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M.A. International Media and Communications

Dissertation

Mapping the 'KGB-Phobia' of British newspaper reportage following Russian state violence in the United Kingdom.

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Contents:

1. *Abstract*

This text will map a chronology of Russian representation in British historical and cultural contexts, culminating in a discussion on the prevalence of a so-called KGB-Phobia. It centrally observes some key motifs and themes in the ways in which the stories of both Alexander Litvinenko's death and the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal were conveyed by the British media, and attempts to identify some mitigating factors, in the cultivation of prejudice, industry pressures and the inevitability of cyclical stereotyping.

Discussing a timeline of historical and cultural contributions to the western concept of Russian national identity, this dissertation considers how these contexts feed into the machine of the cyclical stereotype. The result of this is then instilled in the mind, used by journalists lazily and sloppily for a variety of reasons which will be considered – this only serves to feed the cyclical stereotype and further perpetutate prejudice.

A number of key themes and motifs will be extrapolated from the mediation of both the Litcinenko and Skripal stories, considering where the simplistic caricatures used in the language have originated, what impact these may have on public attitudes, and whether it may be considered as blatant KGB-Phobia.

Lastly, this dissertation will consider the issue of KGB-Phobia, and the broader issue of cultural xenophobia, within the framework of post-colonial media studies, deliberating the similarities to the structural oppositions realised in some seminal 19th and 20th century works of culture and communication studies.

2. Introduction

This dissertation will discuss the variety of ways in which Russian villainy is portrayed in western cultural and editorial contexts. It will identify the historical origins of Russian representation and how these stereotypes continue to pervade modern illustrations. Continuing to identify some examples of film and television, such as the global *James Bond* franchise and the BBC drama *Spooks*, this dissertation will acknowledge a modern intermediary in the communication of prejudice. The final destination of these stereotypical depictions is in the editorial offices of Fleet Street.

Following events of Russian state violence, when the moral fabric of the UK is most at threat, newspaper reportage is embellished with more compelling, and spectacularised, narratives derived from both historical and cultural contexts, as highlighted previously, such as espionage and intercontinental murder plots. This, I premise, is the result of a cyclical stereotyping. Capitalising on the theories of Henri Tajfel and the likes, this dissertation dissects the numerous influences of the cyclical stereotype, the culmination of which is the reproduction of prejudice.

This text, using methods of critical discourse analysis – deconstructing cultural and editorial examples and discussing their construction and application – will highlight a chronology in the representations of Russian villainy. Firstly, how historical contexts, derived from the Cold War and the Soviet Union, have set the benchmark for western attitudes towards Russia through the application of 'simplistic caricatures' (Galeotti, 2019, p. 3) which are both misleading and anachronistic. Secondly, popular culture has been responsible for an exacerbation of these attitudes, constantly posing Russia as an enemy force, with the 'spy-theme genre often clearly bifurcating good and evil, which recreated the structural opposition of east and west' (Miller, 2003, p. 19). And, lastly, the news sector is responsible for taking these sentiments from the peripheral sphere of popular culture, to the pervasive industry of news.

The central case studies for this dissertation are two high-profile news events from the UK. Both the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006 and the 2018 poisoning of Sergei

Skripal were quickly smothered by hyperbolic narratives which include spies, spooks and secrecy, often comparing the unfolding story with those of John Le Carré or Ian Fleming.

However, this dissertation looks to move beyond current studies of Russophobia to consider a comment made, following the attack on Alexander Litvinenko in 2006, by the then head of the KGB, Nicolae Kovalyov. "The ultimate target of the operation could have been to promote KGB-Phobia" declared Kovalyov (2006) following the murder of Alexander Litvinenko; "to show that Russia is ruled by KGB people", he concluded. This dissertation considers the possibility of this distinction and how the infamous security service has grown such a meta-narrative that it can now be analysed indiscriminately from the studies of national identity representation.

3. Literature Review

This section will consider pre-existing academic literature within the immediate sphere of this research: those which share similarities with this text, and have, indeed, inspired it, but are flawed or different in certain areas. These texts have been selected to inform and enhance the conception of this dissertation. It will focus on three central motifs, reviewing relevant, pre-existing academic literature surrounding: the depiction of Russia in western contexts and a rising wave of so-called 'Russophobia'; the importance of news media and the agency of news institutions; and the role of national identity representation and post-colonial media culture. The sources that have been selected for this literature review will expand on these areas, helping to inform the available knowledge of the subject and assist in answering the research question.

The academic study of KGB-Phobia is unashamedly embryonic. It is nebulous and novel. As yet, inexistent. However, this study does fit within some similar, pre-existing ontological areas. The study of Russophobia is, perhaps, the most pertinent. Here, a press narrative poses the 'two former world superpowers – the USA and Russia – as mired in a new, more dangerous cold war that never really ended' whilst 'the western media narratives about Russia profoundly influences the way we think about it' (Basulto, 2015, p. 2). It involves the conception of a negative attitude towards Russia, emanating from the west. It is not merely a lamentation of Russian government, or the Russian military. But, the condemnation of Russia as a whole. Some consider this to be a blatant example of xenophobia.

Geoffrey Wheeler (2007) identifies the rise in anti-Russian attitudes in the west with 19th century orientalism. A time when western countries ascended to 'condescending and patronising' (Said, 1978, p. 201) roles, looking down upon the east from their industrial and civilised positions. However, Kovalyov's ascription of 'KGB-Phobia' promotes several distinct questions from the more general Russophobia studies. Where the notion of Russophobia highlights a trident of ways in which anti-Russian sentiment broadly manifests in western culture (namely, A: 'Prejudice, hostility and hatred towards Russian political elites, cultures or people. B: Anxiety or fear of Russia. C: Pathological fascination or mesmerisation of Russia as a result of past trauma inflicted by it' (Meszaros, 2016, p. 60)), the study of KGB-

Phobia offers a different stance, based on the 'liberal and democratic tradition that is absent in Russia' (Bachman, 2019) and the lamentation of Russia's world-renowned security service.

This research, then, should be considered as ontologically tripartite. In regard to contextualising this dissertation within the disciplines of media, culture and communication studies, there are three central themes which the text will regularly draw upon. These are; the consequences of news media coverage and the ways in which it can influence opinion on so-called out-groups; the importance of national identity representation and the ways in which distant others are familiarised through particular historical and cultural lenses; and, finally, the relevance of post-colonial media culture and international power struggles, considering the ways in which Russophobia is exercised to maintain a certain distance between the two nations at the centre of this thesis.

The analysis of news is an important aspect of this research, considering whether Kovalyov's assertion is, indeed, correct, and news institutions are responsible for cultivating a form of KGB-Phobia. To do this, certain rhetorical and lexical issues are to be identified. Conventions such as Agenda Setting, as delineated by McCombs (2004), as well as Cohen's (1972) famous study of Moral Panics are important, combining the issues of communicative xenophobia with the analysis of news discourse.

One of the most interesting, and novel, results of this research, though, is the way in which the central characters are largely adopted by the British news media. The migrant - be it an economic migrant, an asylum seeker or an illegal immigrant - often saturates the front pages, particularly with the right-leaning newspapers to whom sovereignty and patriotism are at the crux of British culture. Both Litvinenko and Skripal, though, are different here, enacting a more 'positive version of the asylum seeker phenomenon' (Hutchings & Miazhevich, 2009, p. 226). Described as a more diluted 'émigré', Litvinenko becomes both a 'time-out' from the 'paranoid, security-ridden agenda to which British news had become wedded following the 7/7 suicide bombings' and a 'metaphoric recapitulation' of that agenda 'cleansed of its awkward ethnic colouring' (Hutchings & Miazhevich, 2009, p. 225). The pair actually receive the backing and sympathy of the right-leaning broadsheets, despite their salient

imbrication with a so-called *'Londongrad'*, rather than the disdain which migrants usually receive from British newspapers whom often associate them with 'terrorists', 'suspects' and 'criminals' (Allen & Blinder, 2013, p. 3).

