion pieces (153 all together) concerning "Russia" or "Russians" in a two-week period following each of the government speeches were registered as relevant and subjected to a focused review. While content related to Svalbard was excluded due to the study's emphasis on Sør-Varanger, materials involving Finnmark and Troms received thorough examination. The relevant texts were cataloged and classified under two primary discourses: "Cooperation/Reassurance" and "Threat/Deterrence." To minimize the influence of researcher bias, the categorization relied not on an in-depth linguistic analysis but on the expressed opinions regarding Russians or Russia (Berg-Nordlie, 2018, p. 3). Within each main discourse, I introduced sub-categories to further refine the analysis. Under the "Cooperation/Reassurance" discourse, sub-categories such as "We distinguish between state and people" and "cooperation as identity" were created. Similarly, for the "Threat/Deterrence" discourse, I established sub-categories like "Hybrid Threat," "Conventional Threat," "Threat to the Liberal World Order," and "Sør-Varanger as Frontline of Defence." Over the course of the year, various themes emerged within these sub-categories, including "Friendship Agreements," "Historical Memory," "Societal Crisis," and "Dual Citizenship." Since this is a qualitative study with the objective of shedding light on diverse perceptions of security, I did not prioritize quantitative metrics such as counting headlines with positive, negative, or neutral depictions of Russia. Instead, I was interested in the discourses that could be traced through analyzing these texts. It was crucial to recognize that

the media serves as an arena where various actors strive to shape public opinion. The media itself acts as a discursive entity, influencing the narrative by selecting which issues to highlight, which individuals to interview, and which discourses to prioritize (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999).

I organized the interview material through an open approach, to allocate themes and map certain patterns across the material, to see what emerged as data clusters. In the initial phase, themes such as "Russophobia and Suspicion," "Information Deficit," "Fear of Appearing Overly Russia-Friendly," "Identity Crisis," and "Societal Crisis" were identified. Subsequently, a more targeted thematic analysis was conducted in alignment with the two principal discourses traced across the data material: "Threat/deterrence" and "Cooperation/reassurance." During this phase, the previously identified themes were systematically categorized under these two overarching discourses, enabling a nuanced understanding of the material in relation to the two other levels under study.

3.5 LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH VALIDITY

Qualitative research is often criticized of being anecdotal, dependent on a few well-chosen examples. This could weaken the trustworthiness of the research (Silverman, 2000, p. 176). I have tried to mitigate problems of limited, anecdotal analysis by using the mixed methods approach described above, and triangulating statements from the interviews with media content and government speeches. As such, I felt that I was able to draw certain conclusions regarding perceptions of security and trust in a specific time and in a specific context. In triangulation I utilized research categories established in prior studies and applied comparative methods to validate my findings. I strategically analyzed various periods within the study's timeframe and included speeches aimed at the broader Norwegian populace as well as those specifically targeting the local residents of the municipality in question. This approach was designed to provide a more comprehensive perspective. To avoid making easy conclusions and spurious correlations, I tried to look at the topic from different points of view (2000, p. 178). For instance, the semi-structured interviews revealed deviant discourses that were not found through investigating the media sample (2000, p. 180). These insecurity articulations are detailed in chapter 5 and unveiled insights that might have eluded detection had I relied solely on a singular method like discourse analysis of texts. Therefore, by comparing different datasets, and using mixed methods, I was able to strengthen the foundational knowledge of the study, ensuring a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research question.

The validity of the study could have been enhanced by including a more diverse age range among the semi-structured interview participants. While the sample comprised an equal number of women and men, there was a gender imbalance with respect to their cultural backgrounds—more women were represented in the corpus of individuals with Russian affiliation, and more men were represented in the corpus of individuals without Russian affiliations. Regrettably, the sample included only one youth representative. Future research could benefit from engaging more youth to examine whether there is a generational divide in security perceptions. The insights derived from the interviews are qualitative in nature and not representative. Nonetheless, they are suitable for exploring certain views present among an unknown proportion of the population. Moreover, the methodological triangulation achieved by combining discourse analysis with semi-structured interviews helps to mitigate some of the study's constraints.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Given the sensitive nature of the study's topic, ethical considerations were paramount. Some of the people I interviewed were originally suspicious of the purposes of the study and worried their participation and the statements they provided could have adverse repercussions for them. It was vital to seek informed consent and I offered full disclosure of the project's aim and research questions, to be as transparent as possible (Silverman, 2000, p. 201). I was aware that people would gauge how far I should be trusted and simultaneously how easy I could be manipulated by their stories (2000, p. 199). The following statement is an example of suspicion I encountered coming from one of the interviewees, which quite well emphasizes the sensitivity of the topic.

“I hope I can trust you. That you won't provide the security services with this material about me tonight. Or tell some journalist about me. That would be the worst thing that could happen.” *Man with Russian affiliation, aged over 60.*

When citing interview content, informants were given the choice between being identified by their full name or remaining anonymous. The majority opted for anonymity, and some requested the deletion of their recorded interviews upon the project's completion. Therefore, anonymity was provided and names and addresses securely hidden to protect confidentiality. We agreed that non-identifying demographic information such as nationality, gender, and age range could be disclosed to provide context for their perspectives. Given the close-knit nature of the community, where personal connections are common, I conducted most interviews in their private homes or in an apartment I had rented, to prevent exposure and harm to the

participants (Berg-Nordlie, 2018, p. 457). The opportunity to express views and concerns seemed to empower the interviewees. At times, the opinions shared were notably controversial and stood in stark contrast to my personal values. Remaining cognizant of my own biases, maintaining professionalism, and withholding judgment proved to be a challenging yet crucial aspect of conducting the research ethically (Silverman, 2000, p. 199). Because the topic is sensitive, I was very careful not to disclose my personal opinions, and to be objective, while at the same time be sensitive to the feelings that the research questions generated in interviewees. From the blushing, tears, fluttering eyes, restless feet, and sweaty hands I could clearly feel how uncomfortable some people felt regarding these issues. Consequently, it was essential to strike a balance between maintaining professional detachment and demonstrating empathy, kindness, and humanity during the interviews. Nonetheless, I must admit that I occasionally experienced discomfort when interviewees inquired about my personal safety and the state of academic freedom in Norway.

Among the practical challenges I encountered were the constraints of time and the need to refine the project's scope. For a long period, the scope felt unmanageable and too ambitious. My fluency in Russian was advantageous, as it allowed Russian-speaking interviewees to articulate their thoughts without the need for an interpreter, fostering more nuanced and discussions. However, this linguistic skill presented its own set of challenges during the thesis writing process, as translating interviews from both Russian and Norwegian into English was an exceptionally time-consuming task.

3.7 REFLEXIVITY

According to Max Weber, all research is to some extent influenced by the values of the researcher. It is through these values that specific problems can be studied and recognized. Furthermore, Weber contends that conclusions are largely based on the researcher's moral and political beliefs (Silverman, 2000, p. 200). Given that personal background and previous experiences influence the way we perceive the world, I will be reflexive of my own positionality and identity.

I have worked with Russian related issues for 15 years, including two years at the Norwegian Embassy in Moscow and seven years at the Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes. I know the local community of Sør-Varanger and the Norwegian-Russian bilateral cooperation well. At the Barents Secretariat, I was responsible for Indigenous peoples' affairs and oversaw the secretariat's communication strategies. I have witnessed the highs (the signing of the maritime delimitation agreement and the border resident certificate) and lows (the annexation

of Crimea) in the bilateral ties between Norway and Russia. On behalf of the Norwegian government, which funded the Barents Secretariat, I have promoted the importance of people-to-people cooperation with Russia. Our mandate was to facilitate cooperation between ordinary Norwegians and Russians in a strategically important and highly militarized Arctic region. We even argued that this was Norway's most important peace project. We had countless high-profile visits, including from other border regions with Russia, who wanted to learn from the Norwegian experience.

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, I was present at the Kirkenes conference, an annual meeting place for businesses, politicians, and other stakeholders in the Barents Region. I noticed how the shock and disappointment spread among the conference participants, including myself, when the invasion was a fact. In the months following the invasion I grappled with sort of an identity crisis. I had studied Russian language, culture, history, and politics. Since I was an exchange student in Arkhangelsk in the mid-2000s, I'd been working for dialogue and diplomacy with Russia, and in a matter of days that work had been shattered. Considering the profound nature of my own "identity crisis", I wondered how the new security landscape impacted the municipality at the border, the self-proclaimed capital of the Barents Region?

My extensive travels in Russia and personal connections have undoubtedly influenced my normativity. I have had prejudices both confirmed and disproven through my empirical encounters. I believe this has made me more cautious about jumping to hasty conclusions in either direction. Having worked closely with Russia, I have witnessed the country's shift towards authoritarianism. I have experienced how individuals involved in cooperation were approached by Russian security authorities and asked to report back. I was aware that we were under surveillance during meetings. Nonetheless, the Frode Berg case in Norway, where a former employee at the border commissioner's office in Kirkenes was arrested in Russia on charges of espionage, also showed that intelligence work is something that the West is engaged in. My experience has demonstrated that openness and interaction can be exploited, but I have always thought that the alternative to contact is even more dangerous; a cemented enemy image without nuances, where people stop asking questions because they lack personal experiences to draw upon. Although the war prompted me to reconsider the merits of cooperation, my experiences form a normative basis that I am conscious of writing this thesis.

My positionality is influenced by the dichotomy of closeness and distance. On the one hand, I know the social, historical, and cultural codes of the society. On the other hand, the place is no longer my home. I was investigating the local context from the outside.

Consequently, I am positioned between closeness and distance throughout the study (Repstad, 1993). Being close to the topic offered some advantages. Knowledge of the Norwegian-Russian relations enabled me to observe and analyze the changes as they unfolded. Moreover, having a wide network in the municipality proved helpful. Most of the interviewees were familiar with my background. They knew that I spoke Russian and had travelled extensively across the border both privately and professionally. I believe my background was perceived as less threatening by community members on the margins. To some extent I think it provided me with the trust necessary for people to speak honestly about their current anxieties. On the other hand, others might have been hesitant to engage with me because of my past professional involvement with the Barents cooperation. To enhance the credibility of the thesis, it was important to encompass individuals from diverse backgrounds and with varying viewpoints.

I spent time acknowledging my own predictions and assumptions, to aim for new connections and understandings. Nevertheless, I am fully aware that my closeness to the issue could be criticized of contributing to blind spots in my interpretations (Silverman, 2000, p. 2). Therefore, I have tried to counter my bias by carefully asking open-ended questions to avoid leading the interviewees.

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chapter aims to outline some of the historical context that has shaped Norwegian security discourses regarding Russia since World War II. It will not provide an exhaustive account of the bilateral relationship between Norway and Russia. Instead, it will concentrate on critical events that illustrate how Norway has managed the act of balancing deterrence and reassurance, navigating between perceptions of threat and the imperative for cooperation in its interactions with the USSR and subsequently Russia (Rowe, 2018, p. 7). Special focus will be given to Sør-Varanger municipality, located by the Norwegian-Russian border, and how it has been shaped by these historical dynamics. Given that Norwegian security discourse often emerge as reactions to discourse propagated by Russia concerning Norway or the West, the chapter offers a brief contextual overview of Russian discourses leading up to the full-scale invasion. The first section describes key experiences from World War II that forged two dominant discourses in Norway concerning Russia. Subsequent sections detail the Cold War era, the period following the Cold War, and the time after the annexation of Crimea, culminating in the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022—the central conflict around which this thesis revolves.

4.1 EXPERIENCES FROM WORLD WAR II SHAPED NORWEGIAN DISCOURSES

Due to the asymmetric power dynamics and relationship between Norway and Russia, it has been important for Norway to balance its position between Russia on the one hand and its core Atlantic allies, especially Great Britain and the US, on the other. Experiences from World War II starkly highlighted the importance of the High North for Soviet security. The USSR followed a strategy where more territory implied increased security. As part of the strategy, it was important for the regime to establish defence barriers (buffer zones) in the North (Korobochkin, 1995, p. 187). The USSR engaged in the strategic move to pursue German forces from Finland to Tana in Northern Norway in 1944 for this purpose. Despite the USSR withdrawing from Finnmark, they stayed much longer than needed, until September 1945, which reinforced the Norwegian concerns over the "true intentions" of the USSR (Skogrand, 2004, p. 21). This experience has influenced Norwegian foreign policy since World War II. Incidents like the communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the establishment of a so-called "friendship agreement" between Finland and the USSR the same year, as well as a Soviet proposal for a joint Soviet-Norwegian defence of Svalbard and Bear Island, have heightened suspicions among Norwegian leaders about Russia's motives in Northern Norway (Korobochkin, 1995, p. 199). Eventually, the fear of a possible Soviet attack was decisive for Norway entering NATO in 1949. Since then, NATO has represented the bedrock in Norwegian Foreign and Defence policy. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Defence Treaty has served as a guarantee for Western support in case of an invasion (Holtmark & Mankova, 2015, p. 309). Since World War II the anxiety of Russia's expansionist potential has represented the cornerstone of the *deterrence pillar* in Norwegian security policy discourse. It has placed Norway firmly within the Western block, where Russia has represented the ultimate threat.

Nevertheless, the war legacy left Norwegian authorities uncertain about the extent to which Atlantic allies would prioritize Norway's security in future European conflicts. This scepticism was rooted in historical events such the aftermath of the Narvik victory against Germany in 1940, when Norway found itself forsaken by its allies and compelled to surrender (Elenius & Tjelmeland, 2015, p. 309). Another incident was the episode in October 1944, when Western allies refrained from deploying troops to liberate Northern Norway, leaving it to the USSR alone (Eriksen et al., 1987, p. 81). This decision by Norway's war allies ran counter to Norwegian preferences, reinforcing a sense of uncertainty about reliance on

Western support, which further shaped Norway's relationship with Russia (Skogrand, 2004, p. 32). Informed by these historical lessons, Norway prioritized establishing a constructive relationship with Russia to safeguard its interests and sovereignty. As part of this strategy, Norway introduced its own self-imposed restrictions when entering the NATO alliance. These restrictions included barring military aircraft from flying east of the 24th meridian east, prohibiting nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil, and refraining from hosting foreign military bases unless faced with an attack or the threat of invasion (Korobochkin, 1995; Stormoen, 2023). Norway and the USSR (and later Russia) managed to engage in various cooperation efforts including their joint fish resources in the Barents Sea. These efforts were aimed at reducing mutual suspicion and preventing escalations of crises (Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018; Østhagen, 2023). This cooperative strategy has been characterized as the '*reassurance pillar*' in Norwegian security policy discourse (Skogrand, 2004, p. 21). However, it is important to note that both the reassurance and deterrence pillar are deeply rooted in concerns over Russian actions that could potentially compromise Norwegian sovereignty.

4.2 COLD WAR: COMMUNIST THREAT AND INCREASED SURVEILLANCE

When the Nazi threat was replaced by the communist threat by the late 1940s, the role of the USSR changed from ally to enemy. This affected the northernmost region of Norway in Eastern Finnmark and Sør-Varanger. The Soviet liberation of this area had contributed to increased communist support (Elenius & Tjelmeland, 2015, p. 333). The civilian population were thankful to the soldiers who had provided them with food, repaired water supplies and cleaned the area of German mines (Elenius & Tjelmeland, 2015, p. 322). However, as the war came to an end, it became important for Norway and its Atlantic allies to minimize the Soviet influence in Norway. Although the USSR didn't participate in the liberation of the rest of Norway in 1945 they abstained from withdrawing from Finnmark until September 1945. Their presence, though in the end temporary, caused unease among Norwegian decision-makers as Soviet forces fostered good relations with the local population and attempted to recruit informants for their intelligence network (Bones, 2007).

As NATO and the USSR became antagonists in the Cold War, Norwegian communists became perceived as security threats. The government feared they could constitute a fifth column within the Norwegian state that could be exploited by Moscow. They feared Norwegian communists could initiate a coup against the authorities alone or with Soviet assistance. Based on this anxiety, over number of years, thousands of people were registered and held under surveillance, the spite the fact that monitoring of Norwegian citizens was

deemed illegal (Njølstad, 2008, p. 388). The Norwegian partisans who cooperated with the USSR on intelligence gathering and sabotage operations during World War II were not included in the heroic Norwegian resilience discourse after the war. Instead, they were under surveillance because of their communist inclinations (Petterson, 2008, p. 324). Despite some of the most violent war actions for Norway took place in Sør-Varanger,¹ this part of Norwegian war history was simultaneously difficult for Norwegian authorities to fully acknowledge (Grimnes, 2009, p. 484). Nevertheless, the historical memory of both the Soviet liberation and Norwegian political surveillance forms a substantial part of the local history and discursive terrain in the border region (Fagertun & Mohr, 2015).

4.3 POST COLD WAR: BARENTS EXCITEMENT AND COOPERATION

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the international system went from bipolar to unipolar – with the US left as the most powerful state in the global order. However, there was also more space for smaller powers to politically manoeuvre through the new terrain. Torvald Stoltenberg, The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, introduced the idea of a Barents Region, including the northernmost counties as well as the national authorities in Russia, Norway, Finland, and Sweden (Rowe & Hønneland, 2010). The Barents cooperation addressed issues such as trade, infrastructure, health, indigenous peoples, and environmental protection. The cooperation aimed to “turn peripheral border areas into places where governments can meet in a transnational forum serving a diversity of interest” (Rowe & Hønneland, 2010). Since the formal declaration was signed in 1993, the administrative town Kirkenes within the Sør-Varanger municipality, was perceived as the “capital” of the Norwegian Barents region with the International Barents Secretariat and the Norwegian Barents Secretariat located here (Toscano, 2019, p. 35). The Norwegian government regarded the so-called “people-to-people cooperation” across the regional borders as a crucial component of the reassurance strategy. To underscore the amicable relations between the nations, official discourses emphasised shared historical experiences, such as USSR and Norway being allies during the Second World War and Norway never being occupied or attacked by Russia. Instead, the discourse highlighted a longstanding history of trade and

¹ Kirkenes is described as the place with the second most air raid warnings and air attacks in Europe during second world war, with more than 300 attacks. Paulgaard, G., & Soleim, M. N. (2023). The arctic migration route: local consequences of global crises. *Journal of peace education*, 20(2), 196-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2022.2159794> .

collaboration dating back to the Pomor trade era in the mid-eighteenth century when Norwegian traders exchanged fish with Russian grain, and timber (Berg, 2004, p. 38)

The normalization of relations played a significant role in honing a distinct local identity and boosting employment in Sør-Varanger. Local business owners began to forge extensive contacts with Russian partners. Russian ships were repaired and maintained in Kirkenes and several Russians settled in Sør-Varanger (Orinor, 2021). Between 2017 and 2019, the open border between Norway and Russia facilitated an average annual direct sales revenue of NOK 590 million, representing 36% of the municipality's total sales. Russian economic activities generated over NOK 305 million in total wage payments. Additionally, Russian cross-border trade accounted for around NOK 50 million each year. In a municipality of less than 10.000 inhabitants, these numbers show how interlinked this part of Norway and Russia became (Orinor, 2021, p. 6).

