



# **Comparative Analysis of the Danish Government's Response to the Invasions of Ukraine and Gaza.**

**Master thesis**

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# Abstract

In this study, I investigate how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023. To answer the study's main question, I have formulated two sub-questions, shedding light on: how the Danish government framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding the invasions, focusing on aggression, self-defense, and victimhood, as well as similarities and differences when analyzing the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law. The study's epistemological positioning is critical theory, while critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used as the methodological tool. The theoretical framework consists of William Cavanaugh's theory of the myth of religious violence and Judith Butler's notion of grievability. The qualitative study is based on primary empirical data, including statements made by the Danish Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Defense at the time. In the analysis related to the first sub-question I conclude that, despite the invasions of Ukraine and Gaza being illegal, Russia and Hamas are framed as the sole aggressors. In contrast, Ukraine and Israel are framed as the victims, legitimizing their right to self-defense. Despite Gaza also being subjected to an illegal invasion, Palestinians are not recognized as victims entitled to the right of self-defense. In the analysis of the second sub-question, I conclude that this framing of social reality influences the Danish government's response to allegations of violations of international law. The government condemns alleged violations committed by Russia, endorsing the need for President Vladimir Putin and his government to be held accountable while neglecting to do the same regarding Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In the study, I conclude that the Danish government legitimizes violence carried out by actors it perceives as aligned with Western ideology, framing it as necessary to ensure global stability while de-legitimizing the actions of non-democratic and non-secular actors, framing them as fanatical. This reinforces an existing hierarchy of grievability in which the lives of non-democratic and non-secular actors are less recognized and, therefore, framed as legitimate targets. The findings and theoretical framework hold significance within a broader context as they can be applied to understanding how other Western countries frame global conflicts, uncovering harmful biases and power structures. This prompts a critical reassessment of Western values and legitimization of past and future warfare.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the last decades, several conflicts have shaped the Danish political landscape. However, in recent years, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023 have been the most prominent. Despite different contexts, the two invasions share features, such as territorial disputes, military invasions, numerous casualties, and massive civilian displacements. Moreover, both Russia and Israel have been accused of violations of international law, including direct targeting of civilians, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and persecution (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024). The consequences of the invasions have not only led to humanitarian catastrophes but sparked debate about equality and justice worldwide.

Denmark asserts itself as a devoted supporter of human rights and international law (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.). In fact, Danish Foreign Policy supports an international community in which the rule of law prevails, territorial disputes are resolved peacefully, and individuals who commit war crimes, terrorism, and genocide are held accountable for their actions (Udenrigsministeriet, n.d.). Despite these official values, the Danish government has faced condemnation regarding its different response to the invasions of Ukraine and Gaza, with many questioning the consistent application of these values. For over a year, following the Danish government's response to Israel's invasion of Gaza, thousands of Danish citizens have marched the streets in protest, claiming hypocrisy and demanding the Danish government be held accountable.

Inspired by these events, my study examines how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023. To answer this main question, the analysis focuses on two comparable events: the Danish government's initial response to the invasions, focusing on the discourse surrounding aggression, self-defense, and victimhood, and similarities and differences in responses to allegations of violation of international law. More specifically, my study focuses on the Danish government's response to attacks on hospitals and the arrest warrants issued by the International Crime Court<sup>1</sup> (ICC) for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu. In the study, I argue that ideological positionings and notions of grievability influence how the Danish government responded to the invasions of

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<sup>1</sup> The ICC is an international court investigating and persecuting individuals accused of genocide, war crimes, crimes of aggression, and crimes against humanity (International Criminal Court, n.d.). Today, more than 120 State Parties, including Denmark, are responsible for cooperating with the ICC, supporting its mission, and upholding its rules by exercising its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible (International Criminal Court, 2020).

Ukraine and Gaza. My epistemological positioning is critical theory aiming to uncover systems of oppression and achieve human emancipation. Influenced by critical theory, my methodological positioning is critical discourse analysis (CDA), focusing on how harmful power structures, ideologies, and narratives are framed through language. The theoretical framework consists of William Cavanaugh's theory of the myth of religious violence and Judith Butler's notion of grievability. While Cavanaugh helps uncover how Western ideology is used to legitimize and justify state violence, Butler provides the framework to analyze how lives are valued differently during warfare. A comprehensive introduction to the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological framework will be presented later in the study.

## Events leading up to the invasions and Denmark's involvement

CDA states that social, cultural, and historical contexts are essential to understanding discourse (Fairclough, 2015). Based on this assumption, and given the complexity of both invasions, a historical introduction is necessary to understand the context of the study.

### Russia and Ukraine

The escalation of events leading up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be traced back to 2013, following Ukrainian protests against President Viktor Yanukovich's rejection of greater economic integration with the European Union (EU), resulting in him fleeing the country (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). After Yanukovich fled, a pro-European interim government came to power (Ray, 2024). Claiming the need to protect Russian citizens, Russian President Putin ordered his troops to annex the Ukrainian region of Crimea in 2014, sparking armed conflict between Russian and Ukrainian forces. In 2016, the United States increased NATO's presence in the Baltic and Poland to prevent future Russian aggression. In 2018, Ukraine joined NATO in conducting air-scale exercises in western Ukraine (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). In 2021, Russia demanded that the United States and NATO cease military activity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, refrain from further NATO expansion towards Russia, and prevent Ukraine from joining the alliance. The demands were rejected and replaced with a warning that aggression towards Ukraine would result in economic sanctions. In response, Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). The war following the invasion is believed to have killed 30.000 Ukrainian civilians, leaving 14.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The number of internally displaced people

has reached 3.7 million, while 6.5 million have fled the country (Center for Preventive Action, 2025; UNWomen, 2024). On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2025, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine stated that Russian military combat losses amounted to 839.040 (Ukraine Government, 2025). The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has accused Russia of violations of international law, including attacks on Ukraine's energy-related infrastructure, attacks with explosive weapons affecting civilians and civilian objects in populated areas, torture of prisoners of war, and sexual and gender-based violence (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024). On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Putin for alleged war crimes committed from the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 (International Criminal Court, 2023).

Denmark supports Ukraine's right to self-defense, providing them with military equipment, national and international training assistance, and humanitarian and economic aid (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2024). Since 2022, Denmark has donated approximately 7.1 billion EUR in military support and 709 million EUR in civilian aid, not including contributions through the EU (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2024). The Danish government has also shown support by raising the Ukrainian flag in official state buildings and granting Ukrainian refugees a Temporary Protection Directive, giving them the right to reside, healthcare, education, work, and financial support (Folketinget, 2022; Visit Ukraine, 2024). Denmark does not support Russia's actions and has, along with the EU, imposed sanctions on countries supporting Russia (European Council, 2024).

## Israel and Palestine

The events leading up to Israel's invasion of Gaza can be traced back to the establishment of Israel in 1948, resulting in the displacement of around 750.000 Palestinians. The unresolved question of Palestinian self-determination led to the first intifada in 1987 (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). This was a Palestinian uprising characterized by non-violent demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes, putting pressure on Israel to negotiate (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, n.d.). The uprising resulted in the Oslo Accords, which recognized Palestinians' rule over parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and the mutual recognition between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel's government. Israel broke the agreement, sparking a more violent second intifada in 2000 (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). In response, Israel built a separation wall around and inside the perimeter of the West Bank, claiming the need for protection

(International Court of Justice, 2003). In 2006, Hamas<sup>2</sup> won the Palestinian elections, taking control of Gaza in 2007 (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). Viewing Hamas as a terror organization, Israel imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on Gaza. From 2007 until October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, violence between Israel and Gaza resulted in the killing of approximately 5.300 Palestinians and 250 Israelis (UNICEF, 2021). On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Hamas and other armed Palestinians launched an attack on Israel, killing 877 civilians and 314 military personnel and taking 252 hostages to Gaza (Human Rights Council, 2024). The day after, Israel declared war against Hamas, carrying out a “complete siege” on Gaza (Center for Preventive Action, 2025). The warfare against Hamas has killed at least 46.707 Palestinians while displacing 1.9 million out of around 2.3 million (AJLabs, 2025; World Health Organization, 2024). In contrast to the civilian population of Ukraine, Palestinians in Gaza have not been able to flee because of Israel’s air, land, and sea blockade (Frelick, 2024). According to The United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) 66% of the total structures in the Gaza Strip have been damaged (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2025). The United Nations (UN) states that 1.8 million experience critical levels of hunger (2024). In contrast, 1.200 Israelis have been killed and 5.432 injured, while 73 are still held hostage in Gaza by Hamas as of February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, of which 34 have been declared dead by Israel (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024; Bisset, Ledor, & Shapiro, 2025). Both Hamas and Israel have been accused of violations of international law. Violations committed by Israel include systematic direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, starvation, collective punishment, forcible transfer, torture, gender persecution, and sexual violence such as sexual humiliation and sexualized torture and abuse (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024). Violations committed by Hamas include direct attacks, inhumane treatment, kidnapping and torture of civilians, as well as sexual violence and sexualized desecration of corpses (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2024). In November 2024, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and Hamas commander Mohammed Deif for war crimes and crimes against humanity (United Nations, 2024).

Denmark officially supports a two-state solution, allocating around 60 million EUR in 2020 for the purpose (Udenrigsministeriet, 2020). However, Denmark does not recognize Palestine or their right

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<sup>2</sup> Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) rose from the first intifada. In 1988, Hamas’s charter denied peace resolutions with Israel, stating that the only solution for the Palestinian problem was to up-root Israel (Abu-Amr, 1993). In their charter from 2017, Hamas does not recognize Israel but accepts a Palestinian state in territories occupied in 1967. They wish for an independent Palestinian state, Jerusalem as the capital, and for Palestinian refugees to be able to return. (Middle East Eye, 2017; Wintour, 2017). Hamas is viewed as a terrorist organization by the EU and the United States (Robinson, 2017). In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly rejected the United States resolution to condemn Hamas (United Nations, 2018).



to self-defense, and given its status as a terror organization, Denmark does not collaborate with Hamas. Nonetheless, in March 2024, Denmark allocated approximately 14 million EUR to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (Udenrigsministeriet, 2023). In December 2024, the Danish government increased humanitarian aid by around 4.6 million EUR (Udenrigsministeriet, 2024). Denmark supports Israel's right to self-defense and collaborates with Israel in terms of research, technology, cybersecurity, and military, including arms trade (The Database of Military and Security Export, n.d.). Contrasting its support for Ukraine, Denmark has refused to help evacuate patients from Gaza despite the World Health Organization's (WHO) call for action in 2024 (Pedersen & Poulsen, 2024). In 2024, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen asked to examine whether all Gaza demonstrations in Denmark could be prosecuted for terror incitement (Ritzau, 2023). In December 2024, the Danish Parliament prohibited civilians and institutions from raising foreign flags except for those of the Nordic countries, Germany, and Ukraine (Justitsministeriet, 2024).

## Structure of the Thesis

Following this introduction, the study is organized into seven additional chapters. In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature and identify research gaps. In the chapter, I also present the main research question, sub-questions, and the study's objectives. Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical framework, detailing critical theory and my application of Butler and Cavanaugh's theories. Chapter 4 presents the methodological tools that I have used throughout my study. Chapter 5 examines how the Danish Government has framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding both invasions and how these narratives reflect discourse surrounding aggression, self-defense, and victimhood. Chapter 6 contains the second part of the analysis, examining similarities and differences in the Danish Government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza and how these can be understood. Finally, in Chapter 7, I present key findings addressing the research question and reflect on broader implications and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review, Research Questions and Objectives

This chapter presents the literature review, where I review works on framing and justification of war and identify relevant research gaps. This is followed by the study's main research question, related sub-questions, and objectives.