The second theme involves the conception of national identity representation and the historical and cultural contexts which gradually build up the spectacle of nationality. Drawing on important texts within this discipline, such as Edensor's *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (2002), this dissertation considers the ways in which a, seemingly, inexorable image of Russian national identity is fed into a cyclical stereotype, resulting in news stories which are hyperbolised by the stereotypical conception of the east. Of course, the issue of national identity representation rather hinges on the nation. This study, though, looks to move away from the study of Russophobia to consider how the nation state and its revered security service are regularly conflated. Where typical studies of national identity representation consider the iconography of national and cultural imagery, this study will be slightly different. Whilst, of course, the imagery of Russia is important, it is the way in which the image of the KGB, and all that comes with it, is regurgitated in western cultural and journalistic texts, that is important here.

Lastly, is the issue of post-colonial media culture. This is where the pre-existing studies of Russophobia are most pertinent. An intercontinental power struggle is centric to the textual examples that come later. Whilst the condemnation of Russia and the KGB may be overt, it is the subtext which is equally important. Indeed, the cultural and editorial image of Russia subconsciously places Britain on something of a pedestal – a modern, moral metropolis, veritably advances of the backwards, brutal and barbaric Russia who 'pose a threat to our norms, values, principles and religion' (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 40).

The study of Russophobia exacerbates these political, cultural and social differences. However, as mentioned previously, this study will look to deviate in some specific areas. One of which is demonstrated quite plainly in Dominic Basulto's *Russophobia* (2015) – considered to be one of the foremost texts in the discipline. The principal argument of Basulto's book is that anti-Russian sentiment in western media has 'led to a new cold war between Russia and the west

that includes elements of information, cyber and economic warfare' (Basulto, 2015, p. 13). He debates how pre-existing images of Russia, usually derogatory and anachronistic, continue to pervade western consciousness and maintain a distorted image of the east. However, there is one major chasm that this dissertation looks to exploit. In Basulto's entire 275-page book, the popular culture section is just three pages long. This seems to suggest a relative ignorance towards the value of popular culture in influencing the dominant reading of Russia. As a result, this dissertation will take a chronological perspective, recognising both the historical and later cultural contributions in cultivating the image of both Russia and the KGB.

4. Methodology

This research will, primarily, rely on a qualitative study of news media linguistics, supported by some quantitative data which will help to prove, or disprove, Kovalyov's assertion. This study will aim to take an interpretivist approach, looking to understand and explain the key questions of this research, whilst treating truth and falsity as relative subjects in the face of hyperbole and conjecture: 'researchers have shown that fact and opinion are by no means easy to separate' (Bell, 1991, p. 13). The aim, then, is to 'uncover the buried ideology' (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 15) of news media discourse surrounding Russian representation following events of state violence in the UK, deliberating as to how these depictions are conceived, and concluding as to whether a blatant 'KGB-Phobia' is at play in the offices of Fleet Street.

The analysis of news is an important and specific ontological distinction in the study of linguistics where 'news media form a kind of speech community producing their own variety of language' (Bell, 1991, p. 9). News itself is becoming increasingly ambiguous as 'the category of news in the UK press constantly evades a concise single definition of what it is and what form it takes' (Harrison, 2008, p. 39). The author of news - at the micro level: a journalist, and on a macro level, a news corporation - often have the opportunity to exercise a certain ideology or deploy an ulterior motive in their locution. Be it, influencing the electorate or lobbying government, the news industry provides the platform for journalists to 'wield their immense power' (Robinson, 2018, p. 16) via the 'influencing machine' (Gladstone, 2011) that is the news media. Indeed, even on more mundane issues, news institutions regularly offer their position on the 'depiction between good and evil, black and white, them and us' (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p. 99).

The main body of this research will deal with two major news stories; namely, the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko in London, 2006 and the attempted murders of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, 2018. Using the newspaper database Nexis, a timeframe of one week following each event (24/11/06 – 01/12/06 for the former; 05/03/18 – 12/03/18 for the latter) has been selected to collate and analyse newspaper reports from the 'five newspapers with the

highest readership in England' (Statista, 2020): *The Sun, The Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror, The Guardian* and *The Independent*.

Primarily, this research will be collated through a method of critical discourse analysis, studying the media linguistics of newspaper reportage by 'using discourse analysis to uncover the preproduction of ideology' (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 136). This methodology enables a more fulsome and deeper analysis of the texts (selected within the timeframe referred to previously); extracting, examining and exploring lexical and rhetorical conventions used by journalists, as well as the implementation of 'language which expresses, highlights, indicates or emphasises certain news values' (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 137), in their shaping of the image of Russian national identity. The 'selection' of news values remains a contentious subject within academic spheres of media and journalism studies. One school of thought is that 'news values are neutral' (Lippmann, 1922) and that important news stories naturally gravitate to the top. Others feel that 'news values are selected and are not neutral but reflect ideologies and priorities reflected in society' (Bell, 1991, p. 156). Therefore, the ability to extrapolate connections between historical and cultural contexts and their manifestation in news media discourse enables the plotting of a 'communication background', reifying all that is 'behind its verbal part' (Dobrosklonskaya, 2008, p. 36). The ability to make a correlation between fictional images of television and film and the presence of a 'culture bound lexicon' (Maximova, 2018, p. 27) in news texts will help to decipher how journalistic prejudice, in the case of Russian national representation, is conceived.

This lexicographical and rhetorical analysis will be supported by a small quantitative study, capitalising on a '21st century trend within critical discourse analysis to combine qualitative and quantitative analyses' (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 136). The study aims to visually and quantifiably gauge the presence of an overt KGB-Phobia in news texts. Again, harnessing the Nexis database and counting through articles within the same temporal and spatial parameters, a search for articles which discuss the term 'KGB' as well as regular pejoratives which have become associated with the outfit in historic and cultural contexts, such as 'thugs', 'assassins', 'bastards', 'tyrants' and 'Nazis', will help to explicitly indicate the denotation of anti-Russian prejudice, in addition to the qualitative research's ability to delineate its more subtle connotations.

This exclusive use of qualitative analysis is plagued with certain issues. Despite its use in identifying patterns, and its subsequent ability to help explain why said patterns emerge, its inability, in this instance, to provide quantifiable and irrefutable data may have been an issue. Whilst the collation of data is not something which this study will rely on entirely, the inclusion of enumerative research can offer a certain evidential logicality. This type of qualitative investigation, though, hinges most importantly on the inference and interpretation of the researcher, meaning that it is difficult to provide a true, ultimate answer to the research question. The use of humanistic and analytical research, here, is likely to conclude with a 'hypothesis, concept, model or theory' (Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 66), rather than a definitive and indisputable verdict. As is ubiquitous with linguistic and lexical research, the connotation and suggestion of semantics is almost entirely subjective, rather than objective.

However, the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research solidifies the findings of this bilateral study as both analytical and empirical. Whilst the use of qualitative results, and the 'dissection and deconstruction of the impacts, roles and cultural reproductions' (Cotter, 2001, p. 416) found in media texts will develop a deeper understanding at the connotative level of this research, the implementation of a small, subsidiary, enumerative study serves to back-up said connotative analysis with denotative evidence.

5. Historical and Cultural Contexts of Russian Representation

This chapter will begin to consider the importance of historical contexts in the forging of national identity representation. According to Berger (2007, p. 1), 'national history has long played a prominent role in the forging of national identities'. The beginning of this chapter elucidates upon that assertion, considering some examples of major international events that have contributed to the shaping of Russian national identity in the west.

National identity representation does not exist in a vacuum. Nor does it appear of its own volition. It is cultivated and contextual. Historical and cultural. It is, therefore, 'difficult to escape the problem of identity in contemporary Europe' (Robbins, 1990, p. 370). Especially when one considers the representation of those in far-flung places, the only interaction with whom is often in the news or on television. The perception of national identity can play a crucial part in political, cultural and social relationships, whilst 'historiographic nationalism has also contributed to xenophobia, exclusion, discrimination, violence, war and genocide' (Berger, 2007, p. 1). Robbins (1990, p. 371) discusses the fall-out from the Second World War as an example, describing how British nationalism created a 'war guilt' on Germany's behalf, as commentators and authors 'were influential in creating, during the Second World War, a view of the German past which had a bearing on post-war planning' – much of which reflected the frosty British attitude towards Germany as a whole.

Robbins (1990, p. 372) describes how, 'it is now commonplace to find articles and books throughout the continent that wrestle with the issue of identity, usually inconclusively'. This assertion was made over thirty years ago. Texts of that ilk have proliferated in the time since, especially considering the polarisation of Europe and a rise in nationalistic politics, both in the United Kingdom (with the birth of UKIP and, subsequently, Brexit) as well as in continental Europe (with political movements such as France's Ressemblement National and Germany's National People's Party).