4.4 GREAT POWER AMBITIONS, ANTI-WEST RETHORIC AND HYBRID WAR

However, after Putin resumed the presidency after Medvedev in 2012, the increasingly authoritarian trends were more difficult to ignore, and collaboration became more challenging (Gubrium et al., 2024, p. 6). Long-standing strategic discourses re-emerged in Russia, including the "civilizational discourse of the threatening West" and the "great power discourse" (Götz & Staun, 2022; Tolz & Hutchings, 2023). The first discourse was rooted in a sense of vulnerability vis-à-vis the "West". The Russian narrative stressed the importance of creating strategic depth and buffer zones around Russia to protect its long borders against NATO (Götz & Staun, 2022, p. 484). Moreover, colour revolutions in Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004) were perceived as foreign interference in the "Russian sphere of influence" (Götz & Staun, 2022). The discourse stressed the importance of Russia defending itself and Russian citizens outside of the regime, from western Russophobia. "The West" (from a Russian perspective meaning all countries who followed the US) was portrayed as the ultimate "other", rejecting morals, history, gender, and religion. Russia, on the other hand was portrayed as the great power of cardinal change, ready to challenge the status quo (Tolz & Hutchings, 2023, p. 356). The discourse propagated by the Russian state emphasized that the West sought to undermine Russia from within by backing LGBT and human rights NGOs. In response, the regime enacted legislation that curtailed human rights, freedoms of speech and assembly. These laws targeted "Foreign Agents," accusing them of infiltrating Russia to destabilize the regime from within (Karamanau & Litvinova, 2024).

Intensified Russian threat discourses, combined with its annexation of Crimea and military modernization in the Arctic, sparked anxiety among smaller neighbouring states. Questions arose around Russia's intentions. As a result, relations between the West and Russia rapidly soured and NATO member states compelled the alliance to redirect its focus towards the Arctic region (Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018; Østhagen, 2023). Studies carried out by (Nilssen, 2015; Rowe, 2018; Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018), show that Russia's annexation of Crimea led to downgrading of reassurance in favour of deterrence. The High North had become an orbit of potential conflict with Russia, as it represented a military strategic space (Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018).

Although the local level people-to-people cooperation largely remained stable and unaffected by the otherwise cooler state relations (Borge & Horne.H, 2020), the geopolitical tensions impacted the security in the area. The migration crisis in 2015 when over 5000 migrants crossed the Norwegian-Russian border to apply for asylum was by some perceived as an example of hybrid threat activities from Russian authorities to test the Norwegian resilience (Toscano, 2019, p. 40). Russia`s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led to an immediate stop in official contacts which led to annual border crossings dropping from 250 000 in 2017-2019 to 55.000 in 2022, out of which several were Russian men fleeing military mobilization (Gubrium et al., 2024, p. 6).

Recent research conducted after the full-scale invasion reveals that Russia conducted several hybrid threat operations in Northern Norway aiming to destabilize and create discord (Hoogensen Gjørsv, 2024; Østhagen, 2023). Hybrid threats are deployed to “exploit vulnerabilities or opportunities [and] to undermine the opponent’s decision-making process, while maintaining a degree of deniable plausibility”(Hoogensen Gjørsv, 2024, p. 7). Moreover, Gjørsv argues, that hybrid threats are deployed “below the threshold”, using low-risk, low-cost tools that are not classified as military attacks, hence attacks that will not provoke the activation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty (2024, p. 6). In the Norwegian context jamming of GPS signals, misuse of historical commemorations and memorials, weaponizing of migration to create chaos and uncertainty in Sør-Varanger are examples of hybrid threat activities deployed by Russia after its annexation of Crimea in 2014 but also after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Hoogensen Gjørsv, 2024).

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Norway's relationship with Russia has been characterised by a strategic equilibrium between the twin pillars of deterrence and reassurance. Deterrence is manifested through Norway's

membership in NATO and bilateral defence agreements with the US, which offset the asymmetrical power dynamic by aligning with a coalition of like-minded states. Concurrently, Norway has sought to temper this defence posture with reassurance measures aimed at de-escalating tensions and fostering trust with Russia (Wilhelmsen & Gjerde, 2018, p. 387). These historical trajectories inform the two foundational security discourses in Norway to date. The empirical data presented in chapter 5 reveals that this dichotomy, characterized by both apprehension and collaboration, continues to be crucial elements in the security discourses following the full-scale invasion. Moreover, the data indicate that historical memory plays a significant role in shaping discourses, identities, and policy decisions at both the national and local level. The upcoming chapter describes these discourses in greater detail.

SECTION 2

This section aims to present the discourses traced through the three levels the study examines: the individual, the societal and state level. Chapter 5 details individual insecurities identified through the semi-structured interviews. Chapter 6 explores insecurities highlighted in the selected government speeches, and Chapter 7 examines those insecurities found in local editor-controlled media. Governmental insecurities are presented prior to the societal ones because I analysed local media coverage (the societal level) in a two-week window following each government statement to see if media discourses were influenced by government signals. Moreover, the societal level serves as an intermediary, blending elements from both the individual and governmental levels. However, Section two only presents the collected empirical data, with the analysis and discussion of these findings reserved for Section three.

5. INDIVIDUAL INSECURITIES

This section details the insecurities identified through interviews with 22 individuals in Sør-Varanger municipality. 5.1 outlines the perceptions of insecurity experienced by local Norwegian participants, while 5.2 covers those experienced by local Russian participants. Each interviewee has received a #number to be recognized throughout the chapter.

5.1 LOCAL NORWEGIAN INSECURITIES

This subsection explores perceptions of insecurity and trust experienced by Norwegian individuals following the full-scale invasion. Section 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 are related to the deep-seated threat/deterrence discourse outlined in chapter 4, whereas 5.1.3 and 5.1.4 are related to the cooperation/reassurance discourse, where new moral restrictions contributed to insecurity.

Section 5.1.5 reveals how historical memory from the Cold War era contributes to insecurities and mistrust today.

5.1.1 FEAR OF RUSSIA`S REAL INTENSIONS

Several of the interviewees acknowledged that the war in general and the Russian hybrid operations in particular, had demarcated a clear distance between Norway and Russia, but also between Norwegians and Russians residing in the municipality.

"In regard to Russians, I sense that there's a heightened level of suspicion. Trust is certainly not at its highest. If Russians aren't quick to declare an anti-war stance, I tend to believe they support it. I'm quite convinced of that. Those who oppose the war are usually very forthcoming about it, often leading with that in a conversation." #1, *Woman, aged over 40*.

"The overall trust in Russians has diminished. This is partly because many of them, including those living among us, for reasons that are unfathomable to us, support Putin. Should a crisis arise here, I wouldn't look to them for comfort or security, to the Russians (...). A century ago, my grandfather remarked that a Russian remains a Russian: no matter how you try to change them, even if you 'boil them in butter,' it's impossible. They come from a completely different culture. They can be very pleasant, but in certain situations, they just aren't completely reliable." #6, *Man, aged over 50*.

The ambivalence or reluctance of Russians to explicitly distance themselves from the Putin regime fostered a climate of unease and suspicion.

"In the fall of 2018, journalist Øystein Bogen presented his book "Putin's Secret War Against the West," which focuses on hybrid warfare. The event was attended by several Russians, many of whom left angrily. Some objected, demanding he cease writing negatively about their homeland and president. This incident served as a wake-up call, underscoring the deep polarization between Russians and Norwegians here." #2, *Man, aged over 60*.

Several described how the evolving security landscape heightened their alertness to the "true intentions" of Russian individuals.

"I've even begun to question things that never bothered me before, like, wasn't that a bit strange? It's a completely new feeling for me to think this way. Should I start being sceptical of people, questioning their intentions, and doubting their words? It's not in my nature to suspect ulterior motives. Yet, if I come across someone with a car registered in Russia near critical infrastructure, I'll note the license plate and check with the police to see if they need it for any investigations. Shouldn't we all work together to catch those wrongdoers?" #3, *Woman, aged over 60*.

They explained how they felt an urge to confront Russians residing in the municipality which they knew supported the war, to make them understand that such opinions were unwanted in the community.

"When a woman expressed great sympathy for Russia, I told her: 'You're free to move back. We're not like those on the other side; we don't hold you here against your will. You have the choice to leave. Return if you truly believe it's better there.'" #2, *Man, aged over 60*.

Others were concerned that such confrontations and moral judgements could drive supporters of Putin towards more extreme positions, while simultaneously jeopardizing crucial democratic principles.

"Engaging with Russians who believe Putin is a decent man has been quite challenging. They ought to be posed with critical questions, yet without feeling like they're being persecuted. It's unfair to judge them as individuals based on their differing opinions from the majority. There's a tendency for people to be unkind. You don't sway minds to a more balanced perspective through hatred or by casting them in a negative light... It's easy to claim that the scope for expression is too broad, that we need to tighten it up, and penalize people. But by doing that, we risk compromising our most vital asset, democracy, which is founded on the right to free speech." #4, *Man, aged over 60*.

The ingroup- outgroup attitudes were also applied to individuals without Russian affiliations, who nevertheless justified official Russian perspectives of the war.

"Only the outliers in the group who support or defend Putin face criticism. Such expressions are illegal here, as in the rest of the country. Attempting to understand Putin and Russia labels one as overly sympathetic towards Russia, prompting questions like: Are you out of your mind? Don't you know what he's doing in Ukraine?" #5, *Man, aged over 50*.

People who did not distance themselves from the war, were sympathetic to Putin's discourse, or criticized Norwegian security measures, were also relegated to the not- entirely-trustworthy group of individuals. In contrast, those who expressed a need for distance were categorized as part of the trustworthy in-group.

"I found it positive that the Labour Party's mayoral candidate took part in the protest outside the consulate. It bolstered my confidence in her. Additionally, the gesture of the former mayor, who had been honoured by the Russian state, returning his medal, and distancing himself from Russia left a lasting impression. He had engaged with Russia throughout his entire adult life, yet he chose to take a public stand against the regime. I find that to be a very strong statement. It reinforces my trust in him". #2, *Man, aged over 60*.

Being sceptical towards Russia is not new in the municipality. It was strongly present during the Cold War. However, the enthusiasm for Barents cooperation in the 1990s contributed to a shift in the dynamic, from scepticism to curiosity and openness, leaving those critical of Russia in a more marginalized position.

"Previously, it was frowned upon to criticize any of our actions concerning Russia. Many kept silent because they faced severe stigma for voicing any criticism. In February of last year, the pressure cooker's lid blew off. Suddenly, all those who had been quiet came out into the open. But then the pendulum swung too far in the opposite direction. Those who harboured more Russia-friendly sentiments became the silent ones. Now it's no longer acceptable to hold a nuanced perspective on Russia." #5, *Man, aged over 50*.

Statements like this indicate that the current war in Ukraine contributed to a shift in dynamics, with scepticism now dominating.

"I grew up in the Soviet era, and now it feels like we're back to 'the good old days.' Those sceptical of Russia have had their suspicions confirmed: you can never trust a Russian—that's what I've always believed." #5, *Man, aged over 50*.

Several emphasised how the war had contributed to bolstering the common Norwegian identity in the municipality, fostering a stronger sense of national unity.

"We've grown more conscious of our identity and the values we uphold. Our scepticism towards Russia has intensified compared to the past. I believe we've drawn closer to the broader Norwegian community, and this has strengthened the national cohesion, the bond of trust between the south and the north in Norway." #6, *Man, aged over 50*.

"Previously, the loyalty of citizens from Finnmark was under scrutiny. There was a belief that too much communism ran in our veins, rendering us unsuitable as front-line defenders against the eastern adversary. This suspicion persisted for quite some time. I don't believe that's the situation now. The war in Ukraine has fostered a stronger sense of national unity, a stronger national 'we'." #2, *Man, aged over 60*.

5.1.2 FEAR DUE TO INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Another, associated topic Norwegian interviewees spent time reflecting on, was a sense of insecurity stemming from insufficient information provided by the government. Many highlighted that ambiguous statements concerning the present Russian hybrid threat exacerbated their feelings of anxiety. Several interviewees drew parallels between the current crisis and the pandemic, noting that during the pandemic, information was disseminated clearly, and the threat was tangible. In contrast, the current threat was characterized as existential, yet it remained unclear to the public exactly what or who posed the threat.

"I believe they ought to be much more transparent about what's going on. They keep insisting that everything is so dangerous, and we need to heighten our vigilance. However, for me to take that seriously, I need concrete details. Without them, I just end up feeling more bewildered. It's all very ambiguous and difficult to grapple with." #1, *Woman, aged over 40*.

"There's no war in Oslo. I've been aware of that for quite some time... But here, it's as if the conflict is just across the border. I fish in the Pasvik River and gaze over to the other side. I'm not exactly worried, but I wish the authorities were more mindful about the information they share with us. If I sense that the flow of information is robust, then I feel more secure. My impression is that we're on the receiving end of too little information." #7, *Man, aged over 40*.

5.1.3 FEAR OF AN IDENTITY CRISIS

Several expressed that they were experiencing an identity crisis following the full-scale invasion. They struggled with the idea of turning their backs on former colleagues and friends in Russia, rejecting them as enemies.

"Kirkenes possesses a distinct identity. 'We live in Kirkenes, right next to the Russian border,' that's the common refrain. In a sense, that proximity is a defining characteristic — geographically, politically, and historically. So yes, there might be an identity crisis at play. Even though the border isn't physically sealed, it is mentally closed." #3, *Woman, aged over 60*.

"The cornerstone of our identity was our openness and our capacity to engage with a different system. That identity has shifted. What was once considered fundamental, being a neighbour to Russia, is no longer present. Now, we must emphasize other relationships to characterize the community." #4, *Man, aged over 60*.

Interviewees referred to the historical memory of Sør-Varanger being liberated by the Soviet Union to explain why they found it hard to categorically view Russia as a threat and adversary.

"The fact that the Soviets liberated Sør-Varanger is something I believe many of us reflect upon. We didn't receive any assistance from the central authorities. Consequently, there's a deep-seated perception of Russia being a friend. This historical context makes it challenging for people to shift their mindset and regard Russia an enemy." #4, *Man, aged over 60*.

Several statements reveal a palpable sense of disappointment and regret over the realization that the substantial efforts the residents have put into fostering mutual trust through collaboration with Russia was in vain.

"There's profound sadness in no longer being able to include Russia as a normal part of our everyday life. It's been incredibly fun! People became less prejudiced, which was exactly the goal. Initially, you'd drive to Nikel, fill up on gas, and then head straight back from the gas station. But over time, we began visiting hairdressers, cafes. And now, all of that has vanished. It's like a game of snakes and ladders. We've been sent back to the start and must begin anew." #3, *Woman, aged over 60*.

What we've accomplished here in the municipality is precisely what the authorities encouraged us to do. We forged connections across the border. That initiative, it flourished. My, how thrilling it was to live here. How wonderful! We had the freedom to travel. There was no need for elaborate plans. Now, all of that is gone. It feels like autumn, like winter. Nothing is blooming. You've lost a piece of your identity. You feel uprooted. It's as though a floor has vanished, a room in a house. So, you find yourself lying there at times, with a knot in your stomach, reminiscing about the good friends you had in Murmansk and in Nikel." #8, *Man, aged over 70*.

"We've poured so much time, money, and emotion into our role as bridge-builders that when the foundation of that effort crumbles, we're left disoriented. It's painful. Many have formed strong connections and emotional ties. They have friends in Russia with whom they can't maintain a normal relationship. One day we're partners; the next day, we're enemies." #5, *Man, aged over 50*.

These accounts highlight the emotional impact of the changing security landscape. For the past three decades, the Norwegian government had actively encouraged, promoted, and financed cooperative initiatives with Russia as a key strategy for reassurance. However, when circumstances shifted, the citizens felt that the government had deserted them, leaving them to justify these efforts by themselves.

"The Foreign Ministry has completely withdrawn. It feels like we've been left home alone, as if the parents have run off and aren't coming back. The cooperation with Russia wasn't something the Kirkenes community came up with on its own. Yet, now we must fend for ourselves as the "parents" slipped out the back door." #3, *Woman, aged over 60*.

5.1.4 FEAR OF BEING CONSIDERED A SECURITY THREAT

After dedicating time and resources to fostering trust and friendships across the border, in line with the government's wishes, several individuals now harboured fears of being perceived as overly friendly towards Russia, potentially becoming subjects of Norwegian surveillance.

"I suspect that one is likely under surveillance, particularly those of us who had dealings with Russia in the past. You're being watched and probably by several entities. It doesn't feel very secure. Sometimes I find myself wondering if someone has tampered with things in my apartment. It's evident that there's a lot happening behind the scenes that we're not privy to. Circumstances can shift abruptly. You can't really trust anyone completely, not even yourself." #1, *Woman, aged over 40*.