### Literature review

In the academic study of war, several authors have studied how it is justified. In his book *Selling a 'Just' War*, Michael J. Butler critically evaluates “framing of war” as a policy tool to gain public support and legitimize warfare within US foreign policy (2012). Instead of examining *whether* framing is used, Butler focuses on *how* and *why*. Butler presents case studies evaluating the just frame's relevance, credibility, and adaptability while reflecting on military force's long-term utility in US foreign policy. He concludes that “just” war frame is a central mechanism that US foreign decision-makers use. This is because wars categorized as “just” garner more support, leading to more successful military campaigns while legitimizing the larger enterprise of war. Although the book focuses on U.S. foreign policy and direct participation in warfare, it can be applied in a Danish context to understand the power of discourse when justifying war.

The research study by Mirjam Edel and Maria Josua combines framing theory with research on domestic and international dimensions of authoritarian rulers when examining how these justify repression (2018). In contrast to the previous study, this one investigates the nature and justification of frames rather than how they are transmitted or whether they are successful. Although the study focuses on an authoritarian context, it can be used to understand how states justify violence. The authors argue that states often frame groups as threats when justifying forceful actions against them. Justification often revolves around unity, legality, and security. The rhetoric is strategically selected to fit broader strategies, although not necessarily successful. Based on specific cases, the study found that protesters were accused of criminal behavior, terrorism, extremism, violence, and disruption. Over time, the terms became more focused on “values”, indicating a shift in framing. Nonetheless, the terrorism frame appears to be a popular justification in the current century as it resonates with concrete events and risks to which both domestic and international parties can relate. International influences play a significant role in the overall framing. These arguments are relevant when

examining the Danish government's initial response to the invasions and its reactions towards alleged violations of international law.

In the academic study of war, the concept of the War on Terror, coined by the George Bush administration after 9/11, has been widely researched. One of the studies discussing the matter is the article by Stephen D. Reese and Seth C. Lewis (2009). The authors regard the War on Terror as an ideological expression at a macro-level used to legitimize the invasion of Iraq. Moreover, they argue that the elite uses pre-existing cultural codes to gain support for warfare. The article concludes that the War on Terror was initially internalized and naturalized by the media and treated like an uncontested truth. Because of this, the term became an organizing principle rather than a policy label, paving the way for the legitimization of the Iraqi invasion. The label is still in use, showing that it has become deeply rooted in the cultural framework of American society. Although my study does not focus on media, the perspective is relevant when understanding the framing of discourse by the Danish government and its possible consequences.

In contrast to international studies, the essay by Robert D. DeLong (2009) and the article by Mads Daugbjerg and Birgitte Refslund Sørensen (2016) discuss Denmark's transformations in relation to domestic and foreign policy. DeLong recalls a time when Denmark was admired for upholding the rule of law and the importance of peaceful conflict resolution, nonintervention, and cooperation. Daugbjerg, Sørensen, and DeLong argue that this changed after Denmark's involvement in the War on Terror. The Danish Prime Minister at the time, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, compared the choice to invade Iraq with the Danish World War II resistance against the Nazis, claiming the moral obligation to free the population of Iraq from Saddam Hussein's regime and fight for security in the region. However, the lack of UN Security Council's authorization and violations of human rights in connection to the invasion of Iraq damaged the Scandinavian model of international relations and resulted in UN condemnation. The shift to a more politically and publicly accepted "active" use of military force overseas also escalated during Rasmussen's leadership, leading to Danish deployments in Afghanistan. This shift sets Denmark apart from other European and Scandinavian countries as the public support for overseas military deployment is higher than in any other coalition nation. Despite not directly concerning the framing of war, these studies serve to understand the Danish relationship with warfare, providing a deeper understanding of the underlying reasoning behind the Danish government's current responses to the invasions of Ukraine and Gaza.

Building on the discussion of Denmark's evolving stance on overseas military deployment, the article by Joep P. Cornelissen, Robin Holt, and Mike Zundel expands on how analogies and metaphors are used when framing and legitimizing strategic change (2011). Even though the authors focus on organizational management, it provides insight into how language can be used by the Danish government when framing the invasions of Ukraine and Gaza. The authors argue that analogies and metaphors can guide thinking and social acceptance as they represent familiar concepts, thus creating meaning and providing structure in unfamiliar situations. Analogical comparisons are most effective when change is additive to prior categories of understanding. In contrast, metaphorical comparisons seem more effective when change is not continuous with the past, allowing managers to draw on comparisons and categories beyond the organization. Moreover, the authors argue that analogies and metaphors that successfully illustrate how decisions are connected are more likely to legitimize change. The more the claim is framed within shared collective understandings, the more it is likely to be effective. Lastly, they argue that the degree of legitimacy's success depends on whether the framing aligns with the recipients' motives.

When examining the academic study of war, it is clear that research has been conducted regarding U.S. Foreign Policy and its framing and justification of war in the Middle East. The same has been researched within a Danish context. However, little research has been conducted exploring the Danish government's response to similar contemporary warfare, emphasizing how they are addressed, perceived, and legitimized within the same democratic context. Furthermore, there is a lack of research into whether the response is influenced by shared ideology and perceived value of the lives of those involved.

## Main Research Question & Sub-Questions

Based on these research gaps, my study addresses the Danish government's reaction to two contemporary invasions in which Denmark has voiced strong opinions. Specifically, the study asks how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023. Comparing the two invasions enables examining whether responses differ depending on the historical and sociocultural context, shared ideology, and the perceived value of human lives. Moreover, it enables to shed light on how the Danish government frames and legitimizes invasions that challenge Danish core values such as human rights principles and international law. To address the above, the study focuses on the Danish government's initial

response to the invasions, focusing on its discourse surrounding aggression, self-defense, and victimhood, as well as its response to allegations of violation of international law. The latter includes its response to attacks on hospitals as well as the arrest warrants issued by the ICC for President Putin and Prime Minister Netanyahu. The following sub-questions have been formulated to guide the analysis:

- How has the Danish government framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023, and how do these narratives reflect discourse surrounding aggression, self-defense, and victimhood?
- Which similarities and differences can be identified in the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza, and how can these be understood?

## Objectives

My overall objective is to uncover how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023. Specifically, I aim to uncover how the Danish government has framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding the invasions, focusing on aggression, self-defense, and victimhood, as well as understanding similarities and differences in the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza. The findings may apply to understanding Danish discourses surrounding other global conflicts, both in the past and future, uncovering harmful biases that are normalized within the Danish government.

Drawing on existing academic war literature, the study offers a novel combination of existing theoretical perspectives shedding light on how Denmark responds differently to warfare and alleged violations of international law based on whether it perceives countries as being aligned with Western ideology and thereby deserving of grief. The study holds significance within a broader conceptual framework as it can be applied to understanding how other Western countries frame global conflicts, uncovering harmful biases and power structures. This prompts a critical reassessment of Western values and legitimization of past and future warfare, challenging the notion that the West is inherently objective and righteous.

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework I constructed to analyze how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israel's invasion of Gaza. In it, I propose an innovative combination of two theories, that of Cavanaugh on the myth of religious violence and that of Butler on grievable lives.

### Critical Theory

The study's epistemological positioning is critical theory, as I analyze power relations leading to societal inequalities and marginalization, uncovering and challenging systems of oppression. Critical theory breaks with the idea of neutral science, in which the researcher is judgment-free. Instead, the field of study is examined based on an ideal of the conditions for human emancipation (Jacobsen, Schnack, Wahlgren, & Madsen, 2007). My study, which is based on qualitative research, presupposes that all lives should be equally valued and acknowledged regardless of ideology, nationality, or religion.

### William Cavanaugh: The Myth of Religious Violence

In his book *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Root of Modern Conflict*, William Cavanaugh draws on critical theory, postmodern critique, and theology to argue that Western societies have created a concept of violent religion to legitimize Western violence (2009). According to Cavanaugh, this conceptualization impacts both institutions and war policies. The "religious other" is often viewed as irrational, while the democratic, secular West is understood as rational. For this reason, violence committed by non-secular countries is seen as primitive and fanatical, while violence committed by the West is viewed as a means of peace. Cavanaugh argues that the separation of religious violence and political violence is a misleading invention of the West as no definition of religion can be separated from politics. Furthermore, Cavanaugh argues that secular ideologies can be just as violent and irrational. He argues that the West is not a fixed entity but a construct framing the world in a binary relation of "the West and the rest". However, the myth of religious violence is often used to legitimize the marginalization of non-Western societies and military interventions with the intent of bombing those into democracy. Muslim communities are especially portrayed as villains,

as religious expressions often play a more significant role in the public sphere compared to the West and because Islam often mixes religion and politics. Cavanaugh argues that the myth of religious violence is not necessarily antireligious but “anti-public religion”, based on the belief that the secularization of politics is fundamental to a civilized society. Therefore, societies where religion does not play a public role are considered superior, making reasoning with the “religious other” pointless. Cavanaugh is not opposed to the separation between church and state, nor does he deny that certain aspects of Muslim beliefs can promote violence. However, he argues that it is essential not to disregard secular forms of imperialism and violence used for centuries by Western societies to impose their beliefs on others. This is crucial as the marginalization of the Other is self-reinforcing, eventually turning it into an unquestionable reality. Due to the overall focus on societal and global ideologies, narratives, and power relations, Cavanaugh’s theory offers a macro-oriented perspective.

## Judith Butler: Grievable Lives

Judith Butler’s notion of grievability draws on social constructivism. In their<sup>3</sup> book *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Butler uses the term “framing”, arguing that we are all recruited into a specific understanding of reality through the state’s directive (2016). In other words, the elite has the power to decide which lives are worth protecting and which are dispensable during warfare. Often, the lives that are mostly viewed as dispensable are the ones that do not align with the dominant ideologies. When framed as threats, populations can be viewed as acceptable targets, encouraging acceptance and normalization of war. Butler argues that avoiding destruction and civilian harm during war is impossible. However, the construction of international laws attempts to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable damage and war crimes, framing whose lives are worth protecting and which are dispensable. This categorization shapes social norms, reinforcing social inequalities. Butler distinguishes between grievable and ungrievable lives. Grievable lives refer to those who are acknowledged and grieved over when they perish, while ungrievable lives are never recognized and, therefore, not mourned when destroyed. Destroying them might even seem unnecessary, as it only reinforces their lack of value. This categorization is not only maintained in times of war. Instead, the times of war reinforce this sentiment. In their book, Butler also touches upon religion and modernity, arguing that the understanding of liberal freedom as relying on a hegemonic culture of “modernity” can result in cultural and religious hatred and objectification. According to Butler, liberal and secular

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Butler is referred to using they/them, as those are their preferred pronouns.

countries often perceive themselves as enlightened while viewing non-liberal and religious societies as barbaric or underdeveloped. In this context, Butler addresses how war and immigration policies have been used to mobilize liberal values at the expense of Muslim populations, as they are understood as a threat to Western values such as gender equality, sexual freedom, and democracy. Butler's theoretical frame is both micro- and macro-oriented. The theory is micro-oriented because it focuses on how individual lives are valued. Moreover, it provides the lens to understand why some lives are marginalized and dehumanized more than others. However, Butler connects this framing with more macro-oriented societal structures, discussing how ideologies, politics, and power intersect with those dynamics.

## Analytical Contribution

In this study, I have applied the theoretical framework through a deductive approach (Bingham, 2023), testing how these theoretical assumptions manifest in the Danish government's public response to the two invasions. The theoretical framework draws on slightly different but complementary analytical positionings. As mentioned, Butler draws on social constructivism, while Cavanaugh's theory combines elements of critical theory with theology and postmodern critique. Moreover, while Butler's notion of grievability can be considered both micro- and macro-oriented, Cavanaugh's theory is more macro-oriented. Despite these differences, both theories focus on the power of language and discourse, wanting to dismantle normative understandings and categories to challenge and change social reality for the better. My combination of Butler's and Cavanaugh's theories offers a holistic understanding of how ideological frameworks influence individual narratives of marginalization and grief and how religion can play a role in this process. The shared focus on dismantling normative understandings is closely related to critical theory, which is the epistemological positioning of the study.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the methodological lens in this study, is influenced by critical theory as it uncovers how power structures that generate inequality and oppression are framed through language, wishing to identify and challenge morally faulty societal developments. CDA provides a concrete method to analyze statements made by the Danish government. By combining CDA with Butler's and Cavanaugh's theories, my study provides an interdisciplinary approach to uncovering how language legitimizes violence and the value of human life in public discourse.



