The political language of identity
A cross-disciplinary analytical map for understanding national rhetoric. Tested and refined through analyses of New Year’s speeches held by Danish prime ministers between 2002-2017.

Tor Gaute Syrstad

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Abstract

This thesis provides an analytical map for understanding national rhetoric, based on the combined knowledge from contemporary rhetorical theory and the social identity approach in social psychology. A symbiosis of theoretical perspectives can help us to understand the psychological mechanisms that lie behind rhetorical mobilization, without forgetting the value of analyzing language and text. The main goal with the analytical map is to establish a repertoire of different social identities that the rhetor switches between throughout a speech, to understand what content these identities are filled with, and to show how the language of inclusion and exclusion constitutes an overall impression of “the nation”. The map is tested and further refined through one in-depth analysis of Danish prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s New Year’s speech in 2017, and one broad analysis of the Danish New Year’s speeches from 2002 until 2016. These practical analyses prove that combining theoretical perspectives and analytical terms from two different, and normally distanced, academic fields can result in a comprehensive and well-functioning set of textual techniques. Additionally, the thesis offers empirical insight into how Danish prime ministers have used the New Year’s speech to define the borders of the Danish community, and how they fill the national identity with certain values and ideals. In combination, the in-depth and the broad textual analysis shed light on how Danish prime ministers mobilize their “people” through social self-representations, and how they use linguistic tokens to create integrated personal, political and national narratives.
The present master’s thesis is the result of a long-lasting process, in which I have not been alone. I have plenty of reasons to be grateful, and many persons to thank.

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1. Introduction

The quest for identity is the modern pilgrimage.
- Edwin Black, 1970³.

Rhetoric matters. Through speech, national leaders not only present their preferred policy measures and ideological visions. Even more importantly, they create an image of who “we” are, and who “we” should become. They invite some into their audience while others are excluded from their community – their nation. That is an act of great influence, which political scientists should try to understand. I believe that rhetorical analysis can give important insight into how politicians mobilize their “people” through a language of identity – how leaders construct a narrative for the nation and create a feeling of loyalty among members of the group.

National rhetoric, however, is studied from a wide range of different angles, and as a part of varying disciplines and schools. This can easily lead to confusion. At the same time, it provides room for cross-disciplinary cooperation. Unfortunately, this room has not been used as much as it could have been. Specifically, I miss closer ties between social psychology and rhetoric. While prominent scholars from both of these fields are concerned with national identity, there have been few attempts to build unifying theoretical and analytical frameworks. Deep-felt cleavages between different academic fields hinder fruitful innovation and result in a situation where researchers from both camps miss out on important support – and criticism – from each other.

If we leave old scientific cleavages behind, a symbiosis of perspectives could help us understand the psychological mechanisms that lie behind rhetorical mobilization, without forgetting the value of analyzing language and text. My aim in this thesis is therefore to create a cross-disciplinary framework, based on the social identity approach in social psychology and contemporary rhetorical theory of collective identity. This framework, or more precisely, analytical map, should offer concrete and applicable terms and techniques for an analysis of the political language of identity. Analyses following this map should both establish a repertoire of different social identities that the rhetor switches between throughout a speech, reveal what content these identities are filled with, and show how the language of inclusion and exclusion constitutes an overall impression of “the nation”.

To secure that the analytical map functions in practice, I will test and refine it through the analysis of a concrete set of speeches. National rhetoric is all around us, and interesting texts could be found around the globe. Nevertheless, the long-lived debate about national identity in Denmark has inspired me to study Danish rhetoric specifically. Self-awareness as a small nation with a great and powerful history has traditionally made questions of identity highly relevant in the Danish discourse (Østergaard, 2000). The importance of these questions has not waned in our contemporary political landscape. Ever since the start of a so-called “cultural war” under the leadership of prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in 2001 (Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2011, pp. 1-8), Danish identity has been a topic of controversy in the public debate. Events such as the caricature conflict in 2005, the financial crisis from 2008, the terror attack in Copenhagen in 2015, and the influx of refugees the same year have just strengthened the concerns about a possible decay of Danishness. Instead of speculating about the content of Danish identity, rhetorical analysis can reveal how a feeling of national belonging is actively constituted through speech.

Based on this core motivation, I have been in search for speeches that enable Danish political leaders to constitute Danish identity on the foundation of some “shared” values and beliefs. Throughout the year, few speeches are meant to be more nationally unifying, yet at the same time politically potent, than the annual New Year’s speech. On the festive occasion of a new year starting, this speech gives the prime ministers of Denmark a unique opportunity to unite their people around certain national values; to underline what is, and should be, common to “all Danes”. I have therefore chosen to test the analytical map through one in-depth analysis of the New Year’s speech in 2017 and one broad analysis of the speeches from 2002 until 2016. The analyses can help us understand how Danish prime ministers mobilize their national communities and constitute a Danish “we” through New Year’s speech rhetoric. In addition to guiding theoretical development, the in-depth and the broad analysis will thus yield important insight into an empirical material of interest.

To sum up, my aim is to develop a cross-disciplinary analytical map in a three-step process. First, I will combine insights from the social identity approach with contemporary rhetorical perspectives on collective identity. The goal with this theoretical symbiosis is to connect an understanding of social categorization processes with techniques fit for textual analysis. In particular, I will search for applicable terms for practical analysis, which will result in a preliminary set of analytical guidelines. Second, I will test the usefulness of this analytical map in an in-depth analysis of the New Year’s speech held by Danish prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen in 2017. In this analysis – a form of plausibility probe in methodological
parlance – I want to examine the practical utility of the theoretical symbiosis in a concrete analysis of national rhetoric. Results from the analysis will prepare the ground for a further elaboration of the map, to secure a correct balance between the different terms and techniques.

There is a risk that the results from this initial analysis reflect case-specific characteristics with the New Year’s speech from 2017. If so, not only will the theoretical symbiosis and analytical combination be insufficiently tested; empirically, we will be left with a biased impression of dominant modes of social categorization in this genre of speeches in Denmark. Thirdly, therefore, I will conduct a broad analysis of the Danish New Year’s speeches from 2002 to 2016. This analysis, and the following refinements, will secure that the final analytical map is fit for analyzing national rhetoric in general, and the Danish New Year’s speech genre in particular.

The forthcoming thesis thus attempts to answer the following theoretical research question:

**How can the social identity approach be combined with contemporary rhetorical theory in an analytical map fit for analyzing the way political leaders constitute national identity through speech?**

In the process of developing the analytical map, my examination of the speeches will help me answer the following empirical question:

**How do the Danish prime ministers from 2002 to 2017 constitute Danish national identity through their New Year’s speeches?**

Accordingly, this thesis is concerned with nationalism, not as a political ideology, but as a rhetorical praxis – a praxis that constantly underlines the nation as a relevant, maybe even the most relevant, social group of belonging. Throughout the process of answering my two research questions, I will both collect analytical tools that could be used to understand national rhetoric, and test these tools in practical analyses.

In the next chapter, I will go deeper into the theoretical foundations for my research. This chapter will first elaborate on the importance of context for categorization processes and group identities seen from a social psychological point of view. The theoretical framework is then further informed by contemporary rhetorical theory of collective identity, and its poststructuralist inspirations. In the third chapter, I go through the practical implications of my
theoretical symbiosis in order to build a preliminary analytical map. Chapter 4 provides background information about the rhetorical situation surrounding the actual New Year’s speeches in Denmark. This information is important for understanding the analysis, which follows in chapter 5. In that chapter, I will first analyze the New Year’s speech by prime minister Løkke Rasmussen in 2017. This analysis contributes to a refinement of the analytical map, which is then further tested through an analysis of the New Year’s speeches between 2002 and 2016. My most important findings are discussed and concluded in chapter 6.
2. Theoretical and methodological framework

The heart of the collectivization process is a political myth.
- Michael Calvin McGee, 1975\(^2\).

The main goal with this master’s thesis is to collect well-functioning tools to understand how political leaders constitute national identity through speech. The first step to reach this goal consists of combining theoretical insights from two separated fields that both are concerned with national identity, yet in different ways: the social identity approach in social psychology on the one hand and rhetorical theory of collective identity on the other.

In rhetorical theory, contemporary streams of research provide important insight into the relationship between language and identity. Inspired by poststructuralist principles (Lund Klujeff, 2009, p. 69), leading personalities in the field have theorized on how texts “construct subjects” and create the premises for social belonging (Bruner, 2005, p. 311). This means that collective identity is seen as a flexible and intersubjective phenomenon, which is created through communication. However, some people have greater power than others to define common norms and values: the great orators, professional speakers and political leaders. It is thus specifically interesting to find out how these central actors take part in the intersubjective process of meaning: how some rhetors use their power to make their own beliefs and own visions of identity common for everyone.

Although national identity is understood as fluid and a constantly negotiated phenomenon, the negotiation inevitably has to build on some psychological processes that motivate group formation and social belonging. I have missed a clarification of the social psychological premises in the rhetorical scholarship. Therefore, I have been in search of additional knowledge about categorization processes and group formation, which I found in critical social psychological literature. Here, prominent scholars showed me how it is possible to build an empirical analysis on basic premises about the psychology of categorizing, without making essentialist or deterministic claims about the “natural” features of certain groups, such as the nation. On the contrary, recent works in the social identity approach focus on how social categories are constructed in the culture, and emphasize the value of understanding these processes through the analysis of text.

\(^2\) McGee, 1999a [first published in 1975], p. 346.
From my point of view, combining rhetorical theory with the social identity approach thus seems promising. In the following chapter, I will examine the compatibility of these perspectives and, even more importantly, investigate if contributions from both fields can add value to a combined analytical map. The next sections reflect the twofold theoretical inspiration of this project: In section 2.1, I will elaborate on the social identity approach in social psychology, while section 2.2 goes deeper into contemporary rhetorical theory of collective identity and relates it to poststructuralist principles.

2.1 The social identity approach: New areas of interest in post-war Europe

The first main inspiration for my analytical map is found in social psychology, and specifically the social identity approach. Along with a wide range of social psychological research, this approach was inspired by the terrible years of World War II (Reicher, 2004, p. 922). After the holocaust, scholars from various disciplines urged to understand how such evil was allowed to happen in the developed societies of Europe. How could seemingly normal men and women participate in mass murders, and why did the loyalty to national leaders, the fascist parties or the “common will” trump moral commitments? Social psychologists started to investigate these questions, mainly through experiments – some of which have changed the social sciences forever.

Henri Tajfel was one of them. As a Polish Jew, serving in the French army that fought against Nazi troops, Tajfel felt the evilness of war himself (Jahoda, 2004). Yet, unlike many of his colleagues, he did not want to research on obedience or violence in particular: Instead, he urged to understand what the underlying feelings of group membership are built on, and how easily we all experience social loyalty, even without there being important values at stake or us having deep personal relations with other group members. Based on this interest, Tajfel (1970, 1978) developed what he called the minimal group paradigm (see also Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971), whose goal was to describe the minimum criteria for group feelings, group behavior and discrimination to occur.