"I've become more cautious. I fear having someone unexpectedly showing up at my door. That's my concern. I have nothing to hide, but it's disconcerting (...) There aren't many who have travelled to Russia as frequently as I. Yet, I've never been approached by Russian or Norwegian intelligence. Given my profile, I must be an ideal target, so perhaps I am under surveillance. I think so. That's simply the nature of the system." #8, *Man, aged over 70*.

"We're perceived as being too friendly towards Russia here. But we've never had any conflicts with them or anything of the sort. Yes, that's what fuels the distrust towards us. It likely explains why we have a significant division of the PST (Norwegian Police Security Service) in the area. I don't believe it's only the Russians they're keeping an eye on." #6, *Man, aged over 50*.

64 percent of the Norwegian interviewees said they did not trust the Police Security Services, a specialized branch of the police force dedicated to maintaining national security. Multiple interviewees referred to historical episodes from the Cold War era when several residents in the municipality were subjected to surveillance due to perceived overly strong ties to Russia. This scrutiny had far-reaching consequences, as families suffered through job losses and tarnished reputations.

"I believe the current situation is rekindling old feelings. My thoughts turn to the descendants of the partisans, those who played a part in the genuine resistance during World War II but went unrecognized for their contributions. Just when they thought it was behind them, we're facing another wave of mistrust. It's understandable for thoughts to resurface." #7, *Man, aged over 40*.

"There are no other local communities in Norway that have felt the impact of being neighbours with a major power quite like us. People lost their jobs and endured surveillance because they visited the USSR during the war and were communists. Those memories are resurfacing." #8, *Man, aged over 70*.

"I've had conversations with influential individuals in Sør-Varanger who believe that the presence of Norwegian intelligence poses a greater threat to the community than Russian intelligence does. Such views are naïve, yet if it stems from scars revealed by the ²Lund Commission—where families were impacted by actions that were rightfully identified as illegal—it's understandable that intense personal experiences and emotions are at play. If that is indeed the situation, then official Norway has an obligation to be seen as credible. They ought to be as transparent as possible to cultivate understanding." #2, *Man, aged over 60*.

² The Lund Commission was the Norwegian Parliament's investigative commission for secret services, appointed on February 1, 1994, due to numerous allegations of illegal surveillance of Norwegian citizens post-1945. The report concluded that illegal political surveillance had taken place in Norway after 1945, primarily targeting the political left. Aspøy, A. (2023, 03.05.24). *Lund-kommisjonen*. Retrieved 12.05.2024 from <https://snl.no/Lund-kommisjonen>.

Those who expressed concern of being considered a security threat emphasised that it hindered them from contributing to the public discussions. They explained that they felt safer keeping their opinions to themselves as a precaution.

"I still find it interesting and enjoyable to travel to Russia. However, I'm cautious about how I express this. People might wonder; Why does he say that? Does he have some agenda there? The space for having political opinions has been completely crushed. I find myself retreating from the political debates that once engaged and enriched me. I fear my views are not aligned with those of the broader Norwegian society." #8, *Man, aged over 70*.

5.1.5 FEAR OF A SOCIETAL CRISIS

All the participants in the study, regardless of background, emphasized that the war had triggered a societal crisis in Sør-Varanger. Two-thirds of the economic activity in the municipality was linked to maritime and port-related Russian enterprises. Numerous public sector jobs were tied to and developed around collaboration across an open border (Orinor, 2021). As a result, the economic sanctions levied against Russia had profound effects on local commerce and employment. The cornerstone shipyard, Kimek, was hit hard.

"Kimek used to generate 70 percent of its revenue from Russian business. The ripple effects of this downturn are being felt across the community. As Kimek was forced to downsize and lay off employees, the repercussions spread, leading to the cleaning agency having to cancel contracts. The impact is reverberating throughout the entire society." #10, *Woman, aged over 30*.

Insecurities were related to income, the future of the society and its resilience.

"Take a look at the local real estate market. Over 100 homes for sale, and not one has sold in the past few months. The listings are the same, yet the number keeps climbing. If we had 50 properties in May, that number doubled by August. This is a classic indicator of a community in crisis. People are eager to move and are trying to sell. It deeply concerns me." #12, *Man, aged over 30*.

The economic sanctions were imposed to weaken the Russian regime and suffocate its war economy. Moreover, they contributed to bolstering the collective European solidarity with Ukraine and sent a resolute message to the Kremlin, demonstrating the unified Western stance. Nonetheless, the sanctions had a deep impact on the local border community. Several expressed how they felt the government introduced measures that didn't fit the local needs.

"The authorities come here, but they don't listen to what we are saying. They haven't considered the input from the business community because they believe they know best what we need. It's like if I bought you a very nice dress in size XXXL. It may be beautiful, but it's useless because it doesn't fit." #10, *Woman, aged over 30*.

"When people have confidence that their well-being is safeguarded, they will place their trust in the authorities. However, if there's a belief that the authorities aren't caring for our welfare, trust erodes. The government's actions, or lack thereof, have sown seeds of uncertainty and division, instead of promoting unity. If the Norwegian authorities don't manage such situations prudently, they risk opening a door that can be exploited by those aiming to erode the trust among us. There's a palpable sense of

uncertainty that could easily spiral into distrust. I ask myself how invested the central authorities really are in our future and our progress?" #4, *Man, aged over 60*.

These statements indicate a prevalent distrust among the people regarding the government's understanding of their circumstances. 64 percent of the interviewees doubted the government had any faith in them.

"I don't think the authorities trust us, especially if they're reading the reports from the local police. They're fearful and tend to demonize those of us who are interested in establishing a normal relationship with Russia after the war." #9, *Man, aged over 70*.

The latter highlights how community members anticipated being on receiving end of mistrust from the authorities.

5.2 RUSSIAN INSECURITIES

This subsection examines perceptions of insecurity and trust felt among Russians and Norwegian-born individuals with Russian parents in the aftermath of the full-scale invasion. 5.2.1 is related to side-effects of the Norwegian threat discourse. 5.2.2 is concerned with insecurities related to being caught in the middle of two colliding threat discourses. It showcases how Russians residing in Norway are impacted by the Russian state discourses.

5.2.1 FEAR OF “RUSSOPHOBIA”

82 percent of the interviewees expressed concern over the Norwegian government's vocal encouragement to remain vigilant towards suspicious Russian behaviour. This, coupled with a reinforced Norwegian identity in the local society, resulted in heightened insecurity among the Russian minority.

"I have to be careful. It's not even about hatred, but some people are eager to erase all things Russian. They want nothing to do with Russia. But that's not possible in Sør-Varanger. I'm worried that negative sentiments towards Russia could impact my children and my family." #13, *Woman, aged over 40*.

They expressed how increased suspicions affected their everyday lives negatively, instilling fear in them.

"In Norway, the authorities are vigilant in their efforts to thwart espionage. My concern is that I might come under suspicion merely because I am Russian. This makes me feel unsafe. The thought that someone might consider me a threat to Norwegian security is troubling. I fear losing trust (...)
War breeds suspicion. Observing it unfold was a tragedy for me from the beginning. The filth, the mistrust—it permeates various layers of society. It fosters a poisonous atmosphere that impacts us all, whether innocent or not. Anyone who has experienced it is marked. You lose sight of the individuals beyond their ethnicity. It's deeply unsettling." #14, *Man, aged over 40*.

Many expressed how it had become increasingly challenging for Norwegians to distinguish between Russia's aggressive actions and ordinary Russians living in Norway.

"Many Norwegians find it challenging to distinguish between Russia as a state and Russians as individuals. Russia, Russians, Putin, war. To most people, it's the same." *Woman, aged over 50.*

"The media uses the term 'Russians' to refer to the actions of Russia. 'The Russians have attacked.' When Russians are arrested, the headlines read 'Russians have done it.' What I see happening is that the actions of the regime are being attributed to 'Russians' as a whole. This framing influences the perception of ordinary Russians living in Norway. It concerns me." #15, *Woman, aged over 20.*

They voiced concerns about the repercussions of Russophobia. Numerous people reported feeling like second-class citizens, leading them to conceal their Russian heritage to avoid stigmatization.

"The relationship between Norwegians and Russians has worsened significantly and swiftly. There have been troubling episodes where Russians were on the verge of being attacked. It's alarming that people resort to such extreme actions. We are starting to feel like second-class citizens, akin to the Jews. When we speak Russian among ourselves, people suspect us being spies. Some say it in jest, but there's always a serious undertone. It seems ingrained in people's subconscious to keep Russians at distance. We have to be cautious to avoid suspicion." #16, *Woman, aged over 50.*

"I seldom disclose my Russian heritage to strangers. I share this information only when I feel secure that I won't be misinterpreted. Upon revealing my nationality, there's often an immediate presumption along the lines of, 'Oh, so you're a Putin supporter, aren't you?' But that assumption is incorrect. Being Russian does not equate being an ally of Putin." #15, *Woman, aged over 20.*

Several individuals voiced feelings of being unwelcome and stigmatized within the local community due to their perceived association with undesirable ideas and values.

"I feel unwelcome here. There are voices saying I should leave the country. It makes me worried and quite sad. They think I'm a crazy person living here. They don't talk to me, just turn away, not everyone, but those who are interested in politics. I'm concerned when people tell me to get the hell out of Norway." #17, *Man, aged over 60.*

"We don't dare discuss the conflict in Ukraine. We're afraid of losing our jobs. I have kept my apartment in Murmansk in case you chase us away." #18, *Woman, aged over 60.*

The distinction between "us" and "them" was equally present in these statements, revealing a reciprocal sense of mistrust directed towards individuals without Russian affiliation.

"I know people who used to cross the border multiple times a day to purchase inexpensive goods. Now they're the ones clamouring for the closure of the Russian consulate. I'm certain that this very person, should peace return, and circumstances revert to their previous state, would partake in the same advantages. The moment they're unable to acquire affordable items, they turn against us. 'To hell with all of Russia.' I'm cautious around such individuals because they are unpredictable, and I can never be certain when they might stab me in the back." #19, *Woman, aged over 60.*

"I'm not condoning the war, but why should we turn away Russians escaping mobilization, and why shouldn't we assist those who are unwilling to fight? Is that the hallmark of democracy? The average Russian is enduring hardship. I declare my support for the people, and I'm branded a Putinist for it. If that's the case, then so be it, I suppose I'm a Putinist. Here in little Kirkenes, we've reached a point where we no longer exchange greetings." #20, *Woman, aged over 50.*

Statements such as these illustrate how feelings of disappointment can lead to confrontational behaviour. Some individuals began questioning the core values of democratic Norway, highlighting how labelling can potentially push individuals towards more radical positions.

5.2.2 DUAL CITIZENSHIP: A THREAT IN NORWAY AND IN RUSSIA

82 percent of the interviewees expressed anxiety related to their dual citizenship, of having to act in accordance with the national legislation in both countries, posing a potential threat in Norway and in Russia.

"Norwegian authorities will prioritize their own citizens in a crisis, meaning those who are Norwegian. I find myself caught between two worlds, and there are many of us feeling the same. This leaves us in a position where we wouldn't be safe, neither here nor there." #18, *Woman, aged over 60*.

"When I travel to Russia, I'm seen as the NATO affiliate coming to town. That's the near-universal assumption among those who aren't familiar with me. 'Here comes the NATO spy,' they think. And the situation is mirrored in Norway, where I'm tagged as the Russian spy." #17, *Man, aged over 60*.

"The direst outcome for me would be to face deportation. Suddenly, there might be consequences for me due to my Russian citizenship. I've participated in various protests and given some interviews. Should anyone investigate, they would uncover my public stance, and that could lead to imprisonment in Russia. That's one concern. Another is the possibility of being drafted into the war. They require cannon fodder. So indeed, they might send me to the front lines." #14, *Man, aged over 40*.

The Russian regime has enacted multiple laws designed to curtail freedom of speech and assembly. These measures were intensified following the "special military operation", targeting so-called "foreign agents." These individuals were accused of attempting to influence Russia or spreading information critical of the regime (Karamanau & Litvinova, 2024). Dissemination of what was deemed false information about the war could result in imprisonment for up to 15 years. Such legislation has been instrumental in enabling the Kremlin to consolidate its control over the nation. Interviewees voiced apprehension regarding this legislation, enforced to suppress dissent among citizens. They said participating in demonstrations in Norway or voicing dissent in Norwegian media could lead to severe consequences for their relatives in Russia and for themselves when entering the country.

"I am concerned with the potential repercussions for my family back home, who are essentially hostages in the situation. I have a mother in Russia, and I'm aware that if I protest here, agents from the FSB [the Federal Security Service] might decide to 'visit' her for a 'chat.' For an elderly woman in her seventies, such an encounter could be so distressing it might induce a heart attack." #14, *Man, aged over 40*.

"Criticizing the state and the president is a criminal offense. Despite residing in Norway, I hold Russian citizenship. I am obliged to comply with the laws of both Norway and Russia. This is the reason many Russians in Kirkenes remain silent. If I travel to Russia after participating in a public demonstration against the war, I could be looking at a prison sentence of up to 10 years. Who would willingly face incarceration? Under Russian law, a conversation like the one we're having could be sufficient ground for imprisonment." #20, *Woman, aged over 50*.

They described how a pervasive mistrust within the Russian community in Sør-Varanger affected their daily lives, leading them to be careful about expressing opinions.

"People who are in favour of the war seem unreachable, almost like zombies. If someone supports the war, I steer clear of the subject." #21, *Woman, aged over 50*.

"Some are protesting and waving Ukrainian flags. In my view, those individuals are betraying their fellow Russians." #17, *Man, aged over 60*.

"My relationship with my parents has become difficult. Their opinions are so extreme that I no longer trust them completely. They have a dangerous mindset that isn't healthy. I suffered from depression in March and April last year because of it." #12, *Man, aged over 30*.

Some emphasized how internal policing among themselves, and surveillance conducted by the Russian consulate made them choose silence as a security mechanism.

"The Russian consulate operate on behalf of the state, and part of their role is to monitor what is being said. They may claim their work is diplomatic, but a significant portion of their activities involves intelligence gathering. That's the reason I've opted not to publicly discuss the conflict. Consequently, I'm accused of being a coward. It's quite easy for someone who is here, with no connections back there, or who has cut all ties, to be bold. But for someone like me, who needs to travel to Russia for family matters, speaking out could be a matter of life and death." #12, *Man, aged over 30*.

"People are very aggressive in Russia now. You see it reflected in the laws. Those who hold the 'wrong' opinions from a Russian perspective are scared to express themselves here in Norway out of concern for their family in Russia. I believe Ukraine should be independent. But for such statements, you would be punished. That's why I won't say it. I grew up under a dictatorship. I am certainly not going to wave any flags here." #13, *Woman, aged over 40*.

Others referred to the Wagner group rebellion in June 2023 and the death of their leader, Prigozhin, to explain why they refrained from protesting. According to them the killing of Prigozhin was a signal from the Kremlin to the Russian people residing all over the world on how traitors were to be treated.

"I feel like a hostage. Norwegian activists accuse us of being Putin supporters when we don't speak up, wave Ukrainian flags or protest outside the consulate. I'm a resident of Russia too. What happened to Prigozhin was a warning to all of us about what happens to those who protest. Everyone in Russia understood the message. Those who criticise Putin and the war are branded traitors. I don't know if people in Scandinavia understand what 'traitor' means, but in Russia, it's the worst thing you can be. That's why Putin had Prigozhin killed." #20, *Woman, aged over 50*.

"I've been asked what I would say to Putin if I met him. The truth is, I would have absolutely nothing to say. Consider what happened to Prigozhin – he was killed. What do you think my fate would be? That's the reality of the situation." #19, *Woman, aged over 60*.

"Discussing politics in Russia has become dangerous. Prigozhin was killed. Such an outcome is deemed normal for traitors. He was what they referred to as the 'fifth column' in the USSR. Acts of high treason are something they cannot tolerate. I will stay silent, focus on my work, and hope for a swift change in the current climate. But I won't be taking part in any protests." #17, *Man, aged over 60*.

Genuine fear of being labelled a traitor, endangering family members in Russia, or facing imprisonment for violating Russian law led many Russians to refrain from protesting or

expressing dissatisfaction with the war. Consequently, they chose silence as a security measure in their daily lives. Nevertheless, these statements demonstrate that Russian authorities manage to control Russian citizens in Norway through domestic legislation, surveillance, and threatening discourse.

6. STATE INSECURITIES

This chapter presents government discourses traced in the six speeches under scrutiny. It starts by describing the threat discourse and details security measures taken to secure Norwegian interests. Furthermore, section 6.1.1 describes the Frontline Defender discourse, a sub-discourse under the threat discourse that targets the local community more specifically. Subsequently, section 6.3 describes the “cooperation” discourse and 6.3.1 presents the “High-North-Low-Tension,” discourse, a sub-discourse under the cooperation discourse. These discourses indicated which cooperative efforts were still feasible in the new security environment.

6.1 THE THREAT - DETERRENCE DISCOURSE

This discourse underscored that Russia was adopting a more menacing and aggressive stance, exacerbating tensions in the North with its rearmament initiatives, intensified military exercises and by placing Russia’s nuclear forces on high alert near the Norwegian/NATO frontier.

“Just a few kilometres east of our current location, we are witnessing significant Russian military rearmament and modernization efforts. The escalation in Russian military exercises has led to heightened tensions in the area” (Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Kirkenes Conference, 23.02.22, one day prior to the full-scale invasion. My translation (Huidtfeldt, 2022). #1

“The Russian President has placed Russia’s nuclear forces on high alert – an unacceptable escalation of the conflict. The Kola Peninsula, close to Russia’s border with Norway in Finnmark, is home to many of Russia’s nuclear weapons. Russia’s move to increase protection of its nuclear weapons is leading to increased military tension and activity in the north (...) The situation calls for heightened military preparedness in Norway as well” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b).#2

The discourse articulated a “point of no return”, describing the invasion as a watershed moment.