## Chapter 4: Methodological Framework

In this chapter, I outline the methodological framework used throughout the study.

### Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA, which draws on critical theory and was developed by Norman Fairclough, serves as the methodological lens to identify how power dynamics, ideologies, and narratives are framed through language (2015). Fairclough argues that power can result in unacceptable and unjustifiable actions as it constructs meaning, common-sense assumptions, and societal values, potentially contributing to constructing and maintaining unequal and harmful ideologies. Analyzing power relations at the elite level is crucial, as elite groups influence social reality, including how events, issues, and social processes are discussed and understood. Moreover, the elite has the power to frame the discourse in such a way that it justifies and legitimizes their actions while downplaying or excluding counterarguments. When analyzing discourse as a social practice, CDA incorporates the following dimensions (Fairclough, 2015):

*Description:* This dimension describes linguistic features. Drawing on this dimension, I focus on metaphors and figurative and absolute language when analyzing statements made by the Danish government. The scope is understanding how words reflect and promote specific social realities and ideologies. Moreover, based on this dimension, I explore how discourse constructs a relationship between the statements, the invasions, and the audience, as specific wordings convey neutrality, condemnation, or solidarity, revealing underlying attitudes.

*Interpretation:* This dimension focuses on the relationship between text and audience. Fairclough argues that social, cultural, and historical contexts are essential to understanding the broader context of discourse. Drawing on this dimension, I examine how Denmark's strained relationship with Russia, its alliance with Ukraine, its recollection of the Holocaust, its support of Israel, and its lack of recognition of Palestine influence statements about the invasions and how the audience receives them.

*Explanation:* This dimension focuses on discourse as a social process within broader social, cultural, and political contexts and how this is produced, distributed, and understood. The purpose is to understand how discourse affects existing values and ideologies – both reproducing, challenging, or

transforming them. I use this dimension to uncover how discourse legitimizes dominant ideologies and what the dominant discourse might obscure or silence. For example, Denmark's Western alignment with Ukraine could reinforce a framing of social reality in which Ukraine is viewed as the victim and Russia as the aggressor, legitimizing Ukrainian acts of self-defense.

## Deductive approach

As mentioned, my study adopts a deductive approach, meaning that I have selected the theoretical framework before analyzing the empirical data material (Bingham, 2023). I have selected the theoretical framework based on prepositions that have emerged from prior observations and knowledge about the field of study. My goal has been to test how those theories manifest in practice when analyzing how the Danish government has responded publicly to the two invasions.

## Critical reflections

Critical theory and CDA impact how the field of study is analyzed and understood, so it is essential to approach it critically. When conducting critical analyses, it is up to the researcher to interpret the ideal conditions for human emancipation and how they relate to social reality (Jacobsen, Schnack, Wahlgren, & Madsen, 2007). For this reason, a critique of critical theory and CDA could be that it is impossible to uncover an objective truth. However, my study aims to initiate a dialogue concerning potential normalized social inequalities within the Danish government. Another critique could be that my personal bias can influence how the empirical data is collected and analyzed. This is especially relevant when analyzing politically charged themes. Aware of potential biases, I have reflected on those before and throughout the study. Moreover, I have ensured transparency when selecting and addressing empirical data. Reliability and validity can also be problematic when conducting critical studies, as they are often impossible to reproduce. For this reason, the study contains a detailed explanation of the analytical process, including the linguistic and discursive features examined. Reliability has been ensured by referencing empirical data, making comparisons possible.

## Data Sources

The purpose of my study is to analyze how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israel's invasion of Gaza. For this reason, the empirical data consists of primary data in the form of interviews, official press conferences, statements posted by Danish politicians on their Instagram and X accounts, and news articles in which statements made by the respective politicians are included. I have chosen to focus on primary sources as they offer direct and unfiltered access to statements, making the responses more reliable and trustworthy.

## Selection criteria

The analysis is primarily focused on statements made by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, who held office during both invasions. Her statements are crucial as she represents Denmark's official stance. To ensure a nuanced perspective, the study also includes statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense during both invasions. Statements made by the Minister of Foreign Relations are included, as the Minister is responsible for managing Denmark's relations with other countries, holding Denmark accountable to international law, providing humanitarian aid, and imposing sanctions when needed (Udenrigsministeriet, n.d.). The Minister of Defense is responsible for Danish cooperation with NATO and other alliances, Denmark's military operations, military aid, or assistance in times of conflict (Forsvarsministeriet, n.d.). Due to space constraints, Facebook statements are not included as they reflect the same stance expressed on X and Instagram.

## Analyzing the Danish Government's Initial Response

When examining how the Danish government has framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding the invasions of Ukraine, the analysis includes statements by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Jeppe Kofod, and Morten Bødskov, who at the time held the position of Minister of Defense. The data includes statements made within the first three days of the invasion. The initial narratives surrounding the invasions of Gaza include statements made by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, and Troels Lund Poulsen, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense at the time. Because Hamas's actions are crucial to understanding the following invasion of Gaza and the government's response, the data

includes statements made from the 7<sup>th</sup> of October until the 11<sup>th</sup> of October.

### Analyzing the Danish Government's Response to Alleged Violations of International Law

When analyzing similarities and differences in the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza, the statements collected are those of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Defense Minister at the time, Troels Lund Poulsen, and Minister of Foreign Relations at the time, Lars Løkke Rasmussen. The statements are not restricted to a specific time frame, as this would impair the ability to analyze the broader context and understand the full extent of the government's response.

## Analytical Process

In order to organize the empirical data, reduce complexity, and identify discourse patterns, I have coded the empirical data, following a deductive approach (Bingham, 2023). Firstly, I read the statements multiple times to understand narratives and detect patterns and themes guided by the pre-defined theoretical framework. I then highlighted recurring phrases, metaphors, and significant narratives. Afterwards, I created categories relevant to the selected theories and the scope of the study, such as "aggression" and "victimhood". I assigned different colors to the statements, depending on the corresponding theory. Finally, I selected and used the most meaningful statements in the analysis.

## Chapter 5: The Danish Government's Initial Response Surrounding the Invasions

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023 sparked immediate reactions worldwide, prompting a swift response from the Danish government. In this analysis, I examine how the Danish government framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding the invasions and how these narratives reflect discourse surrounding aggression, self-defense, and victimhood. Throughout the analysis, CDA is the methodological tool used to identify how power dynamics and narratives are framed through language. The theoretical framing used throughout the analysis consists of William Cavanaugh's theory of the myth of religious violence and Judith Butler's notion of grievability. The analysis is structured by focusing on each invasion separately, examining the selected discourses within each context. Finally, an interim conclusion summarizes key findings.

### Framing of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

#### Russia as the Aggressor

According to Cavanaugh, Western societies have framed religion as prone to violence, enforcing an understanding of violence committed by non-Western countries as primitive, irrational, or fanatical. In contrast, violence committed by the democratic, secular West is understood as rational and a means for peace (2009). Although Russia's invasion of Ukraine is framed as driven by secular and imperial ambitions, the concepts of *rationality* and *irrationality* can still be applied, as Cavanaugh's myth of religious violence is rooted in Western liberal nation-states, which is characterized by democracy and the rule of law (Munro, 2014). While it is true that Ukraine is not a Western country and has been a part of a one-party authoritarian state during the Soviet Union, it has sought to transition into a democracy since its independence in 1991 (Szostek & Toremark, 2023). Today, Denmark views Ukraine as part of the Western world and endorses its ambition to fully join the EU and NATO (Udenrigsministeriet, 2022). In contrast, Denmark views Russia as a non-Western, authoritarian country that does not live up to liberal democratic standards due to manipulated elections, oppression of opposition, media restrictions, and the absence of freedom of speech (Wallander, 2021). This aligns Danish and Ukrainian values while starkly contrasting the values that Denmark attributes to Russia.

On the day following the invasion, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen initiated an official press conference by stating: “Last night, Russia launched a large-scale military operation against Ukraine. A full invasion. Attacks on Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, and several other Ukrainian cities (...). Today is a dark day for peace in the world” (Statsministeriet, 2022). From a CDA perspective, Frederiksen uses linguistic features to convey a sentiment of condemnation towards Russia. This is evidenced by the words *invasion* and *attack* and the metaphor “dark day for peace in the world”. The reference to darkness signifies sadness, fear, and despair. Drawing on Cavanaugh’s theory, peace can be associated with larger ideals of harmony and freedom, which Western liberal states argue to uphold. When seen in this context, Frederiksen underlines that those qualities are associated with Ukraine, Denmark, and the rest of the “free world”, insinuating they are at risk of disruption. The following statement in her speech supports this framing of reality:

(...). It is an attack on the era that has prevailed since the end of the Cold War. (...). A phrase we have been fortunate not to have had to say in the same way for many years (...) Russia’s actions are completely unacceptable. Denmark stands together with our allies in a clear condemnation and in clear action. This must have serious consequences for Russia (...). In other words, we are now seeing Putin’s true identity. And it is ominous for all of us who desire security, peace, and democracy. The Russian invasion is brutal, and it is an unprovoked act. (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

Once again, negative absolute wording such as *unacceptable*, *brutal*, and *unprovoked* is used, positioning Russia as the sole aggressor. CDA allows for identifying references to historical, social, or cultural contexts used to frame and reinforce specific power relations and narratives (Fairclough, 2015). By referencing the era following the Cold War, Frederiksen not only reminds Danes that they have been lucky to live in a peaceful country for many years but reinvokes the fear and uncertainty that characterized the period during the Cold War in which constant tensions between the West and the Soviet Union were a reality (Britannica, 2025).

The metaphor “we are now seeing Putin’s true identity” is a powerful linguistic metaphor. Identity refers to a person’s fundamental characteristics, which the Danish government does not have access to as none of the politicians have close relationships with the president. Instead, the metaphor is arguably meant to insinuate that Putin has been hiding his true intentions, framing him not only as the aggressor but as cunning, calculating, and untrustworthy.

The Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jeppe Kofod, also references historical events by stating that: “This is one of the darkest days in Europe since the end of World War II” (Statsministeriet, 2022).

The day after, he additionally posted the following on his X account: “(...) Russia’s attack on freedom and democracy is incompatible with @coe (Council of Europe) (...)” (Kofod, 2022).

Based on Cavanaugh’s theory, one could argue that the statements made by Frederiksen and Kofod reference Western governance, reinforcing collective identity surrounding democratic values and ideology while positioning Denmark and its allies as rational and lawful representatives of peace. According to Cavanaugh, Western societies often perceive violence committed by non-Western actors as primitive and irrational (2009). Based on this understanding, one could argue that their statements frame Russia’s actions towards Ukraine as backwarded – a step back on the history ladder that threatens the progressive values that Ukraine, Denmark, and the West have worked hard to achieve. This framing of reality can be seen as part of the broader discourse positioning Western democratic countries as rational actors while framing non-Western authoritarian actors as sole irrational aggressors.

## Ukraine’s Right to Self-defense

During the initial press conference, Frederiksen stated that the invasion violates the UN Charter and international law (Statsministeriet, 2022). The same sentiment was shared through the Danish Prime Minister’s officer’s account on Instagram the same day (Frederiksen, 2022). The statements imply that liberal nation-states are rooted in principles of cooperation and law, informing the ideological positioning that violations of such should be condemned and acted upon immediately. The need to react is stressed both by Kofod and Frederiksen during the initial press conference:

The Prime Minister will meet with the other EU heads of state and government this evening, where sanctions will be at the top of the agenda. And we will work for a swift and decisive EU response that can be felt. There is a need to speak in a language that Putin understands. (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

The Danish government will work to ensure that the EU imposes the most extensive sanctions Russia has ever seen. (...). We must speak in a language that Putin understands. (...). I would like to emphasize that both Denmark and the West have wanted dialogue. We have tried to find a diplomatic solution until the very end. However, dialogue – it requires reciprocity. (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

Examining the statements through CDA and Cavanaugh’s theory, words such as *extensive sanctions* and *decisive responses* frame the power relationship between Russia and Ukraine as well as the power relation between Russia and the West. Russia is framed as the aggressor, leaving no other choice than

to take measures of self-defense, which are legitimized for this very reason. Because Russia is a proper noun, the phrase: “a swift and decisive EU response that can be felt” can be understood as a metaphor. The verb *feel* is often used to describe emotional and physical experiences, invoking a personal element to the act of self-defense, emphasizing the response’s strength and severity. Based on Cavanaugh’s theory, the statement: “The Danish government will work to ensure that the EU imposes the most extensive sanctions Russia has ever seen. (...). We must speak a language that Putin understands” not only stresses the Western right to self-defense and the ideological standpoint that Putin’s actions threaten Western progress. It also implies that Denmark, being the rational party, must lower itself to a lesser level to engage with the president of a more primitive regime, only capable of communicating through violence and aggression.