2.1.1 Social identity theory

The minimal group paradigm was the beginning of a remarkable journey on which Tajfel conducted some groundbreaking experiments that are still obligatory readings for students of social psychology. One of the most famous experiments was done back in 1970, when Tajfel brought 64 14- to 15-year-old boys from a suburb outside of Bristol to the university. The boys
were told that the experiment was about visual judgments. Forty clusters of varying numbers of dots were then flashed on a screen, and the participants were asked to estimate the number of dots in each cluster (Tajfel, 1970, p. 99). After they had completed this task, the experimenter divided them into groups, and told them that the grouping depended on their estimations. In reality, the categorization was completely random. However, the boys thought that they were categorized based on a superficial and non-important characteristic. Tajfel then moved on to study the relationship between the two groups, asking each of the participants to allocate a small sum of money between other individuals in the study. They did not know the identity of the persons they allocated money to – the only thing they knew was whether the other subjects were a part of their own group, or the other group. Tajfel recorded the allocation patterns that occurred, and the results were remarkable: The boys, even though they did not know the identity of the other persons, systematically allocated more money to individuals from their own group. Even more surprising was the fact that participants prioritized to maximize the difference between groups over an absolute money gain for the ingroup. In other words: For most of the participants, it was more important to secure the group a relatively higher amount of money, than to earn as much as possible (Tajfel, 1970, pp. 100-102). This general tendency to sacrifice absolute level of reward to the ingroup in order to increase the difference between the ingroup and the outgroup is known as the strategy of maximum differentiation (Tajfel, 1970, p. 102; Reicher, 2004, p. 928). 

Tajfel saw these and other similar findings as a confirmation of his hypothesis that outgroup discrimination is “extraordinarily easy to trigger off” (Tajfel, 1970, p. 102; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 39). Just the notion of a group division is enough to make subjects discriminate against people from the other group, even though the criterion for grouping in the first place is completely random (Billig & Tajfel, 1973, p. 27). From here on, Tajfel theorized about the implications of his and his colleagues’ results. If it is this easy to create a feeling of group membership, and even group behavior, then each of us must define ourselves as part of a wide range of different groups during a single day. Wherever there exists a more or less important reason to define an outgroup, this is easily done, and as the ingroup-outgroup relationship is established, Tajfel has shown, ingroup favoring and outgroup discrimination will occur.

Why is it so, that individuals, almost automatically, favor their own group, compared to another? According to Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 43), this is mainly due to the effect of positive distinctiveness. This effect builds on the very basic psychological need to feel good about oneself. Most people want to see themselves as good, happy and successful individuals. Memberships in groups may stimulate this feeling, but only as long as the ingroup member
defines the group as better than other comparable groups. In other words: Seeing your own
group as superior to other groups helps you feel better. Based on the mechanism of positive
distinctiveness, Tajfel (1982, pp. 24-25) concludes that group membership means something
more to us than practical categorization. By taking part in groups, the individual adopts social
identities, which, together with the personal identity, determine how each individual looks at
him- or herself. These identities, both the personal and the social ones, are defined in
comparable terms: Each individual differentiates oneself from others in order to develop a
personal identity, and each group member differentiates their group from other groups in order
to develop a social identity. By comparing ourselves to others, we find out who we are, and as
soon as we have defined our personal and social identities, we tend to overestimate the positive
characteristics of these identities (Tajfel, 1982).

As should be clear from these paragraphs, and of utmost importance for the forthcoming
sections: (1) A feeling of group loyalty is easy to trigger. (2) Such a feeling may be described
as a social identity, and this identity is defined in comparative terms. (3) What we want to get
out of our group membership, is some positive feelings about ourselves, and therefore we try
to glorify our own group. All of these findings and theoretical assumptions contribute to the
important status of Tajfel and his work in the field of social psychology. Even more importantly
for our purpose, Tajfel’s research underlines why we should study nationalistic utterances. If

group behavior is easy to motivate, and the consequence tends to be ingroup favorism, or even
outgroup discrimination, then it is relevant to analyze which “we”-identities political leaders
are offering their audiences, and how these identities are compared against “the others”. Tajfel’s
successors, whom I will write about in the next section, developed his work in a direction that
makes the social identity approach even more suitable for an analysis of national rhetoric.

2.1.2 Self-categorization theory
According to social identity theory, a feeling of group membership is easy to trigger, and such
a feeling affects how the individual sees him- or herself. This means that every human being
switches between a wide range of different self-understandings, or identities. But, while Tajfel
simply demonstrates the process of group formation in a fixed setting, he does not explicitly
explain how this process may unfold in real-world situations, where each of us have an
opportunity to define ourselves as representatives of many different groups at the same time. In
other words: Early social identity theory does not give us an understanding on how a rich and
ambiguous context may affect group formation and categorization. One of Tajfel’s respected
colleagues, John Turner, took this as his starting point when he wanted to explore human
categorization processes even further. In the major work "Rediscovering the social group" from 1987, Turner presents the "self-categorization theory". According to Turner (1987, p. 44), self-categories are "cognitive groupings of oneself and some class of stimuli" as internally identical, and at the same time different from some external class. This means that self-categorization is the process of defining oneself as part of an ingroup, in contrast to the outgroup. So far, Turner agrees with Tajfel in the most important premises for the group formation process. However, he wants to dig deeper into what makes an individual choose to see him- or herself as an exemplar of one category in certain situations, while in other situations the same individual uses other self-categorizations based on different factors.

Following Turner, people’s social categorization is determined by an interaction between the readiness, or relative accessibility, of a category in the mind, and the fit between the social reality and available categories (Oakes, 1987, pp. 126-132, Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994, p. 455). Relative accessibility reflects a person’s motives, values and needs, together with their former experiences (Turner et al., 1994, p. 455). This simply means that an individual tends to make use of the categories that are cognitively central to that individual. As an example: people who have grown up in an environment where gender roles were underlined, are more prone to categorize themselves based on gender, and those who lived most of their lives in a milieu of racial conflicts will be more likely to see themselves as a representative of their race.

Fit, on the other hand, reflects the match between a certain category and the social reality. This means that features in our present surroundings affect which category we tend to make use of. Category fit is further divided into normative fit and comparative fit. Normative fit refers to the match between the cultural expectations towards a category, and the features of the individuals being represented (Oakes, 1987, pp. 126-132; Turner et al., 1994, p. 455). We will categorize people as part of a distinct group, if they behave in line with the normative expectations to that group. Normative expectations differ between contexts, and therefore we will see ourselves as representative of different categories in different settings. Take the category of “left-wingers” as an example. This category means something quite different in the US than in Sweden. Someone who categorizes him- or herself as a left-winger in the first country will probably categorize him- or herself as a centrist in the latter. Which social categories we use is affected by the norms around us. Comparative fit describes the situation in which one way of categorization minimizes the perceived differences between individuals in the group, and maximizes the perceived differences between the ingroup and other groups. This latter point is also called “the metacontrast principle” (Turner, 1987, pp. 46-48), and implies
that the categorization process is fundamentally dependent on the other individuals around us. We will use the social categories that maximize the differences between groups, while at the same time minimizing the differences between the individuals in each of the groups. This means that “categorization and comparison depend upon each other, and neither can exist without the other” (p. 46). Haslam, Reicher and Platow (2011, p. 66) sum it all up in an informing way:

In order to represent sets of people as members of distinct categories, the differences between those sets must not only appear to be larger than the differences within them (comparative fit), but the nature of these differences must also be consistent with the perceiver’s expectations about the categories (normative fit).

Together, the principles of fit underline that “categorizations are highly fluid and contextual, and the extent of their stability is not due to the stability of the categorization in itself, but due to stability in the perceived and in the perceiver’s social context” (Moss, 2015, p. 13). Which category that is most important for our self-understanding changes according to the situation. However, the unstable and fluid process of group formation does not make the strong ingroup feelings, and group behavior, any less important. When an ingroup is established, such feelings will grow, due to what Turner and Oakes (1986, p. 242) term the process of depersonalization. Depersonalization happens as a member of the group defines themselves as a representative of a category of people. This self-definition motivates them to overlook the differences between themselves and the perceived common characteristics in the group. Therefore, each group member tends to gradually define their own self in line with the prototype of the group self. Such self-stereotyping strengthens the ties between the individual and the group: It reinforces the social identity, and underlines the perceived and often simplified differences between the own group and other groups. This is the basic process of making a number of individuals into a group or unit, which is different from the sum of the individuals (Turner & Oakes, 1986).

Turner’s continuous work on social identity theory has especially clarified the situational factors in group formation and dynamics, and how depersonalization strengthens a feeling of groupness. He provides important insight into how the social reality affects categorization. Anyway, to fill out the whole picture, it is also important to investigate the “other side of the equation” (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005, p. 557): how active (rhetorical) categorization can change the social reality; how the rhetorical definition of social boundaries can make certain groups relevant and important, compared to others. It may seem like both category accessibility and category fit somehow just happens, without any well-defined actors.
However, as mentioned by Turner, the criteria of normative fit actually come from the society or the discourse, and the comparative fit is ultimately built on the perceived similarity between ingroup members. In addition, the accessibility of certain categories is based on personal experiences, values and attitudes formed in a society. This means that the categorization process does not come from “nowhere”, and just happen “naturally”. On the contrary, we adopt criteria, values and patterns of comparison from the discourse – from our friends, family and from our political leaders. In that way, active social categorization can actually function as a rhetorical tool, which is the subject of the next section.

2.1.3 Categorization as a rhetorical tool

Henri Tajfel’s and John Turner’s theories about group formation and categorization processes have been further developed by Stephen D. Reicher, who seeks a deeper understanding of the construction of salient categories in society. He specifically focuses on the acting figures holding power over categorization processes: actors who define who “we” are, in contrast to “the others”. Reicher believes that a lot of social psychological work “serves to promote the politics of domination rather than promoting an understanding of political action” (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a, p. 383). His development of the social identity approach should contribute to a more critical and socially concerned understanding of how groupness is shaped.

One of the main arguments of Reicher and his colleagues is that “categories are not only a reflection of our social being, but are also part of the process of social becoming” (Reicher & Hopkins 2001a, p. 384). Instead of taking the available categories for granted, we should seek to analyze how those categories became relevant in the first place – how groups are arrived at, and how they gain their position as natural or given. Some people have a great influence in defining the boundaries of categories and filling social identities with certain content. This act of influence affects how other people understand themselves and how they behave, who they vote for, and how they stand up for their rights. In other words: Which categories that are adopted has consequences for what is legitimate or possible to do (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a, p. 386). In line with this, categorization is fundamentally political. Politicians attempt to influence collective action, and therefore they will seek to shape social identity. Reicher and his colleagues thus underline the agency of political actors in the process of social categorization. Leaders have clear goals, and one way to achieve these goals is to create, form or uphold their own versions of social (or national) identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a, p. 387).