“Putin’s regime in Russia is willing to use brutal military force to achieve its objectives – and we must expect this in the future as well. This is what makes this war a *defining crisis* for our continent” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b).#1

Moreover, it linked the historical memory of totalitarian regimes from the past, with the present unpredictable Russian regime, which strengthened the boundaries between Russia and

the West. This way the history and misery of the Second World War was connected with the present, emphasising Russia as an existential threat to European peace and stability.

"We are dealing with a Russian leadership that is guided by mistrust and fear displaying clear totalitarian traits. We have seen totalitarian regimes before. They have a strong facade. But behind this facade they take decisions based on fear and uncertainty, often compensated by mistrust of a world that it is convinced wishes Russia ill" (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022a). #4

The way out of the threatening situation called for immediate, extraordinary measures; for instance, providing Ukraine with weapons.

"There is no question that there is war in Ukraine. This raises many dilemmas. At the same time, we are experiencing an extraordinary security policy situation in which NATO and the EU member states are pursuing a unified response (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b).">#2

As a result, Norway broke with a fundamental principle since 1959 of not permitting the sale of arms or munitions to areas where there is war or the threat of war. Moreover, Norway heightened its military preparedness and facilitated for more Allied activity in the Norwegian neighbourhood.

"Our NATO membership provides security in an uncertain and potentially dangerous time. We will look at immediate measures to enhance the Armed Forces' response capabilities and Norway's ability to receive Allied reinforcements. We are NATO's eyes and ears in the north. Better intelligence and an increased presence, especially in the north, will be vital. Russia's move to increase protection of its nuclear weapons is leading to increased military tension and activity in the North. The situation calls for heightened military preparedness in Norway as well" (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b). #2

"We are strengthening the bedrock. We are expanding the number of personnel more rapidly. We are reinforcing the Home Guard. We are filling up our contingency stocks. We are setting aside more funding for day-to-day operations and maintenance. And we are facilitating greater Allied activity in our neighbourhood" (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022a). #4

The police, Armed Forces and the Intelligence Services were given additional resources to safeguard Norway.

"Russia appears to be willing to take greater chances in its intelligence activities something we are taking very seriously. The use of a broad set of instruments, cyber-attacks, and unwanted drone activity constitute what we call complex threats. They are intended to sow division and create insecurity and instability. We have heightened preparedness, both civil and military preparedness, in line with updated and well-established plans" (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022a). #4

The discourse placed the Norwegian identity firmly within the transatlantic community of like-minded states. They all shared democratic and liberal values and favoured a "legal-based international world order". The storyline underscored that Russia had not only attacked a peaceful neighbour, but the rule-based world order, where each country has exclusive sovereignty.

“Russia has launched a frontal attack on international law and the international legal order that has promoted democracy, prosperity and peace in Europe since the Second World War (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b).”#2

“None of us are willing to compromise on one fundamental principle: that all sovereign states must be able to determine their own geopolitical alignment.” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b).” #2

Moreover, the invasion was depicted as a symbol of an existential battle between the liberal good and the illiberal evil, with Western states united on one side as representatives of the inherent good, while Russia represented the “other”. This way the discourse marked a clear demarcation of identity. Norway, together with its European allies and NATO, was portrayed as a guardian of the liberal world order, united by shared values and a common identity. Conversely, Russia was depicted as the radical other whose aggressive actions threatened the very foundation of these values. Ukraine was depicted as a hero ensnared in a fundamental struggle between good and evil, courageously defending the ideals of democracy and peace.

“They (Ukraine) are fighting to defend our ideals, our values. They are fighting for peace, for democracy, and for a Europe where conflicts are resolved by peaceful means, not with military force”(Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22(Støre, 2022b). #2

The discourse emphasised the moral importance of maintaining distance towards Russia in line with like-minded states sharing similar insecurities, values, and identity.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine has changed Norway's relationship with Russia. As long as President Putin remains in power, there is no doubt: relations between our countries will not be the same again. The Government is reducing its political contact with the Russian authorities. This is in line with the actions of other European countries and our allies." (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 3.3.22(Støre, 2022b).#2

It became existential to showcase European and transatlantic unity vis-à-vis Russia.

“President Putin has underestimated the international response and unity in NATO and Europe. Indeed, he has underestimated the power of democracy.” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 3.3.22(Støre, 2022b).#2

Therefore, to take a clear stance, mental borders were created alongside the Western identity formulation, articulating limitations of manoeuvre for each subject in the given context.

“Cooperation with Russia in a wide range of areas will be discontinued, put on hold or scaled down until further notice.” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 3.3.22,(Støre, 2022b). #2

From October onwards, the importance of distance was reinforced referring to Russia's violation of universal norms and international law.

“I know many people are disappointed. It is affecting the cultural and business sectors, particularly in the north, and especially in Eastern Finnmark. But this too is a consequence of Russia's development over the course of many years, involving repeated violations of European norms, and not least Russia's gross violation of international law – its unprovoked military attack on a neighbouring country.

Regrettably, there is little reason to believe that the situation will improve in the short term”
(Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022a). #4

As Europe and Norway encountered several hybrid incidents, a narrative of vigilance emerged, underscoring that Russia used all possible tools, including human beings, to destabilize European democracies from within. In this narrative Russians in general could pose a threat to Norwegian security and distance was decisive to restore security. The contrast between Russia and the West, between Norwegians and Russians, was further accentuated.

“Any Russian citizen with dishonest intentions should know that they are at great risk of detection”
(Speech at Press Conference by the Minister of Justice and Public security, 17.10.22(Mehl, 2022). #3

Norwegians were urged to play an active role in national security by reporting any suspicious behaviour to the authorities.

“Greater awareness of these issues is an important part of keeping Norwegian society safe, and we all have a role to play here. This goes for the authorities, the business sector and each and every one of us. We should all be more aware of potential threats and how to protect ourselves. People can contribute by being vigilant and informing the police or the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) if they see anything” (Speech at Press Conference by the Minister of Justice and Public Security, 17.10.22(Mehl, 2022). #3

The discourse highlighted Russia's increasing unpredictability and its willingness to employ a full spectrum of tactics to foster confusion, discord, and anxiety. Disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, manipulation of migration flows, intimidating military manoeuvres, clandestine military sabotage, and GPS jamming were all cited as components of Russia's hybrid warfare arsenal, aimed at destabilizing Norwegian societal security. In response to this multifaceted threat, Norwegian authorities implemented enhanced security protocols to bolster the nation's emergency preparedness.

“The police and the PST are working to keep Norway safe all day every day (...) Emergency preparedness is high, and we are fully focused on the threat scenario that surrounds us and the changed security situation” (Speech at a Press Conference by the Minister of Justice and Public Security, 17.10.22(Mehl, 2022). #3

“The brutality and destructive momentum of the war are putting us all to the test. We must be prepared for the unexpected. For more uncertainty. More instability. The very core of democracy is under threat: the ability to stand together, speak the truth and defend our freedom.” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022a). #4

Moreover, Russia aimed to weaken the Western unity and solidarity with Ukraine. Therefore, although the effects on the local community at the border was acknowledged, the discourse called for unity within the self and distance towards the Russian other.

“Use of nuclear weapons would cross an unprecedented red line. At present, we consider the likelihood of such use to be low. But low does not mean zero (...) We must assume that the purpose of these threats is to weaken Western solidarity with Ukraine. It is a form of extortion. And in response – just as

with other threats from Russia – it is crucial that we stand together with our allies. That we come together in NATO. Build consensus. Strengthen our cohesion” (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022a).#4

6.1.1 THE FRONTLINE DEFENDER DISCOURSE

This sub-discourse, which persisted throughout the period, cast the Sør-Varanger municipality as a Frontline against Russia. The mantra "Without people, no security; without security, no people" encapsulated the strategic importance of maintaining a robust Norwegian civilian presence along the Russian border to uphold Norwegian sovereignty. The discourse contended that it was the government's duty to implement policies that would make life in this strategic area favourable and sustainable. The state pledged to sustain a strong border community, underpinned by both military presence and economic opportunities. The discourse highlighted that the residents living near the border were not merely inhabitants but also guardians of Norwegian sovereignty.

"Without people, no security. Without security, no people. A robust Northern Norway is vital for the nation as a whole. Eastern Finnmark stands as the frontline that ensures a strong and resilient Norway. Consequently, the High North carries a national responsibility of strategic significance." (Speech at the Kirkenes Conference by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 23.2.22. My translation (Huidtfeldt, 2022). #1

One year later statements disclosed that the fundamental narrative remained unchanged.

"We require a thriving community in this region. I firmly believe that the past year has served as a crucial reminder to the entire nation of the significance of maintaining a military presence along our eastern border. Equally important is the value of the North and the contributions of those who reside here." (Speech at the Kirkenes Conference by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 3.3.23. My translation (Huidtfeldt, 2023). #5

In June 2023, this discourse was invoked to rationalize the implementation of measures aimed at mitigating the societal impact of the sanctions against Russia in the border region.

"It holds security policy importance to implement measures that enable residents to live, pursue education, and establish new enterprises in the northernmost northeastern part of our country, adjacent to the Russian border. In other words, the vitality and dynamism of Finnmark carry weight not only for Norway but also in a European context. Issues like education and job creation in this region are integral to contemporary security policy. A vibrant North, with thriving communities and the development of renewable energy in Finnmark, constitutes a strategic security policy initiative." (Statement at a Press Conference by the Prime Minister, 7.6.23. My translation (Støre, 2023). #6

The discourse emphasized that the development of renewable energy would boost employment and demographic growth in the area, thereby reinforcing the frontline strategy. Consequently, the advancement of renewable energy was portrayed as a critical security measure that would reduce both Norway and Europe's dependence on Russian energy supplies.

6.2 THE COOPERATION-REASSURENCE DISCOURSE

This discourse depicted the High North as a region of low tension, constructive dialogue, and cooperation, where a well-functioning relationship with Russia secured Norwegian interests. During her visit to Kirkenes, one day before the full-scale invasion, the Minister of Foreign Affairs encouraged the residents to be open for opportunities. Moreover, she expressed hope for expanded cooperation and noted that cross-border interactions in the region were crucial for trust-building, thereby broadening the scope for dialogue (Huidtfeldt, 2022). The Minister emphasized that the community in Sør-Varanger better than anyone else recognized the importance of maintaining a functional relationship with Russia to protect Norwegian interests. According to the minister, their inherent approach balanced openness to cooperation with a realistic awareness.

"It is crucial to maintain practical cooperation and political dialogue, as well as to keep the channels of communication open. The more complex a relationship is, the greater the necessity for dialogue. As neighbours, we must engage in conversations about our shared interests, addressing both straightforward and difficult issues alike" (Speech at the Kirkenes Conference by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 23.2.22. My translation. (Huidtfeldt, 2022). #1

Furthermore, she emphasized that while Norway condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, Norway still aimed to maintain cooperation with the Russian people. This discourse emphasised Norway's benevolent intentions towards Russians both within Russia and among those residing in Norway. The mantra "we distinguish between state and the people" was recurring throughout the study. Prime Minister Støre emphasised the importance of sustaining cross-border relations in his parliamentary address in March 2022, reinforcing the commitment to keeping open lines of communication with the Russian people despite that cooperation on governmental level was put on halt.

"I would also like to emphasise that the action we have taken and our words of condemnation are directed towards the Russian regime, not the Russian people. Many Norwegians have close ties to Russia. Many Russians live in Norway. It is important that the people-to-people contact between our two countries continues." (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 3.3.22 (Støre, 2022b). #2

Moreover, he stressed that discrimination and Russophobia was unacceptable.

"Save the Children in Norway has received several reports of children and youngsters with Russian background experiencing harassment as a result of the war in Ukraine. This is unacceptable (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 03.03.22 (Støre, 2022b). #2

Nevertheless, as the war continued the discourse was revised to fit the new security landscape. From encouraging people-to-people cooperation in general, to a more selective approach, where only those who actively opposed the regime could remain trustworthy partners of cooperation.

"We must make a clear distinction between the Russian people and Putin's regime. Upholding this principle is of great importance to us. The session 'Voices behind the Iron Curtain' at yesterday's Kirkenes Conference served as a poignant reminder of the courageous individuals who persist in their struggle against an ever more authoritarian regime." (Speech at the Kirkenes Conference by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2.3.23. My translation (Huidtfeldt, 2023).#5

However, the scope for collaboration was much more constrained. Individuals who refrained from protesting or were employed by the government were left out.

"Last year, I described the Arctic as a region marked by constructive international cooperation. This year that image must be revised. We cannot ignore the harrowing sights of mass graves, attacks on energy infrastructure, and other brutal acts against civilians and simply carry on as before. The very same Putin responsible for these grave violations against civilians in Ukraine also presides over cultural and educational institutions, as well as media outlets, just across our border." (Speech at the Kirkenes Conference by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 3.3.23. My translation (Huidtfeldt, 2023). #1

6.2.1 THE HIGH NORTH-LOW TENSION DISCOURSE

This sub-discourse aimed to reassure Russia that Norway would remain a predictable, consistent, and recognizable neighbour that posed no threat to anybody. One day before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine the Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed Norway's position.

"We consciously refrain from conducting military exercises with allies in Eastern Finnmark and have chosen not to host allied bases on Norwegian soil. This decision is a deliberate measure to de-escalate tensions in the region. Russia knows our position." (Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Kirkenes Conference, 23.02.22. My translation. (Huidtfeldt, 2022). #1

Furthermore, she highlighted the significance of World War II in Eastern Finnmark and emphasised that Russia withdrew from Finnmark after the liberation.

"When I meet colleagues abroad, I often discuss the 1944 liberation by Soviet forces, who subsequently withdrew. It's a compelling narrative that has shaped our national identity. Therefore, we'll continue to promote our own interests in the North. However, dialogue and cooperation with Russia remain important." Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Kirkenes Conference, 23.02.22. My translation. (Huidtfeldt, 2022). #1

However, when the Minister visited Sør-Varanger again one year after, the WWII narrative was revised to underscore that the liberator then had now become the conqueror(Huidtfeldt, 2023). Nonetheless, pragmatic cooperation with Russia remained necessary in areas crucial to Norwegian interests. To ensure sustainable management of the joint Norwegian-Russian cod stock in the Barents Sea, Norway justified an exemption from EU sanctions. While the EU banned Russian fishing vessels from accessing European ports in October 2022, Norway kept three ports open.

"Some degree of cross-border cooperation is essential to maintain certain critical public functions, basic security, and sustainable resource management. A recent example is the exemption to the ban on access to ports for Russian fishing vessels. We introduced the exemption to safeguard the long-term and sustainable management of fish stocks in the Barents Sea. We act predictably and with a long-term perspective. Our actions are consistent and recognisable. Norway, the Nordic countries, and NATO pose no threat to anyone" (Parliamentary address by the Prime Minister, 25.10.22(Støre, 2022b).#4

7. SOCIETAL INSECURITIES

This chapter presents media discourses mapped in the period under study. The local threat-and-shame discourse is presented first, detailing specific disassociation initiatives in the Sør-Varanger community in response to the Ukraine war. Subsequently, the cooperation discourse is displayed, highlighting a moderate alternative to completely cutting ties with Russia. In section 7.2.1 specific examples of cooperative efforts are presented.

7.1 THE THREAT-AND-SHAME DISCOURSE

A combined threat-and-shame discourse swiftly emerged following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. To demonstrate dissatisfaction with the war, solidarity with Ukraine and to avoid being exploited by Russia, residents of Sør-Varanger felt compelled to sever all connections with the increasingly totalitarian Russian regime. The threat-and-shame discourse emphasized the importance of vigilance as Russia developed into an escalating conventional and hybrid threat. Moreover, it underscored that Russia gained from exacerbating existing social divisions within Norwegian society that could be exploited through covert influence campaigns aiming at weakening the nation. To avoid becoming victims of Russian hybrid operations, the threat-and-shame-discourse underscored the importance of cutting ties with anyone who might be linked to the regime in any capacity. The next sections show through examples from local media how a variety of disassociation initiatives were circulated in Sør-Varanger.

A RETURNING OF MEDALS

Individuals who had previously engaged in close collaboration with Russia distanced themselves from the regime. Local historian Harald Sunde, who had been awarded an order of honour by the Russian Ministry of Defence for his efforts to illuminate the history of the Partisans and the Liberation of Finnmark, returned the medal referring to Russia breaching International Law.

"Now, Russia is the aggressor. I feel uncomfortable possessing a medal bestowed upon me by the same Ministry that is currently executing a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The actions taking place there constitute a breach of International Law (Harald Sunde, 3.3.22, *Finnmarken*. My translation (Nævestad & Sandø, 2022)).

Similarly to Sunde, former mayor from the Labour Party, Rune Rafaelsen, returned the Order of Friendship he had received in recognition of his decade-long efforts to foster friendship and cooperation across the Norway-Russia border.

"I cannot bear to hold an order bestowed by Vladimir Putin, a person and president who violates all principles of friendship and cooperation." (Rune Rafaelsen, Former Mayor from Labour Party, 1.3.22 *NRK Troms and Finnmark*. My translation (Sørenmo et al., 2022).

B. TERMINATION OF FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENTS

As the conflict progressed and the perceived threats to the Norwegian territory became more tangible, particularly following the Nord Stream pipeline explosions in the Baltic Sea in September 2022, various stakeholders advocated for the cessation of "friendship agreements" with municipalities and counties in Russia. Since Russian municipal leaders were appointed and governed by Moscow and functioned as representatives of the regime in the regions, the threat-and-shame discourse emphasised the need for termination to signal a repudiation of the brutal war and an expression of solidarity with Ukraine. Moreover, it was seen as a moral responsibility to dissolve these friendship agreements, as failing to do so indirectly was perceived as "doing Putin and his regime a favour."