During the initial press conference, the Minister of Defense, Morten Bødskov, made it clear that Denmark had deployed forward-positioned F-16 fighter jets in Bornholm, allowing Denmark to respond and deter threats. Bødskov also assured Denmark would send over 200 soldiers to NATO’s forward presence in Estonia (Statsministeriet, 2022). During a press conference taking place three days later, Bødskov and Frederiksen stated that Denmark would donate approximately 2.700 anti-tank weapons to Ukraine (Batchelor, 2022). The same day, the Prime Minister spoke at the demonstration for Ukraine in front of the Russian Embassy in Copenhagen, stating:

(...) Family fathers taking up arms. Young Ukrainians on their way home from abroad with a one-way ticket – to defend their country. Danish Ukrainians traveling through Europe to bring their compatriots to safety. A steadfast president leading a brave nation. (...). We see it all. Both the horrors of war and the courage of the Ukrainians. (...). The EU and the West have in recent days stood together with sanctions of unprecedented scale, and we will go further with even harsher sanctions. (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

Frederiksen refers to sanctions when describing the actions taken by the EU and the West. However, the discourse emphasizes violence more strongly than the initial press conference. This is evident by the referral to “fathers taking up arms” and “Ukrainians on the way home to defend their country”. The sentences refer to civilians who cannot impose political sanctions on Russia, arguably meaning that the self-defense in question is direct violence. The Prime Minister and the Danish government endorse these actions by using the words *brave*, *respect*, and *sacrifice*. The phrase: “Young Ukrainians on their way home from abroad with a one-way ticket” can be understood as a metaphor, highlighting that these civilians might not return home. Whether this implies death during battle or



that the fight for self-defense against Russia will go on indefinitely is unclear. Nonetheless, the message is clear: Denmark legitimizes Ukrainian violence as a means of self-defense.

Cavanaugh critiques the War on Terror narrative, which justifies violence in the name of national security (2009). Although Russia's invasion is not categorized as terror, Cavanaugh's argument helps understand the Danish government's legitimization of violence. During the first three days of the invasion, all three politicians supported the Ukrainian self-defense. This has not wavered since. Even though Denmark has not deployed military personnel into battle, it has provided weapons, knowing that it would lead to violence. Today, we know that the war has killed over 30.000 civilians (Ukraine Government, 2025). By framing Ukrainian violence as a legitimate response towards aggression, much like the War on Terror was framed as a defense of liberal values, Denmark participates in constructing a global ideological framework in which Western violence is not only permissible but necessary to defend global freedom.

#### *Excluding the Russian Version of Reality*

Cavanaugh argues that viewing the West as progressive limits the ability to understand how and why other societies operate the way they do (2009). With this perspective in mind, it is interesting that the statements made by the Danish government did not include Russia's justification of events. This is except for the speech held by Frederiksen at the demonstration for Ukraine in front of the Russian Embassy, where she stated: "The Russian propaganda machine is running strong right now with false stories about a Ukrainian military threat to Russia and sabotage – even genocide" (Statsministeriet, 2022). On the day of the invasion, Russian President Putin did, in fact, claim in a press conference that one of the goals was to end Russian genocide, stating:

(...) in accordance with article 51 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter (...) I made the decision to carry out a special military operation. The purpose (...) is to protect the people who for eight years now have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. (...) (Michael, 2023).

Indeed, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has found no evidence of genocide (2025). Instead, Russia's invasion of Ukraine violates Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity of another state (Brunk, 2025). Still, it is worth addressing that Russia's justifications are dismissed as a propaganda machine highlighting the absurdity of those claims. During the initial press conference, the Danish Prime Minister and former Minister of Foreign Affairs clarified that Putin had rejected all dialogue and diplomatic solutions. However, during his press conference, Putin stated:

(...). It is a fact that over the past thirty years, we have been *patiently* trying to come to an agreement with the leading NATO countries (...). In response to our proposals, we invariably faced either cynical deception and lies or attempts at pressure and blackmail (...). Anything that does not suit the dominant state (...) is denounced as archaic, obsolete, and useless. (...). Even now, with NATO's eastward expansion, Russia's situation has been getting worse and more dangerous by the year. (...) any further expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance's infrastructure or the ongoing efforts to gain a military foothold on Ukrainian territory are unacceptable for us. (...). Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist while facing a permanent threat from the territory of today's Ukraine (...). They did not leave us any other option for defending Russia and our people other than the one we are forced to see today. (...) (Michael, 2023).

From a CDA perspective, the statement positions Russia's actions as self-defense rather than aggression. This is evident by words such as *force* and *threat* when describing NATO expansion towards Russia. Phrases such as "Russia's situation has been getting worse" and "Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist while facing a permanent threat from the territory of today's Ukraine" frame a power relation in which Russia, facing an outside threat, has no choice but to react. Russia's actions are therefore framed as a logical outcome of longstanding provocation. The longstanding provocation is underscored by using sequential narratives such as: "over the past thirty years, we have been *patiently* trying to come to an agreement". The argument that Russia has been trying to communicate in vain positions Russia as rational in contrast to an irrational West unwilling to collaborate. Moreover, Putin uses the words *archaic*, *obsolete*, and *useless* to describe the Western perspective on Russia, thus recognizing that Russia is seen as primitive. One could argue that the Danish government's choice to frame Russia as unwilling to negotiate de-legitimizes Russia's geopolitical reasons for action as those do not align with those of the West. As mentioned, the Western liberal state is characterized by the rule of law, which Frederiksen references when describing Russia's invasion as violating the UN Charter and international law. In his speech, Putin also mentions international law, claiming that it was created to suit Western interests and to be applied as the West sees fit. Putin refers to Western violations taking place in Iraq, Syria, and Libya (Michael, 2023). Based on Cavanaugh's theory, holding Russia accountable for violations of international law while silencing violations committed by the West indicates that the Danish government, as a part of the West, possesses the power to frame who is the victim acting in self-defense and who is the sole aggressor.

## Framing the Value of Russian and Ukrainian Lives

The initial discourse surrounding the invasion of Ukraine indicates how the Danish government framed and legitimized narratives of aggression and self-defense. But how are Ukrainian and Russian lives valued within this context? This question can be examined using Butler's notion of grievability. According to Butler, how wars are reported plays a significant role in framing the value of the lives of the people involved. In this context, they argue that emphasizing certain events while silencing others imposes a specific version of reality. Butler distinguishes between grievable and ungrievable lives. Grievable lives refer to those acknowledged from the beginning and, therefore, grieved over when they perish. In contrast, ungrievable lives are never recognized and, thus, not grieved when destroyed (2016). The initial press conference primarily condemns the attack, outlines potential consequences for Denmark and the West, and calls for immediate action. However, Frederiksen also addresses Ukrainian lives and continues to do so the following three days. In the initial press conference, Frederiksen stated:

(...). My thoughts are with the Ukrainian people. This morning, millions of people in Ukraine woke up to war – to fears for their safety, their children's future, and their own lives and the lives of their loved ones. My thoughts are also with all of you from Ukraine who live in Denmark today. (...). We stand with you, and we share your pain. Denmark stands with Ukraine, and we will support and help you. (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

Examining this statement through the lens of CDA and Butler's notion of grievability, words like *fear*, *safety*, and *support* indicate a sentiment of victimhood towards the Ukrainian population. The metaphor "woke up to war" emphasizes a specific version of reality in which Ukrainians were vulnerably asleep during the invasion, insinuating an element of surprise and supporting the narrative that Ukraine had no role in the invasion. Collective victimhood and relatability are invoked by the phrase "millions of people" and when mentioning the suffering of *children* and *loved ones*, appealing to the primal human fear of losing loved ones. In contrast, the phrase "Many of us in Denmark have ties to Ukraine and its people" frames the invasion as personal for Danish society, reminding the audience that Ukrainians are integrated into Danish society, invoking compassion and solidarity. Those sentiments are further induced during Frederiksen's speech in front of the Russian Embassy, where she promised:

(...). We are sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine, supporting neighboring countries, and opening the door for Ukrainians fleeing the war. The first Ukrainian citizens have already arrived in Denmark. You are welcome. More will come. You are also welcome! (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

Based on Butler's notion of grievability, the metaphor "we are opening the door for Ukrainians" solidifies the moral responsibility to help civilians in need. Meanwhile, the promise to send humanitarian aid and the insinuation that there is no limit on how many refugees Denmark is ready to accommodate stresses the situation's urgency while acknowledging Ukrainians' suffering.

Frederiksen is not the only one solidifying these sentiments through metaphors. During the initial press conference, Kofod stated: "The images we are seeing from Ukraine right now are heartbreaking" (Statsministeriet, 2022). The metaphor of a "broken heart" stresses that the consequences of the invasion are more than political – they affect people on a deeply personal level, making it relatable for the audience. The effort to personalize the consequences of the invasion is also evident the next day when he posts the following on X: "Saw my good colleague and friend @DmytroKuleba (Dmytro Kuleba) on video call from Ukraine earlier today. He put into words what they are going through... I won't be able to sleep tonight" (Kofod, 2022). In his post, Kofod mentions a collegial connection to a Ukrainian official affected by the invasion. This arguably adds credibility to his statements as he has firsthand knowledge about the situation. Stating that he will not be able to sleep adds a personal dimension, inviting the audience to reflect on the emotional consequences of the invasion.

Bødskov mainly focused on Russian sanctions during the initial press conference. However, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, he posted the following on Instagram: "The government strongly condemns Russia's assault on Ukraine" (Bødskov, 2022). The word *assault* is often used to describe harmful actions towards individuals. Therefore, describing Russia's actions as such serves to humanize the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The need to respond to this tragic assault and ensure the survival of grievable Ukrainian lives is underscored two days after when he uses his X account to ensure the Danish population that 2.000 military protective vests and 700 medical kits are on their way through Poland to Ukraine, along with civilian emergency supplies (Bødskov, 2022). During the speech held at the demonstration for Ukraine in front of the Russian Embassy in Copenhagen on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, Frederiksen stated:

(...). Imagine this: One day, you live in freedom. The next day, you're huddled together, scared, in a shelter. That's what it's like in Ukraine. We've all seen the horrifying images. Apartment buildings under fire. A burned-out apartment. Tanks in the streets of Kyiv. Scared children. Families fleeing. Bombs and horror. (...) (Statsministeriet, 2022).

From a CDA perspective, words like *scared children*, *horror*, *bombs*, and *families fleeing* invoke strong mental images of human suffering, inviting the audience to feel sympathy for Ukrainians while underscoring Ukraine as the victim. Drawing on Butler's notion of grievability, one can argue that the portrayal of Ukrainian suffering underscores their lives as acknowledged and worthy of mourning. Butler argues that categorizing which lives are worth protecting shapes social reality and reinforces social inequalities (2016). Following the Russian invasion, none of the politicians mention the suffering of the Russian population. Indeed, the invasion was carried out by the Russian government. However, the fact remains that also Russian civilians will experience the consequences of warfare and that they, just like the Ukrainians, did not have a say in the decision to invade. One can argue that the choice, not to mention the potential suffering of the Russian population, solidifies a social reality in which Ukrainian lives are more valuable. Based on Butler's notion of grievability, it can be argued that the suffering of Russians is overlooked because they are understood as somehow complicit or secondary to the political decisions of the Russian government. This frames them as potential threats to Western ideology and values, making them acceptable targets and unworthy of grief.