National identity representation works chronologically. Whilst the influence of popular culture, from the mid-20th century onwards will be dissected later, it is all preceded by historical contexts that lay the foundations for national and international stereotypes that manifest years later and remain pervasive to this day. It stands to reason that major international events, that one interacts with via news programming or authorship, contributes to the ways in which said country is perceived elsewhere. The Russian image is shrouded in the infamy of violence and brutality. Two of the major progenitors in cultivating the Russian image are the USSR and the Cold War.

One of the major historical eras which influences the perpetual and inexorable Russian national identity is that of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). Here, a number of, what Galeotti (2019, p. 3) refers to as 'simplistic caricatures' surrounding Russia are cultivated. Founded in 1922, the USSR is an important epoch in Russian history and one that remains prevalent in the western conception of the east. Boasting infamous leaders including Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin and Leonid Brezhnev, Soviet Russia was to be 'the new world superpower' as it focused on 'expansionist goals during the war', becoming 'one of the three superpowers that had created the basis of the victorious anti-Hitler coalition' (Reiman, 2016, p. 169). However, perhaps the most pervasive caricature – to use Galeotti's phrase – to come out of the USSR, is the image of communism. The USSR was responsible for 'the establishment of communist regimes in eastern Europe' (Gibianskii & Naimark, 2006, p. 1). As a result, Russia has long been seen as contrapuntal to then Capitalist, market-driven west.

Another progenitor for the modern-day image of Russian nationality is the country's involvement in the Cold War. From 1947 to 1989, Russia entered into a 'lengthy struggle' with the United States following the aftermath of the Second World War. The two countries 'clashed in a lengthy, strategic and ideological conflict punctuated by crises of varying intensities' (Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe, 2016, p. 3). The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet communist regimes saw the cessation of the Cold War in 1989. The result of this is, what will become a recurrent theme in this dissertation: what Miller (2003, p. 18) describes as 'the bifurcation of good and evil, predicated along the lines of west and east'.

There are several other international and intercontinental events that continue to influence the ways in which Russia is perceived by the west. Before his eventual assassination in the UK, Alexander Litvinenko became a whistle-blower on the KGB, claiming in his book *Blowing up Russia* (Litvinenko & Felshtinsky, 2007) that the KGB had planted bombs in an apartment building in Moscow; blamed the Chechens; and then used this to incite a war. Other examples include Russia's thuggish attempts at annexation, both in Crimea and Ukraine. The 2014 attack on flight MH17, a number of whose passengers were western, was heavily embroiled in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The prevailing theme, then, is the image of Russian violence and antagonism, which is no-better embodied than in the world-lamented special service, the KGB. Although the ancient branch has mutated and changed over several decades (it is now officially known as the FSB), the general themes surrounding the outfit still remain. This is delineated in Amy Knight's *Spies Without Cloaks* (1996, p. 3) where she discusses the western conception of the 'the world's most powerful security and intelligence apparatus' and how it fits among other European law enforcement agencies, such as Britain's equivalents, MI5 and MI6. The KGB is conceptualised as being 'powerful and pervasive' with 'vast monetary and technical resources' as well as 'personnel that numbered at least 420,000' (Knight, 1996, p. 5).

These themes, and caricatures, born from major historic epochs of Russia and eastern Europe, topped-up by more recent international news events that have pervaded western consciousness, all contribute to the ways in which Russia is perceived in the west. The next stage of the cultivation of national identity representation is the way in which it is mediated.

Considered historically through a study of mediated representations, the fundamental iconography of national identity, which is cultivated in the historical contexts discussed previously, begin to pervade cultural consciousness through examples of popular culture, such as film and television. Visual media, especially, are common conduits for the representation of varying social denominations. Be it class, colour or creed, much pertinence is often placed, within academic spheres of media and communication studies, on how these social circles are depicted in cultural contexts, and its role in 'inspiring, improving and deepening the human experience' (Arnold, 2009, p. 15) through inter-personal communications. This section will consider how cultural contexts further expand upon our understanding of national identity representation.

The term 'culture' has become extremely ambiguous and 'has been bedevilled by an inability for theorists to agree on a common definition, for it has remained a fluid term' (Edensor, 2002, p. 12). One may consider the distinction between so-called high culture; 'the culture of the elite and the intelligentsia' (Mangattu & Baby, 2017, p. 2), and low culture, such as that 'which offers satisfaction at the lowest level' (Leavis, 1930, p. 12), for instance. We sometimes associate culture with religion or even the notion of *being* cultured in a sophisticated fashion. Culture, especially in the United Kingdom, is 'still rooted in a hierarchical class system' (Robson, 2016). A cultural context then, in this sense, involves media which create a 'cultural interaction' (Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 49) with some form of entertainment or information. Formats such as film, television, music, art, dance, magazines and games are all examples of cultural contexts. This research is concerned, specifically, with popular culture, often demonised as 'harmful, hypnotic and addictive' (Edensor, 2002, p. 13) by the bourgeoise high-culture commentariat.

The importance of on-screen representation is the subject of much consternation among media scholars. One school of thought is that 'representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture' (Hall, et al., 2013, p. 1), whilst others feel that 'on screen representation seems facile when one considers the persisting inequalities behind the camera' (Johnson, 2021). The issue of representation, though, through ubiquitous channels of popular culture has become a fundamental way in which our world view is increasingly shaped. The process of social cognition - 'one of the most highly influential and widely celebrated theories in the field of psychology, which has since extended into the fields of communication and media effects' (Pajares, et al., 2009, p. 285) - helps to explain this.

According to Bandura (1995, p. 221), 'the capacity of humans to think abstractly or symbolically positions the media as an important source of information to facilitate observational learning and increase self-efficacy to perform given behaviours'. In short, he accredits some weight to the efficacy of media and culture in defining societal norms. The mediated representation of social denominations, then – in this instance the depiction of Russian national identity – can traverse through 'communication between group members, be

it through conversation or the use of mass media where social representations can be generated and passed within a culture' (Hinton, 2000, p. 26).

These types of on-screen representations often become ingrained in public perception and the consequential generation of stereotype and prejudice, whereby 'if we find consensus on a particular social group from the media, it is likely that we will accept this normative influence as the apt way to view the group' (Hinton, 2000, p. 19). In regard to the specific issue of national identity representation, 'the analysis of cultural context in media texts can contribute to our understanding of how national images are constructed in the international media discourse' (Maximova, 2018, p. 25). Mass media and popular culture have become imperative channels in bringing distant groups from the outside, and into the living room as 'the public discourses of mass media are the primary source of shared ethnic prejudices and ideologies' (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 126). The representation of Russia on the television may be the closest some people ever come to eastern Europe: here, 'cultural forms and practices of a nation' which members of the public are misinformed or ignorant of are 'increasingly replaced by meanings, activities and images drawn from popular culture' (Edensor, 2002, p. 12).

Of course, this automatic assumption of national identity relies on a dyadic relationship between the messages of the mass media and its reception by audience members; or the 'encoder' and 'decoder' relationship as devised by media scholar, Stuart Hall (2006, p. 165). The social impact of culture remains much debated, specifically whether cultural contexts have 'shaped public prejudices and attitudes or merely reflected them' (Robinson, 2007, p. 4). Hall recognised that, despite contrasting theoretical frameworks within the field of media and communication studies, most audiences are not merely a 'group of people who are lumpen and unreflective' (Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 138), as is the assumption in the study of passive audience theory. Hall's (2006, p. 163) concept of 'sender/message/receiver' is widely understood to be a more flexible and fulsome method of assessing audience reception of the media. Unlike the cruder metaphor of the 'hypodermic syringe' which 'injects audiences with the dominant messages of the mass media' (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 382), Hall's scaffold is more nuanced and places greater responsibility on the audience to accept and reject messages as they see fit. This is further anatomized into three broad readings: dominant, negotiated and oppositional.