This reasoning builds the ground for a special interest in political rhetoric, also from a social psychological point of view. If politicians, together with other influential personalities in
society, can form and uphold social identity, then it is important to research on how such powerful people actually construct these identities, and how the constructions may work as means to reach political goals. However, identity formation is not a one-way process, and not any sort of social categorization works out in practice. Rather, leaders and followers are cooperating in the process of forming and upholding a feeling of belonging. Identity is formed between individuals, rather than compelled upon the followers, which means that categories both shape, and are shaped by social reality. Therefore, political rhetoric has to be analyzed in context (Haslam et al., 2011, pp. 70-72).

Reicher has, together with colleagues, explored how self-categorization is used politically to persuade an audience in a range of different contexts, such as the fight over abortion ban in the United Kingdom (Hopkins & Reicher, 1997) and the Persian Gulf War (Herrera & Reicher, 1998). However, his stream of research has been particularly concerned with nations and national identity formation (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b for an overview). According to Hopkins and Reicher (1996, p. 70) one of the main features of our everyday understanding of “the nation”, which makes it important to analyze in social psychological terms, is that the national category often is presented as given. Despite the everyday use of the category, a nation is, according to them, a social construction. Therefore, no such thing as a national identity exists “apart from or beneath its social representation” (Hopkins and Reicher, 1996, p. 75).

This does not mean that the division of the world into nations is meaningless or just exists in our thoughts. On the contrary, nations are real. They give direction to our behavior, our feelings and our consciousness much more than most other categories. As this way of categorization is made salient for us, we act upon it, which illustrates the tight link between categories and action described in the previous paragraphs. However, nations are produced through social representations. They are built and given meaning through symbols and they are reproduced through language and communication. This means that the boundaries of the national category and the content of the national identity is rhetorically constructed, and that the definition of the nation could change from one speaker to another, according to their (opposing) worldviews. Using the terms from self-categorization theory, political leaders and important rhetors obtain the power to make the national category salient; to underline the nation as an important social group of belonging; and to fill the connected identity with a specific content (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b).

These principles of social identity are applied in Reicher and Hopkins’ (2001a; 2001b, pp. 53-62) research on the devolution debate in Scotland. Comparing different parties with
conflicting views on Scottish independence, they find that all politicians heavily referred to the “national interest” in their tactical reasoning. Even though the “nationalist” label was popularly used to describe the Scottish National Party, SNP, all of the debaters were equally nationalistic in categorizational terms. However, which content each party filled the category with, differed. In their textual analysis of statements from the debate, Reicher and Hopkins show how politicians define their national identity in a way that serves their larger goals in the dispute. The Conservative representative, whose goal is status quo for Scotland in the UK, points out that it is “typically” Scottish to be self-expressive. This description then, serves to refute the idea that Scottish interests are in danger in the union. On the other hand, the representative from SNP describes the Scottish identity as shy and careful, which makes it necessary for Scotland to gain more independent power in the UK (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a, p. 388). In other words: The definition of national identity may itself function as a rhetorical instrument, because either definition of the nation implies different understandings of reality, and it is aimed to direct collective action in a certain direction.

Another example of how self-categorization and definitions of social identity are used as rhetorical means comes from Reicher and Hopkins’ (1996b) analysis of Margaret Thatcher’s and Neil Kinnock’s speeches concerning the British miners’ strike in the ’80s. Reicher and Hopkins (1996b, p. 370) show how both political leaders construct an inclusive ingroup, which in turn builds on a “naturalization” of their own argument, presenting their own main points as undeniable. Thatcher defines a small outgroup, consisting of just the trade union leader and a few collaborators, against a large ingroup, with herself in the center of an almost unified population. Kinnock, on the other hand, defines Thatcher as part of a small and “un-British” outgroup, which does not understand solidarity as an important part of the “British” soul. In this way, both Thatcher and Kinnock use social categorization to gain support for their view on the conflict, making their own argument seem self-evident.

Reicher and his colleagues’ research on the political and rhetorical use of social categorization is of major importance for this master’s thesis, not only because of its clever analytical insights, but because it shows how the social identity approach can be applied in an analysis of text. Moreover, the writers invite to interdisciplinary cooperation in addressing and analyzing political communication. In essence, they state that a marriage of the social identity approach and textual analysis, such as rhetorical analysis or discourse analysis, will open up a field of practical and theoretical possibilities (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996b, p. 353). It seems impossible to disagree, and in order to meet his invitation, I will combine the impressive work done by Reicher and his colleagues with contemporary rhetorical theory of collective identity.
2.2 Contemporary rhetorical theory of collective identity

Just as Stephen D. Reicher called for cooperation between social psychology, discursive and rhetorical theory, prominent rhetorical scholars have also stated a wish for more integrated research on social identity. In a paper from 2005, Michael Lane Bruner terms the absence of rhetorical approaches a “striking feature” (Bruner, 2005, p. 309) of the classical scholarship on national identity. According to him, this is unfortunate: Rhetorical theory has a lot to offer for everyone who is interested in the construction of a political collective. In particular, rhetorical theory may help us understand the relationship between how we talk, and which groups and social categories we create and live by. Merged with Reicher’s psychological understanding, rhetorical analysis points out special words, sentences and ways of talking that trigger a feeling of “groupness” and belonging in certain contexts.

Bruner lists a range of approaches in the contemporary stream of rhetorical research that are fit for comprehensive analysis of social identity in general, and national identity in particular. Many of the scholars Bruner mentions, such as Michael Calvin McGee and Maurice Charland, are part of a discursive development in rhetorical theory from the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s, inspired by the poststructuralist view on language, text and meaning (Lund Klujeff, 2009, p. 67). Before I present the works of these rhetoricians later in this chapter and in chapter 3, we should seek to understand their inspirations.

2.2.1 Inspirations from poststructuralist principles of language and identity

Contemporary rhetorical scholars of collective identity typically see language as constituting reality rather than just passively reflecting it (Bruner, 2005, see also Charland, 1990). Such a view of language is in line with the overarching principles of poststructuralism. In order to explain how poststructuralist ideas inform my rhetorical analysis, I will first elaborate on the foundation for both structuralist and poststructuralist thinking: language as a network of signs.

Following pioneering structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure (1964), a sign is understood as the unification of a mental sound-image and a mental concept (Saussure, 1964, p. 66). The sound-image is the representation of what a word may sound like. This sound-image enables us to refer to concepts in our inner talk, and potentially transform them into a physical articulation in front of others. The concept is the idea or thought about an object or phenomenon; we use the sound-image to represent that idea or thought. One of the main principles in structuralism is that the relationship between the concept and the sound-image, or alternatively the signifier and the signified, is arbitrary (Saussure, 1964, pp. 67-68). A word does not mean anything in itself, but gets its content from a constructed link between the representation and the
phenomenon that is represented. Words, which are “empty” from the beginning, need to get their content in relation to other signs. It is the system, or network, of signs that enables us to differentiate between them and use them in our every-day life. Therefore, according to Saussure (1964, p. 120) “in language, there are only differences”. A word and an idea, such as “bicycle”, does not mean anything before we have constructed a link between the letter combination “bicycle” and our mental concept of a “bicycle”, but even then the word does not make much sense before it is understood in relation to words and concepts such as “car”, “motorcycle” and “carriage”.

Thus, meaning is a result of constant comparison. No natural or given ways of representing exist; instead, what we think of as self-evident representational relations, are constructed and kept alive through language. However, the arbitrariness of a sign does not mean that every person may construct their own system. Conversely, Saussure (1964, p. 69) states that the individual “does not have the power to change a sign in any way, once it has become established in the linguistic community”. Consequently, “the signifier, though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free” (Saussure, 1964, p. 71).

The main ideas of structuralism inspired clever thinkers from a wide range of fields, such as anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, cultural critic Roland Barthes and philosopher Jacques Derrida (Culler, 2006, pp. 110-116). Even though the latter was considered a great structuralist at the time, Derrida actually got his scientific breakthrough by criticizing some of the main principles of this movement. Whereas he endorsed the relational view on language and meaning, he believed that the classical structuralists had a too static view on discourse. On the contrary, Derrida underlined the flexibility of meaning in the network of signs, and he opposed the “fixed” character of language (Derrida, 1993 [first published in 1970], p. 224). These ideas were first presented in a lecture at Johns Hopkins University in 1966 – exactly when the structuralist movement was at its peak. Already in the opening of the speech he made it clear that his objective was to change the status quo in the structuralist way of thinking: “Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an event” (Derrida, 1993, p. 223).

The “event” Derrida refers to is the moment when scholars understand the fluidity of meaning. This is the moment when the “structurality of structure” (p. 225) is unfolded, so that language and society from there on could be analyzed as ever-changing structures building on relationships that constantly are at play:
This was the moment when language invaded the inversal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse (…) – that is to say a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. (Derrida, 1993, p. 225)

What Derrida mainly objects in structuralism is the stable and direct relationship between a concept and its representation. This relationship implies that a signifier simply represents our mental concept of one thing or phenomenon, and when we see certain signs, we therefore think of the corresponding concepts (Burr, 1995, p. 72). According to Derrida, there is no such direct link. Conversely, a sign may refer to a lot of different other signs in an unbreakable chain of meaning that is not straightforward. One representation may lead our thoughts in many potential directions, either to one specific concept, or to a new representation, and so on (Burr, 1995, p. 72). In this way, Derrida underlines his new direction, and ambition: He advocates a poststructuralist view on language in which nothing is taken for granted. Meaning is constructed, and has to be deconstructed in order for us to understand how the game of language is played (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 85).

Deconstructive praxis aims to “unfix” or disconnect meaning from their structures (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 86). This is done with a special interest for differences, and in particular dichotomies. Derrida thinks that a dichotomy rarely consists of two concepts mirroring each other from opposite, but equivalent sides. On the contrary, one part of the opposition is preferred over the other (Landau, 1992, pp. 1895-1896), such as the historical conceptions of light versus dark, white versus black, and man versus woman. The dichotomy is often not critically reflected upon, and the unbalanced power may even be denied in society (Landau, 1992, p. 1896). The main goal with deconstruction is to point out that such oppositions and power relations are not self-evident. Deconstructive praxis often thus consists of reversing the “normal” relation in those oppositions, underlining that the dominant or preferred term actually is dependent on the subordinated part of the dichotomy. Alternatively, the analyst can show that the dichotomy does not contain opposite terms at all, and thereby violate the construction of a powerful side against a weak one.

Many of the main points from the two previous pages could be summed up by taking a look at Derrida’s famous term “différence” (1973 [first published in 1968]). In French, the spelling error in “différence”\(^3\) is impossible to hear when articulated. Thereby, the intended error works as an indirect critique of the majority of linguists, including Saussure, who have

\(^3\) The correct spelling would be différence.
presented written language as the subordinate form in contrast to the spoken word. According to Derrida, there is often a kind of ambiguity in the spoken language, which makes references to written language needed (Bisong, 2007, p. 172). Therefore, the term is in itself a way of reversing a sedimemented dichotomy. Furthermore, “différence” refers to the poststructuralist understanding of language, as a constantly changing net of references between signs. To describe a sign, we need to contrast the sign against what it is not, and to describe what the sign is not, we need to use other signs, which in turn must be compared to other signs, and so on. The chain is unbreakable, which explains Derrida’s description of “différance” as not only the effect of language and meaning, but the very foundation for it: “Différence is what makes the movement of signification possible” (Derrida, 1973, p. 142).