## Framing Israel's Invasion of Gaza

### Hamas as the Aggressor

Cavanaugh argues that Muslim countries are portrayed as villains by the West because religious expressions play a more prominent role in the public sphere of those countries and because Islam often mixes religion and politics (2009). Denmark officially understands the relationship between Israel and Palestine as a political conflict over territory (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021). However, Cavanaugh's concept of religious violence can still be applied when analyzing the Danish government's initial response surrounding Israel's invasion. Gaza is not a part of the West as it is situated in the Middle East. Moreover, Hamas describes itself as a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement whose frame of reference is Islam (Middle East Eye, 2017). Being categorized as a terror organization by Denmark and the rest of the EU (Robinson, 2017), Hamas's governance over Gaza does not live up to the ideals of a democratic state. Israel is, of course, also situated in the Middle East. However, despite the Nation-State Law stressing that Israel is a nation-state of Jewish people only (Al Jazeera, 2019), Prime Minister Netanyahu describes Israel as democratic. Denmark, which views Israel as an ally, shares this stance.

The Danish government did not hold an official press conference following Hamas's attack on Israel or Israel's air invasion of Gaza the following day. However, its opinions were voiced on social media. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, Frederiksen posted the following on her Instagram: "Today Israel woke up to a brutal attack from Hamas. (...) This is yet another senseless attack on Israel. We condemn the attack, and Denmark stands with Israel. (...)" (Frederiksen, 2023).

Defense Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen also addressed the situation:

I strongly condemn this morning's attack by Hamas on Israel. According to the latest reports, this cynical terrorist attack has resulted in over 100 deaths and more than 900 injuries. My thoughts are with the victims, their families, and the entire Israeli society (Rasmussen, 2023).

Through the lens of CDA, framing Hamas's actions as *brutal* and *cynical terror* while describing Israel as the *victim* automatically frames Hamas as the sole aggressor. Arguably, mentioning the initial Israeli death toll is meant to solidify this sentiment by invoking compassion towards the Israeli population. When these statements were made, Israel had not yet invaded Gaza. However, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, the bombings of Gaza resulted in the death of at least 413 Palestinians (Pedersen, 2023). The same day, Frederiksen stated: "(...) is not even a conflict but a full-scale attack by Hamas across the border into Israel" (Pedersen, 2023). Within this statement, Frederiksen highlights Hamas's violent actions, exonerating Israel from any involvement in the escalation, including illegal occupation and neglecting their lawful obligation to protect citizens of its occupied territories (United Nations, 1999). On the same day, the Minister of Defense and Foreign Affairs posted very similar statements on X and Instagram (Poulsen, 2023; Rasmussen, 2023).

Based on Cavanaugh's theory, these reactions can be understood in the context of a Danish political discourse targeting Muslims. In 2016, the Danish Parliament passed the so-called "Jewelry Law", allowing Danish authorities to confiscate cash, jewelry, and other valuables above 1.340 EUR from asylum seekers. While applied to people from the Middle East and North Africa, the law does not apply to Ukrainians (Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 2022). In 2010, Denmark started assembling lists of "ghetto" neighborhoods. Today, they are classified as "parallel societies". In 2018, new laws made "non-Western" background the primary criteria for this classification, forcing a reduction of non-profit housing in these areas to a maximum of 40% by 2030, a goal that can be achieved by demolition (Felle, 2024). On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) declared this illegal, breaching the EU's racial discrimination law (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2025).

Moreover, in 2023, the Danish government introduced a 37-hour work requirement for social assistance recipients, explicitly mentioning “non-Western” immigrant women from countries surrounding the Middle East and North Africa as the reasoning behind the decision (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2023). Indeed, not all civilians in the Middle East and North Africa are Muslims. However, they constitute the majority, indicating that the Muslim population is perceived as a threat to Danish values and, therefore, must be monitored. This perspective feeds into a broader discourse portraying Muslims as a threat to Western values. Arguably, this influences how violence is framed by the Danish government, explaining why illegal violence committed by a Muslim organization such as Hamas is framed as aggressive while Israel’s illegal actions are not. A counterargument could be that religion plays a central role in Israel’s public sphere and politics as well. However, Denmark and Israel officially share democratic values. Moreover, the rhetoric concerning the Jewish population in Denmark is starkly different. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, the Danish Prime Minister held a speech in Copenhagen commemorating the Holocaust, stating:

(...) We Europeans swore that it should never happen again. Never again! And yet, we are once again witnessing episodes that are dreadful reminders of our dark past. Once again, Jews are being persecuted—simply because they are Jews. In far too many places across Europe, hatred has returned to the streets. Even here in Denmark. (...)  
(Statsministeriet, 2023).

The same day, Rasmussen posted the following on his Instagram:

Home from a moving and heart-wrenching afternoon and evening in Gilleleje, where we marked the 80th anniversary of the Danish Jews’ escape to Sweden (...). My Israeli colleague (...) had to cancel due to Hamas’s brutal terrorist attacks. A grim contemporary backdrop for a similarly dark story (...)(Rasmussen, 2023).

Frederiksen stresses the Danish moral obligation to protect the Jewish community, a stance that has never been made about Muslims. The stance is stressed by the fact that Denmark has an Action Plan against antisemitism (Center for Dokumentation og Indsats mod Ekstremisme, 2023). Following Hamas’s attack, the Danish government intensified its commitment by allocating around 1.5 million EUR in 2025 to combat antisemitism (Justitsministeriet, 2024). The Danish government has never issued an Action Plan against Islamophobia, even though Islamophobia is a widespread phenomenon in Denmark, which has intensified after October 7<sup>th</sup> (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2023). The statement: “A grim contemporary backdrop for a similarly dark story” indicates a linkage between Hamas’s actions and the Holocaust, insinuating that Jewish people are at risk of suffering a similar fate at the hands of

a Muslim organization. Both statements underscore a strong relationship between the Jewish and Danish populations. Arguably, the sentiments of solidarity towards the Jewish population and Israel are related, highlighting that violence is framed based on whether the actors are aligned with Western ideological values or officially rooted in Muslim religion.

## Israel's Right to Self-defense

From day one, the Danish government framed Hamas as being the aggressor and Israel as the victim. But how did the Danish government frame and legitimize the narratives surrounding Israel's right to self-defense? In an interview conducted on October 8<sup>th</sup>, Frederiksen answered the following when asked about Israel's right to self-defense:

There is no doubt that Israel has the right to defend itself. It is Israel that is being attacked by Hamas. Hamas is a terrorist organization, and what we are seeing right now is an attack on Israel. Hamas must stop its attacks, and Israel has the right to defend itself. Every country that is attacked in the way we see from Hamas's side has the right to defend itself (...) one cannot question Israel's right to defend itself against an attack from Hamas (Pedersen, 2023).

From a CDA perspective, Frederiksen's choice to repeat that Israel has the right to defend itself while stating that "every country that is attacked in the way that we see from Hamas has the right to defend itself" underscores the importance of the message while framing it as a universal truth. Western liberal nation-states are defined by the rule of law, which Israel and Denmark claim to uphold. Framing Hamas's actions as terror indicates violations of this rule of law, stripping them of any political or ideological justifications. Frederiksen does not mention that Hamas, according to the United Nations General Assembly, is granted the right to defend itself against the occupation (United Nations, n.d.). Indeed, the act of self-defense must comply with international law, which did not happen on October 7<sup>th</sup> (Amnesty International, 2023). Nevertheless, the right to self-defense is not mentioned at all, and the attack is framed as unprovoked, legitimizing Israel's right to self-defense. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, Rasmussen stated the following on X:

Denmark stands in full solidarity with Israel. I have just reiterated this message in a meeting with Israel's ambassador, @DavidiAkov (David Akov): Denmark strongly condemns the terrorist attack by Hamas, and Israel, of course, has the full right to defend itself within the framework of international law (Rasmussen, 2023).



In addition to also supporting Israel's right to self-defense, Rasmussen stresses that Israel's actions must comply with international law. By stating Israel's right to defend itself, both politicians refer to Article 51 of the UN Charter, allowing UN members to engage in "collective self-defense" (United Nations, n.d.). Interestingly, this right is not applicable under occupation (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023), given the obligations imposed by the Geneva Convention, meant to protect citizens of occupied territories (United Nations, 1999).

Based on Cavanaugh's theory, holding Hamas accountable for violations of international law while silencing violations committed by Israel indicates that the Danish government, as a part of the West, possesses the power to frame who is entitled to carrying out violence as self-defense. Denmark has not directly provided Israel with military equipment and arms since the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 2023. However, during the first three days of the invasion, all three politicians supported Israel's right to self-defense, which undoubtedly would lead to violent deaths. Today, it is known that the air and land invasion of Gaza has resulted in the killing of at least 46.707 Palestinians while displacing over 90% of the population (AJLabs, 2025; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024). Drawing on Cavanaugh's critique of the War on Terror, by framing Israel's initial violence as a legitimate response towards terrorism, Denmark has participated in constructing a global ideological framework in which Western violence is not only permissible but necessary to defend global freedom.

#### *Excluding Hamas's Version of Reality*

Cavanaugh argues that the myth of religious violence serves to marginalize non-secular countries while silencing their reasoning for action (2009). During the days after Hamas's attack on Israel and Israel's initial air invasion of Gaza, both the Danish Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs made references to the persecution and killings of Jewish people during the Holocaust (Frederiksen, 2023; Rasmussen, 2023). However, in its 2017 Charter, Hamas officially states:

(...). Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity. (...) (Middle East Eye, 2017).

The statement indicates a discrepancy between the narrative imposed by the Danish government and Hamas. While the government references religion when referring to the consequences of October 7<sup>th</sup>, Hamas clearly distinguishes between Judaism and Zionism. Drawing on Cavanaugh's theory, one could argue that the exclusion of Hamas's official intentions serves to de-legitimize and marginalize

their reasoning for action while promoting their actions as solely irrational. Hamas contradicts this narrative in its Charter, stating:

(...) Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. It provides an umbrella for the followers of other creeds and religions who can practice their beliefs in security and safety. Hamas also believes that Palestine has always been and will always be a model of coexistence, tolerance, and civilizational innovation. (...) (Middle East Eye, 2017).

By referring to Islam as a “religion of peace” and an “umbrella for other creeds and religions”, Hamas aligns its ideology with global values of tolerance and harmony, distancing itself from the accusations of irrationality and extremism. In contrast, Hamas frames a social reality in which Israel and the West are the irrational actors. In the document, Hamas further elaborates by stating:

(...). The Zionist project is a racist, aggressive, colonial, and expansionist project (...) it is hostile to the Palestinian people and to their aspiration for freedom, liberation, return, and self-determination. The Israeli entity is the plaything of the Zionist project and its base of aggression (...). The Zionist colonial occupation occupied our Palestinian homeland and displaced our people, destroyed our towns and villages, committed hundreds of massacres against our people, killing children, women, and elderly people and demolishing homes with their inhabitants inside in violation of all international norms, laws, and human rights conventions. (...) (Middle East Eye, 2017).

Based on a CDA perspective, absolute negative wording such as *racist* and *aggressive* frame Israel as the aggressor and Palestinians as the victims entitled to self-defense. This is evident by the depicting of strong mental images when elaborating on the destruction caused by Israel, referencing Al-Nakba (catastrophe), which refers to the forcible transfer of approximately 750.000 Palestinians and the destruction of around 5.000 Palestinian communities and cities during the establishment of Israel in 1947 (Darweish, 2023). In addition, Hamas refers to Israel as being *colonial* and *expansionist*, arguably referring to the now 700.000 settlements living illegally in the occupied Palestinian Territories (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2024).