Cultural representations, derived from historic images and implanted into modern consciousness through methods of mass media and popular culture, also begin to pervade more important and consequential forums of communications, such as news. Here, a 'culture-bound lexicon' (Maximova, 2018, p. 25) inevitably leads to a news landscape saturated by 'tabloidized infotainment' (Kellner, 2002, p. 58). News stories which discuss the 'other' – often countries which are seen as 'ideologically or ethnically different, distant or deviant' (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 361) – are regularly imbricated with stereotypical and banal language which enables the story to be 'better understood by the audience when [it] is introduced through familiar concepts and well-known experiences' (Maximova, 2018, p. 25). Essentially, with stories which involve actors who are unfamiliar to the domestic audience, in this case Russia and Russians, events are familiarised through the utilisation of a 'culture-bound lexicon'. Here, 'everything pertaining to Russian social or political realities refracts through the prism of national and cultural stereotypes shaped among the English-speaking audience and wrapped in an essentially negative disguise' (Maximova, 2018, p. 27). To familiarise audiences with certain stories pertaining to Russia, they are often imbued by banal and injurious pejoratives, such as 'tyrants', 'Nazis', 'thugs', 'rebels' and 'bastards'. This junction between historical and cultural contexts and their influence on journalistic imperatives will be explored further in a later chapter.

Instances of television and film, in their iconography and narrative, have 'often clearly bifurcated good and evil which recreated the structural opposition of West and East' (Miller, 2003, p. 18). This binary is often present in media texts which are generic of a spy or espionage thriller. Drawing on historical contexts, discussed previously, Russia has regularly been posed as an enemy or threat to the UK in examples of cultural fiction. Indeed, 'we write and talk about *them*, especially when *their* presence has become socially salient or otherwise interesting; the rhetorically populist point in all these discourses always is the pervasive construct of threat to our norms, values, principles or religion – thus, cultural differences between *us* and *them* are exaggerated' (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 62). The binary opposites of good and evil have long reigned in fiction and culture. They venerate the hero and denigrate the villain; celebrate a winner and malign the loser. Stories are often boiled down to a reductive contest between X and Y. Indeed, 'we often pronounce the words [good and evil] in the same breath, the word "and" should join

the two abstract nouns merely in coordination; instead, it draws out their remarkable opposition' (Mitrano, 2012, p. 23). Britain and Russia, and more expansively the west and east, have often found themselves in the midst of this contest of good and evil.

One example of this 'bifurcation of east and west' (Miller, 2003, p. 18) in popular culture is the ubiquitous *James Bond* film franchise. Bond, the 'suave, distinctly un-American warrior against communism whose very image conjures up nostalgia for British imperial might' (Hutchings & Miazhevich, 2009, p. 221) is the ultimate embodiment of western 'good'. In antithesis, he is regularly posed against the backwards, brutal and barbaric east - often depicted as Russian KGB officers and framed within 'already existing stereotypes, framing Russians as others by subjecting them to negative labelling and generalisations' (Lawless, 2014, p. 80). The Bond franchise remains perpetually iconic and important in British cultural and national iconography; indeed, after 1975, the Christmas Day television transmission of a Bond film 'established its place in the way of life' (Bennett, 2017, p. 10) of the British public.

This prominent position gives it ample opportunity to convey its not-so-subtle messages of western heroism and eastern villainy. The two forces are regularly posed as opposites through textual and thematic conventions. The use of colour and symbolism is prescient throughout the 1977 film *The Spy Who Loved Me*, for instance. Images are cut between Bond and his Union Jack parachute, to a Russian man ostensibly in Red Square, bathed in red light and holding a red telephone. "I need you", a woman exclaims. "So does England!", Bond replies before skiing to safety and beginning a mission which will commence "a new era of Anglo-Soviet relations". *Octopussy* (1983) sees further Russian antagonism through the tyrannical and maniacal General Orlov, eager for violence with a west that has become "decadent and divided".

Lawless (2014, p. 92) discusses how the use of a cod-Russian accent further embellishes the east as an archetype of villainy: 'the menace of such linguistic discrimination in differentiating *good* and *bad* characters by their language is that it may evoke audience's perceptions of *good* and *bad* types of language – in this case, Russian being the *bad* one'. Audiences, especially British audiences of spy and espionage thrillers such as *James Bond*, instinctively side with the

home-based hero and, consequentially, immediately cast aspersions on the opposition, which is stylistically and thematically cultivated in the film. In the case of the Bond film franchise, this is regularly a country which is seen as 'ideologically or ethnically different, distant or deviant' (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 361) – which is regularly: Russia.

Russia is habitually posed as the antithesis to Britain in other examples of the same genre. The long-running BBC television series *Spooks*, for instance, where 'British political elite concerns and suspicions, like the falsity of news and threats posed by other states, are expressed through stories about a team of intelligence officers preventing persecutory threats to the British state' (Ortega Breton, 2011, p. 228). Like Bond, *Spooks* encourages an almost nationalistic sentiment among audience members. The MI5 team, working to protect the UK command a home-like support in a football match; metaphorically, the away team changes each week, but they are always an enemy. Russia is one of these enemies. Examples of cultural fiction have historically, and continuously, framed these conflicts within a 'cold war narrative' (McMorrow, 2011, p. 422), fetishizing a now-defunct branch of the Russian defence: the internationally lamented KGB.

The KGB has taken a prominent place in several western cultural texts, usually as the enemy or antagonist. It's three letters have taken on a presence entirely of their own and exist in a whole other paradigm to its western equivalents: MI5 and the CIA, for instance. Russian President, Vladimir Putin, learned of the much-revered special service through 'spy stories, books and television' (Galeotti, 2019, p. 31), before later joining the department and reviving it during his presidency. Indeed, when one considers how ordinary a state department the KGB should be, it is intriguing as to how western commentators have continuously demonised and fetishized it. Obviously, the historical factors discussed previously are a major contributory factor to the KGB's long-prevailing image.

To refer back to the beginning of this chapter, cultural contexts of Russian representation take the building blocks from the historical influences of the USSR and the Cold War (to name but two) and bring that iconography into modern consciousness in a natural chronology of ever-evolving information and entertainment systems.

6. *The Formulation of Stereotype*

Whilst this research does not deal with anything as blatant or overt as racist or ethnic prejudice, the issue of xenophobia is, indeed, pertinent. Described as a form of 'subtle racism' (European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations, 2002, p. 53), the issue of xenophobia, in this instance, relates to the recrimination and lamentation of Russia and Russians in cultural and journalistic contexts. Here, the media, through the implementation of stereotypes and 'overgeneralised attributes associated with the members of a particular social group' (Hinton, 2017, p. 3), play a key role in producing and perpetuating stereotypical imagery as 'they have a huge reach in society and are a key filter through which people learn about each other' (Ross, 2019, p. 394).

Media and communications scholars have long researched the relationship between the marginalisation of ethnic groups and the historical and economic power struggles that perpetuate it. Stuart Hall (1996) places a great impetus on multi-ethnic representation and the ideological and cultural foundations which create it. Jedlowski and Thomas (2017) identify a crucial relationship between the media and ubiquitously-held prejudice, whereby 'the media are highly influential in structuring social ideals about race and ethnicity' (Ross, 2019, p. 398). Research has indicated that the media are, indeed, an influential force in developing and disseminating the iconography of distant others. Public service media and popular culture have become imperative channels in bringing distant groups from the outside, and into the living room as 'the public discourses of mass media are the primary source of shared ethnic prejudices and ideology' (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 126). These contexts have the proclivity to either 'reflect a basic reality' or 'mask and pervert a basic reality' (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 11); providing a plausible likeness of others, or a prejudice and clichéd refraction, born from long-prevailing historical and cultural influences.

Tracing the manifestation of these attitudes, though, is difficult and nuanced. Perry Hinton (2000) attributes an individual's culture as a major factor in their selection and utilisation of prejudice and stereotype. Here, 'implicit stereotypical associations, picked up by an individual, reflect the associations prevalent within their culture' (Hinton, 2017, p. 3). The individual is influenced by the cultural performances one makes, be it watching a certain television channel, listening to a particular genre of music or wearing a specific style of clothing. Of course,

stereotypical assumptions and the generation of ethnic or xenophobic prejudice can be inculcated in several other ways as 'cultural meanings, including stereotypes, are generated from within the complex messiness of people's lived experiences, of which media are just one part' (Ross, 2019, p. 405). Amodio (2014) discusses how the brain is susceptible to all and any influences, Golu (2013) describes how prejudice is forged in the furnace of the school playground, whilst Castelli and Zogmaister (2009) accredit the family and socialisation as major factors in the creation of an individual's world view.