The chain of comparison in order to produce meaning is not only the foundation for our understanding of things and external phenomena: Also the most personal of signs – the subject, the “I” and “you” – are constructed through the same process. Thereby, Derrida opposes all kinds of essentialist views on the human being. Rather, each one of us is just an “effect of the subject’s place in an economy of differences” (Biesecker, 1989, p. 124). Here we are at the core of Derrida’s understanding of identity, and how it may be analyzed: Identities, whether we talk about personal identities or social identities, are constructed through a constant comparison between what “I”, or “we” or “they” are, and what they are not. Also here, the link between the sign, for example “I”, and what this sign represents is arbitrary. To think about “myself”, therefore, starts a chain of references and comparisons to other signs, which all have random relations to what they represent.

At this point it is worth remembering our point of departure: the social identity approach, represented by Tajfél, Turner and Reicher. Even though these theoreticians do not see their works in relation to the poststructuralist movement or Derrida, the similar foundational understanding of identity is striking. They all see identity as a fluid and flexible concept, and they come together around the words “differe(a)nce” and “comparison”. Thus, it seems fruitful to combine these insights, to secure that we understand both the psychological grounding for identity, and its relation to text and language. In the next section, I will go deeper into how the derridarian way of thinking can prepare the ground for concrete textual analysis of how identity is rhetorically constituted.

2.2.2 The path from Derrida’s deconstruction to constitutive rhetoric

Building on the knowledge we have now gained about poststructuralism, and in particular its chief protagonist, Derrida, we might ask what this actually has to do with a rhetorical analysis.
The poststructuralist principles have undoubtedly been important in different analytical frameworks, but most of these are known and used as *discourse analysis*. It is enough mentioning leading personalities in the field, such as Michel Foucault, and Laclau & Mouffe. Through a series of comprehensive analyses, Foucault showed us how the flexibility of meaning may be analyzed to uncover the constructions of collective behavior in a society. The so-called archeological approach enabled him to research on how the common understanding of ambiguous terms such as science (1970), sexuality (1978) and insanity (1965) has changed fundamentally from time to time. Even though each understanding was considered as natural in its own context, it was soon exchanged with another given standpoint. Laclau & Mouffe (1985) on the other hand, used Marxist positions as their starting point. They opposed what they saw as reductionism in the Marxist tradition, pointing out the historic specificity of social struggles. Instead of narrowing the scope of interest to only the economic relation between owners and employees, Laclau & Mouffe underlined that the salient relationships in society are constantly changing according to varying hegemonic norms (Biesecker, 1989, p. 128). These examples clearly illustrate the poststructuralist principles in practice: There is nothing fixed about certain relations between the signifier and what it represents.

The fact that the most known examples of poststructuralist analysis are works of discourse analysis does not mean that the principles that lie behind poststructuralism are not relevant for rhetoricians. On the contrary: In an influential article from 1989, Barbara A. Biesecker argues that inspirations from Derrida may prepare the ground for more comprehensive and interesting rhetorical critique. She starts with the endless debate in rhetorical science about the role of the rhetorical *situation* versus the rhetor’s own *intentions and goals* (see Jørgensen & Villadsen, 2009, pp. 85-96; Lucaites, Condit & Caudill, 1999, pp. 213-216 for an overview). Instead of either emphasizing the situational constraint on a rhetorical utterance, or underlining the actor’s own choices, Derrida helps us understand that rhetorical persuasions are constructed in the relation between the rhetor and the circumstances. In other words: Meaning is not simply transmitted from an actor to a passive audience, nor are the auditors in full control over how they are affected by rhetoric. Indeed, both sides of this false dichotomy imply that the subjects – either the subject who is speaking, or the subjects in the audience – have stable and objective identities before they enter the discourse. On the contrary, Biesecker (1989, p. 124), in line with Derrida, underlines that neither the rhetor or the audience are anything before they start using the language to find themselves in the floating system of differences (Biesecker, 1989, p. 124). Therefore, the subjects – or the identities – are called into being by the rhetorical discourse: The rhetor is constituted as an “I” and a “her” or
“him”, while the listeners are constituted as a “we” or a “them” – all the time compared with other subjects, or groups of subjects:

Simply put, the deconstruction of the subject opens up possibilities for the field of rhetoric by enabling us to read the rhetorical situation as an event structured not by a logic of influence but by a logic of articulation. If the subject is shifting and unstable (constituted in and by the play of difference), then the rhetorical event may be seen as an incident that produces and reproduces the identities of subjects and constructs and reconstructs linkages between them. (Biesecker, 1989, p. 126)

In this way, Biesecker clearly points out the relationship between Derrida, his term deconstruction, and rhetorical analysis. What we get from this symbiosis is an opportunity to analyze how subjects are constituted: how communities are made and social bonds are created through communication. This process of identity construction through language is the foundation for any textual analysis of how “I” became “who I am”, and how “we” is understood as something different from “them”. As reflected in my research question, this is indeed what a rhetorical analysis of national identity formation aims to do. In addition, Biesecker builds directly on a contextual understanding of identity, which means that her views are fully compatible with the social identity approach. At this point, it is also worth noting how all the theoreticians mentioned so far in chapter 2 have, from fundamentally different points of view, emphasized intersubjectivity. The social psychologists underline how social categories are constituted through a conversation between leaders and followers, and Biesecker effectively points out how poststructuralists understand identity as a result of negotiation and comparison in context. This sheds light on a rather surprising compatibility across scientific fields and methodological viewpoints.

I will now further investigate this compatibility through the work of Michael Calvin McGee. Although not explicitly referring to himself as a poststructuralist, he shares some important assumptions with Biesecker. Specifically, they both emphasize that collective identity is constituted through speech. As will be become apparent in the next section, McGee has been particularly influential in the field of constitutive rhetoric, where social communities are understood as discursive audiences.

2.2.3 “The people” as a rhetorical fiction
Analyzing and understanding the audience of public utterances has always been an important part of the rhetorical field – both as a scientific discipline and as a practical exercise in effective
persuasion. However, this term has often been understood in a concrete and rather straightforward manner, as a collection of individuals who the rhetor potentially may reach with his or her speech. Accordingly, in classical and neo-Aristotelian rhetorical theory, the audience is important primarily as the group of persons that should be convinced by the rhetor (Roer & Lund Klujeff, 2009, pp. 14-16; Jørgensen, 2009, pp. 14-15). In order to build our understanding of the audience on a flexible identity concept, informed by poststructuralist principles, we need to move away from this concrete definition of the term, and instead look at audiences as constituted entities, which get their meaning through comparison, rather than from an objective reality (Lund Klujeff, 2009, pp. 61-62). These are exactly the main principles that build the ground for Michael Calvin McGee’s article “In search for the “people”: A rhetorical alternative” (1999a [first published in 1975]). In this article, McGee delivers a clever critique of classical rhetorical theory, which, according to him, has ignored wider social questions. Thereby, the field has failed to prove its relevance in the discussions about important societal phenomena, such as group formation and national identity. In the core of his critique, is McGee’s opposition against the concrete understanding of rhetorical audiences.

One might conclude that, with a few exceptions, most rhetorical scholarship presupposes a “people” or an “audience” which is either (a) an objective literal extension of “person” or (b) a “mob” of individuals whose significance is their gullibility and failure to respond to logical argument. (McGee, 1999a, p. 342)

Instead of making either of these two mistakes again, McGee offers an alternative, where the community – the audience or the people – is seen as a “rhetorical fiction” (p. 344). For McGee, there is no such thing as an objective social identity. Instead, all groups, small ones along with large ones, are “infused with an artificial identity” (McGee, 1999a, p. 345). The construction of such artificial identities happens through persuasion. Furthermore, and even more interesting in this particular project: The construction of identities, as mass illusions, are not side effects of persuasion, but the most important ones. Rhetoricians could of course analyze, as they have done for ages, how a politician tries to convince a concrete audience about a certain policy compared to other policies. Yet, in line with McGee, this does not make much sense, because the creation of a liable audience is the effect itself. This effect may be seen as the construction of a community that is willing to listen: the definition of a social group that enters “the audience”, and accepts to be a part of the “fiction” (McGee, 1999a, p. 343).

The most fantastic of all the social fantasies that we are persuaded into, is the “nation”. This is the prime audience, understood as a “fictionalization of a national, collective identity
that achieves reality only in the context of being called into existence by a specific rhetoric” (Lucaites, Condit & Caudill, 1999, p. 327). The nation is nothing before it is talked about and made salient through collectivization. Therefore, McGee states, “the people” is more of a process, than a phenomenon (McGee, 1999a, p. 345). The people develops from nothing, through a rhetorically driven socialization process, to the acceptance of a political myth. It is important to understand that this myth feels real for the individual. “The people” is something for us, it changes our lives and guides us through action. At the same time, the very foundation for a national collective is close to what Marx and Engels (1893) described as false consciousness; an overwhelmingly realistic dream, that still is nothing more than a dream (McGee, 1999a, p. 347). Therefore, the process also has to stop at one point, when the individual wakes up from the dream, when the fantasy ceases to be, giving way for a new fantasy to come true. Accordingly, being a part of a nation is just a temporal feeling. Only after the end of the process, when the nation is not there anymore, the individuals will be able to see what it actually was. Then the ideological character of “the people” comes to the surface, while each individual understands that politics is not about priorities inside the community, but instead about the creation of the community in itself. At that point, everyone in “the people” realizes that they were persuaded to be a part of a fiction. Nevertheless, they will not resist taking part in the next illusion (McGee, 1999a).

Before I go further, it might be useful to connect McGee’s ideas to the other theories I have presented so far. Even though he uses abstract words, and writes in a both entertaining and philosophical way, it is fully possible to see how his thoughts correspond with Derrida, and even the social identity approach. In line with poststructuralism, McGee points out that the signifiers of identity do not refer to an objective reality. The fiction is constructed when the individual steps into an audience – or to use the terms from social psychology: when the individual categorizes him- or herself as part of a group. Therefore, let us remember how these scholars from different fields and different times actually communicate rather well with each other, providing an opportunity to link their insights together. However, before those connections and links are translated into a cohesive analytical model, it is necessary to search for some slightly more concrete tools and techniques in the different theoretical fields discussed so far, which hopefully allows us to use the combined theoretical insight in a textual analysis.
3. The analytical map: Combining the social identity approach and rhetorical theory

In order to develop the overreaching theoretical framework into a practical analytical map, this chapter will explicitly point out applicable extensions of the theories presented in chapter 2. The main goal is to find concrete terms and techniques that can guide the forthcoming analysis. Throughout this chapter, I aim to construct a preliminary analytical map to use in the analysis of national identity formation. This map is summed up at the end of the chapter, and further refined in chapter 5.1, through the in-depth analysis of Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s New Year’s speech in 2017, and in 5.2, through a broader analysis of the New Year’s speeches in Denmark since 2002.