"Not suspending agreements would amount to supporting Putin's regime. These are not agreements with ordinary people in Russia. That's why it's incorrect to continue, and that's why these agreements should be suspended" (Skjalg Fjellheim, Political Editor in the biggest regional newspaper Nordlys, 27.10.22, *NRK*. My translation (Åsali & Ellingsen, 2022).

Magnus Mæland, Candidate for Mayor in Sør-Varanger from the Conservative Right Party, was one of the local actors promoting this discourse. He wrote an op-ed that was published in the local newspapers, where the narrative can be captured:

"The war in Ukraine must serve as an alarm for us to recognize that Russia is an authoritarian regime trending towards totalitarianism. The municipalities with which we have friendship agreements are, regrettably, part of Russia, and their local political leaders either openly or tactically support the war. As a mayoral candidate, collaborating with political leaders of this nature is utterly inconceivable. It is remarkable that Sør-Varanger maintains friendship agreements with countries like Russia and China, both identified as the greatest intelligence threats to Norway by our security services. Our friend Inari in Finland is looking towards NATO. We have the freedom to choose our friends." (Magnus Mæland, 4.11.22, op-ed in *Sør-Varanger Avis and Finnmarken*. My translation. (Mæland, 2022)

The statement underscored the necessity of a type of moral distance and condemnation, highlighting the imperative of severing all connections with Russia. Since both China and Russia were identified as the greatest intelligence threats to Norway, Mæland emphasized the impossibility of trusting the Russian participants taking part in the "friendship cooperation." Instead, the municipality ought to pivot towards amicable nations such as Finland. Through his op-ed, the demarcation between 'us' and 'them' was accentuated. The 'ingroup' comprised states sharing similar values and the 'outgroup' was consisting of authoritarian and totalitarian nations like Russia and China. Brede Sæther, who also represented the conservative Right Party proposed not merely to terminate friendship agreements but to remove all Russian road

signs. Furthermore, he proposed hoisting the Ukrainian flag outside the City Hall, adjacent to historical monuments, and by the port until the cessation of the war (Finnmarken, 2022).

C. VIGILANCE TOWARDS INDIVIDUALS WITH RUSSIAN AFFILIATION

NRK had a series of articles in October covering espionage and surveillance activities in Norway, both historically and present. The arrest of a "Brazilian researcher" in Tromsø, who was accused of being an "illegalist"—an individual who establishes an identity as an ordinary citizen while covertly working for Russian intelligence—brought the issue to the fore. Ola Kaldager, a former intelligence officer, said in an interview with *NRK Troms and Finnmark* on October 26th, he asserted that Norwegian authorities had been naive for two decades, thereby facilitating Russian espionage activities in Norway (Finnset et al., 2022). He suggested that Norwegian services should engage in dialogues with all Russian students and employees at Norwegian universities to counteract the threat. He contended that even Russian individuals in ordinary professions could be exploited by Russian authorities, thereby becoming a security risk in Norway.

SVA, *Finnmarken* and *NRK* published a series of articles concerning Russian hybrid operations in Northern Norway, many of which pertained to illegal drone activity and Russians operating them. The arrest of Andrey Jakunin, who purportedly was a close confidant of Putin, received extensive coverage in the press. He was detained for operating drones illegally in Norway. Despite asserting British nationality, Jakunin's dual citizenship status rendered him legally Russian, thereby barring him from drone operation within Norwegian jurisdiction. The issue of dual citizenship emerged as a legal grey area.

In March and June of 2023, numerous articles underscored the escalation of hybrid activities from Russia, pointing out that Russia's hybrid operations represented the most significant security challenge confronting Norway. The prevailing discourse underscored that Russia benefitted from a trust-rift within Norwegian society. To achieve that end Russia would attempt to utilize existing societal divisions, such as issues pertaining to Sami rights, fisheries management, environmental protection, or the consolidation of municipalities and counties (Monsen, 2023c).

“What the public should be vigilant about are potential attempts at influence, where Russia may try to capitalize on existing conflicts for their own ends, to exacerbate disagreements. My advice is to scrutinize sources critically. Consider the possible motives behind the information. Following the invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, the credibility of the Russian authorities has diminished. To accomplish their desired ends, they must resort to covert, more indirect methods, such as utilizing

social media and supporting fringe groups.” (Nils Andreas Stensønes, Head of Norwegian Military Intelligence, 14.06.23, SVA. My translation(Børnfjord, 2023).

D. PROTESTS AGAINST MISUSE OF COMMEMORATIONS

The potential for Russia to exploit historical memory to justify its ongoing war in Ukraine by referencing the Nazi threat was a recurring topic. As the populace of Eastern Finnmark regarded the USSR as a liberator in World War II, the threat-and-shame discourse underscored that Russia would attempt to manipulate the local population's positive sentiments associated with the liberation to disseminate disinformation. Furthermore, Russia could attempt to create rifts between different segments of the Norwegian population over historical memory, aiming to weaken societal cohesion. Ellen Katrine Hætta, Chief of Police in Finnmark, expressed concerns related to commemorations and ceremonies initiated by Russian diplomats throughout Northern Norway (Sætra, 2022a). Her scepticism was linked to Russia's disinformation campaigns, as Russia, according to her, actively used historical memory as part of their toolkit to create division and sow uncertainty. On October 25th, 2022, the anniversary of the Soviet liberation of Finnmark in 1944, numerous residents demonstrated their disapproval of Russia by turning their backs on the Russian diplomat as he delivered his official commemorative speech at the local war memorial.

"Should this memorial be co-opted by Putin's supporters as propaganda for his war in Ukraine, it would no longer be a site of positive remembrance. My message to the Russian Consulate General is that they should refrain from visiting this memorial until the war has concluded" (Harald Sunde, local historian, 26.10.22, *Finnmarken*. My translation.(Nævestad, 2022).

In March 2023, Myklebost and Markussen, historians, and specialists in Russian "memory policy" from the UiT Arctic University of Norway, emphasized in an interview with SVA that the Russian regime employed commemorations to bolster their current geopolitical interests. Consequently, the researchers cautioned individuals to remain alert to the potential manipulation of World War II history. They particularly noted that the history of Norwegian partisans, carrying out intelligence operations under directives from the USSR, was susceptible to exploitation by the regime today.

"The history of the partisans is tied to the Great Patriotic War and the liberation by the Red Army, thereby legitimizing geopolitical objectives, as the current Russian military actions are depicted as a continuation of the heroic struggle to free Europe from Nazism. As such, one should be cautious regarding monuments and St. George's ribbons, since they carry symbolic significance in the Russian public sphere that we may not wish to be affiliated with." (Kari Aga Myklebost, 03.03.2023, SVA, my translation(Monsen, 2023b)

E. CALL FOR CLOSURE OF THE LOCAL PORT

Despite Norway experiencing several hybrid operations on its territory in September/October 2022, the government implemented an exemption to the European port ban on Russian fishing vessels, maintaining open ports in Kirkenes, Båtsfjord, and Tromsø (Sætra, 2022b). The objective was to ensure the sustainable management of the cod stocks in the Barents Sea. This decision was met with protests from security actors who highlighted Russia's intention to exert pressure on Norway through both formal agreements and covert operations. They argued that Russia used the fisheries agreement as leverage to compel Norway to keep strategic ports open, allowing Russian civilian vessels to continue their surveillance activities. Concerns about economic coercion and espionage deemed open ports irresponsible, comprising national security. *NRK* and *SVA* published several articles highlighting Russia's threats to withdraw from the fisheries agreement if Norway proceeded to close the remaining ports to Russian fishing vessels. The liberal party "Venstre" criticized the government for allowing itself to be dictated by Russia.

"We must cease to legitimize threats from Putin's dictatorship. The management of fisheries and the landing of fish are unrelated matters. We must reject the notion of linking them together" (Alfred Bjørlo, representative from the Liberal Party, 25.10.22, *NRK Troms and Finnmark*. My translation (Kråkenes & Tronsen, 2022).

The regional Chief of Police, Hætta, expressed dissent with the government's exemption and advocated for a prohibition on all Russian vessels entering Norwegian ports, deeming them a threat to national security (Sætra, 2022a). Furthermore, she implored the citizens to heed the counsel of experts.

"It is crucial that the public trusts the threat assessment provided by the Security Services. They possess a high level of expertise, and when they indicate that the surveillance threat has escalated, we should understand the implications. We have a neighbour engaged in invasion who possesses nuclear missiles just a stone's throw away." (Ellen Katrine Hætta, 26.10.22, *SVA*. My translation.(Grønvik, 2022)

Hætta's position as Head of Police endowed her with significant regional security authority. As she advocated for a more restrictive policy than that of the government, some politicians called for the closure of both the border and the port to safeguard national interests.

"The border at Storskog ought to be closed. The same with the ports. All Russian vessels should be denied entry. Yet, the ports and borders remain open. I recognize that ceasing all interaction with Russia will have repercussions for the fisheries. However, the ramifications of keeping them open could rapidly prove far more severe" (Toril Bakken Kåven, Head of "North Calotte People", a Sámi political party in Norway, *Finnmarken*, October. My translation (Østvik, 2022).

7.2 THE COOPERATION DISCOURSE

This discourse highlighted the residents' astute ability to separate political issues from

cooperative endeavours. People of Sør-Varanger were adept at differentiating between the Russian state and its citizens. As border inhabitants, they possessed a unique skill set for navigating the complexities of their neighbouring country. Cooperation and dialogue with Russia were integral aspects of the local identity that had to be continued despite the worsened relationship between Russia and the West.

"People living near the border have a different approach to Russia compared to other areas in Norway. We are able to discern between politics and practical cooperation." (Lena Bergeng, Mayor from the Labour Party, 24.02.22 *SVA*(Sætra, 2022c).

The discourse emphasized the importance of maintaining open communication channels to show Russian neighbours that Norway had not severed all ties with Russia.

"We are aware of our location, and a significant number of our residents have Russian heritage. They are our fellow citizens, neighbours, colleagues, friends, and family members. My role is to sustain the dialogue. The people-to-people cooperation with our eastern neighbours grows ever more crucial. We denounce Russia's aggression towards a sovereign state, but not the Russian people." (Lena Bergeng, Mayor in Sør-Varanger from the Labour Party, 25.02.22, *SVA*. My translation (Abarkach, 2022).

However, the mood shifted quickly. As the threat discourse became hegemonic, the cooperation discourse adapted to align with the new era where security and western values were emphasised. The distinction between politics and practical cooperation was no longer stressed. However, Russians who actively condemned the war, desired change, and took to the streets were welcomed as partners.

"The West must actively support those who seek change, who oppose the war, and who are currently protesting against it." (Russian-born Ksenia Novikova, 3.3.22 chronicle in *Finnmarken*. My translation(Novikova, 2022).

"This war constitutes an attack not solely on Ukraine but also on the peace-loving Russian people. Numerous friends of mine are left devastated and fearful due to the state's oppressive actions against citizens who voice their dissent against the war." (Rune Rafaelsen, Former Mayor from the Labour Party, 2.3.22, *Finnmarken*. My translation.(Rydland, 2022).

Others tweaked the discourse to advocate for the resumption of cooperation with children and youth on the Russian side. By fostering collaboration with youth, one could influence their thinking in a more democratic direction.

"To build democracy in Russia, one must start with children. Now, they grow up isolated from the rest of the world, getting no external stimuli. They are not given a chance to experience the world beyond. It's simply helping Putin to halt cooperation" (Leader of Kirkenes Athlete Club, 28.10.22, *SVA*(Ingebrigtsen, 2022).

In March 2023, numerous articles underscored the necessity of maintaining cooperation with individuals in Russia. Evgeny Goman, originally from Murmansk, but now working for the local festival Barents Spektakel, emphasised in an interview with *SVA* the critical need to keep the dialogue open, as many Russians were opposing the war.

"It is crucial to have face-to-face meetings with Russians who are still residing within Russia, as it provides them with the energy to persist in their resistance" (Evgeny Goman, Barents spektakel, 03.03.2023, SVA(Monsen, 2023a).

The cooperation discourse underwent a significant and rapid change. It shifted from emphasizing an identity narrative, which highlighted Sør-Varanger's vested interest in sustaining positive cross-border relations and cooperation, to addressing the necessity of backing Russian dissidents who were confronting and resisting the existing regime from the inside and who cherished democratic values. Despite this, the cooperation discourse continued to emphasize the importance of keeping communication channels open to secure Norwegian interests in the North. The following section delve more deeply into the new discursive terrain.

7.2.1 THE FRONTLINE DEFENDER DISCOURSE

This sub-discourse under the cooperation discourse framed previous Norwegian-Russian collaboration strictly within a security context, portraying people-to-people cooperation primarily as a strategy to safeguard Norwegian interests and security in the High North. Although the discourse has much in common with 7.1, it distinguishes itself by promoting pragmatic cooperation instead of categorical disassociation. The discourse argued that the municipality and local businesses had invested time and money to establish a robust partnership with Russia in the border region to maintain low tension in the North. In accordance with government wishes, Sør-Varanger municipality had become heavily dependent on Russian trade. Therefore, the economic sanctions imposed on Russia had profound local impacts. Although the community continued to prioritize securing Norwegian interests and sovereignty vis-à-vis Russia in the new security environment, the implications of the sanctions made the work difficult. The societal crisis emerging from the sanctions impeded a strong and resilient local community that could serve as a "Frontline of Defense" against Russia. Therefore, the discourse called for governmental assistance to secure investments that could counteract unemployment and outward migration.

"For decades, we, the residents of the border, have adopted a balanced approach towards Russia, to the benefit of Norway. Our leaders, including the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, have acknowledged our efforts as a crucial part of Norway's defence strategy in the North. We take our security responsibility seriously and work every day to maintain sovereignty and encourage settlement in the border region. However, we now find ourselves in need of assistance. (...) The phrase 'Without people, no security' is increasingly becoming a reality" (Guro Brandshaug, Development Director at Varanger Kraft and candidate for mayor for the Labour Party, 4.3.22, chronicle published in *Finnmarken*. My translation(Brandshaug, 2022b).

Accordingly, the discourse advocated for a more pragmatic shift away from Russia, favouring a gradual rather than abrupt cessation of relations. The discourse used security formulations to

modify the disassociation approach, highlighting the looming economic crisis and growing mistrust among various segments of the population. The discourse upheld that these factors could undermine the resilience of the community and, consequently, Norwegian security. Below are some examples of pragmatic cooperation initiatives aimed to bolster the “Frontline”.

A. KEEP THE PORT OPEN

When the Chief of Police in Finnmark, criticized the government's exemption to the port ban in October 2022, local politicians, business owners, and trade union leaders penned a collective letter expressing support of keeping the port open. They underscored the security importance of preventing unemployment to secure a robust civil population in the strategic border area. It was necessitated to affirm Norwegian sovereignty in the face of Russia.

"Should Russian vessels be prohibited from docking in the ports of Kirkenes, Båtsfjord, and Tromsø, the consequence would be the loss of hundreds of jobs. There is a consensus that a stable population is vital for maintaining sovereignty. Therefore, we must take all measures to prevent unemployment. In times of uncertainty, broad, forward-thinking is essential. We are wary of an isolationist policy accompanied by sealed borders, which disregards the interests of those residing in border regions. Robust communities and steady employment are instruments of security policy" (24.10.22, *Finnmarken*(Bergeng et al., 2022).

According to the signatories it was in Norway's self-interest to ensure sustainable management of Norwegian fish stocks in the Barents Sea. Achieving this required maintaining a certain level of pragmatic cooperation with Russia. To curb the threat of Russia misusing the exemption to conduct harmful activities, they proposed enhancing police and military authority to control the ships.

"We reject the notion that by advocating for the port to remain open, we are in any way supporters of Putin. Our fate is intertwined with Russia's when it comes to fish stocks, whether we like it or not. Should the police, customs, and the Norwegian Armed Forces require additional resources for enhanced surveillance and control, we are fully in favour of providing such support" (24.10.22, *Finnmarken* (Bergeng et al., 2022).

B. MAINTAIN FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENTS

Those in favour of not terminating, but rather suspending friendship agreements with neighbouring Russian towns, argued that the threat-and-shame discourse contributed to reactions driven by fear and anger that could have negative implications on societal trust. The storyline upheld that severing all ties with Russia would lend credence to Putin's portrayal of the West as antagonistic, thereby deepening divisions within the local community, home to a significant number of Russians immigrants or Norwegian-born individuals with Russian parents. Conveying them and potential partners in Russia that cooperation could be feasible

under a different Russian regime was imperative to rebuild social cohesion and trust. This would in turn make the Frontline less vulnerable to influence operations from the Russian adversary and enhance Norwegian security as a result.

"I am witnessing a growing polarization where we are edging towards a collective condemnation that encompasses Russian individuals (...) It appears that anger and fear are influencing our interactions with our Russian compatriots, and this is a cause for concern. What Putin profits from the most is a narrative that portrays the West as seeking to harm Russia. We need to disprove that narrative and be capable of holding two ideas in our minds at once." (Guro Brandshaug, candidate for mayor from the "Labour Party", Guro Brandshaug, 4.11.22, chronicle in *SVA*(Brandshaug, 2022a).

C. RECONSIDER THE SANCTIONS

KIMEK, the cornerstone shipyard in Sør-Varanger, was one of the companies significantly impacted by the sanctions. Most of their clientele consisted of Russian fishing vessels. Key stakeholders emphasized that a total cessation of collaboration with Russia could result in unemployment and depopulation. To reduce the risk of a societal crisis that would impact the Frontline's robustness and resilience, some advocated for more pragmatic sanctions towards Russia.

"I fear that the 30 people who are now exiting our doors are gone forever, unless the government comes to understand that the sanctions enacted against Russian ships are entirely misplaced (Greger Mannsverk, Director of KIMEK, 15.6.23, *NRK Troms and Finnmark*. My translation(Bendixen et al., 2023).