In its statement, Hamas also references international law, which Denmark and Israel claim to uphold. Arguably, the reference highlights the hypocrisy of upholding Hamas accountable to laws that the West and Israel knowingly violate, de-legitimizing their counterarguments. Hamas mentions the West’s involvement in the occupation, stating: “The Zionist movement, which was able with the help of Western powers to occupy Palestine, is the most dangerous form of settlement occupation (...)” (Middle East Eye, 2017). Drawing on CDA and Cavanaugh’s perspective, this statement indicates a

broader battle against Western superiority, referring to the Balfour Declaration in 1917 supporting the establishment of Israel as well as later support from the UN (Tahhan, 2018). The word *dangerous* stresses the consequences of the choices made by the West, insinuating that they overlooked Palestinian interests to further their own political and ideological agenda, leaving no choice but to act in self-defense. Drawing on Cavanaugh, one could argue that, just as the West uses the concept of War on Terror when legitimizing violence in the name of national security, Hamas employs the same frame of reference when justifying violence towards Israel.

## Framing the Value of Palestinian and Israeli Lives

Arguably, the Danish government's initial response to the invasion was influenced by the perceived value of life of those involved. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, Frederiksen posted the following on Instagram:

(...). My thoughts are with all the victims. Civilian casualties on both sides. Their loved ones. May we never accept the horror of terrorism. Never. I have just placed flowers at the Israeli Embassy. A country has been attacked. And the brutality is deafening (Frederiksen, 2024).

In her post, Frederiksen emphasizes the brutality of Hamas's attack while acknowledging civilian casualties on both sides. However, she only places flowers in front of the Israeli Embassy despite the existence of the Mission of Palestine in Copenhagen. Indeed, the Mission is not a formal embassy because Denmark does not recognize Palestine as an official state. However, it serves as the official representation of Palestine in Denmark (Mission of Palestine, n.d.). Drawing on Butler's notion of grievability, one could argue that Frederiksen's actions symbolize a hierarchy of grievability in which Israelis are more deserving of grief than the Palestinians. Arguably, mentioning civilian casualties on both sides while only placing flowers in front of the Embassy of Israel, which at the time had initiated an air invasion of Gaza, underlines the invisibility of Palestinian suffering and grief. While placing flowers, Frederiksen was approached by a journalist asking whether she intended to show similar sympathy towards the Palestinian civilian population. Frederiksen's responded:

I must admit that I think you contribute to relativizing something that is not comparable. It is Hamas, a terrorist organization, that is attacking a democratic country. Israel has the right to defend itself, and that will result in some casualties. It bears no comparison. And the fact that a Danish journalist asks that question is, for me, profoundly worrying and lacks historical understanding. (...) That lives are lost, and children are injured – that pain is equally great, no matter where the child comes from and no matter where

the civilian population is situated. But comparing an attack by a terrorist organization to a democratic country that is defending itself in the way you do – I simply will not acknowledge that premise (Schuldt, 2023).

Through the lens of CDA, accusing the journalist of lacking historical understanding and being misinformed indicates that Frederiksen tries to frame a social reality in which Israel's violence is more legitimate. However, Frederiksen was asked about sympathy towards civilians. Butler argues that the lives of those aligned with the dominant political or national group are most likely to be grieved and recognized (2016). Indeed, Frederiksen states that "pain is equally great, no matter where the child comes from and no matter where the civilian population is situated". However, not answering the question while addressing the power relation between Hamas and Israel indicates a correlation between ideology and the value attached to human life. Israeli civilians deserve grief as they officially align with the ideological standpoint in Denmark. In contrast, Palestinian civilians do not because they are aligned with aggressive ideologies such as terrorism. Moreover, Frederiksen's statement: "Israel has the right to defend itself, and that will result in some casualties", insinuates that the deaths of Palestinian lives are framed as an evil necessity.

Frederiksen is not the only one placing flowers at the Israeli Embassy. On October 11<sup>th</sup>, Rasmussen did the same, after which he posted the following on Instagram:

It is hard to comprehend the horrors Israel is going through right now. Hundreds of innocent civilians killed. Young people dancing at a peace festival. Elderly people on their way to the supermarket. Innocent women, children – caught in the wrong place, at the wrong time. (...) (Rasmussen, 2023).

The post is intended to highlight Israeli victimhood by invoking strong images of suffering. References to people dancing at a festival, innocent children, and elderly people on their way to the supermarket serve to personalize this suffering, as the audience can relate to these daily activities. The metaphor "caught in the wrong place at the wrong time" insinuates that the civilians were randomly caught in horrific circumstances. The metaphor invokes feelings of dread in the audience as they are invited to place themselves in the shoes of the Israeli victims. In contrast, the suffering of Palestinians, who, at this point, had been bombed by Israel for three consecutive days, is not mentioned, indicating a dehumanization of Palestinian lives.

According to CDA, historical and cultural contexts are essential when understanding a specific framing of reality (Fairclough, 2015). As mentioned previously, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, Rasmussen

shared an Instagram post describing his visit to Gilleleje, where he marked the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Danish Jews' escape to Sweden. On this same day, Frederiksen attended an event marking the same anniversary, after which she posted:

(...). The order from Berlin was given: on October 1<sup>st</sup>, all Jews in Denmark were to be captured and deported. (...). Simply because of their heritage. (...). But here in Denmark, the evil of war met something stronger. (...) More than 7.000 Danish Jewish men, women, and children made a resolute decision to flee. And they received help from thousands of Danes. Families opened their homes. (...). Nurses, doctors, and hospital orderlies hid Jewish fellow citizens in hospitals. (...). Students rowed boats back and forth until their hands bled. October '43 is the story of thousands of small and large acts. They intertwined into one of the most beautiful stories of humanity and solidarity in modern times (...) (Frederiksen, 2023).

In her post, Frederiksen commemorates a historical time in which Danes fought the Nazi's decision to deport the Jewish population. The importance of the historical event is emphasized through powerful images of ordinary Danes doing their absolute best to ensure the safety of the Jewish people. Drawing on Butler's notion of grievability, the perceived notion of Israel upholding liberal freedom combined with the unjust events during the Holocaust frames Israelis as deserving victims. In contrast, not one of the politicians directly articulated Palestinian suffering at the hands of Israel, arguably instating and reproducing a social reality in which lives in religious and non-democratic parts of the world are less acknowledged and valued.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the Danish government has framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding the invasions. The analysis concludes that, despite Russia and Israel being the invaders, Russia is portrayed as the aggressor while Israel is portrayed as the victim. In contrast, despite both being illegally invaded, Ukraine is portrayed as the victim, while Gaza is hardly acknowledged, and Hamas's actions are used to legitimize Israel's actions. Indeed, Hamas's actions on October 7<sup>th</sup> were illegal. However, the same is true for Israel's invasion of Gaza, indicating that the Danish government legitimizes violence carried out by actors that they view as democratic and secular while de-legitimizing the opposite. This also applies to the right to violent self-defense, as Ukraine, in contrast to Hamas, is framed as being entitled to violent self-defense, indicating that violence rooted in Western ideology is framed as a necessity to ensure global security. In contrast, the opposite is framed as fanatical. This framing is rooted in a hierarchy of grievability, which warfare

reinforces, made evident by how the Danish government mourns the deaths of Ukrainians and Israelis. At the same time, Palestinians and Russians are largely unacknowledged or framed as legitimate targets. In the case of Israel and Palestine, religion plays a role as the Danish government has vowed to protect the Jewish populations, which Hamas's attack on Israel has only reinforced. At the same time, Muslims are generally perceived as a threat to democratic values, reinforcing their status as ungrievable.

## **Chapter 6: The Danish Government's Response to Alleged Violations of International Law**

In this analysis, I uncover which similarities and differences can be identified when analyzing the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza and how these can be understood. First, I focus on attacks on hospitals, including Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Ukraine and Gazan hospitals Al-Ahli Arab Hospital and Al-Shifa Arab Hospital. While all the politicians in question commented on the attack in Ukraine, more limited attention was given to the attacks in Gaza. Therefore, my choice to include two attacks on hospitals in Gaza ensures a more balanced and comprehensive analysis. Thereafter, I focus on the Danish government's response to the arrest warrants issued by the ICC for President Putin and Prime Minister Netanyahu. Finally, similarities and differences within each context are identified and analyzed, after which an interim conclusion summarizes the main findings. Like the previous chapter, CDA serves as the methodological tool, while Cavanaugh's theory of the myth of religious violence and Judith Butler's notion of grievability constitute the theoretical framework.

### **The Danish Government's Response to Hospital Attack in Ukraine**

Following Russia's invasion, numerous Ukrainian healthcare facilities have been targeted, killing civilians and causing massive destruction. In August 2024, 1,940 attacks were registered, making it the highest number recorded by WHO of Ukraine (World Health Organization, 2024). The attacks have escalated since December 2023, occurring daily and involving heavy weaponry. The attacks have had significant consequences for civilians needing to access healthcare, as an average of 200 ambulances per year have been damaged or destroyed since 2022. Moreover, the attacks have disrupted essential services such as access to electricity and water, making it hard for the facilities to operate (World Health Organization, 2024). According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, more than 100 healthcare workers have been killed since the invasion (International Rescue Committee, 2024).

## Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2024, Russian strikes hit the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv, resulting in hundreds of children being evacuated, ten being injured, and one killed (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

The day after the attack, the Danish Prime Minister posted the following on X:

Bombing a children's hospital is vile. I condemn the attacks across Ukraine and on children in the strongest way possible. Yet again, Putin shows his ruthlessness. We must continue to support Ukraine in their fight against Russian cruelty (Frederiksen, 2024).

Drawing on CDA, the statement indicates that Frederiksen's sentiments towards Russia's regime have not wavered since the invasion. By stating "Yet again, Putin shows his ruthlessness", Frederiksen centralizes the blame, making it clear that these are the actions of one man and not Russia as a whole. Describing the attack as *vile* indicates that she finds the attack unethical, de-legitimizing alternative opinions and justifications. The emphasis on children invokes emotional responses throughout the audience, as these attacks are generally the most frowned upon worldwide. Condemning the attacks across Ukraine reminds the audience of the number of attacks suffered since the invasion, eliciting sympathy. During an interview conducted the day after, Frederiksen elaborated on her sentiments:

It is truly horrible. A maternity hospital. Russia can hardly sink any lower than what we are witnessing right now. It is just another of...I've lost count of how many by now... attacks on Ukraine. Therefore, we must use this as a kind of prelude to the NATO summit. We must respond strongly. (...). They (Ukraine) pay the highest price, but first and foremost, it's about Russia wanting to decide what happens deep within European countries. We cannot allow that, so we must change gears (Christiansen, 2024).

In her statement, the metaphor "Russia can hardly sink any lower" insinuates a hierarchy in which high and low represent a spectrum of morality. The metaphor invokes a mental image of Putin approaching extreme immorality. By stating that even she has lost count of Russia's attacks on Ukraine, Frederiksen highlights the severity of Russia's relentless perseverance. Moreover, in the interview, Frederiksen states that the attack on the children's hospital will be highly prioritized at the next NATO summit. The NATO alliance is founded on principles of democracy and the rule of law, reminding the audience that Russia's actions are illegal. By reminding the audience that Denmark is part of such an alliance, Frederiksen places Denmark at the highest end of the moral ladder, insinuating that Denmark is responsible for preserving and protecting such values from outside threats – the threat being Russia. She highlights this by stating that *we* cannot allow Russia to decide what happens deep within European countries. Using the word *we* mark a stark division between "us versus



them”. The Danish Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs both shared Frederiksen’s sentiments on their X and Instagram accounts (Poulsen, 2024; Rasmussen, 2024).

When analyzing power relations using CDA, looking into what is not being said is equally relevant. After the bombing of Okhmatdyt Children’s Hospital, Russia denied the attack, claiming that a Ukrainian anti-missile was to blame for the destruction. Additionally, Putin’s press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, insisted that Russian armed forces do not target civilians (Reuters, 2024). None of the Danish politicians mentioned this, indicating they did not perceive the information as valid or trustworthy. Three months later, Frederiksen visited Okhmatdyt Children’s Hospital. There, she was filmed talking to an injured 16-year-old girl who lost her mother during the attack. In the video, the girl is lying in a hospital bed while Frederiksen is kneeling next to her, saying: “I am sure that you will be okay again because you are so strong. But I am so sorry you lost your mom” (TV2, 2024). Frederiksen is emotional during the visit, as seen by her whipping away tears. After the visit, Frederiksen stated:

I have just visited a children’s hospital here in Kyiv that the Russians have bombed and visited a 16-year-old girl who had most of her body destroyed and is only alive because of her mother, who laid on top of her so she would not be killed. The mother did that while the missile attack was ongoing (TV2, 2024).