For Hinton, though, cultural contexts provide a key forum for creating a xenophobia based on stylistic and narrative stereotyping, particularly in moving image texts. He describes how 'if we find consensus on a particular social group from the media, it is likely that we will accept this normative influence as the apt way to view the group' (Hinton, 2000, p. 19). Therefore, if a particular nationality is regurgitated as villainous and antagonistic, even in frivolous or trivial cultural contexts, Hinton asserts that these representations soon transcend and become fixed into common knowledge.

However, moving beyond the sociology and considering the science of stereotyping offers a mitigation for the implementation of 'an attitude which is firmly fixed, not open to free and rational discussion and resistant to change' (Watson & Hill, 1993, p. 146). One school of thought is that humans are inculcated, from the beginning of their lives, with a 'cognitive bias': 'a systematic deviation from rationality and judgement or decision making' (Vonk & Shackelford, 2018, p. 1003), concerned only with the elevation of the individual's social and anthropological sub-group and the deprivation of others. Here, 'stereotypical associations can implicitly influence social judgement, even for people who consciously seek to avoid their use' (Lai, et al., 2016, p. 1001). Despite this, academia surrounding prejudice and stereotyping has evolved from the theory of cognitive bias and now considers the works of the likes of Tajfel (1982) and Hinton (2000), and their assertions of 'culture in mind' as more appropriate. This model capitalises on early proclamations by Walter Lipmann (1922, p. 81) that 'it is the culture that is creating the stereotype, not the individual', and that 'within a social network' of symbolism, culture and iconography, 'common understandings are developed by the use of stereotypes' (Hinton, 2017, p. 8). Therefore, contrary to the notion that prejudice is an inevitable defect of the human genome, the 'culture in mind' model offers 'evidence to suggest

that mass media play some role, at least, in shaping collective identities and intergroup attitudes' (Ross, 2019, p. 405).

What results is a case of cyclical stereotyping. If prejudice is cultivated through culture, as is asserted by Tajfel and Hinton; the human assumes said prejudice; they then recycle it through the production of cultural contexts (in the era of the 'prosumer'- 'those who are simultaneously involved in both production and consumption' (Ritzer, 2010, p. 61)), then said prejudice is birthed, fed and nurtured in a vicious circle – the panacea for which is yet to be found. Indeed, what results is 'partly out of the complex media production process, norms and values, commercial drivers, and a lack of ethnic minority media producers' (Ross, 2019, p. 397) – all of which contribute to the relentless pace of the cyclical stereotype. Scholars, having considered the impact of on-screen representations in the forging of a hierarchical xenophobia, have begun to reflect on the importance of diversity behind the camera, with a number of recent reports (Cobb, et al., 2019; Follows, et al., 2016; Erigha, 2020; UNESCO, 2018) discussing how the 'occupational routines and structures' of media institutions 'play a key part in shaping what we see and hear in media content' (Ross, 2019, p. 398).

The product of the cyclical stereotype is, often, an over-inflated, exaggerated, negative and harmful condemnation of what is perceived by the 'in-group' to be the 'out-group' (Hinton, 2000, p. 107). In this instance, we shall consider said out-group as Russians, as that is the 'other' with which this essay primarily addresses. The regurgitated use of stereotype leads to a blurring between representation and reality – a 'hyperreality', as coined by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1994). What emerges is a conflation between what is real and what is replica. Sherry Turkle (2011, p. 4) recounts a visit to Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando – 'a park populated by real (that is, biological) animals'. Customers soon began to complain that the 'animals weren't as realistic as the other animatronic creatures in other parts of Disney world – the plastic crocodiles slapped their tails and rolled their eyes: they displayed archetypal crocodile behaviour'. Authenticity, then, has become rather nuanced. The same could be said for the depiction of Russia in cultural and journalistic texts. Certainly, in examples of film and television, as discussed previously, a villain isn't a *proper* villain unless he's bathed in red light, wearing a KGB uniform and speaking in a cod-Russian accent; indeed, 'our tv and movie screens have been flooded with soviet baddies – ruthless and cunning,

humourless and tough, with thick moustaches and even thicker accents' (Brook, 2014). Like the crocodiles at Animal Kingdom, the villain needs to exercise the *real* tropes of villainy for it to be truly authentic.

The combination of all of these things, inevitably, leads to a rather skewed portrayal in examples of news media. The historical and cultural contexts; the culture-bound lexicon; and the generation and perpetuation of a cyclical stereotype contribute to a news landscape which Kellner (2002, p. 58) describes as 'tabloidized infotainment' – where 'entertainment permeates the news' and it becomes saturated by banal and hyperbolised language which refracts the narrative at the heart of the story.

7. Alexander Litvinenko

The first case study that this dissertation will consider is the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko in 2006. Specifically, the ways in which it was mediated by sections of the British press. The newspaper reportage surrounding the Litvinenko assassination provokes three central motifs; namely, the assimilation to espionage/spy thriller narratives; repeated references to both the historic and 'new' cold war; and a rising moral panic concerning the violent potential of Russian nationals living in Britain.

Alexander Litvinenko was granted asylum to the UK in 2000, following a turbulent escape from Russia. A former KGB officer himself, Litvinenko became a whistle-blower on the secret service after, he claimed, he was ordered to assassinate Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky. Alongside a handful of others, who remained under cloak or balaclava, Litvinenko hosted a ground-breaking press conference in which he publicly lambasted and decried Russia's infamous special service, thus becoming 'a big enemy of the Russian regime' (Marconi, 2015, p. 67). In addition to the accusation regarding Berezovsky, Litvinenko also claimed (as he would later expand upon in his book) that there had been a 'return to KGB terror' as the Russians 'planted bombs in a Moscow tower block in order to inculpate the Chechens and reignite war' (Litvinenko & Felshtinsky, 2007, p. 33).

As a consequence of his abandonment of Russia's violent regime, and the apparent discovery of his moral compass, Litvinenko was welcomed to Britain and encouraged to integrate into a society which would collectively decry the Russian antagonisms that he now vehemently stood against. Litvinenko became something of a 'liminal' character from then on – as described, perfectly, by Hutchings and Miazhevich (2009, p. 220). He was largely adopted by the British public, reflected in the attitudes of the national press who, later, would go on to adopt Litvinenko as something of a martyr for western values. He became a British man, killed on British soil and his death personified an attack not just on one man, but on the morality that so embodies western attitudes. Ultimately, Litvinenko became a 'more credible and respected figure after his death than he was alive' (Marconi, 2015, p. 67).

Of course, this was an extremely popular and attractive story at the time. This section will harness the methodology outlined in chapter three. Therefore, this chapter considers 170 newspaper articles, as printed by the five newspapers with the largest readership in England. Using the newspaper database Nexis, a toggle has also been applied to eradicate any duplicate stories.

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As a way of indicating the presence of KGB-Phobia numerically (and explained in the methodology section of chapter three), this research will demonstrate a quantitative study, before the more expansive and detailed qualitative study. Of the 170 newspaper articles considered for this section, 118 of them include the term 'KGB' somewhere in its contents (see figure 1.1). Whilst this doesn't necessarily suggest any indictment or condemnation of the KGB, it is clear that it became a pertinent theme in the mediation of the Litvinenko case. The following section will consider some more lucid themes and motifs.