The implications of the sanctions received extensive media coverage in June 2023, when the government rolled out a special economic package aimed at mitigating the impact of the sanctions in Eastern Finnmark. The package was designed to provide economic stimulus to the municipality, enabling businesses to pivot away from reliance on the Russian market. Although the government introduced measures to counter the crisis, the prevailing narrative underscored that these measures failed to adequately address the businesses directly affected by the challenging circumstances. When KIMEK was forced to lay off 30 employees on June 15th, it prompted reactions from key local and regional stakeholders.

"We anticipated that the government would devise a more integrated approach, targeting support towards the enterprises impacted by the sanctions on Russia. Our members lack a ready pool of customers to alleviate the predicament they face"(Sigrid Simonsen, Head NHO Arctic, the main representative organization for Norwegian employers, expressed concern on behalf of their members,15.06.23, *NRK Troms and Finnmark*. My translation (Bendixen et al., 2023).

Consequently, the sanctions were by some perceived as counterproductive, leading to increased unemployment, and worsening demographic decline in the strategic border area serving as Frontline against Russia.

7.2.2 RUSSOPHOBIA DISCOURSE

This sub-discourse of the cooperation discourse underscored that condemnation and distancing could give rise to hatred, suspicion, and hostility, potentially overlooking the individuals behind the ethnicity.

"Hatred among us only exacerbates this painful situation. The global rush to ban ordinary Russians from every possible arena only worsens matters. I hope we can hold multiple perspectives in our minds at once, continuing to recognize humans rather than enemies. It is disheartening to hear that Russian children in Norway are subjected to bullying. Children have no control over Putin's policies." (Russian-Norwegian Ksenia Novikova, 3.3.22 chronicle in *Finnmarken*. My translation.(Novikova, 2022).

People voiced concerns about emerging Russophobia as an undesirable consequence of the threat discourse. As Russian hybrid operations unfolded in Norway in October 2022, *NRK Troms and Finnmark* provided Russian residents in Finnmark a platform to voice their concerns. "It has been quite a career leap. From prostitute to spy," Elena Merzliakova, Russian university lecturer at the Arctic University of Norway, said in an interview with *NRK (Larsen, 2022)*. She explained how antiquated stereotypes from the 1990s, presenting Russian women as prostitutes, were replaced by contemporary stereotypes of the Russian spy. Some articles reflected concerns of ordinary Russians being unfairly targeted.

"I fear that we will witness instances where ordinary Russians in Norway become stigmatized as a consequence (...) If we are to make any progress in the future, we must protect and shield innocent Russians, not stigmatize them" (Arne O Holm, Editor in Chief in *High North News*, 26.10.22, *NRK Troms og Finnmark* (Finnset et al., 2022).

When the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs met with local youth in Sør-Varanger on March 8th, 2023, they expressed similar concerns. Several had travelled to Russia via Barents projects and recounted their experiences of Russians as hospitable and warm-hearted. "They are fellow human beings, and we can't afford to be ethnocentric," Tobias Borthen remarked to *SVA* (Ingebrigtsen, 2023).

8. DISCUSSION CHAPTER - SECURITY AND TRUST IN LIMBO?

While the previous section introduced the empirical data, this chapter applies the two theoretical lenses (securitization and human security) - to analyse the security articulations across the different levels of the matrix (individual, society and state). By applying securitization theory and human security lens, I will analyse how discourses and specific speech acts impacted both the society and individuals in Sør-Varanger within this historical context. Given that trust is a fundamental feature of security, I will use it as a variable to highlight shifts in security perspectives at the state, societal, and individual levels.

8.1 EMPLOYING A MATRIX ANALYSIS

By employing a matrix structure (x and y categories), I was able to identify data-clusters from the different levels around two intersecting dominant discourses: threat/deterrence and cooperation/reassurance.

8.1.1 THE THREAT/DETERRENCE DISCOURSE

The war in Ukraine rekindled Norway's historical fears and deep-seated concerns about Russia's intentions. These worries, underscored from state authorities in Speech #1 and #2, highlighted Norway's NATO membership as a crucial defence against Russia's strategic ambitions. The existential threat narrative in Speech #2, which contrasted Western values and interests with Russia's totalitarian and brutal behaviour, permeated all levels of the matrix. It solidified a European and Western "us" against the threatening Russian "them," underscoring the vital importance of European and transatlantic unity.

From the local media coverage – which played an interesting role reflecting both state and individual security perceptions, it was evident that the government's threat discourse, which sharply delineated between Western and Russian values and interests, including clear signals about what was permissible and what was not, led people in the border community to distance themselves from Russia. This shift was similarly evident in media reports where individuals returned medals, called for the termination of friendship agreements, and advocated for port closures. Additionally, the government's speeches reflected the fear of Russia's probable true intentions, which were also visible in the individual insecurities described in Chapter 5.1.

There was a clear correlation between the government's warnings about Russian hybrid threats in Speech #3 and #4 and the extensive media coverage of hybrid warfare tactics in society. The Norwegian public was urged to be alert and report any suspicious Russian activities, blurring the distinction between the Russian state and Russian people in general. Issues such as dual citizenship and potential involvement of local Russians in hybrid incidents caused unease in Sør-Varanger among both Russian-affiliated and non-affiliated individuals, as the threat was perceived as no longer state-centric but now could emanate from average civilians. These concerns surfaced in interviews where Norwegians expressed fears about the intentions of local Russians. Several Norwegians openly admitted to a newfound distrust towards the Russian residents. They questioned their loyalty and shunned any association with them. Russians were perceived as 'the other,' individuals to whom they would not turn in

times of adversity. Russians, on the other hand, worried about discrimination and Russophobia resulting from the calls of vigilance.

Despite the government attempting to counter discrimination by consistently emphasizing the mantra "we distinguish between state and people" from speech #1 through #5, the prevailing discourse in the speeches called for vigilance, which constituted local Russians as a potential threat. Consequently, the distinction between average (read: good) citizens and the Russian regime, diminished in significance and impact. Moreover, the media – again reflecting state discourses while simultaneously representing local concerns, showed limited representation of Russian perspectives. Nonetheless, the few Russians who were interviewed in the media mentioned discrimination and stereotyping, noting the growing difficulty for Norwegians to differentiate between the Russian state and its citizens, a significant point of reflection highlighted in section 5.2.1.

However, the genuine concern about the loyalty of local Russians and fear of discrimination and Russophobia within the community were largely overlooked by the editor-controlled media. Issues such as hybrid threats, the contentious matter of dual citizenship, and espionage were thoroughly reported and discussed by security experts in broader, national terms, while the nuanced situation in Sør-Varanger remained largely unaddressed. This significant, yet delicate, topic was left to simmer beneath the surface.

8.1.2 THE COOPERATION/REASSURENCE DISCOURSE

The Russian invasion of Ukraine halted collaborative efforts with Russia across various platforms, including the Barents cooperation, demonstrating the conflict's broad impact on the High North. Despite this, speech #1 and #2 encouraged people-to-people cooperation, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the Russian regime and its citizens. However, starting in Speech #3 and #4, threat articulations (as opposed to cooperation) became hegemonic, and by speech #5, trust was limited to Russians actively protesting the Russian regime.

Initially, local media coverage emphasized that cooperation and dialogue with Russia were integral to the local identity and should be maintained despite cooling relations between Norway and Russia at the national level. However, this narrative declined after Prime Minister Støre's parliamentary address on March 3rd, adjusting to align with government signals. Despite this shift, individuals consistently expressed a desire to resume collaboration with Russia through local media, often emphasizing the importance of supporting Russians who opposed the Russian regime and shared Western values. This perspective, which aligned

with the government's approach of distinguishing between the Russian state and its people, as indicated in speech #5, was not controversial to assert. Nevertheless, when granted anonymity in informal interviews, participants strongly articulated a distinct collaborative identity related to Russia, which they were hesitant to admit under the current circumstances where disassociation was deemed appropriate. Moreover, individuals expressed genuine fears of an identity crisis triggered by the war. Concerns about being perceived as overly sympathetic towards Russia, coupled with fears of being labelled a security risk, compelled many to remain silent to protect their personal safety. These specific concerns about both an identity crisis and Norwegian surveillance were completely overlooked in both discourses traced in the media and in the government speeches.

In speech #2 and #4, the government affirmed several reassurance measures concerning the management of cod stocks, search and rescue operations, and border control collaboration. These measures aimed to mitigate conflicts and maintain crisis stability between the two countries in a tense geopolitical environment. Furthermore, in speech #4, the government introduced an exemption to the port ban to ensure the sustainable management of joint fisheries. This initiative was supported in the media by those advocating for pragmatic cooperation with Russia to strengthen the “frontline” and uphold Norwegian sovereignty (7.2.1A). However, it faced opposition from those who favoured termination and distancing of relations to protect Norwegian security (7.1E).

The discourses traced in the media clearly showed that security concerns were a central theme across various opinions. The notion of security was applied to arguments both in favour of continuing collaboration with Russia and in support of severing all ties. The consistent theme of vigilance against Russia's "real intentions" was apparent across all levels of the matrix and tainted relations locally. The following sub-sections will utilize the theoretical framework to understand how perceptions of security and trust was affected on the different levels (state, society and individual).

8.2 SECURITIZATION – HOW WAS SØR-VARANGER IMPACTED?

Recalling the theoretical chapter, we remember that for securitization to be deemed successful, it first necessitated the presence of a discourse framing an existential threat. The discourse should articulate a "point of no return," a critical juncture beyond which the situation became irreversible. Additionally, the discourse should propose a pathway to avert the threat, often through extraordinary measures. The presence of external conditions linked to the perceived threat would further strengthen the process of securitization, as these

conditions lend credence to the urgency and legitimacy of the security discourse (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 3). For securitization to work effectively, it requires an audience that agrees with the premises presented through the speech acts. Additionally, there should be a direct connection between the proposed solutions and their implementation in specific security measures designed to address the threat (Wilhelmsen, 2017a, p. 175). The following section examines how securitization impacted the different levels of the study.

8.2.1 SECURITIZING OF RUSSIA, RUSSIANS, AND COOPERATION

The government's existential threat articulations echoed across media reports and the local interviews, underscoring the speech acts' influence on public perceptions of security. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was described as a defining crisis and a watershed moment signalling a point of no return, where extraordinary measures were justified to secure peace and stability on the European continent. It strengthened the Norwegian identity and had significant impact outlining appropriate and inappropriate behaviour (Hansen, 2000, p. 305). On the societal level, the speech act contributed to closing the border mentally and resulted in local acts of condemnation, disassociation, calls for termination of friendship agreements and removal of road signs. Moreover, it led to moral restrictions which stigmatized behaviour that used to be normal, such as border-crossings, taking part in World War II commemorations and cooperating with Russian individuals. Instead, cooperation with like-minded states such as Finland and Sweden were prioritized. Gubrium et al. described similar evidence of moral restrictions in their recent research (Gubrium et al., 2024). Security is a quality actors inject into issues by securitizing them and staging them on the political arena in a specific way (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 204). By calling for vigilance and consciousness regarding suspicious Russian behaviour in speech #3 and #4, the government staged Russians as potential threats to Norwegian security, which essentially securitized local Russians residing in Sør-Varanger.

Discourses traced in the local media suggests that the local population had come to accept the securitization of both Russia in general and more specifically Russians residing in the municipality. The debates around the so-called "friendship agreements" with Russian municipalities illustrate this point well. Advocates for terminating these agreements supported the government's call for distancing, arguing that maintaining ties with Russia was morally indefensible given Putin's control over these municipalities. This discourse demanded immediate distancing, aligning with the broader Norwegian and European perspectives. Conversely, those in favour of continuing cooperation, or at least freezing rather than terminating these agreements, also engaged with the securitized discourse. They framed their

arguments around national security imperatives, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the Russian regime and its citizens. In response to Putin's attempts to sow societal discord, they argued that it was crucial to communicate that the condemnation was aimed at the regime, not the people, to effectively counter Russian hybrid tactics and avoid stigmatizing Russians, thereby rebuilding societal trust. The intense debate, with accusations from both sides of playing into "Putin's agenda" and jeopardizing Norwegian security, exposed the depth of securitization that had taken place. This case also demonstrates that securitization is not solely a top-down process but can also arise from grassroots levels. The key issue is who can politicize and further securitize a matter effectively enough to shape the discourse.

8.2.2 SECURITIZATION OF THE SØR-VARANGER MUNICIPALITY

The threat discourse led to successful securitization of Sør-Varanger municipality itself. The “Frontline of Defence discourse” underscored the necessity of a strong Norwegian civilian presence along the Russian border to maintain sovereignty vis-à-vis the threatening neighbour—a sentiment that resonated well and was echoed across all layers of the matrix. Furthermore, the Frontline of Defence discourse integrated the residents of this strategic region into the broader security discourse. A robust municipality was framed by the government as a critical asset in mitigating the risk of both hybrid and conventional threats from Russia. This discourse intertwined regional politics with national security strategies, advocating for initiatives that would bolster the community's resilience.

Nevertheless, the sanctions Norwegian authorities enforced to contribute to crippling Russia's military strength had severe repercussions for Norway's strategic border region. These sanctions led to local insecurity, unemployment, and drew residents away from the area, as described by individuals in chapter 5.1.5. These local repercussions revealed a disconnect between the government's "Frontline of Defence" speech act and the actual outcomes experienced by the community. The threat identified by the government, which the local community ultimately accepted, was not effectively neutralized by the implemented measures. Instead, these measures seemed to actualize the threat rather than mitigate it. The guiding principle of the "Frontline of Defence" discourse was "without people, no security; and without security, no people." Contrary to its intended purpose, the sanctions posed an existential threat to the community's survival. In response, local stakeholders acted as securitizing actors, utilizing local speech acts to communicate that the government's measures were exacerbating the insecure situation. The local strategy to prevent societal collapse

involved adopting a more pragmatic approach towards Russia, allowing some interaction to secure the municipality's survival and strengthen Norwegian sovereignty in the strategic border region.

However, the designation of the municipality as a "security zone" justified the mobilization of resources and the implementation of specific political measures from the state level. A pertinent example is the government's introduction of economic relief packages in June 2023, which aimed to alleviate the societal crisis resulting from the imposed sanctions. The adoption of "whole of government" approaches, where all departments contribute to combined solution, is recognized as an effective method for tackling emerging security challenges in strategic regions. By improving the living conditions of the populace, the overall security of the nation is enhanced (Brown & Grävingsholt, 2016; Duffield, 2005, p. 144).

8.3 HUMAN SECURITY – IMPACT OF DOMINANCE/NON-DOMINANCE

The concept of human security allowed the study to consider how individuals living in the border municipality experienced the securitizing move and how the change in power dynamics impacted people's perceptions of security (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006). The interviews detailed in chapter five revealed that the bolstered distinction between the Western "us" and the Russian "them" gave rise to new power dynamics, accompanied by evolving informal norms and practices. Both Norwegian and Russian residents indicated that for Russians to be embraced as part of the trusted societal "we," they were expected to vocally denounce the Russian regime. The inability to fulfil this expectation gave rise to suspicions and resulted in individuals being labelled as "Putin supporters."

Anonymous interviews, however, uncovered that many Russians opted for silence, driven by fears of reprisals against their families or because they feared being labelled as traitors and facing imprisonment in Russia. Yet, their silence resulted in them being categorized as part of the out-group of not entirely trustworthy inhabitants. Consequently, to ensure their safety, they adopted security strategies that involved either conforming to the dominant norms or maintaining silence. Several explained how they always stated their anti-war opinion in conversations with Norwegians to reassure of their benign intentions. Simultaneously, they avoided public demonstrations or media interviews as a silence strategy to safeguard themselves and their families from potential repercussions from Russian authorities. Despite these precautions, they voiced profound feelings of alienation, distress, and insecurity, as the atmosphere of unwelcome and exclusion both in Norway and in Russia took a toll on their well-being and sense of belonging.

The same applied to Norwegians who did not adhere to the emergent norms and chose to maintain their pre-existing way of life. For the past three decades, the border municipality had cultivated an identity as the capital of the Barents Region, positioning itself as an area of international strategic importance with expertise in Russian cooperation (Gubrium et al., 2024; Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023). To adapt to the new security situation this identity had to be revised. Several Norwegian interviewees emphasised that they struggled with an identity crisis as a consequence of the ongoing war. They found it challenging to reconcile their former roles as "Bridge-builders" or "Peacekeepers" with the new expectation to act as "Frontline defenders" against Russia. Their testimonies were laden with emotion, rooted in personal experiences of collaboration with Russians and the integration of Russia into their daily lives. The once-open border had enriched their lives, infusing them with greater purpose and meaning. Yet, in the current climate, they confessed feeling a sense of shame when voicing such sentiments publicly, as prevailing social norms and expectations deemed such perspectives morally questionable and naïve. Articulating positive views of Russian relations risked categorizing them as part of a distrusted out-group perceived as overly sympathetic to Russia. Although it wasn't illegal for Norwegians to travel to Russia after the war or to cooperate with Russians, those who did reported feeling judged. The norms that emerged alongside the societal threat-shame-discourse had effectively closed the border in a mental sense. Those who strayed from the hegemonic normative script found themselves stigmatized, much like their Russian counterparts. Several citizens in Sør-Varanger expressed constraints in their ability to live freely within the new security landscape, which are important security factors acknowledged by human security theory (Williams, 2018, p. 223).

8.4 TRUST-RIFTS ACROSS THE MATRIX

Trust between individuals hinges on the assurance that their values and interests are secure. It is influenced by personal experiences, emotions, and historical memories embedded in identities. Trust involves a gamble on future actions and is crucial for collective security (Bilgic et al., 2019). In Sør-Varanger, new identity hierarchies, formal restrictions, and moral constraints led to multiple crises. A crisis can be described as a situation that is limited in time, causing instability and unpredictability (Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023, p. 8). Following the Ukraine war, the municipality faced an economic crisis, an identity crisis, and a deepening crisis in trust, which this thesis explores as a key variable in mapping insecurity.