The fact that Frederiksen, the Prime Minister of Denmark, makes time to visit the site symbolizes respect, solidarity, and an acknowledgment of Ukrainian suffering. Moreover, the fact that the girl is lying injured in a hospital bed invokes sympathy in the audience, arguably highlighting not only the innocence of the girl in question but of Ukraine as a whole. Frederiksen’s tears underscore the gravity of the situation, as the audience is arguably not used to seeing her display such vulnerability. Frederiksen’s assurance to the girl that she will be okay again can be interpreted as an encouragement to the individual and a broader symbolic gesture reflecting Ukraine’s overall resilience. The same can be said about the mentioning of the mother sacrificing her life, confirming the bravery of the Ukrainian people.

The Danish government has not directly addressed other attacks on hospitals in Ukraine. However, statements have been made condemning such actions. After Russia’s attack on Maternity Hospital Nr. 3 in 2022, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy held an online speech at the Parliament Chamber at Christiansborg, stating: “What Russian troops are doing to Mariupol is a crime against humanity that is literally being broadcast live in front of the entire planet” (Folketinget, 2022). At the end of the speech, he asked the people of Denmark to: “(...) light a candle in memory of all the Ukrainians

whose lives were claimed by the Russian aggression” (Folketinget, 2022). On the same day, the Danish Parliament lit torches for Ukraine in front of the entrance to Christiansborg<sup>4</sup> (Folketinget, 2022). The fact that the Danish government did not contradict the accusations of crimes against humanity indicates agreement. Moreover, lighting torches in front of Christiansborg can be understood as a symbolic gesture of solidarity and respect.

In March 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Kofod, addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva by stating that Russia’s attacks on civilian targets are “illegal and immoral conquests of war”, adding:

Future generations will judge us based on the decisions we make in the coming hours and days. Every minute, more innocent civilians suffer, are killed, or displaced. Our children will ask us whether we did enough to support Ukraine when it mattered the most (Udenrigsministeriet, 2022).

By referring to future generations, Kofod aligns Denmark’s present actions towards Russia with the future of Denmark. This is a powerful reference as it insinuates that failure to act can jeopardize Danish values of freedom and the rule of law, potentially leading to the demise of Danish society. In March 2022, Kofod launched a Group of Friends of Accountability with the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Colombia, Marshall Islands, the Netherlands, and Ukraine to “ensure accountability for violations against international law and human rights following the Russian invasion of Ukraine” (Udenrigsministeriet, 2022). In a written statement prior to a Council of Europe summit in Iceland in 2023, Frederiksen consolidated this sentiment by claiming that Russia and Putin should be held accountable for their war crimes in Ukraine (Ritzau, 2023), leaving no question as to Denmark’s opinions regarding Russia’s actions, including the targeting of hospitals.

## The Danish Government’s Response to Attacks on Hospitals in Gaza

Since Israel’s invasion, the healthcare system in Gaza has collapsed. As of October 2024, more than 500 attacks on healthcare facilities have been recorded (United Nations, 2024). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), only 17 out of 36 hospitals are partially functional, while 19 have been destroyed, making it challenging to help the large number of severely injured patients (United Nations Office for the Coordination of

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<sup>4</sup> Christiansborg is a building in Copenhagen that houses the Danish Parliament (Folketinget), the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Supreme Court of Denmark (Folketinget, 2025).

Humanitarian Affairs, 2025). In early December 2024, OCHA reported the killings of over 1.000 health workers (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2025).

### Al-Ahli Arab Hospital

On October 14, 2023, Israeli strikes damaged the Diagnostic Treatment Centre of Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza (Anglican Communion News Service, 2023). The Danish government did not comment on this event. Three days later, an explosion took place at the same Hospital. UN experts reported more than 470 killings and hundreds of civilians trapped under the rubble. The attack caused outrage among UN experts, one of them stating: “Considering statements made by Israeli political leaders and their allies, accompanied by military action in Gaza and escalation of arrests and killing in the West Bank, there is also a risk of genocide against the Palestinian People” (World Health Organization, 2023). The strike reportedly followed two evacuation warnings issued by Israel (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2023). WHO condemned the attack, referencing international humanitarian law while reporting that the hospital was only one of 20 facing evacuation orders (World Health Organization, 2023).

The day after the explosion, Frederiksen posted the following on X: “I am deeply horrified by the explosion at the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza. My thoughts are with the victims and their loved ones” (Frederiksen, 2023). Indeed, questions were arising about who was responsible for the explosion, with Hamas and Israel blaming each other. However, no conclusions had yet been made. From a CDA perspective, Frederiksen’s statement is short and precise. The word *horrified* invokes condemnation, indicating that targeting hospitals is unacceptable. Frederiksen also sends her thoughts to the victims and their loved ones, symbolizing support for civilians. However, she does not mention either Hamas or Israel, indicating a wish to convey neutrality. Moreover, she does not go into depth about the consequences of the explosion or mention Palestinian civilians directly. None of the other politicians mentioned the explosion after its occurrence. Arguably, this could be explained by the fact that questions were raised about accountability. However, at this point, approximately 137 attacks on healthcare facilities had taken place, resulting in the killings of 521 civilians, including 16 medical workers (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).

## Al-Shifa Arab Hospital

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 2023, the biggest medical complex in Gaza, Al-Shifa Arab Hospital, was raided by the Israeli military, claiming that Hamas was using the hospital as a base. According to Gazan health authorities, approximately 1.500 patients, 1.500 medical workers, and some 15.000 displaced people were seeking refuge at the hospital (Debre, 2023). Despite alleged video footage, Amnesty International has found no evidence to support Israel's claim (Amnesty International, 2023). OCHA condemned the attack, reminding that hospitals are not legal targets (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023). On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 2024, the Israeli military seized the hospital. After 14 days, the Israeli army withdrew, leaving behind a building in ruins, hundreds of bodies, and mass graves (Knell & Rushdi, 2024). The Danish prime minister did not address the attack. However, Rasmussen addressed both the initial raid and the siege. In November 2023, he stated that: "It is a challenge for Israel that Hamas does not follow the laws of war. This is, for example, evidenced by the militant movement's presence beneath the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza" (Ritzau, 2023). When asked if the attack could be justified due to Israel's video footage, Rasmussen replied:

Politically, I can say that Israel must exercise restraint and that it is in Israel's own interest to do so. It is also about the global community's stance on this conflict. (...). I can take note that Israel has presented this material, and I know it is supported by U.S. intelligence and U.S. statements. (...) It has clearly been a challenge for Israel, which is being attacked by Hamas, that the organization (Hamas) by no means plays by the rules (Ritzau, 2023).

From a CDA perspective, it is noticeable that Rasmussen does not address that Israel's footage has not been classified as credible. Neglecting to share this information, while stating that Israel and the United States endorse the evidence, obscures information that is essential for the public to make an informed opinion. Indeed, Rasmussen states that "Israel must exercise restraint". However, he does not mention international law, the destruction, or the killings of Palestinian civilians and medical staff, downplaying the consequences of the raid. Instead, he mentions Hamas, indicating that they are the ones who do not "play by the rule", framing a narrative in which Hamas is the only one violating international law. By emphasizing that Israel is the one being attacked by Hamas, Rasmussen reinforces this narrative. In March 2024, after the siege of Al-Shifa Arab Hospital, Rasmussen stated:

My overall belief is that a change of course is needed. We need a ceasefire. To get humanitarian aid in. (...). I will prioritize this at the meeting with Blinken. If there is

anyone Netanyahu might listen to, it is probably our American friends (Ritzau, 2024).

Once again, Rasmussen does not address Israel's violations of international law or the killings of Palestinians. Instead, he takes a neutral stand, focusing on the need for humanitarian aid. The sentence "If there is anyone Netanyahu might listen to" insinuates that he believed that Israel's actions are, in fact, unacceptable. However, he does not state this directly. Indeed, the Danish government has stated the importance of upholding international law. Yet, none of the politicians in question have directly accused Israel of not doing so, nor have they directly addressed the targeting of hospitals in Gaza.

## The Danish Government's Response to the ICC Arrest Warrant for Putin

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Putin for alleged war crimes committed from 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 onwards (International Criminal Court, 2023). These include unlawful deportation and transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine and into Russia. The ICC stated that there is reason to believe that Putin bears direct responsibility for these crimes either by acting alone or working with others. Moreover, the ICC has accused Putin of failing to prevent personnel from carrying out such acts under his authority (International Criminal Court, 2023). The Danish government has not directly addressed Putin's warrant of arrest. However, it has been vocal about its stance on Russia's alleged violations of international law. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, two years after Russia's invasion, the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Rasmussen, submitted a statement for the OSCE Permanent Council meeting, stating:

(...). Denmark stands firmly behind Ukraine and will continue to do so. That was the message I conveyed when I visited Mykolaiv last month. We will continue to seek full accountability for Russia's unlawful war of aggression. All alleged violations of international law must be investigated. Whether it concerns human rights, war crimes or crimes against humanity. Furthermore, Denmark will continue to work for a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine in line with the Ukrainian Peace Formula, the UN Charter and international law. (...) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2024).

From a CDA perspective, Rasmussen is precise and unwavering when addressing Denmark's stance on Russia's actions. He refers to Russia's invasion as an "unlawful war of aggression" and clearly states that he wants Russia to be held accountable for all violations of international law. As previously presented, the Danish Minister of Defense at the time, Kofod, launched a Group of Friends of

Accountability in March 2022 (Udenrigsministeriet, 2022). Although the Danish government has not directly addressed Putin's arrest warrant, the launching of this group, as well as previous statements made by Frederiksen addressing the bombing of Okhmatdyt Hospital, clearly indicate that the Danish government believes that violations have been committed and that Putin should be held accountable. This is arguably one of the reasons why the Danish government has not deemed it necessary to comment on the arrest warrant and why it has not been asked directly about its stance.

## The Danish Government's response to the ICC arrest warrant for Netanyahu

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2024, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu (United Nations, 2024). The accusations include the deprivation of food, water, medicine, and medical supplies, as well as fuel and electricity for civilians in Gaza. The Chamber found reason to believe that the deprivation created conditions calculated to bring about the destruction of the civilian population in Gaza, which constitutes the crime against humanity of murder (International Criminal Court, 2024). Accusations of crimes against humanity of other inhumane acts have also been issued, as the limited medical supplies and medicine forced doctors to carry out amputations without anesthetics, depriving civilians of their fundamental rights to life and health. Moreover, it is believed that civilians were targeted based on political and/or national grounds, invoking the crime against humanity of persecution. Among others, Netanyahu is also accused of failing to facilitate relief to Gaza as well as hindering humanitarian organizations from providing essential goods and humanitarian relief. For this reason, Netanyahu is accused of starvation as a method of warfare. Finally, the Chamber assessed that there are reasons to believe that Netanyahu bears criminal responsibility for intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population of Gaza (International Criminal Court, 2024). The Danish government has not voluntarily addressed the arrest warrant issued by the ICC. However, due to accusations of hypocrisy, the Danish government found itself forced to address the matter. Five days after the ICC's issue of arrest, during a parliamentary session, Frederiksen was asked whether individuals who are wanted by the ICC, including Netanyahu, would be arrested if they set foot on Danish soil (Folketinget, 2024). The question was asked by Pelle Dragsted, a politician from the left-wing Danish political party Enhedslisten (the Red-Green Alliance). Frederiksen answered:

I can confirm our support for international forums, including the ICC. Denmark has been a strong supporter of the ability to prosecute within the international community, and we will, of course, continue to do so. (...) Regarding specific situations, it will be up to the authorities to make the assessment (...) (Folketinget, 2024).

Not directly answering the question, Frederiksen was then asked whether the Danish government would support an arrest, to which she answered:

It is not the case that, as a government, we support arrests. We follow international rules and laws (...). I do not get involved in scenarios (...). We have always supported the ICC, and we continue to do so, and we follow the obligations that come with this (Folketinget, 2024).