3.1 Analyzing national rhetoric in the light of social identity

The first main contribution to my analytical map comes from the social identity approach and specifically Reicher and colleagues’ understanding of social categorization as a rhetorical tool. They promote a form of qualitative textual analysis that is, as shown in chapter 2, compatible with poststructuralist and constitutive principles. This means that they analyze political communication both in order to grasp how language expresses the structural constraints on our thinking, and how the flexibility of signs and meaning opens a room for political action through speech. In line with this, Reicher and Hopkins (1996b, p. 359) describe their way of analyzing text as a variant of discourse analysis. By using the term discourse in this context, they emphasize that, unlike in the approach of more mainstream political psychologists, language is not simply a window to underlying cognitive representations, but a system “in which category definitions are constructed and contested” (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996b, p. 355). This is perfectly in line with the other theoretical foundations for this thesis.

Apart from naming their analytical approach discursive, Reicher and colleagues’ rich scholarship does not explain in detail what this term actually implies for the analytical work. Rather, discourse analysis is described as a “general analytic approach whose precise implementation depends upon the particular theoretical issues at hand” (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996b, p. 355). I will thus concretize the way forward by combining insights from different applied research projects on categorization as a rhetorical tool.
To begin with Reicher and Hopkins’ (1996b) own research, they underline that textual analysis should identify category arguments in speeches and how rhetors include themselves in different social groups in a variety of domains or speech topics. The analytical aim could therefore be divided into three different steps of the analytical process: First, the researcher should note all the parts of the text that “relate to the nature of the issue at hand and the categories involved in it” (p. 359). Thereafter each instance of rhetorical categorization is to be examined to understand which “aspects of context/category construction” (p. 359) it performs in the text. Finally, it is important to study how these categorizations fit together; whether they contradict each other, or are consistently working together to build the overall argument.

Accordingly, one important point in the social identity approach is the interest in different identities and social categories that we live by interchangeably. Each person has many “I”s, is part of many “we”s, and distinguishes him- or herself from many “others” (see Roccas and Brewer, 2002, for a further elaboration on the complexity of identities in the personal sphere). In the methodological field of textual analysis, there is nothing new or original about this emphasis on social categories and groups. Identifying the dominant perceptions about “us” and “them” is a relevant goal in different interpretive textual analytical techniques. However, the social identity approach enables the researcher to focus on the variety of categorizations apparent in a speech instead of being solely interested in the “we”- and the “other”-conception.

Social psychologist and discourse analyst Martha Augoustinos has, together with Stephanie De Garis (2012), proved the value of examining the different social identities that a speaker aims to represent through speech. Inspired by the social identity approach, she conducted a comprehensive analysis of American president Barack Obama’s speeches, and found that the president actively mobilized his audiences by underlining many different social categories. Thus, he appeared as a person that was “able to understand and identify with a diverse range of social groups: young and old, middle and working class, the rich and the poor, immigrants and natives” (p. 572). The combination of social identities contributed to an overall personal narrative, which was integrated with his vision of the American dream: Through social identification, he represented himself as the embodiment of the national identity he aimed to promote. Drawing on the work of Augoustinos and De Garis, the first step in my analytical map will be an examination of different social identities, or self-representations in the speech. Analyzing social self-representations enables the researcher to understand how identities are created and defined, and how the flora of identities contributes to a coherent national understanding and narrative, which fits the worldview of the rhetor.
Similar thoughts are expressed in Haslam, Reicher and Platow’s (2011) book “The new psychology of leadership”. In this seminal work, they describe several premises for effective leadership, based on a social identity approach (see also Haslam & Reicher, 2016). Specifically two of these premises may provide concrete guidelines for rhetorical analysis of national rhetoric. The first premise is that, in order to be effective, leaders need to present themselves as “representative of a shared ingroup” (Haslam & Reicher, 2016, p. 29). According to this, it is specifically important to analyze how the reference to different social sub-groups helps the leader to appear as a prototype of the national norms and values. This follows directly from the principles of fit that were examined in chapter 2: It is not enough that the leader is part of the ingroup, he or she must appear as an exemplification or illustration of the difference between the ingroup and the outgroup (comparative fit) (Haslam et al., 2011, p. 68). Note however that being prototypical is not the same as being typical or average. Rather, the prototypical self-representation is that of being an extraordinary and special personification of the national – it has to communicate that the leader is willing to stand up for the norms and values of the group (normative fit) (p. 68).

Secondly, “effective leaders need to be entrepreneurs of identity” (Haslam et al., 2011, p. 71). Being an entrepreneur of identity means both defining the borders of the social category, and filling that identity with certain norms and ideals. For an analyst it is thus of particular importance to investigate how political leaders integrate their own policies and ideas into an overarching national identity, so that contested statements are seen to represent a large majority. In other words, it is crucial to examine how national stereotypes function as “argumentative devices for mobilizing specific types of social action and thereby for realizing specific forms of social reality” (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b, p. 104). This point follows directly from the principles of categorization as a rhetorical tool. Leaders have an impact on how category boundaries are defined, which content the category is filled with, and who is presented as the others: leaders “tell us who we are, and what we want to be” (Haslam et al., 2011, p. 70).

To sum up, the social identity approach guides the analyst to examine all the different categorizations that are expressed in a speech, and how these categorizations contribute to the image of the rhetor as a prototypical representative of the nation. Furthermore, the rhetorical analysis should reveal how the social categorizations present in the speech create an ideologically loaded social identity for the nation. It is worth remembering that social identities, both the overall national one and the different sub-identities are defined relationally (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b, p. 33). In line with poststructuralist principles, and Reicher’s own emphasis on the conceptuality of categorization (see chapter 2), “I” is always understood through a
comparison with “you”, “he” or “she”, and “we” always in a comparison with “they”. This point is of utter importance in understanding the link between different theoretical elements in my thesis, and will be further informed by Edwin Black and Philip Wander in the next section. These two rhetoricians have developed analytical terms useful for analyzing social identity in the light of principles from literary science.

3.2 The first, second and third persona
The previous section narrowed the overall principles of the social identity approach down to some concrete terms and analytical techniques. In the following sections, I aim to do the same with rhetorical theory of collective identity. In the field of rhetorical theory, the pioneer Edwin Black has been specifically important when it comes to innovative theoretical and methodological development. As a creative force in the field, Black based much of his work on an intensive critique of classical and neo-Aristotelian rhetoric (Lucas, 2007, pp. 513-514), in particular because of its instrumental and non-contextual ideals of analysis. Instead of accepting such a narrow analytical scope, he argues for a completely different understanding of discourse, rhetor and auditor. Utterances are, in line with this, not particularly interesting to analyze as a means to persuade the audience per se. Rather, rhetoric may reveal something much more important: which ideological categories the rhetor constructs and, thereby, the premises auditors have to accept before they can step into this discursive community.

In the article “The Second Persona”, Black (1999 [first published in 1970]) uses literary science as his starting point, describing how literary analysts often search for an “implied author” (see Booth, 1983) in the texts they analyze. This implied author is different from the real one: It is more like a model of the features that readers may attribute to an author, based on how the work is written. Thus, the implied author is an artificial creation: “a persona, but not necessarily a person” (Black, 1999, p. 333). Analyzing the implied author, or what we may call the “first persona” (Wander, 1999, p. 369), in the text gives critics an opportunity to analyze rhetors, without claiming access to their thoughts and intentions. It is the persona, or the “model” of a person present in the text that is important (Lund Klujeff, 2009, pp. 65-66). Thereby Black responds to a long-lasting critique of the rhetorical field, holding that rhetorical analysis often tries to conduct a “telepathic” exercise of analyzing the speaker’s mind. By examining the persona, and not the person, the analyst can better understand a rhetor’s representation of their own identity. However, Black also wants to have the same opportunity in an analysis of the audience, which literal analysis does not provide. Therefore, he introduces
the term “second persona”, which basically is the model of the auditor drawn by the rhetor through speech (Black, 1999).

In an analysis of the implied auditor, or the second persona, the actual or concrete audience is ignored. Rather, the analyst urges to reconstruct what the “ideal auditor” may look like (Lund Klujeff, 2009, pp. 66-67). This auditor is a model of a person who accepts, or even agrees with, the basic values in the speech. Thus, the second persona works as a prototype of the “perfect” representative of the discursive community the rhetor constitutes. To revisit the terms of Reicher, the second persona is a rhetorically constituted prototype that members of the group – according to the rhetor – should use as their basis for self-stereotyping. The second persona models a person who accepts all of the values that are implied in the speech. This is the persona other auditors should identify with, to secure being included as a legitimate part of the group:

Especially must we note what is important in characterizing personae. It is not age or temperament or even discrete attitude. It is ideology – ideology in the sense that Marx used the term: the network of interconnected convictions that functions in a man epistemically that shapes his identity by determining how he views the world. (Black, 1999, p. 334)

In other words, building an analytical model over the second persona is all about finding the most important features of a rhetor’s perfect audience. The most relevant utterances to analyze in the discourse are clear-cut claims about the world. However, as such claims normally are not formulated directly, Black proposes to analyze what he calls “stylistic tokens” (p. 334). These tokens are linguistic means, like idioms or metaphors, bearing with them some basic values and ideological premises, which an analysis can and shall reveal. According to Black, such signs and representations tend to “fulfill themselves” (Black, 1999, p. 334). This happens through the process when members of the actual audience try to find out what to think, how to understand themselves, and in which way to interpret the context. They then look for cues in the discourse that potentially could provide answers to those questions – answers that guide a person’s basic views on the world and, most importantly, form the auditor’s self-perception as a part or not a part of a larger group (p. 334). Therefore, a speech may be understood as an invitation from the rhetor to attend his or her community. The borders of that community are defined by categorizations and, according to Black, claims, tokens and literal means in their speech, which give content to the categories.
It is worth underlining the implied understanding of identity in Black’s theory about a second persona. Instead of seeing identities as fixed, and audiences as a mass of concrete persons which the rhetor has to “target”, Black has a more fluid and flexible view on identity. Identity is constructed in the context, and therefore, we constantly look for hints “as to whom we should become” (p. 335). We compare our own ideological stances with those represented by the first and second persona, to find out what is acceptable. Our political leaders have access to a public scene to perform such hints in front of a large concrete audience. This gives them an opportunity to make salient some features of a “good citizen”, or a “legitimate part of the community” which in turn could have great influence on how each person sees themselves and the world. Therefore, analyzing political speeches is a relevant way to understand how the ideological norm is constructed, and thereby to find out who is a part of the speaker’s community – or more correctly: who a person needs to become in order to gain access to it. However, these analytical tools only help us building the prototype of the “I”-identity, and the “we”-identities, or alternatively the presentation of the speaker’s personal identity, and the social identities he/she constructs. What is missing is a tool to analyze how “they” are represented in the discourse. This is exactly what Philip Wander (1999 [first published in 1984]) provides. Through his article “The third persona: An ideological turn in rhetorical theory”, Wander requests a more morally concerned rhetorical critique. After listing terrible events throughout history in which the humanist and social sciences did not fight against evil powers, he urges for an analytical model that “listens to the victims” (p. 359).