8.4.1 DISTRUST ON THE STATE LEVEL

Since World War II, Norway has aimed to avoid bilateral agreements with Russia due to fears

of being coerced by the superpower from one entrenchment to another (Holtmark & Mankova, 2015). The Ukraine war again underscored the importance of buffer zones in Russia's national security doctrine, leading Russia to ensure that neighbouring border areas remain non-threatening to its strategic interests (Götz & Staun, 2022). Any movement by Norway towards an "unfriendly" stance or the approach of US forces near Russia's critical thresholds is likely to trigger a strong Russian response. For Norway, this increases the sensitivity and vulnerability of the border area to hybrid threats, as they are deployed "below the threshold", often not classified as traditional military attacks that will otherwise provoke the activation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty (Hoogensen Gjørsv, 2024, p. 6). The shared insecurity and mistrust have led to the securitization of Sør-Varanger, influenced by both Norwegian and Russian strategic interests. Research following the Ukraine war indicates that Russia has supported and intensified existing conflicts in Norway as part of its hybrid operations in Europe (Hoogensen Gjørsv, 2024; Myklebost, 2023). These incidents have reinforced collaboration among and between Western states, emphasizing the need for distance, as Russia, according to the threat discourse, aims to erode this unity. Similarly, Russian speech acts suggest that the West is seeking to undermine Russian society from within and signals to Russians, including those residing in Sør-Varanger, the consequences for "foreign agents" and traitors (Götz & Staun, 2022; Karamanau & Litvinova, 2024; Tolz & Hutchings, 2023). The mutual mistrust between states has local repercussions.

8.4.2 DISTRUST BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS ON THE SOCIETAL LEVEL

Societal trust is categorized into generalized and particularized trust. Generalized trust fosters an inclusive identity, welcoming those who might seem unfamiliar into a broader moral community. In contrast, particularized trust limits trust to a smaller group identified by specific markers. Consequently, to protect security and trust within the "Self," particularized distrust towards the "Other" often arises (Bilgic et al., 2019, pp. 2-4). Despite the Minister of Justice and Security Preparedness acknowledging the innocence of most Russians in Norway, she cautioned Norwegians against naivety, urging vigilance against suspicious activities. In speech #3 she warned that any Russian with dishonest intentions risked detection. This stance fostered particularized distrust towards Russians at the local level, which reinforced social divisions and heightened feelings of insecurity among the Russian minority. The empirical data show that the speech act reinforced Norwegian identity and unity within the municipality, extending particularized trust only to those aligning with shared values. Conversely, Russians who publicly opposed the war, aligning with Western values, were

granted generalized trust (Bilgic et al., 2019, pp. 2-4). However, statements like “Should a crisis arise here, I wouldn't look to Russians for comfort or security,” revealed that even generalized trust was at stake. Similarly, statements like “I'm cautious around some (Norwegian) individuals because I can never be certain when they might stab me in the back” from Russian interviewees, revealed particularized distrust towards Norwegian individuals considered unpredictable in the new environment. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that despite living in Norway, Russian speech acts influenced the Russian minority and contributed to controlling their behaviour. As many within the Russian minority hold dual citizenship, they felt compelled to navigate and comply with the laws and social norms of both Russia and Norway. In a heightened security environment where these norms clash, individuals are deemed trustworthy/untrustworthy based on their conformity to dominant societal practices. Consequently, many chose silence as a security mechanism. This, however, further complicated efforts to build societal trust as many Norwegians viewed their silence as evidence of loyalty to the Russian regime, deepening suspicions, and social divisions.

8.4.3 DISTRUST BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVEL

Trust is built on historical experiences and social relationships (Bilgic et al., 2019, p. 4). Since the establishment of the Barents cooperation, the cooperative discourse has been hegemonic in Sør-Varanger. In accordance with national policy it highlighted cooperation as a security measure to reduce tension and create trusting relationships, aiming to minimize actions harmful to Norwegian interests (Gubrium et al., 2024, p. 2). An interviewee mentioned that previously, criticizing the cooperative approach led to stigma in the local community, silencing dissenters. With the shift toward disassociation with Russia, those opposing the “threat-and shame” discourse were silenced. However, in anonymous interviews, individuals expressed dissatisfaction with the government “sneaking out the back door,” leaving them abandoned and ashamed of inadvertently having supported “Putin's agenda.” These statements highlighted a mistrust in the government's ability to handle the identity crisis in society, stemming from the changed security approach where reassurance initiatives were replaced in favour of deterrence/distance. However, the local sentiment of being “left to fend for ourselves” is not a new phenomenon in Sør-Varanger. Similar concerns about the government's lack of understanding and recognition of the need for support during critical situations were expressed during the Refugee Crisis in 2015 (Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023, p. 11). Moreover, the empirical data in section 5.1.5 highlighted concerns regarding the economic crisis and local proposals being overlooked by national authorities. This fuelled

fears that government policies could threaten the survival of the community. Despite the government's acknowledgment of the economic crisis and its launch of economic relief packages, both local media reports and semi-structured interviews suggested that many viewed them as inadequate for the crisis's severity. A widespread sentiment of mistrust in the government's understanding of the local area's unique challenges was evident. Statements like, "There's no war in Oslo. I've been aware of that for quite some time. But here, the conflict is just across the border," underscored the perception that the government was disconnected from the community's need for tailored support.

Another issue where mistrust towards the government was traced related to the legacy of Cold War-era illicit surveillance. In Sør-Varanger, this topic has been kept alive through local storytelling, creating a collective memory that makes residents feel vulnerable to being monitored (Paulgaard & Soleim, 2023, p. 13). Many interviewees referenced historical instances of local stigmatization and humiliation to express current fears of being perceived as a security risk. Their anxieties, revealing deep mistrust towards Norwegian intelligence services, were tied to this collective memory. While some noted improved relations between the government and the local community driven by increased national unity, most felt the government still distrusted them. One interviewee stated, "We're simply perceived as being too friendly towards Russia here." Through the interviews, residents voiced a need for more information about the Russian security threat to manage the situation correctly. The disconnect between the local perspective and the government's approach was a recurring theme across the different levels of the matrix. Many accused the government of ignoring local concerns by delivering a top-down policy that failed to fit the local context.

8.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study indicates that the Norwegian balance between deterrence/threat and reassurance/cooperation has become increasingly difficult, with deterrence emerging as the dominant strategy. Russian hybrid operations, aimed at sowing discord and undermining trust, were perceived as the primary threat to Norwegian security following the Ukraine war as described in speech #2, #3 and #4. Nonetheless, in a region affected by securitization and anticipated interference from adversaries, the challenge lies in finding the right balance between deterrence and reassurance strategies to keep tensions low and ensure stability. Another challenge is to uphold democratic principles such as freedom of speech and ensure transparency and openness in a region where collective memories fuel insecurity. Reflecting on the theoretical framework, we recall that the concept of security includes positive aspects like

fostering safer, more inclusive environments and enhancing capabilities (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006). The study reveals that the dominant discourse of threat and shame caused significant insecurities in the border municipality, leading to widespread silence. To prevent feelings of exclusion from evolving into deeper mistrust, which external actors could exploit, it's crucial to engage with the blind spots and acknowledge that the possibility to speak security is constrained for some individuals. To preserve the security of these individuals, the national and societal “we” must become more inclusive. Both the society and the government must recognize that a significant minority within the border community feels vulnerable and as a security mechanism, they suppress their opinions. The state, society, and individuals all have a duty to prevent societal division by ensuring that diverse opinions are welcomed, in line with democratic principles. Given that hybrid threat activities are deployed to exploit vulnerabilities and existing conflicts to create discord (Hoogensen Gjørsv, 2024), the trust-deficit revealed in the thesis can prove detrimental if not managed properly.

9. CONCLUDING CHAPTER

To conclude the study, this chapter revisits the research question and the matrix structure utilized to answer this question. Moreover, it summarizes the main findings, and provides thoughts and proposals for further research and policy measures.

9.1 REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In the introductory chapter, I noted my observation that local citizens of Sør-Varanger had become unusually quiet around political discussions in the community. I wondered if the silence could reflect a cautionary attitude, with people being wary of making missteps following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. If so, I was eager to identify if they experienced insecurities, what the specific insecurities were, and determine whether these were being recognized and addressed by the broader society and the state. I formulated the following research question to comprehend how the full-scale invasion of Ukraine had impacted security and trust in Sør-Varanger:

- In what ways, if at all, do Norwegian national security discourses correspond to the security perceptions of the people in the border community of Sør-Varanger, often referred to as the “frontline of Norwegian sovereignty?”

I utilized a matrix design where security articulations were traced at the individual (through semi-structured interviews), societal (through local media outlets) and national (through government speeches) level. These three levels and data sources intersect, impact, and influence each other through security articulations and create data clusters at moments in time

after the 2022 escalation of war in Ukraine. This research design helped me answer how national security discourse (speeches) impacted perceptions of security and trust among the local society and individuals living in Sør-Varanger. By combining the theories of human security and securitization I was able to analyse what happened in the data clusters, revealing symmetries, disconnects and blind spots, which in turn made it possible for me to find some answers to why the society had become more silent.

9.2 REVISITING THE MAIN FINDINGS

The empirical findings indicate that Sør-Varanger municipality faced multiple crises following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The municipality suffered an economic downturn due to sanctions and a decrease in border crossings which was perceived as a societal crisis that threatened the survival of the community. Additionally, some experienced a crisis of identity. For nearly three decades, Sør-Varanger was seen as the capital of the Barents region, with many locals having jobs and interests linked to Russia. Both semi-structured interviews and media analysis revealed that distinguishing between politics and everyday cooperation was considered a fundamental aspect of the local identity. After years of fostering relationships and friendships across the border, it was difficult for many to suddenly view most Russians as adversaries. Furthermore, the empirical data revealed a complex, multi-layered crisis in trust affecting various relationships: between Russia and Norway at a broad level, between Norwegians and Russians locally, between the local community and the national government, within the Russian diaspora, and among different segments of the local Norwegian population. Due to this trust deficit and the moral constraints arising from the conflict, many individuals chose silence as a daily security strategy to protect themselves.

The study shows how the war pushed Norway into a trajectory of heightened securitization, where a strong Norwegian and Western identity was consolidated in contrast to the Russian threat. Particularly concerning was Russia's use of hybrid warfare tactics designed to create discord and insecurities within European democracies, which significantly eroded trust and had profound impacts on the border municipality. Despite Norwegian authorities steadfastly distinguishing between the Russian state and the Russian people, the call for vigilance gradually blurred the distinction between the two in the government's speech acts. Data across the different levels showed that heightened vigilance urged in response to the Russian threat made it difficult to differentiate between the Russian government and Russian people in general. All Russians could potentially pose a security risk.

The data revealed that local speech acts arguing in favour of distance from Russia to safeguard Norwegian interests became hegemonic and reinforced the Norwegian “we” vis-a-vis the Russian “other”. Furthermore, the policy measures implemented to counteract the Russian threat—such as heightened intelligence presence, and the cessation of cooperation with Russian counterparts—enhanced security for the majority of Sør-Varanger's population. Nonetheless, these measures simultaneously increased feelings of insecurity among those who felt they were considered a security risk, including Russians with dual citizenship and Norwegians who feared they were perceived as “overly sympathetic” to Russia.

Many Russians reported experiencing heightened “Russophobia”, describing the distressing feeling of being unwelcome and suspected of harbouring hostile intentions. Some explained that they chose silence as a security measure to avoid stigmatization for possessing values and ideas perceived as inappropriate in Norway. Others remained silent in fear of being labelled as traitors and imprisoned in Russia if they expressed anti-war sentiments in Norway.

Fear of being labelled a "security risk" prompted several individuals from the Norwegian segment of the population to opt for silence. They withdrew from public debate due to fears of being stigmatized. They voiced concerns about the shrinking space for open discussion and fear of inadvertently doing "something wrong." Historical memories of communist surveillance during the Cold War era were highlighted in the reasoning, underscoring how past experiences and collective memory still hold relevance today.

The majority of the local population understood the importance of unified sanctions to condemn Russia's actions and strengthen European unity. However, many simultaneously feared the repercussions for the local community, which had become reliant on relations with Russia. Several viewed the sanctions as counterproductive and a threat to the survival of the border community, as job losses led to people relocating away from the area. This highlighted a significant disconnect between governmental policy and local sentiment. Despite governmental relief packages being provided to curb the crisis, several expressed distrust towards the government, questioning whether local interests and well-being were being adequately considered.

9.3 RELEVANCE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study demonstrates how the war in Ukraine extended its effect to the Arctic, significantly impacting the strategic border municipality Sør-Varanger. However, throughout the study, I encountered additional topics that could significantly enhance our understanding of the

region's security complexities. An intriguing issue related to the theme emerged, namely how the securitization of the region influenced the dynamics between the larger society and the Sámi minority. In the "Frontline of Defence discourse" green industrialization was framed as a security strategy aimed at enhancing European energy independence and generating jobs in the strategic High North. Concerns about Sámi rights posing a threat to green industrialization was articulated by Sylvi Listhaug, leader of Norway's right-wing "Progressive Party," in an interview with *NRK* on March 13th 2023 (Larsen & Lydersen, 2023). She emphasized the importance of a robust population in the region and advocated for Norway's withdrawal from the ILO Convention protecting Sámi rights. Several of my interviewees expressed that apart from the war itself land disputes were a significant concern to them. They expressed distrust in the Norwegian government's understanding of the issue's complexity.

“Land disputes is akin to a ticking bomb. Discussions about it are confined to hushed tones behind closed doors, yet it scarcely breaches the surface of public discourse. Should the Norwegian political authorities fail to navigate these matters with prudence, they risk unlocking a gateway for those intent on eroding the mutual trust that binds us” *Man from the “Norwegian” segment of the interviewees with Sámi heritage, aged over 60.*

These examples demonstrates that security dynamics following the outbreak of the Ukraine war also affected the Norwegian-Sámi dynamic. Given the ongoing land disputes between the Norwegian state and Sámi reindeer herders, and the perception among many in the Sámi community of industrialization posing an existential threat to Sámi peoples survival (Amnesty, 2023), further research into how indigenous rights can be affected by the security discourse could be valuable. It seems to constitute a knowledge gap that is worth exploring.

9.4 FINAL REMARKS

The study has provided evidence that failing to include human security or local security concerns by solely addressing state and societal insecurities, weakens the security agenda. Moreover, solely studying speech acts is inadequate because they do not capture the concerns of those who remain silent. Without integrating human security concerns, and seeking out where silence may reside locally, critical issues would have remained unrecognized, such as Norwegian insecurities related to the loyalty of local Russian residents, the stigmatization and hostility Russian citizens face resulting from the call for vigilance, fears of being deemed a traitor in Russia and the Russian regime`s influence over people outside the Russian border, identity crises, and anxieties among Norwegians regarding national surveillance. These concerns were neither discussed in the editor-controlled media nor addressed in the government speeches in the scope of this study. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge state,

societal, and individual security concerns to prevent exclusion and counter external influence campaigns in the new security landscape evolving following the Ukraine war.

Trust is cited as Norway's most cherished asset (Bilgic et al., 2019; Støre, 2022a). To prevent hybrid threat activities from finding fertile ground requires fostering transparent and open dialogue across the individual, societal, and national level. Additionally, embracing rather than suppressing discord - in accordance with democratic principles - is vital to prevent silence which only exacerbate suspicion and insecurity. Creating more inclusive arenas could help reduce mistrust, which could otherwise become vulnerabilities. The study demonstrates the significant impact of discourse and speech acts in shaping policies and practices; thus, when used wisely, they have the capacity to de-securitize issues, potentially leading to a more inclusive society less vulnerable to hybrid threat activities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abarkach, M. (2022, 25.02.22). Lena fordømmer styresmaktene. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others. *Theory, culture & society*, 21(2), 25-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133>
- Amnesty. (2023). «The Sami culture might just disappear”. Retrieved 09.05.24 from <https://amnesty.no/sites/default/files/2023-03/Petition%20Sami%20rights%20English%20version.pdf>
- Aspøy, A. (2023, 03.05.24). *Lund-kommisjonen*. Retrieved 12.05.2024 from <https://snl.no/Lund-kommisjonen>
- Bendixen, A., Faugstad, S., Humstad, K., & Sætra, G. (2023, 15.06.23). Hjørnestensbedriften Kimek i Kirkenes sier opp 30 ansatte. *NRK Troms og Finnmark*
- Berg-Nordlie, M. (2018). New in town. Small-town media discourses on immigrants and immigration. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 64, 210-219.
- Berg, B. A. (2004). Evakuering og gjenreising som moderniseringsmotor. *Speculum Boreale* 7.
- Bergeng, L. N., Johansen, B., Bråten, H., Mæland, M., Mannsverk, G., Henriksen, A., Webber, A. B., Steinbakk, F.-H. S., Tharaldsen, B., Danielsen, N., Rafaelsen, R., & Pettersen, T. G. (2022, 24.10.22). Utspillene fra politimesteren skaper ikke ro - de skaper usikkerhet. *Finnmarken*.
- Bilgic, A. (2013). *Rethinking Security in the Age of Migration: Trust and Emancipation in Europe* (1 ed., Vol. 4). Oxford: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203558973>
- Bilgic, A., Hoogensen Gjörv, G., & Wilcock, C. (2019). Trust, distrust, and security: An untrustworthy immigrant in a trusting community. *Political psychology*, 40(6), 1283-1296.
- Bloomberg. (2022). ‘This is not a bluff’: Putin orders ‘partial’ mobilization of 300,000 troops and rattles nuclear saber. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://fortune.com/europe/2022/09/21/putin-orders-partial-mobilization-300000-troops-rattles-nuclear-saber-ukraine-russia/>
- Bones, S. (2007). *I oppdemningspolitikken grenseland. Nord-Norge i den kaldekrigen 1947-70* Universitetet i Tromsø].
- Booth, K., & Wheeler, N. (2008). *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Borge, B. H., & Horne, H. (2020). After Ukraine: Is the Norwegian-Russian Idyll in the Border Area Still Intact? . *Magma*, no.5.
- Brandshaug, G. (2022a, 4.1.22). Krevende vennskap. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Brandshaug, G. (2022b, 7.3.22). - Nå trenger vi hjelp. Situasjonsrapport fra Norges førstelinje i nordøst. *Finnmarken*.
- Brown, S., & Grävingholt, J. (2016). Security, development and the securitization of foreign aid. In *The securitization of foreign aid* (pp. 1-17). Springer.
- Buzan, B., Wilde, J. d., Wæver, O., & Buzan, B. (1998). *Security : a new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner.
- Børnfjord, F. (2023). Russland sett med etteerretningssjefens øyne. *Sør-Varanger Avis*, 8-10.
- Duffield, M. (2005). Getting savages to fight barbarians: development, security and the colonial present: analysis. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 5(2), 141-159.
- Elenius, L., & Tjelmeland, H. (2015). *The Barents Region : a transnational history of subarctic Northern Europe*. Pax.
- EOS-utvalget. (2024). *Historikk*. Retrieved 03.05.24 from <https://eos-utvalget.no/hjem/om-eos/historikk/>