After which she elaborated:

(...) we support the ICC (...), and we will continue to do so. Because of this, we have certain obligations, and then it is up to the authorities to make an assessment of the specific situation. I actually agree that when it comes to war crimes, it is very, very crucial that we have international institutions that are independent and that can be relied upon. This has historically been important, and it will obviously continue to be so in the future (Folketinget, 2024).

CDA draws attention to the phrases “I can confirm our support for international forums, including the ICC”, “Denmark has been a strong supporter”, and “We will of course continue to do so”. The phrases frame Denmark as devoted to international law, positioning Denmark as a country with high moral values. By stating “it is very, very crucial that we have international bodies that are independent and that can be relied upon. This has historically been important”, Frederiksen stresses Denmark’s historical support for ICC while framing Denmark as a country that can be relied upon by its fellow State Parties when holding individuals accountable for international crimes. However, from a CDA perspective, it is noticeable that Frederiksen refuses to answer whether Denmark will arrest Netanyahu if he steps on Danish soil. Instead, Frederiksen uses phrases such as “I do not get involved in scenarios” and “it is up to the authorities to make an assessment”. Given Denmark’s relationship with Israel, these phrases can be understood as an attempt to avoid taking a stance and repercussions for future collaborations. Referencing the ICC allows her to remain neutral while respecting legal procedures. In a written statement, the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rasmussen, expressed the following:

I just had a phone conversation with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar, during which we discussed the current situation in the Middle East and, specifically, the arrest warrant issued by the ICC. I made it clear that Denmark is a strong supporter of the ICC

and backs its independence. Denmark will naturally comply with its international legal obligations, and if there is suspicion of international crimes, they must be investigated and, if necessary, prosecuted (Burhøi, 2024).

In his statement, Rasmussen assures Danish cooperation with ICC, backing its independence. Using the word *naturally* insinuates that Denmark has never questioned the rulings of the ICC. Using the word *must* absolve Denmark of doubts about whether the government will fulfill its obligations. However, Rasmussen does not address Gaza in the statement. Instead, he refers to “the current situation in the Middle East”, arguably trying to avoid taking a political stance. Additionally, in the phrase “if there is suspicion of international crimes, they must be investigated and, if necessary, prosecuted”, the repeated usage of the word *if* is crucial, as it indicates that the Danish government is uncertain as to whether violations of international law have occurred, or at least want to remain neutral. Based on the overall statements, it can be argued that the Danish government demonstrates respect for the ICC and its decision while avoiding addressing Gaza, or Israel’s alleged violations of international law.

## Comparative Analysis: Understanding Similarities and Differences

Several aspects become apparent when examining the differences and similarities in the Danish government’s response to attacks on hospitals and arrest warrants. When addressing Russia’s attack on the Ukrainian hospital and the alleged violations of international law committed by Putin, condemning language is used. Despite not addressing the ICC warrant directly, the politicians state that they view Putin and his government to be held accountable. Based on Cavanaugh’s theory, this can be explained by Russia being framed as an irrational threat to global security. The Russian government’s irrationality is stressed by not considering their framing of events, which eliminated any questions as to whether Ukraine was at fault for the attack on Okhmatdyt Hospital. Referencing the rule of law to strengthen their arguments emphasizes the shared identity of Ukraine and Denmark as democratic countries, framing them as rational and ideologically enlightened. Arguably, because Denmark and Ukraine officially share the same values, it is easier to draw the line between what the Danish government perceives as moral and immoral. References to NATO indicate that Denmark’s allies share the same perspective, making this definition even easier. Based on Butler’s notion of grievability, the shared ideology influences and reinforces the need to ensure Ukrainian safety, as



Ukrainian lives are perceived as grievable. This is evident by Frederiksen's emotional visit to the hospital and the overall emotional language used when addressing Russian alleged violations of international law.

When addressing Israel's attacks on hospitals in Gaza and the arrest warrant for Netanyahu, the response is starkly different. One of the main differences is that the Danish government does not mention Israel or the possibility of violations of international law like they do when Russia strikes. Moreover, contrary to the attack on the Ukrainian hospital, the Danish Prime minister only addresses the attack on Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in a short statement, not including condemning language against Israel or addressing Palestinians directly. Frederiksen has not commented directly on any other attacks on hospitals in Gaza, which is significant as she represents Denmark's official stance. Rasmussen also does not address any attacks directly; when he does, he blames Hamas.

In contrast to the attack on Okhmatdyt Hospital, no torches were lit in front of Christiansborg after attacks on hospitals in Gaza. Drawing on Butler, this indicates that Palestinian lives are perceived as less grievable. Arguably, this is due to Gazans being made complicit or secondary in Hamas's actions, framing them as equally irrational and possibly even responsible for their fate, making them legitimate targets in the pursuit of the greater good. One could argue that Palestinians were framed as ungrievable before the attacks and that the war on Gaza has only underscored this sentiment, reinforcing pre-existing social inequalities and leading to a normalization of wars in which they are the victims. This can be argued based on the overall rhetoric in Danish politics framing the Muslims as potential threats while vowing to protect the Jewish population. The majority of the Gazan population is Muslim, which aligns with the existing framing of reality.

Despite the ICC arrest warrant, the Danish government has never directly acknowledged alleged violations committed by Israel and Netanyahu, as it has with Russia and Putin. When asked directly, the answers are avoidant, neutral, or focused on legal aspects. Arguably, this is because Hamas's ideology does not align with that of a democratic state. Even if the Danish government were to believe that Israel's government was to blame for the attacks on Gazan hospitals or deserving of the arrest warrant, they would arguably be more challenging to condemn. While Putin and Hamas have always been framed as immoral and irrational, condemning Israel and Netanyahu would not align with the framing of reality that the Danish government has constructed and reinforced, putting Denmark's own rationality at risk.

When examining the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law, the only similarity is that the Danish Prime Minister has issued statements expressing condolences towards victims in general in relation to the attacks on hospitals. The similarities found when analyzing the response to the ICC arrest warrants is that Denmark respects and acknowledges their obligations under international law while choosing not to challenge or intervene in the ICC's decisions.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined identifiable similarities and differences in the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza and how these can be understood. Despite all attacks on hospitals being illegal, the Danish government condemns attacks on Ukrainian hospitals carried out by Russia while legitimizing or refusing to comment on attacks on hospitals in Gaza carried out by Israel. Despite not mentioning President Putin's arrest warrant directly, the Danish government has been vocal about the need for persecution and for him and the Russian government to be held accountable for breaching the rule of law. In contrast, the Danish government has not condemned Israel's actions or labeled them as illegal, despite the arrest warrant. The analysis suggests that the importance of condemning international law violations and mourning those affected by those violations depends on whether a democratic liberal-state rule governs the civilians affected and whether the civilians involved are perceived as grievable – which is not the case for Palestinians in Gaza. Condemnation and grievability also seem to be influenced by the contrasting narratives surrounding Muslims and the Jewish population cemented by the Danish government. The analysis concludes that similarities include respect for ICC's ruling and general acknowledgment of civilian suffering.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

The main objective of the study was to uncover how the Danish government has publicly reacted to and framed Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and Israel's invasion of Gaza in 2023.

In my analysis presented in Chapter 6, I examined how the Danish government has framed and legitimized the initial narratives surrounding the invasions, focusing on aggression, self-defense, and victimhood. My analysis concludes that the Danish government framed Russia and Hamas as the aggressors and Ukraine and Israel as the victims, legitimizing their use of violent self-defense. Hamas's actions were used to justify Israel's invasion. The Danish government's response is influenced by an existing hierarchy of grievability in which Ukrainian and Israeli lives are framed as more grievable than Palestinians and Russians. This is reinforced during warfare, normalizing and legitimizing the targeting of Russians and Palestinians. Arguably, religion plays a role in the case of Israel and Gaza, as the Danish government has vowed to protect the Jewish populations. At the same time, Muslims are perceived as a threat to Danish values, reinforcing their status as ungrievable.

In my analysis presented in Chapter 7, I addressed similarities and differences in the Danish government's response to alleged violations of international law in Ukraine and Gaza, including attacks on hospitals and the arrest warrants issued by the ICC for President Putin and Prime Minister Netanyahu. Concerning attacks on hospitals, my analysis concludes that the Danish government condemns attacks carried out by Russia while legitimizing or refusing to comment on attacks carried out by Israel. In relation to the arrest warrants issued by the ICC, the Danish government has not commented on the arrest warrant for President Putin. However, they have condemned Russia and Putin for alleged violations of international law, wanting him and his government to be held accountable. In contrast, the government has not condemned Israel's actions or labeled them as illegal, using Hamas as a justification for their actions.

Both analytical chapters conclude that the Danish government is far from neutral when responding to the invasions. Drawing on Cavanaugh's theory of the myth of religious violence and Butler's notion of grievability, the Danish government can be argued to legitimize violence carried out by actors whom it perceives as aligned with Western ideology, framing it as necessary to ensure global stability while de-legitimizing the actions of non-democratic and/or non-secular actors, framing them as irrational and fanatical. This reinforces an existing hierarchy of grievability in which the lives of non-democratic and non-secular actors are less valid and, therefore, framed as legitimate targets. Framing

of condemnation and grievability are further influenced by religious narratives promoted by the Danish government.

My innovative combination of Butler and Cavanaugh's theories offered an understanding of how ideological frameworks influence narratives of marginalization and grief and how religion can play a role in this process. The findings are significant, as they raise the question of whether other democratic countries, which claim to uphold human rights principles and international law, apply these principles equally or through biases and political preferences based on notions of ideology and grievability, undermining the UN 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The declaration was established after World War II to ensure universal protection of fundamental human rights (United Nations, n.d.). Arguably, such undermining could destabilize international cooperation between the West and the rest, threatening global stability, as the rule of law would be perceived as hollow and hypocritical.

Despite valuable insights gained from combining Cavanaugh and Butler's theories, it is important to recognize their limitations. As is the case with the invasions of Ukraine and Gaza, governments' responses are obviously impacted by economy, security policies, and geopolitical interests. These are important aspects that Cavanaugh and Butler do not address in depth, as their theories do not focus on the complexity of political mechanisms or state policies. Therefore, a realist approach focusing on military power and international alliances should be considered.

My study also encourages research on how framing some lives as more "grievable" reinforces polarization and contributes to social destabilization – not only in Denmark but globally. When conducting further research exploring the consequences of governmental responses to warfare, it would be relevant to explore how these affect overall trust in the government, societal affiliation, and the risk of radicalization and extremism. Despite research having been conducted on how extremist groups use the invasions of Gaza and Ukraine as a means of recruitment (PET, 2024), not a lot of research has been conducted on how the Danish government influences this tendency. In this study, I have applied Cavanaugh and Butler's theories, predominantly focusing on a macro-level. Although Butler's theory can be considered more micro-oriented than Cavanaugh's, both theories mainly focus on structural power dynamics. Therefore, they do not provide the framework to understand how the individuals affected internalize and respond to these power structures. For this reason, applying a more micro-oriented interactionist approach would be interesting.

As the theories used are primarily macro-oriented, my study has focused on top-down mechanisms addressing governmental responses. Although offering valuable and relevant insights, my study calls for future research on solidarity movements' counter-narratives. This would shed light on how public sentiments influence governmental debates, offering an interesting bottom-up perspective to the field of study. In this context, it would also be interesting to delve deeper into the media's coverage of warfare and the developments of narratives over time, as the media plays a significant role in shaping public perception and dominant narratives (Entman, 1993).

Personally, I choose to believe that there is hope for a world where lives are equally valued and acknowledged regardless of ideology, nationality, or religion and where justice carries more weight than political convenience and ideological affiliations. However, this prompts a critical reassessment of Western values and legitimization of warfare, challenging the notion that the West is inherently objective and righteous. The findings of this study contribute to such dialog while advocating for more transparent and ethical communication about warfare. Only by questioning the way warfare is perceived and responded to can we pave the way for meaningful and lasting change.

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