What interests me is the theoretical issue centered on the ways in which theory in general, rhetorical theory in particular, is shaped by the context in which it is propounded. To what extent does rhetorical theory obliges us to ignore audiences not addressed, unable to attend, and unable to respond to the “text”. (pp. 375-376)

In this way, Wander focuses on the people who are excluded from the community. By examining the language of exclusion, the analyst can reveal a textual prototype of the ignored “third persona”. The third persona could be characterized by features of the marginalized persons, or groups discriminated against. However, even more importantly, the model of the third persona is built on an analysis of who are completely ignored in the discourse, or objectified as “its”, rather than real human beings.

It is important to understand, however, that this concept refers not merely to groups of people with whom “you” and “I” are not to identify, who are to remain silent in public, who are not to become part of
“our” audience or even be allowed to respond to what “we” say. Beyond its verbal formulation, the Third persona draws in historical reality, so stark in the twentieth century, of peoples categorized according to race, religion, age, gender, sexual preference, and nationality, and acted upon in ways consistent with their status as non-subjects. (Wander, 1999, p. 376)

In other words: Finding out how the third persona is defined by the rhetor is not just a clever analytical enterprise, it is a moral obligation allowing rhetoricians to point out where the most severe form of discrimination is happening: the total exclusion and ignorance of other subjects, defining “them” as representing a qualitatively different category than “us”. Combining Black and Wander gives us the opportunity to analyze discourse in order to build the persona prototypes on top of the categories identified in the first analytical step. These textual personae are representations of identity.

The previous paragraphs leave us with two central questions: First, are the perspectives of Black and Wander compatible with the social identity approach? Second, if they are, what do they explicitly add to the analytical map that is lacking in the social identity approach? In spite of obvious methodological differences, and their belonging in completely different disciplines, the social identity approach and Black’s and Wander’s contributions build on many of the same basic premises: Identity is not fixed but constituted in the context; leaders may affect which categories that are salient and shape the content of a social identity; the borders of a category define who is part of the ingroup, and who is excluded. However similar, I still believe that both perspectives also add something unique to the analytical map. Black and Wander underline the textual nature of identity constitution, and provide concrete tools to reveal how leaders constitute an audience and exclude the third persona, which are lacking in the psychological theory. In that way, Black and Wander provide a bridge between the social-identity approach and rhetorical theory. In the next paragraph, I will elaborate on an even more concrete textual tool, especially useful for our understanding of the overarching ideological content of the implied personae.

3.3 Groupness as an ideology: In search for McGee’s national fantasy

After conducting the first two steps of our analytical map, it is time to investigate how social categorization and the implied personae play together to form an ideological picture of what McGee (1999a) calls “the people” – the fantasy about national identity (see chapter 2). The construction of such a fantasy is conducted through a rhetorical selection of elements from a pool of available “cultural resources” (Bruner, 2005, p. 311), such as aphorisms, maxims and
commonplaces (McGee, 1999a, p. 346). Together, these elements enable the rhetor to form “political myths” (p. 343). However, to understand how McGee’s rich theoretical scholarship on national identity may be developed into concrete and close-to-the-text analysis, we need to take another of his key terms into consideration: the ideograph.

The term ideograph was first introduced by McGee (1999b [first published in 1980]) in an attempt to create an analytical tool to research on how ideological truths in reality are “product(s) of persuasion” (McGee, 1999b, p. 427). By this, McGee means that ideology is not just expressed through rhetoric, but that ideology in itself is textual: it is created and upheld through language (p. 427). This language is, according to McGee, characterized by slogans, or politically loaded words that have to be analyzed in order to reveal “interpenetrating systems or “structures” of public motives” (McGee, 1999b, p. 427). An abstract and uncontroversial, yet politically loaded term is what McGee calls an ideograph:

An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief, which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable. (McGee, 1999b, p. 435)

From this definition, we understand that an ideograph is a term that does not have a clear-cut or well-defined meaning, but rather is filled with certain political content in the context. Examples of such ideographs are “equality”, “freedom”, “democracy”, “tyranny”, and so on: words that function as ideological markers for completely different political views – and that are extensively used in the justification of certain policies. The important motivation to analyze ideographs is to point out “patterns of political consciousness which have the capacity both to control power and to influence (if not determine) the shape and texture of each individual” (p. 427).

To understand ideographical communication, McGee argues for an extensive analysis of the relation between ideographs and other terms, or to revisit the derriderian language: the ideological sign and other signs in the discourse. By analyzing these relations, the researcher will understand how a politician at the same time is a constrained and powerless slave of language structures, and a communicational inventor, who redefines the legitimate points of view in the “people” (Jasinski, 2002, p. 310). According to McGee, ideographs are both uniting and separating – often at the same time (McGee, 1999b, p. 430). Unifying national ideographs
are terms referring to the people’s “history”, “liberty”, “character” and “pride”. However, these words are also excluding “the others”, both national minorities and neighboring “peoples”. Therefore, ideographs may be used explicitly to trigger certain social categorizations on the basis of specific political premises.

It is worth noting how ideographic analysis fits with the other theoretical contributions in this thesis. In perfect line with Reicher and Black, McGee neither interprets political rhetoric as completely constrained, nor as a creative result of an ultimately free individual. The communicational alternatives that a political leader may choose between are limited by the discursive context, but there is still room for rhetorical agency. It is the use of this margin of maneuver that makes politicians able to define social categories in their own way and to constitute a national identity around a number of loaded words and expressions. Therefore, an analysis of ideographs should reveal how a social category, or more specifically, the nation, is constructed through abstract words and sentences promoting a feeling of community for “the people” (McGee, 1999b, p. 435).

As a step in the analytical pathway, ideographic analysis follows directly from the first steps of detecting different social self-representations, and of pointing out which textual persona are built throughout the speech. Following McGee, it is of utter importance to examine how rhetors connect their different social identities to abstract ideological terms, such as “freedom” and “prosperity”. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine how the political and ideological content is presented as “natural” through the use of cultural references. This last element may be easier to understand after examining the analytical proposals of Maurice Charland’s (1987) constitutive rhetoric in the next section.

3.4 Making a story out of it: Analyzing the national narrative

So far, this chapter has explored three rhetorical perspectives that in different ways help us analyze social categorization processes through rhetorical critique. Many of the principles of Reicher, McGee, Black and Wander, could be summed up through Maurice Charland’s applied paper “Constitutive Rhetoric, the case of the Peuple Quebecois”. In this article from 1987 he analyses the fight for an independent state in Quebec, Canada, and specifically shows how the rhetoric of sovereignty is based on “the asserted existence of a particular type of subject, the “Quebecois”” (Charland, 1987, p. 134). Therefore, according to Charland, the mobilization for a separate state is not mainly built on arguments about why such a state is a good idea, but on the constitution of a distinct “people” in Quebec, which defines itself as having a different social identity than the rest of Canada. “Persuading” the public is therefore all about getting people to
identify with the subject, or the second persona, of the separatist movement, and thereby feel as if they are fighting for their “own” country.

What Charland specifically adds to the contemporary stream of rhetorical research already reviewed, is a focus on national narratives. Such narratives are crucial for Charland’s understanding of the collectivization process: combining different historical, social and ideological elements into a coherent story legitimates the social group as a long-lasting, natural and even eternal unit. Narratives thus construct unified subjects out of temporally and spatially separate events:

In the telling of the story of a *peuple*, a *peuple* comes to be. It is within the formal structure of a narrative history that it is possible to conceive of a set of individuals as if they were but one. (p. 140)

By this, Charland means that the constitution of a community, a nation or a “people” happens through text. Providing a narrative that this community bases its social identity around, drives the constitutive process. Both the community and its narratives are fictive. However, these fictions affect how people live their life, what they believe in and how they see the world:

Subjects within narratives are not free, they are *positioned* and so constrained. All narratives have power over the subjects the narrative present. The endings of narratives are fixed before the telling. The freedom of the character in a narrative is an illusion, for narratives move inexorably toward their *telos*. The characters in a story are obviously not free. (p. 140)

In other words, this part of rhetorical theory underlines the discursive constraints on individuals who accept to be a part of the social community of the rhetor. Nonetheless, Charland still understands the different subjects in a political discourse as *actors*. The rhetor is not just a passive extender of a discourse in society. Rather, constituting a social group is a use of *power*, and connecting this constituted community with a certain combination of historical events is to actively fill the social identity with a content that could have been different.

In that way, Charland’s constitutive rhetoric not only unifies the rhetorical perspectives written about in this chapter. He also illustrates how works of contemporary rhetorical theory actually share many of their basic assumptions with the social identity approach: Social identities are not given or natural, but constructed and in constant flux. Individuals act upon cues in their context to find out who they are, and who they want to become. Furthermore, political leaders may provide such cues, giving them power, not mainly to persuade, but to constitute subjects as part of narratives and with certain social identities. Taken together, these
elements could be placed into a preliminary analytical map that shows how theoretical foundations, presented in chapter 2, are further informed by more applied literature, presented in this chapter. Based on the combined knowledge, I suggest five concrete analytical steps, and each of these steps is connected to a description of textual elements to search for in the analytical process. The two first steps stem from the social identity approach. Thereafter, one step is connected to Black’s and Wander’s contribution, one to McGee’s ideographic analysis, and the last one to Charland’s analysis of national narratives. In the analytical process, the conduct of each of these steps will not necessarily follow in sequence. Rather, it will be useful to go back and forth between them throughout the work.

The map will be tested in an analysis of the New Year’s speech in 2017 in chapter 5.1 and a broader analysis of the speeches from 2002 until 2016 in chapter 5.2. Before that, it is necessary to examine the political context in Denmark, and the special features of the speech genre of interest. Chapter 4 will provide such background information.
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Table 1: Preliminary analytical map
4. Background

Poet and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig is remembered as one of the main inventors of modern Danish nationalism (see Hall, Korsgaard & Pedersen, 2014 for an overview). He promoted an anti-elitist and libertarian national culture, with important elements of egalitarianism that was grounded in protestant ideals. The analysis in chapter 5 is best understood in the light of basic cultural and contextual knowledge about the Danish society. I will therefore use the first part of this background chapter to examine some political expressions of what historian Uffe Østergaard (2000, p. 162) calls the “Grundtvigian synthesis of national and social consensus”. First, I briefly introduce the origin of the party system and important features that characterize the Danish political system and culture. Thereafter, I provide some concrete contextual information about the most important events that formed the respective rhetorical situations covered in my material. The second part of the chapter offers a short explanation of the historical origin of the New Year’s speech, and explains how this special genre may be understood in rhetorical terms. Together, the information in this chapter should form a basis of contextual knowledge that will make it easier to grasp the rest of the thesis.