- Eriksen, K. E., Omre, S.-M., Skodvin, M., Gran, B., Myhr, E., & Gullvåg, E. W. (1987). *Frigjøring* (Vol. bd. 8). Aschehoug.
- Fagertun, F., & Mohr, B. L. (2015). *Krig og frigjøring i nord*. Orkana akademisk.
- Farberov, S. (2022). 'Not a bluff': Putin mobilizes reservists, threatens West with nuclear weapons. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://nypost.com/2022/09/21/putin-sets-partial-mobilization-in-russia-threatens-enemies-as-ukraine-war-reaches-nearly-7-months/>
- Fassin, D. (2001). The biopolitics of otherness: Undocumented foreigners and racial discrimination in French public debate. *Anthropology today*, 17(1), 3-7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.00039>
- Finnmarken. (2022, 4.11.22). Sør-Varanger kommune sier ikke opp vennskapsavtalene med Russland. *Finnmarken*.
- Finnset, K. A., Wilhelms, H., Øvrebø, E. F., & Bryn, I. (2022, 26.10.22). Ola Kaldager mener Norge har vært naive, og er ikke overrasket over spion anholdt i Tromsø. *NRK Troms og Finnmark*.
- Fors, B. S. (2018). *Border Performances: Politics, art and tourism where Norway meets Russia* [UiT The Arctic University of Norway].
- Gjerstad, S., Loe, I. L. P., (USA), M. A., & Tønnessen, M. S. (2022). *Derfor er Swift-utestengelse et viktig økonomisk våpen mot Russland*. TV2. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://www.tv2.no/nyheter/utenriks/derfor-er-swift-utestengelse-et-viktig-okonomisk-vapen-mot-russland/14608337/>
- Grimnes, O., K. (2009). Hvor står okkupasjonshistorien nå? . *Nytt norsk tidsskrift*.
- Grønvik, Y. (2022, 26.10.22). Står fast ved politifaglig vurdering. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Gubrium, E., Aasland, A., Lindskog, B. V., Arteaga, E., & Mikheev, I. (2024). "It Seemed Like Forever!" Shrinking Spaces of Conviviality at the Border of Norway and Russia. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 1-20.
- Götz, E., & Staun, J. (2022). Why Russia attacked Ukraine: Strategic culture and radicalized narratives. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(3), 482-497. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2082633>
- Hajer, M., & Versteeg, W. (2005). A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: Achievements, challenges, perspectives. *Journal of environmental policy & planning*, 7(3), 175-184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15239080500339646>
- Hansen, L. (2000). The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School. *Millennium*, 29(2), 285-306. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298000290020501>
- Henley, J. (2022). *Gross sabotage': traces of explosives found at sites of Nord Stream gas leaks*. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/18/gross-sabotage-traces-of-explosives-found-at-sites-of-nord-stream-gas-leaks>
- Holmes, M. C. S., & Sollerman, Y. S. (2022). *Venstre om regjeringens havne-skjerpning: Går ikke langt nok*. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/GM32zQ/venstre-om-regjeringens-havne-skjerpning-gaar-ikke-langt-nok>
- Holtmark, S. G., & Mankova, P. (2015). *Naboer i frykt og forventning : Norge og Russland 1917-2014* (Vol. b. 2)]. Pax.
- Hoogensen, G., & Stuvøy, K. (2006). Gender, resistance and human security. *Security Dialogue*, 37(2), 207-228.
- Hoogensen Gjørøv, G. (2024). *Hybrid CoE Working Paper 30: Security and geopolitics in the Arctic: The increase of hybrid threat activities in the Norwegian High North*. <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/20240327-Hybrid-CoE-Working-Paper-30-Security-and-geopolitics-in-the-Arctic-WEB.pdf>

- Huidtfeldt, A. (2022, 23.02.2022). *Tale ved Kirkeneskonferansen 2022*.
https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/innlegg_kirkenes/id2901799/
- Huidtfeldt, A. (2023, 2.3.23). *Innlegg på Kirkeneskonferansen 2023*.
https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/innlegg_kirkenes/id2965087/
- Ingebrigtsen, S. (2022, 28.10.22). Savnet russiske konkurrenter. *Sør-Varanger Avis*, 8-9.
- Ingebrigtsen, S. (2023, 8.3.23). Utenriksministeren ville snakke med ungdom i Kirkenes. *Sør-Varanger Avis* 12-13.
- Karamanau, Y., & Litvinova, D. (2024, 6.March). A timeline of restrictive laws that authorities have used to crack down on dissent in Putin's Russia. *apnews.com*.
<https://apnews.com/article/russia-election-repressive-laws-dissent-5927d8932736636a9339fdcbabd2331>
- Korobochkin, M. (1995). Soviet policy toward Finland and Norway, 1947-1949. *Scandinavian journal of history (trykt utg.)*. 20 :1995 :3, S.[185]-207.
- Kråkenes, C., & Tronsen, J. H. (2022, 25.10.22). Russland truer med å trekke seg fra fiskeriavtale dersom Norge stenger ute russiske fiskebåter. *NRKTroms og Finnmark*.
- Larsen, H. (2022, 3.11.22). Russere i Norge har det tungt etter at krigen startet i Ukraina. *NRK Troms og Finnmark*.
- Larsen, H., & Lydersen, T. (2023). – *Det siste vi trenger er økt polarisering*. Retrieved 09.05.24 from <https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/arbeiderpartiet-reagerer-kraftig-pa-listhaugs-utspill-om-at-norge-bor-skrote-urfolks-rettigheter-1.16333639>
- Mehl, E. E. (2022, 18.10.22). *Statement by the Minister of Justice and Public Security at the press brief about the current situation*. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/justis-og-beredskapsministerens-innlegg-pa-pressebriefen-om-dagens-situasjon/id2935709/>
- Monsen, T. (2023a, 3.3.23). - Forandring i Russland er mulig. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Monsen, T. (2023b, 3.3.23). Forskere oppfordrer til historisk bevissthet. *Sør-Varanger Avis*, 10-11.
- Monsen, T. (2023c, 16.6.22). Vil ikke øke spenningen. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Myhre, M. H., Aasland, A., & Holm-Hansen, J. (2024). 'Crimea will forever be Russian': dissenting Norwegian media discourses on Russia's annexation of Crimea. *European politics and society (Abingdon, England)*, 25(1), 185-208.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2022.2103286>
- Myklebost, K. A. (2023). Minnediplomati i grenseland. De russisk-norske patriotiske minneturene 2011–2019. *Nordisk Østforum*, 37(2023), 130-155.
<https://doi.org/10.23865/noros.v37.5514>
- Mæland, M. (2022, 4.11.22). Derfor må vi si opp vennsksavtalene. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Nilsen, T. (2022). *Hybrid threats researcher detained in Tromsø on suspicion of being Russian agent*. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/10/russian-citizen-arrested-tromso-suspicion-spying>
- Nilssen, A. S. (2015). *Norske premisser. En diskursanalyse av regjeringens og mediers oppfatning av Russland*
- Njølstad, O. (2008). *Jens Chr. Hauge : fullt og helt*. Aschehoug.
- Novikova, K. (2022, 7.3.22). Verden ser helt annerledes ut sett fra Russland. *Finnmarken*.
- Nævestad, K. (2022, 26.10.22). - Dere bør holde dere unna til krigen er over. *Finnmarken*, 12-13.
- Nævestad, K., & Sandø, T. (2022, 3.3.22). Her leverer harald (64) tilbake russisk medalje. *Finnmarken*.
- Olafsbye, G. (1998). *Grenser: Nærhet og distanse mellom nordmenn og russere i Sør-Varanger*. University of Oslo].

- Onsager, J. E., & Stuvøy, K. (2022). Barentssamarbeidet og geopolitisk spenning: En analyse av norske erfaringer og legitimeringspraksiser. *Internasjonal politikk*, 80(3), 350-374. <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v80.3577>
- Orinor. (2021). *Grensekryssende verdiskapning i nord*.
- Paulgaard, G., & Soleim, M. N. (2023). The arctic migration route: local consequences of global crises. *Journal of peace education*, 20(2), 196-216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2022.2159794>
- Peoples, C., & Vaughan-Williams, N. (2021). *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. Routledge Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203847473>
- Petterson, A. (2008). *Fortiet fortid : tragedien Norge aldri forsto : tvangsevakuering og overvintring i Nord-Troms og Finnmark 1944-1945*. Gjenreisningsmuseet for Finnmark og Nord-Troms.
- Radoilska, L. (2014). Immigration, interpersonal trust and national culture. *Critical review of international social and political philosophy*, 17(1), 111-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2013.851486>
- Regjeringen. (2022). *Norway provides additional weapons to Ukraine*. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/norway-provides-additional-weapons-to-ukraine/id2906254/>
- Regjeringen. (2023). *Enighet om 105 millioner kroner til aktivitet og utvikling i Øst-Finnmark*. Retrieved 12.05.24 from <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/enighet-om-105-millioner-kroner-til-aktivitet-og-utvikling-i-ost-finnmark/id2983423/>
- Repstad, P. (1993). *Mellom nærhet og distanse : kvalitative metoder i samfunnsfag* ([2. utg.]. ed.). Universitetsforl.
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing : a guide to theory and practice*. SAGE.
- Rowe, L. (2018). Fornuft og følelser: Norge og Russland etter Krim. *Nordisk Østforum*, 32, 1-20.
- Rowe, L., & Hønneland, G. (2010). Norge og Russland: Tilbake til normaltstanden. *Nordisk Østforum*, 24(2), 133-147. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-1773-2010-02-03>
- Rydland, M. (2022). Tidligere ordfører i Sør-Varanger gir tilbake Putin-medalje. *Finnmarken*.
- Røine, N., & al., e. (2023). *Vår tid er nå - Kirkenes i endring*
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research - A Practical Handbook*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Skogrand, K. (2004). *Alliert i krig og fred : 1940-1970* (Vol. B. 4). Eide.
- SSB. (2024). *Population* <https://www.ssb.no/kommunefakta/sor-varanger>
- Stormoen, O. M. (2023). Beroligelse 2.0: Teori, praksis og rammevilkår i en ny tid. *Internasjonal politikk*, 81(2), 158. <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v81.5276>
- Støre, J. G. (2022a, 28.10.22). *Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre Address to the Storting*. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/prime-minister-jonas-gahr-store-address-to-the-storting/id2939900/>
- Støre, J. G. (2022b, 3.3.22). *Prime Minister's address to the Storting on the war in Ukraine*. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/prime-ministers-address-to-the-storting-on-the-war-in-ukraine/id2902946/>
- Støre, J. G. (2023, 7.6.23). *Statsministerens innledning på pressekonferanse om Øst-Finnmark*. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/statsministerens-innledning-pa-pressekonferanse-om-ost-finnmark/id2983460/>
- Sætra, G. (2022a, 19.10.22). Politimesteren vil ha forbud mot russiske fiskefartøy. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Sætra, G. (2022b, 19.10.22). Politimesteren vil ha forbud mot russiske fiskefartøy. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.
- Sætra, G. (2022c, 24.02.22). Åpne, men aldri naive. *Sør-Varanger Avis*.

- Sørenmo, E., Bendixen, P. A., & Børfjord, F. N. (2022, 1.3.22). Rune Rafaelsen og Harald Sunde returnerer vennskapsmedaljen de fikk av Putin. *NRK TRoms og Finnmark*.
- Tolz, V., & Hutchings, S. (2023). Truth with a Z: disinformation, war in Ukraine, and Russia's contradictory discourse of imperial identity. *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 39(5), 347-365.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586x.2023.2202581>
- Toscano, L. O. d. A. (2019). *Kirkenes: a case for borderland Norwegians? An analysis of the discourses and practices towards Russia following the Storskog and Frode Berg cases*
- Wilhelmsen, J. (2017a). How does war become a legitimate undertaking?: re-engaging the post-structuralist foundation of securitization theory. *Cooperation and conflict*, 52(2).
- Wilhelmsen, J. (2023). Avskrekking og beroligelse. Hvilken effekt har denne politikken, herunder basepolitikken, hatt for Russlands politikk overfor Norge. In: Rapport til Forsvarskommisjonen.
- Wilhelmsen, J. (2017b). How does war become a legitimate undertaking? Re-engaging the post-structuralist foundation of securitization theory. In *Cooperation and Conflict* SAGE knowledge. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836716648725>
- Wilhelmsen, J., & Gjerde, K. L. (2018). Norway and Russia in the Arctic. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*, 9, 382-407.
- Williams, P. D. a. M., M. (2018). *Security Studies*. . Routledge.
- Winther Jørgensen, M., & Phillips, L. (1999). *Diskursanalyse som teori og metode*. Roskilde Universitetsforl. Samfundslitteratur.
- Winther Jørgensen, M., & Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. Sage.
- Zysk, K. (2020). *Russia's Military Build-Up in the Arctic: to What End?* (CNA Occasional Paper, Issue.
- Østhagen, A. (2023). *Hybrid CoE Paper 18: The Arctic after Russia's invasion of Ukraine: The increased risk of conflict and hybrid threats*.
- Østvik, H. (2022, 24.10.22). - Altfor sein reaksjon. *Finnmarken*.
- Åsali, S., & Ellingsen, R. (2022, 27.10.22). Mener at flere bør gjøre som Tromsø og avslutte avtaler med russiske vennskapsbyer. *NRK Troms og Finnmark*
- Aasland, A., & Myhre, M. H. (2023). *Nordmenns holdninger til Russland, russere og norsk russlandspolitikk – en spørreundersøkelse* (NIBR kortnotat, Issue.

APPENDIX

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

Grensekommunen Sør-Varanger: HVORDAN PÅVIRKER KRIGEN I UKRAINA LOKALSAMFUNNET?

Formålet med prosjektet

Kunne du tenke deg å delta i et forskningsprosjekt som ser på

- hvordan krigen i Ukraina påvirker lokalsamfunnet i Sør-Varanger, en kommune som ligger helt på grensen mellom Norge og Russland, der en betydelig andel av innbyggerne har etnisk russisk bakgrunn og der en stor del av næringsgrunnlaget har vært basert på samarbeid over grensen med Russland?
- Målet med studien er å undersøke hvordan den nasjonale sikkerhetsretorikken i kjølvannet av krigen påvirker hverdagen, følelsen av trygghet/sikkerhet og tilliten i lokalsamfunnet.
- Studien er en mastergradsoppgave ved Senter for fredsstudier ved Universitetet i Tromsø.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får denne forespørselen fordi

- Du er innbygger i Sør-Varanger og vil bidra til å dokumentere hvordan en konflikt et annet sted i Europa får direkte konsekvenser for et lokalsamfunn som ikke er direkte berørt av konflikten.
- Det er viktig å få et så representativt bilde av de ulike oppfatningene relatert til sikkerhet, trygghet og tillit som mulig, og jeg tror du vil bidra til nettopp det.
- Om lag 20 personer i kommunen vil få den samme henvendelsen og det du sier i intervjuet vil bli anonymisert i henhold til personvernet.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Senter for Fredsstudier ved Norges Arktiske Universitet (UiT) er ansvarlig for personopplysningene som behandles i prosjektet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

- Du vil bli intervjuet i om lag en time om spørsmål knyttet til hverdagsliv, identitet og kollektivt minne, trygghet og tillit i Sør-Varanger.
- Samtalen vil, dersom du samtykker til det, bli tatt opp slik at informasjonen du bidrar med blir så korrekt som mulig gjengitt.
- Opplysningene vil bli ivaretatt i henhold til personvernet.
- Samtalen vil bli elektronisk loggført, men for å ivareta personvernet vil navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine erstattes med en kode som lagres adskilt fra øvrig data.
- Jeg bruker VPN-løsning og totrinnsverifikasjon på alle digitale enheter der datamaterialet lagres for å unngå at uvedkommende får tilgang til opplysningene.
- Du vil bli anonymisert i studien, men alder, kjønn og etnisitet vil kunne bidra til viktige funn og bli publisert.
- Data, men ikke kontaktinformasjon og navn, vil være tilgjengelig for veileder og forskningsgruppen Key to Defence ved Senter for Fredsstudier ved UiT, Norge Arktiske Universitet.

Kort om personvern

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler personopplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Du kan lese mer om personvern her:

Spørsmål

Hvis du har spørsmål eller vil utøve dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med: Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, professor og veileder for masteroppgaven: gunhild.hoogensen.gjorv@uit.no eller personvernombudet på UiT, Norges Arktiske Universitet: personvernombud@uit.no

Med vennlig hilsen

Masterstudent

Anja Kristine Salo

Veileder

Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, professor

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet Grensekommunen Sør-Varanger: hvordan påvirker krigen i Ukraina lokalsamfunnet? Jeg har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål og samtykker til:

å delta i intervju om temaet

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet. Underskrift