Alexander Litvinenko 24/11-06 - 01/12/06

52
Stories not including the term
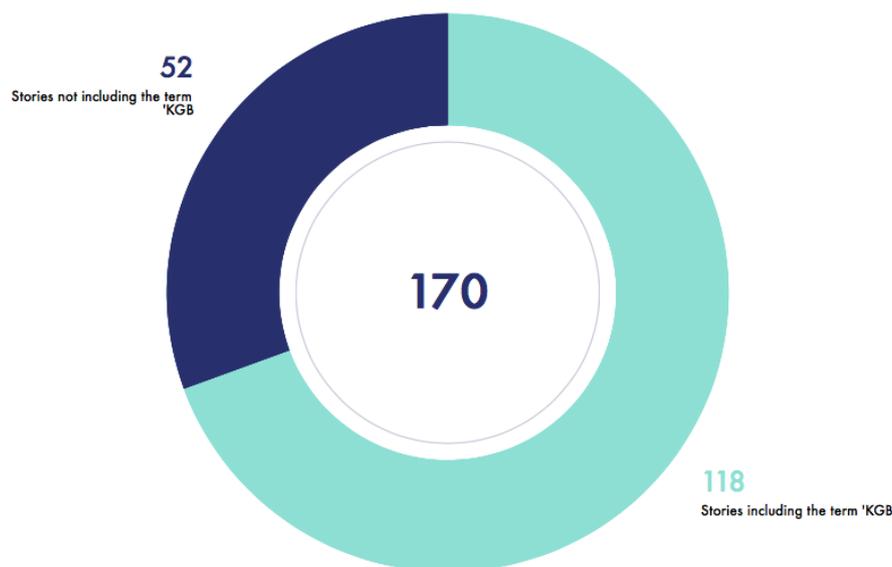'KGB

170

118
Stories including the term 'KGB

Figure 1.1

The first recurrent theme is a structural observation. It is plain to see in the communication of the Litvinenko assassination, an allusion to a canonical narrative; symptomatic of a crime or espionage thriller. As is the case with Agatha Christie-esque TV detective dramas, for instance, the audience is gradually introduced to the crime, the victim, the suspects, the murder weapon. The Litvinenko story was similarly narrativized, especially by *The Guardian.* Front-page articles, all titled *The Litvinenko Affair*, included: 'The Players' (2006); 'The Family' (2006); 'The Theories' (2006); 'The Countdown to Death' (2006); 'The Inquest' (2006). The result of this is, what Kellner (2002, p. 13) describes as, the 'spectacle'. Here, stories are dumbed-down, simplified, diluted and shortened in order to both ease consumption and heighten the frenzy and interest of the narrative. The inherent details of the so-called Litvinenko affair do, of course, lend themselves to a natural comparison to the shadowy worlds of 007 and the like. Yet, the construction of news articles only exacerbates those values; confirming the notion that the cream of news does not simply rise to the top. It is combined with artifice and framed in a way in which it becomes hyperbolised and spectacularised. It is also a bold move by *The Guardian* to so brazenly employ the definite article, imploring the reader to digest **the** theories and **the** suspects selected by the newspaper.

However, whilst these news conventions are certainly questionable when one considers the veracity of information that the public is dealt, the central issue of this dissertation is concerned with the prevalence of a KGB-Phobia. The accusation that the British press would promote such a thing does not seem particularly apparent here, although there is an obvious endeavour to assimilate the story with the preconceived images of Russia, as discussed previously.

The next important and perpetual motif, largely prevalent in the newspaper discourse of Litvinenko's death is a constant reference to the Cold War. As highlighted in chapter five, the Cold War provides a crucial step on the ladder which Russian representation has become in the west. It is an immediate reference point for those even without a knowledge of Anglo-Russia-US conflict and has become almost collocative with Russia. Two major articles demonstrate this allusion unequivocally. Firstly, one may consider *The Mirror*'s (2006) report on the events surrounding Litvinenko's death: 'BIT FISHY? IT STINKS OF A ROTTEN COLD WAR'. This really is a provocative headline. If the reader was to be in any doubt as to whom the major players were in this affair, then *The Mirror*'s headline rather signposts it. After a rather bizarre

condemnation of the Sushi restaurant Itsu (where it was initially believed Litvinenko had been poisoned) the article goes on make several references to the KGB and the Cold War. 'But lest we forget', it explains, 'Alexander Litvinenko was – like the man he detested, Russian president Vladimir Putin – a former KGB man'. Here is a glimpse at what Kovalyov may have perceived to be KGB-Phobia. Where the story is clearly warped by the preconceptions of the author (whom, as the cyclical stereotype dictates, is both a producer and consumer of prejudice), the references to the KGB are, indeed, pertinent. It is important, for context and the consideration of motivation, to reference Litvinenko's past as a KGB general.

What, perhaps, is less pertinent though, is the lazy reference to the cold war – often used to elucidate any kind of friction or antagonism between east and west. It also reflects a new trend in commentating on a number of social and political disparities: the tendency to describe a 'new' cold war. The *Financial Times* (Rachman, 2020) uses the term to describe growing US-Chinese tensions. *Al Jazeera* refer to the US versus NATO as 'manufacturing a new cold war' (Bishara, 2021). Edward Lucas' (2014) book debates 'the New Cold war' and 'Putin's Russia and the threat to the west'. It is this regurgitated and lazy comparison which may be explained as KGB-Phobia. Whilst an explicit reference to the KGB is rare in these articles, the very implication of a Cold War sub-textually implies the involvement of a shady, violent and abhorrent Russian special service, even if the subject is totally unrelated.

Lastly, one may consider the hysteria generated by the news media following Litvinenko's death, and the subsequent moral panic that ensued. Several articles during Litvinenko's demise begin to cast doubt upon Russia as a whole. Its people, its government, its culture are all questioned. Indeed, Russia becomes, very much, a folk devil. One report, which discusses the impact of 'mysterious Russians' (The Mirror, 2006), further alienates the 'rogue' Russia as a backwards 'other', inferior to the omnipotent west – an agenda which several news organisations had already began to perpetuate through their first reports on the Litvinenko case. Here, we see a lucid example of a 'folk devil' and a subsequent 'moral panic' – a group of individuals, in this case: Russians, reproved through hyperbolic mediation by the right-thinking ensemble that dominate the British press. As with every moral panic, the issue of the social construction of deviance is important. Therefore, the contribution of the mass media, and their 'depiction between good and evil, black and white, them and us' (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994,

p. 99), is vital in regard to setting an agenda – whether they choose to condone or recriminate. Public opinion can so easily be influenced by the information of the press as 'people do not spontaneously invent negative opinions' (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 359). The migrant, for instance, be it an economic migrant, an asylum seeker or an illegal immigrant, often saturates the front pages, particularly with the right-leaning newspapers to whom sovereignty and patriotism are at the crux of British culture. Litvinenko, though, is different here, enacting a more 'positive version of the asylum seeker phenomenon' (Hutchings & Miazhevich, 2009, p. 226). Described as a more diluted 'émigré', Litvinenko becomes both a 'time-out' from the 'paranoid, security-ridden agenda to which British news had become wedded following the 7/7 suicide bombings' and a 'metaphoric recapitulation' of that agenda 'cleansed of its awkward ethnic colouring' (Hutchings & Miazhevich, 2009, p. 225). He actually receives the backing and sympathy of the right-leaning broadsheet, despite his salient imbrication with *'Londongrad'*, rather than the disdain which migrants usually receive from British newspapers whom often associate migrants with 'terrorists', 'suspects' and 'criminals' (Allen & Blinder, 2013, p. 3).

The mediation of the Litvinenko case is one shrouded in the historical and cultural contexts highlighted previously. It is stereotypical. It is not, necessarily, prejudiced. It may be described by the likes of Kovalyov as KGB-Phobia. However, that description would far likely be some kind of retaliation to the west's condemnation of the east's distinct lack of morality. Litvinenko's KGB past is pertinent, yet there are obvious areas where these values are exacerbated in order to increase the newsworthiness of the story.

8. Sergei Skripal

As a way of indicating the presence of KGB-Phobia numerically (and explained in the methodology section of chapter three), this research will demonstrate a quantitative study, before the more expansive and detailed qualitative study. Of the 278 newspaper articles considered for this section, 38 of them include the term 'KGB' somewhere in its contents (see figure 1.2). These figures seem to suggest far less reference to the KGB than in the Litvinenko case. This section will continue to discuss some key motifs from the newspaper discourse surrounding the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal.
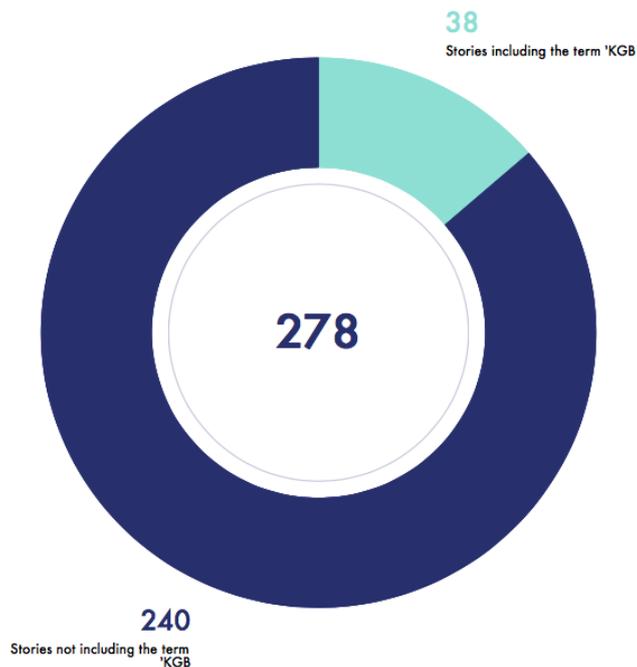

Figure 2.2

Clearly, in an antithesis to the key motifs of the Litvinenko case, the KGB seems to be something of a footnote when one considers the thrust of the Skripal story: the enumerative data indicates that it features in just a handful of articles.