4.1 General political context

In order to understand the contemporary political culture in Denmark, and thereby be able to analyze political rhetoric of the past 16 years, I will use this section to elaborate on some important characteristics of Danish political history. However, this is a wide topic that could be approached from many different angles. In line with discourse analyst Lene Hansen (2002, pp. 52-53), I will specifically focus on the cultural upheavals and political consolidation processes that started in the late 1700s, and lasted until the establishment of a fully developed welfare state in the 20th century. This does not mean that Denmark, Danishness or even Danish politics did not exist before, but that defining features of today’s political culture can be tracked back to the transformation of the country from (1) a powerful composite state to a small state nation,

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4 Translated and cited by Østergaard, 2000, p. 173.
and from (2) an autocratic monarchy to a parliamentary democracy. Knowledge about this
twofold development will shed light on the traditional political cleavages of center versus
periphery and labor versus owners. Thereafter, I will introduce more recent additions to the old
political framework, before examining how the parties interact with each other in the present
parliamentary system.

4.1.1 The Danish party system and its origin
The first of the two major shifts in Danish society from around 1800 was the transformation
from a great power to a small state. In the period when romantic sentiments encouraged
“ordinary people” to form national movements around Europe, the Danish monarchy was under
severe pressure, not only from the forces of democratization. The king of Denmark had, at his
most powerful point, controlled the whole of Norway, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands,
substantial areas of today’s Germany, in addition to the present Danish territory – and held
colonies in West Africa, the West-Indies and India (Østergaard, 2000, pp. 145-147). A series
of “international political catastrophes in the 19th century reduced this multinational composite
state to a tiny nation-state” (p. 148), exemplified by the cession of Norway in 1814, and the
final loss of Schleswig and Holstein in 1864. In Denmark, nationalism and the first political
mobilization thus became inevitably linked to the self-perception as a “small state” under
constant pressure from abroad (Østergaard, 2000, pp. 139-161).

After a period of decay, a wish to “win inwards what was lost outwards” spread into the
Danish society (Østergaard, 2000, p. 159). Now, the agricultural sector got a specifically
important role in the building of an effective state economy based on international free trade
and cooperation after the loss of Norway. Mainly two groups were set to conduct the practical
work: peasants without property rights, and middle-farmers who were organized in
cooperatives. Because of the new political awareness at the time, these groups did not accept to
build the economic foundation for a society ruled solely by an exclusive elite with connections
to the king. They thus organized in groups to represent pre-industrial commoners against
aristocracy and landowners. These organizations became the basis for the first political party,
the Liberal Party (Venstre; Left). Since the oppositional fight was deeply grounded in the
agriculture sector, and contained political elements as well as economic ones, the Liberal Party
became, and still is, the representative of both the liberal and the agrarian ideologies
(Østergaard, 2000, pp. 159-162).

On the opposite side of the first modern political conflict, landowners remained loyal to
the king in order to keep a firm hold on government. They responded to the competition from
peasants and middle-farmers by establishing their own political fraction, the Conservatives (Højre; Right), in 1881. The conflict between these two parties was consolidated during the constitutional fight over parliamentarism in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Although the Liberal Party was scattered by internal controversies, the election in 1901 resulted in the first liberal-agrarian government in Denmark, and prepared the ground for the second major shift in the Danish society; from an autocratic monarchy to a democratic parliamentary system (Mørch, 2004, pp. 31-34).

As the preceding paragraphs have shown, the establishment of the first political parties in Denmark followed a characteristic North European pattern of early party politics, which Rokkan (1987a [first published in 1970], see also Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) described. The cleavage between the national power center, and the alternative nationalist movements in the periphery translated into a sustained conflict between conservatives and liberals. Historian Uffe Østergaard (2000) underlines that this conflict has to be understood in a wider context than the party-political one. Specifically the peasants’ culture got a major influence on the formation of a distinct Danish identity and the popular understanding of Danishness. Rural culture was deeply imbued with what Grundtvig has observed and himself contributed to: a libertarian set of values, formed in opposition against the rules of the king, and egalitarian values, stemming from the democratically led cooperatives. According to Østergaard (2000, p. 162) the special status of the peasant and farmer in Denmark led to a national gathering around a “form of populism or popular ideology (folkelighed) stressing the importance of consensus among people”.

As the industrialization developed further, the emerging socialist movement had rising influence on the Danish identity. As elsewhere in Europe, this movement was established as a combined trade union and political party for the rapidly growing working class in the 1870s, leading up to 1878, when a distinct social democratic party was created (Bille & Rüdiger, 2011). Although banned by the conservative government at the time, this party gained massive popular support, and in 1884 won its first representatives in the Danish parliament. It thereby formed a new opposition to the conservatives from the left, alternative to that of the Liberal Party. Over the following decades, the economic cleavage on which the Social Democratic Party (Sosialdemokraterne; Social Democrats) was founded, would succeed the conflict between center and periphery as the primary organizing principle of Danish politics. The Social Democrats combined a moderate version of the socialist doctrine with liberal values. In that way, the Danish version of socialism was adjusted to the already dominating values of
libertarianism, egalitarianism and anti-elitism in the peasants’ culture (Østergaard, 2000, p. 160).

Following from this, the party system around 1900 consisted of three dominating movements. Revisiting Stein Rokkan’s (1987b [first published in 1966], p. 85) framework on the formation of political parties based on deep social cleavages, the Liberal Party, the Conservatives and the Social Democrats constitute the so-called “pole parties” in the Danish political system (Arter, 2006, pp. 54-55). Traditionally, each of them represented their own social group with distinct economic interests: the peasants and middle-farmers, the land- and industry owners, and the workers. The fourth of what today are called the “old parties” in Denmark came about after a split in the Liberal Party, due to dissatisfaction among the smallholders. They felt that the Liberal Party favored larger farms through its tax policy. In addition to this, the protesters opposed the mother party’s wish to increase the defense expenditure (Thomas, 1988, pp. 279-280). Together with the urban members of the party, the smallholders broke with the Liberal Party in 1905. Nevertheless, they shared their political project with neither the old royal elite, nor the workers’ movement. These fractions therefore formed the Radical Left Party (Radikale Venstre; commonly translated to the Social Liberal Party), and positioned themselves in between the liberals and the social democrats.

The “four old parties” continue to form the basic structure of the Danish party system even today: conservatives and liberals to the right, social liberals and social democrats to the left (Arter, 2016, p. 51). However, specifically from the ’70s and onwards, the Danish party system has been characterized by fragmentation, as new parties have reduced the vote share of the four traditional ones and opened a space for multiple coalitional patterns.

The most influential of the new parties is the far-right Danish People’s Party, which combines euro-skepticism, anti-immigration policy and so-called welfare-chauvinism; an extensive support for a welfare system that is limited to the ethnical Danish population (Careja, Elmelund-Præstekær, Baggesen Klitgaard & Larsen, 2016, p. 436). The Danish People’s Party was established in 1996 but has its roots in the Progress Party, which emerged in the early ’70s, and later disappeared from the political scene. The right, or so-called “Blue Bloc” also contains the libertarian party, Liberal Alliance, which was formed in 2007 in order to reduce the Danish People’s Party’s influence over immigration policy. The Liberal Alliance works against growing public expenditure on the welfare state and promotes extensive tax cuts (Hedegaard, 2016, p. 18).

On the left, two “new” parties have their roots in the communist movement, which formed a Danish Communist Party after a split among the social democrats in 1919. The
communists kept on debating about the relations with Soviet Union, and in 1959 moderate parts of the movement formed the Socialist People’s Party (Arter, 2016, p. 51). Today, this party mobilizes on a combination of leftist welfare policy and environmentalist issues (Arter, 2016, pp. 106-107). The remaining communist movement was for a long time fragmented in many small and not influential party organizations, but these organizations came together in the Red-Green Alliance in 1989 (Nygaard, 2011). In the present party system, the Red-Green Alliance occupies a position on the far-left.

In addition to this, an environmentalist party called The Alternative won its first parliamentary seats in 2015 as the last successful newcomer in the Danish party system, which after the general election consists of nine parties: the classical four old ones and five “new” ones. Due to the special form of consensus democracy in Denmark, all of these parties, with the exception of The Alternative, have had influential roles in the government formation process over the past fifteen to twenty years. A broad understanding of the variety of political parties is therefore useful when reading and analyzing the New Year’s speeches later on. In order to gain insight into how almost every Danish party has played important roles in the strategic political game, I will use the next section to explain the Danish parliamentary system.

4.1.2 Danish parliamentarism and government formation

In the comparative literature, features of the Danish political system have especially been discussed in the context of the “Nordic model” of government (see Arter, 2016, pp. 186-202 for an overview). However, according to Arter (2016, p. 202) it is more useful to talk about a distinct Scandinavian model, rather than a Nordic one. This Scandinavian model is, inter alia, characterized by governments that strive to be representative for the whole population, rather than only being accountable to their own voters. This is partly achieved through cooperation between the government and a hard-working and powerful parliament. The preferred outcome is cross-political consensus around important issues in society (Arter, 2016, pp. 186-206). Denmark complies relatively well with this prototype, and the Danish version of consensus governance is specifically characterized by the historical frequency of minority cabinets. Understanding this special feature is important in order to grasp the interplay between different political actors, and thereby also the tactical position of the prime minister in relation to a New Year’s speech.

Almost every Danish government since 1970 (96 %) has been a minority government (Arter, 2016, p. 250). This strong tendency does not have a single reason, but may be explained by a wide range of different factors (Arter, 2016, pp. 257-258; Heidar & Rasch, 2017, pp. 213-
Firstly, compared to the other Scandinavian states, the Danish election system facilitates even more proportional representation in the parliament, due to a low threshold for national compensatory seats (2 percent). Such a low threshold enables a variety of parties to enter the national political scene. This complicates the formation of possible majority governments, as no party or few-party coalition controls half of the parliamentary seats on its own. Secondly, the Danish system is built on a negative form of parliamentarism. Negative parliamentarism allows a government to form without the active support from a majority of the representatives in the parliament. The government just has to be tolerated, not supported. Thirdly, the parliament has a strong position vis-à-vis the government in the everyday political work. Relatively powerful standing committees enable different parties to work together instead of against each other. Such a bargaining culture of consensus makes it more attractive for small parties to stay outside of government: although in opposition, they can have an influence on the political outcomes. Finally, the Danish party system has historically been characterized by a strong and centrally placed Social Democratic Party, which has been able to govern minority cabinets by cooperating with different parties in the parliament, either to the left or to the right. Although not as dominant, the Liberal Party has obtained a similar position on the right side. This has enabled both parties to form governments that appear weak in parliamentary terms, but that in the political reality have stable, yet shifting, support (Arter, 2016, pp. 257-258, Heidar & Rasch, 2017, pp. 213-222).