Sergei Skripal is, like Litvinenko, a fascinating character. Again, liminal. And again, embodying the victim of western democracy. Skripal, a former KGB spy, had taken residence in London several years ago after the UK and Russia engineered a successful swap of assets, protecting those who had passed intelligence across enemy lines. Skripal was one of those. A mole, some may say. A traitor, say the Kremlin. Therefore, it was, perhaps, inevitable that 'Putin's army' (Blake, 2019, p. 66) would catch up with him.

As the two central characters share similarities, so do the ways in which their stories were communicated. A key theme in the Litvinenko case was the hyperbolised narrative that remained congruent. This is no different. The press seems almost incapable of delivering stories like these without plunging to the depths of lazy and quick reference – in this case, to spy and espionage thrillers. To the worlds of Ian Fleming and John Le Carré. Of course, both Litvinenko and Skripal are somewhat entangled in the realities of these worlds, but the news values exercised in their stories are oafish and extreme – something that will be considered in more detail later. *The Guardian*'s (2018) 'Russian Spy Mystery' perfectly encapsulates this. At the point at which this article was printed, the facts were, quite simply, a Russian man and his daughter, had been found in a catatonic state on a bench in Salisbury. Everything else that contributes to *The Guardian*'s 'mystery' is supposition, summation and stereotype. The frenzy is heightened further by repeated use of synonym. 'Conundrum'; 'puzzle'; 'enigma'; 'riddle' all feature in *The Guardian'* (2018) story.

A second important and recurrent theme is, again, prevalent in both of these cases, but for very different reasons. That is the production of moral panic. What was evident in the Litvinenko case was a heightened panic surrounding Russian nationals in the UK and their supposed threat. In this instance, the more prevailing narrative is the threat to public health. It became clear that a British Airways flight had been exposed to radioactive material, that areas in Salisbury had also been frequented by the perpetrators and that, latterly, a member of the public had died from ingesting the poison. Nevertheless, whilst the threat to public health was central to much of the newspaper discourse (dwarfing that of its allusion to the KGB), *The Sun'*s front-page 'RED SPY IN UK POISION TERROR' blatantly realigns the focus back onto something far more eye-catching and thought provoking. Rather crassly, the red-top used exactly the same headline twelve years previously when reporting on Alexander Litvinenko's death, and here it is again. There is little room for ambiguity. 'RED SPY' is quite clearly a nod to the communist and former-soviet east. It moves beyond the concerns surrounding the safety of the public to

realign with the themes discussed previously – that of antagonism between east and west and the posing of Russia (in this case, ascribed 'RED') as an enemy force.

What it does not do, though, is explicitly link the story with an undercurrent of KGB-Phobia. Rather disappointingly for Kovalyov and co., the Skripal stories are somewhat muted. They are without the backdrop of terrorism or a heightened sense of fear. Instead, there is mostly fascination, centrally by the Novichock used in the attack. Public health featured heavily too. Yet, the KGB and an attack on Russian cultural values does not seem so prevalent here.

9. The Consequences of the News Industry

The news industry, and, specifically, the analysis of printed news, is the prominent area of this research. A fair, balanced and independent news service is vital to westernized, metropolitan countries. Indeed, 'access to information is essential to the health of a democracy' (Centre for Democracy and Governance, 1999, p. 3). Yet, it is something which is becoming increasingly scarce in the age of the infoglut and mass information, whereby 'at the very moment when we have the technology available to inform ourselves like never before, we are simultaneously and compellingly confronted with the impossibility of never being fully informed' (Andrejevic, 2013, p. 2). The news industry was described as an 'ideological state apparatus' by sociologist Louis Althusser in the 1970s and has been used by despots, even preceding that, as a form of mass propaganda and misinformation – especially, using news institutions which are under the control of the state.

The role of the journalist has evolved over several decades; once credited as 'arbiters of the truth' (Robinson, 2018, p. 20); those with the 'ethical duty to provide the public with credible news' (Ward, 2005, p. 10). However, more recent descriptions ascribe them, instead, as 'moral defectives with no sense of responsibility to society' (Petley, 2012, p. 534), where 'the ethic of honesty has been overwhelmed by the mass production of ignorance' (Davies, 2009, p. 28).

One major area of consternation, in relation to the creation and cultivation of news, is the issue of framing. This is majorly intertwined with the notion of context and the 'interpersonal, group, organization and cultural settings' which 'govern situational communication' (D'Angelo & Shaw, 2018, p. 208). Erving Goffman's (1974) seminal *Frame Analysis* provided the foundations for the study of framing in journalism and communications studies, considering how 'small units of social structure cohered' (D'Angelo & Shaw, 2018, p. 208) to create the frame in which a narrative sits. Journalists are endowed with the power of selection; ruminating on what is 'judged to be newsworthy, exercising their news sense within the constraints of the news organisations within which they operate' (Harrison, 2006, p. 13). News values are imperative in selecting between what is pertinent, and what is irrelevant. Scholars debate, however, whether news values are intrinsic to a story – therefore elevating said story to newsworthy status – or whether stories are embellished by certain newsworthy details in order

to make them more interesting and palatable. News values have been described a 'slippery concept' (O'Neill & Harcup, 2009, p. 162) and, indeed, when one considers the social ramifications of news selection, especially considering the in-group/out-group bifurcation discussed earlier, it is especially concerning. This is a valid question in relation to the two central case studies of this dissertation. One may question if a journalist is truly endeavouring to a pursuit of truth if they are merely concerned with the hyperbole and exacerbation of their stories.

The selection, implementation or embellishment of news values all contribute to the frame in which a news story sits. This refers to the overall tone of the piece; whether it venerates or denigrates; the hero and the villain. Repeated employment of a particular frame can lead to an issue known as agenda setting. This is a theory cultivated by media and communications theorist, Maxwell McCombs (2004, p. ix), concerning 'the influences that shape the media's agenda, the impact of specific elements in the media's messages, and a variety of consequences of the agenda-setting process'. Agenda setting usually concerns the press' acrimony to a particular social or cultural subculture. Examples include the castigation of so-called benefit scroungers, binge drinkers or drug users. One famous incident was *The Sun*'s targeting of Liverpool Football Club supporters following the Hillsborough Disaster of 1988. The red-top chastised the Liverpool fans, 96 of whom were tragically killed, describing "THE TRUTH" that "some fans picked pockets of victims", "some fans urinated on the brave cops", and "some fans beat up PC giving kiss of life".

The result of this type of framing and agenda setting from the national press was set-out by the eminent sociologist Stanley Cohen (1972) and ascribed 'moral panic'. Professor Chas Critcher, a media sociologist, defines Cohen's framework as the 'processual model' of delineating a moral panic – this differing from the Americans' Eric Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda's (1994) 'attributional model'. The process of Cohen's (1972, p. 1) theory was identified by Critcher (2003, p. 9) as 'six stages in the development of a moral panic'. These six junctures include: 1) 'A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests'. 2) 'Its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media'. 3) The moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people'. 4) 'Socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and

solutions'. 5) Ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to'. 6) 'The condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible'.

This process is very much evident in the mediation of both the Litvinenko and Skripal cases. The notion of threat to our norms and values is heightened, whist Russia, and the Russians that reside in the United Kingdom, are looked upon with increasing suspicion.

Scholars have begun to consider the industrial pressures on journalists as a way of explaining this lazy reference to stereotype and cliché. One reason for this could be, what Davies (2009) describes as 'churnalism'. Here, under 'increasing pressures of pagination and productivity' (Lewis, et al., 2008, p. 1), journalists are lacking the time and critical skills to research stories effectively; therefore, they begin to rely on what they have been conditioned to believe about certain social subcultures: 'journalists often have little time to review their work, which raises the risk that they might fall back on – and reinforce – widely circulating stereotypes' (Ross, 2019, p. 401). As pressures on journalists grow, we are seeing a 'strange, alarming and generally unnoticed development', whereby 'journalists are pumping out stories without checking them' (Davies, 2009, p. 51) and surrendering their roles as 'arbiters of the truth' (Robinson, 2018, p. 20).

Often, these depictions are not deliberate. As Ross (2019, p. 401) asserts, 'most journalists do not go to work aiming to slander an entire ethnic group'. Instead, this is a result of an insentient process - stereotypical associations 'can implicitly influence social judgement, even for people who consciously seek to avoid their use' (Hinton, 2017, p. 3) – leading to an 'unconscious bias' fuelled by 'newsroom pressures' (Ross, 2019, p. 401). This seems to almost mitigate the journalist's use of stereotype: unconscious and accidental. However, one should consider this as a major cog in the cyclical stereotype. Each time a journalist reaches for a lazy or simplistic reference, the cyclical stereotype is fed.

10. KGB-Phobia as Orientalism

This historical, cultural and now journalistic division – the 'bifurcation of good and evil, predicated along the lines of west and east' (Miller, 2003, p. 18) – should move beyond the nebulous KGB-Phobia and the rumblings of Kovalyov and co, assimilating with the more reified studies of post-colonial media cultures. This largely revolves around a 'discourse of separation' (MacDonald, 2011, p. 127) – cultural differences are exacerbated and hyperbolised to further embellish the chasm between two nations. Whilst this study has looked more specifically at the mediation of KGB-Phobia, rather than an explicit lamentation of a particular nation state, the two realms are conflated and interchanged regularly: KGB is Russia; Russia is KGB. As a result, when one cannot isolate a specific geological location, the 'discourses of separation also operate in psychic, metaphorical and ideological' areas (MacDonald, 2011).

MacDonald (2011, p. 128) emphasises an important aspect in the varying degrees of separation – that of 'culture as the basis of enmity'. It is the clashing of cultures which the evidence in this dissertation so explicitly highlights. It is often rudimentary and, almost, simplistic – 'the clash of civilisations thesis encourages us to perceive cultures in monolithic and oppositional terms' (MacDonald, 2011, p. 128) - but the binary of eastern and western cultural disparities is plain to see. The ways in which we live are posed as being so entirely contrapuntal that the east becomes a threat in a number of ways; physically, morally, traditionally and culturally. Indeed, 'we write and talk about *them* [in this instance, Russia and the KGB], especially when *their* presence has become socially salient or otherwise interesting; the rhetorically populist point in all these discourses always is the pervasive construct of threat to our norms, values, principles or religion – thus, cultural differences between *us* and *them* are exaggerated' (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 62).

Van Dijk is a leading scholar in the interpretation of communicative xenophobia. He describes how 'racism and ethnocentrism are major problems in our society, requiring permanent and persistent critical inquiry' (Van Dijk, 1987, p. 7). As referred to previously, whilst this research does not deal with anything as blatant or overt as racist or ethnic prejudice, the issue of the 'subtle racism' (European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations, 2002, p. 53)

that is xenophobia is, indeed, pertinent. Van Dijk (1987, p. 11) discusses how 'ethnic prejudices become shared and may form the cognitive basis of ethnic or racial discrimination in inter-group interaction'; this wholly relies on the relationships between in-group and out-group members, as delineated previously when considering the formulation of stereotype. Van Dijk pronounces upon classic studies of post-colonial attitudes, as theorised by the likes of Said (1978) and Memmi (1965), which discuss this further.

One might compare the study of cultural and communicative KGB-Phobia to the scaffold set out in Said's (1978) seminal *Orientalism*. He discusses the notion of 'confrontation felt by westerners dealing with the east' and the relationship's 'varying degrees of inferiority and strength' (Said, 1978, p. 201). Memmi's binary of the *Coloniser and the Colonised*, predicated along the lines of colonial forces, is also pertinent, imagining the 'coloniser as a tall man, bronzed by the sun, wearing wellington boots and proudly leaning on a shovel' (Memmi, 1965, p. 47), in comparison to the lowly, desperate colonized people who are ingratiated by colonial assistance. Both of these discourses are constructed upon a blatant xenophobic power struggle – the study of KGB-Phobia is similarly constructed.

For Said, and his study of the Occident and the Orient, language plays an important role in the othering of distant nations. He discusses how 'Orient' was 'a word which accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations and connotations, and that these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient, but to the fields surrounding the word' (Said, 1978, p. 203). This recognition of the way in which a word mutates and expands is entirely reflective of a similar process, as has occurred with the term 'KGB'. Posternyak and Boeva-Omelechko (2018, p. 1) identify a 'lexeme of Russia' which ultimately 'forms metaphorical, evaluative and ethnocultural associative layers' surrounding the word itself. Like Said points out with 'Orient', 'KGB' has generated a similar cultural resonance, born from the western contexts in which it is received. He continues, 'the Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into western consciousness' (Said, 1978, p. 203). Again, one sees a similarity with the resonance of the term 'KGB', as identified by Maximova (2018, p. 27): 'everything pertaining to Russian social or political realities refracts through the prism of national and cultural stereotypes shaped among the English-speaking audience and wrapped in an, essentially, negative disguise'.

Again, one refers to the inexorable and long-standing concept of the cyclical stereotype. Said's (1978, p. 206) notion of 'latent and manifest Orientalism' follows a similar trajectory as prejudice is cultivated in mind, then exercised in thought and talk, which ultimately continues in a perpetual motion. He refers to the ways in which the 'unanimity, stability and durability of latent Orientalism [the unconscious and internal conception of prejudice] is more-or-less constant' (Said, 1978, p. 206) – the similarities in attitudes towards both Russia and the KGB, historically, culturally and editorially seem to suggest something similarly incorrigible.

The subtext of this denigration of one group is usually the veneration of the other. For Said, it was the power struggle between the Occident and the Orient; for Memmi, it was the dialectic between the Coloniser and the Colonised. Here, the cultural and editorial images of Russia and the KGB consciously places Britain on something of a pedestal: a modern, moral metropolis, veritably advanced of the backwards, brutal and barbaric Russia with their 'invisible perpetrators and menacing shadiness' (MacDonald, 2011, p. 127) that so strikes fear into the heart of the west.

11. Conclusion

To conclude this dissertation is rather difficult, as there are far grander and more elaborate avenues of study that could capitalise on the nebulous ideas discussed here. What this text set out to do - an investigation into the KGB-Phobia of British newspaper discourse – has returned a number of hypotheses and concepts. Using two major news stories, separated by over a decade seems to indicate a relative decline in what may be coined as KGB-Phobia. Whereas the Litvinenko affair was shrouded in a heightened sense of emergency in a war on terror, the prevailing narrative of the Skripal poisonings was not one of espionage and antagonism, but of public safety and the threat to wider society. Using subsidiary case studies, international events such as the death of Boris Nemtsov, the shooting down of flight MH17 and the attack on Alexei Navalny, may illuminate this transition more gradually.

However, bridging the gap between national identity representation and the ways in which the KGB meta-narrative may be analysed similarly has been exciting. It shows that many of the characteristics associated with national identity representation, such as stereotype, prejudice, colloquialism and laziness, are also typical of the representation of institutions; especially when they are posed as the enemy. Through the culture-bound lexicon, the cyclical stereotype and the refraction of cultural and political realities, one might agree with Kovalyov's assertion that a subtle form of KGB-Phobia is, indeed, pertinent in the offices of Fleet Street. Must we blame the journalist or the institution for this, though? This dissertation has offered the argument of social cognition, the ways in which the individual assumes prejudice through social conditioning. It has also considered the pressures of pagination and promptness facing journalists and their subsequent usage of lazy churnalism. As historical and cultural factors dictate, the KGB and the myriad of icons and lexis that shroud it, are an easy reference when debating Russia – even if it is almost totally irrelevant.

Kovalyov, then, may have been correct in his assertion. What is harder to deduce is the blurred lines between blatant and predictable Russophobia and the concept of KGB-Phobia. What is inevitable, though, is that whilst the east and west remain contrapuntal, the regurgitation of these narratives will long prevail.

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