A combination of factors has thus made Denmark “the home of minority governments” in Europe (Arter, 2016, p. 250). In contrast to an intuitive conception, however, the Danish case illustrates that minority governance not always is linked to chaos and instability (Arter 2016, p. 250, Heidar & Rasch, 2017, p. 115). Although Danish politics might be confusing to follow from the outside, long-lasting prime ministers and relatively stable periods of governance based in the left or the right of the political spectrum have been the norm rather than the exception.

Following from the previous two sections, the prime ministers covered in my material have been working – and delivering their speeches – in a distinct political culture and a tactical landscape. This landscape is crucial to understand before analyzing New Year’s speeches in context. First, the prime ministers are rhetors in a society where egalitarian and libertarian ideals function as preconditions for the rest of the political debate. These ideals have deep roots in the very first political and democratic consolidation, which prepared the ground for a political system of consensus. The overarching norm of consensus is reflected through a proportional election system, a powerful and hardworking parliament, and in the special feature of minority governance. Also the prime minister role has to be understood in this light. Danish prime
ministers are expected to be unifying figures – they are representative embodiments of the national will, rather than accountable governors. At the same time, they are still party leaders, and they engage in the “ordinary” political game. This twofold identity is of course not unique for Danish national leaders, but the political system makes the “double identity” even more profound. In the New Year’s speech, each rhetor has to act as a unifying head of state and tactical party politician at the same time. The prime ministers covered in my material thus have to manage a complex set of social identities. This is expressed through a many-layered rhetoric of identity, which I will attempt to analyze in chapter 5. Secondly, the prime ministers are leaders of a state that once obtained a strong power position in Europe. A national self-understanding as a small country with a great history affects how Danish prime ministers approach both domestic and international issues. In the following rhetorical analysis, it will be interesting to examine if such a self-understanding is expressed through a language of national protection. Specifically when it comes to the European cooperation, the historic fear of losing territory and power has been balanced against the agricultural interests of free trade and new markets. This cultural combination has made Denmark a reluctant member of the European Union, with several opt-outs from the cooperation (see Arter, 2016, pp. 397-429).

From this more general and overarching discussion of the political and institutional context, I will move on to examine the concrete political situation and parliamentary foundation for each of the three prime ministers covered in my material: Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2002-2009), Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2011-2015) and Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2009-2011, 2015-). This will result in a better understanding of the specific rhetorical situations they faced in their respective New Year’s speeches.

4.2 Specific political context since 2002

Before the general election in 2001, social democrat Poul Nyrup Rasmussen had governed Denmark since 1993. Now, he stood against the leader of the Liberal Party and former minister of economic affairs, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in a campaign that became unusually person-focused and “presidential” in a Danish context (Qvortrup, 2001, p. 207). Nyrup Rasmussen tried to present himself as economically responsible and diplomatically wise, but neither the economic situation nor the international tensions after 9/11 came to be the focus of the campaign. Instead, the attention was on immigration and what Mads Qvortrup (2001, p. 206) characterizes as a fear for the “growing Muslim population” in the country. This favored the Blue Bloc, where both Fogh Rasmussen’s Liberal Party and the Danish People’s Party campaigned on a strict shift in the immigration policy. On election day, the Liberal Party
performed beyond all expectations (table 2), and became the leading one in Denmark for the first time since 1924. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, lost almost seven percent, and were degraded to the second place (Qvortrup, 2001, p. 209). Fogh Rasmussen thus became prime minister for a minority coalition between his own Liberal Party and the Conservatives (see table 2). This government secured its parliamentary foundation due to steady support from the Danish People’s Party, which got around 12 percent of the votes in the election.

Fogh Rasmussen’s period in power was characterized by major events on the global scene. The terror attacks in New York and Washington D.C. had already created a new dynamic in international politics some months before the election. Under the leadership of Fogh Rasmussen, Denmark reinforced its position as a close ally to the United States, and the prime minister made it clear that president George W. Bush had his unconditional support in the following war on terror. According to Mouritzen (2007), Danish foreign policy went from being characterized by atlanticism – a close and historically important cooperation with the US, to what he calls “super-atlanticism”. This was most clearly expressed in the decision to send Danish soldiers to the war against Iraq. Thereby, Denmark became one of only three states in Europe that contributed militarily in the invasion (Mouritzen, 2007, p. 157). Fogh Rasmussen was also an important actor in the process of EU enlargement in 2004. The decision to admit 10 new member states into the European Union was made on a summit of the European council in Copenhagen in December 2002. The Danish role in the process fostered a new debate on the Danish four exceptions from the European cooperation, the so-called opt-outs. Fogh Rasmussen was himself one of the strongest protagonists for abolishing the exceptions and he prepared a referendum on the issue. The referendum was never held however, due to Fogh Rasmussen abruptly leaving office in 2009.

In the domestic sphere, Fogh Rasmussen’s political project could be summed up by the terms “contract policy” and “cultural war” (Kurrid-Klitgaard, 2011, pp. 1-8). When Fogh Rasmussen took over leadership in the Liberal Party, he changed the party’s tactic in order to mobilize the “middle voter”. An important part of the new plan was to present a few clearly formulated promises to the voters. These promises were moderate, and in some instances quite similar to the social democratic program. However, they secured that skeptical middle voters could chose the Liberal Party without fearing a radical shift towards neo-liberalism. The most clear-cut examples of the contract policy throughout Fogh Rasmussen’s governing period were the promises to avoid any rise of taxes while the Liberal Party was in the government, to moderately reduce public expenditure, and to get rid of unnecessary laws and regulations that violated personal freedom. These promises were then linked to the more abstract term “cultural
war” (*kulturkamp*), which was Fogh Rasmussen’s grand project of making Denmark more liberal; to get rid of what he called the “slave mentality”, where personal freedom was lost in favor of a growing state-supported (and left-oriented) cultural elite. He wanted to reduce the “social state”, in order to regain the free and independent Danish mindset (Kurrild-Klitgaard, 2011, p. 4). Fogh Rasmussen’s project could thus be understood in a wider cultural-historical context. He was drawing heavily on libertarian ideas, and the myth about the freedom-loving Danish farmer. As explained earlier in the chapter, these ideas are deep-rooted in the Danish democracy, due to their foundational role in the very first political consolidation. A freedom-based rhetoric therefore has a special mobilizing effect in the Danish political discourse. Fogh Rasmussen’s libertarian project was still unusual and ambitious, and it left an impression of Fogh Rasmussen as ideological leader who promoted a radical transformation of Danish society. Such an impression was further reinforced by the underlining of so-called national values and Danish pride, combined with a stricter stance on immigration – conceded to the Danish People’s Party in return for its stable support in parliament (Kosiara-Pedersen, 2012, p. 416).

The “cultural war” reached its top during the caricature crisis in 2005 and 2006. The crisis had its roots in the publication of twelve caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper Jyllandsposten, including one drawing of Mohammed wearing a bomb-formed turban. The caricatures led to aggressive protests in many mainly Muslim countries, and created a diplomatic crisis between Denmark and a series of states in the Middle East. In the beginning of the crisis, Fogh Rasmussen protected the newspaper’s right to publish provocative statements and drawings, and referred to the freedom of speech as a fundamental Danish value. As the crisis became more severe, due to attacks on Danish embassies and a major boycott of the Danish brand Arla, he moderated his rhetoric, and underlined that he personally would not have published such caricatures (Lindholm, 2008, pp. 53-57). The crisis strengthened an already potent debate about the Muslim population in Denmark, and about the compatibility between Muslim values and Danishness. That debate lasted during the rest of Fogh Rasmussen’s governing period.

Danish political scientist Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard (2011, pp. 25-26) holds that, although Fogh Rasmussen governed during dramatic times and his goals were bold and ambitious, policy under Fogh Rasmussen never became as groundbreaking in concrete terms as his rhetoric indicated. This can partly be explained by the economical context during his first two terms as prime minister. He did not need to transform the state apparatus in order to get the wanted results: Just as in many other European countries, the Danish economy reached new heights
around the mid of the decade. In this environment, the controversies and major debates in Fogh Rasmussen’s governing period were more about values, than about materialistic priorities.

The international financial crisis in 2008 and 2009 dramatically changed this situation. Major losses in the banking sector and the following weakened economic activity led to a serious decline in gross national product, falling prices in the real-estate market (Rangvid, 2013), and an unemployment rate that rose from around 3.5 percent in 2008 to over 7 percent in 2009 and 2010 (OECD, 2016, p. 56). In this situation, the minister of finance, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, became prime minister in the middle of the term, when Fogh Rasmussen abruptly withdrew from his position in April 2009 to take office as secretary-general of NATO. Løkke Rasmussen governed on the basis of the same coalition and parliamentary foundation as Fogh Rasmussen, and his ideological profile was adopted from his predecessor. Due to the economic difficulties, his years in power nevertheless became different from those of Fogh Rasmussen. Løkke Rasmussen conducted more of a crisis management approach, which secured that Denmark avoided some of the worst consequences of the crisis that other European countries faced. His relative success in this area enabled Løkke Rasmussen to present himself as the most trustworthy candidate on economic issues during the 2011 election (Hutcheson, 2012, p. 341; Jung, Jensen & Henriksen, 2011). Although his party had already governed Denmark for about ten years by then, Løkke Rasmussen did relatively well in his first election as prime minister, yet he lost power due to a major setback for the coalition partner, the Conservatives (see table 2).

The election in 2011 resulted in a red-green alliance on the left side of the political spectrum, consisting of the Social Democratic Party, the Social Liberal Party and the Socialist People’s Party (see table 2). Although this was a minority coalition, the prime minister had stable support from all parties on the left side (Kosiara-Pedersen, 2012, p. 415). New prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt’s main task was to bring Denmark out of the crisis, but she faced economic troubles that were more long-lasting than expected. Her government was also scattered by internal conflicts, due to major political differences between the Socialist People’s Party and the more centrist Social Democratic Party and Social Liberal Party. In 2014, SPP left the government, protesting against the reduction of public ownership in an energy company. However, the socialists kept on supporting the government in parliament. Thereby, Thorning-Schmidt held power until she called for a new election in 2015.

The campaign before the general election in 2015 focused on economic policy in light of the financial crisis. Helle Thorning-Schmidt tried to challenge the “issue ownership” that the right parties had over financial measures, and emphasized some economic improvements that
occurred during her period in power (Kosiara-Pedersen, 2012, p. 418). Simultaneously, she changed the rhetoric on immigration issues in order to stop the leak of votes to the Danish People’s Party. The Social Democratic Party promoted a more restrictive immigration policy, and demanded that “everyone who comes to Denmark shall work” (Ritzau, 2015). The political importance of (predominantly Muslim) immigration was at this point already strengthened by the terror attack in Copenhagen in February 2015, in which two persons were shot dead by an Islamist terrorist with immigrant roots. Even though this event did not affect the attitudes towards immigration in the population directly, sociologists Smiley, Emerson & Markussen (2017, pp. 15-16) found that the shooting led to a polarization of the immigration debate among the political parties. Both the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party underlined their strict stances on the issue, and made questions of national identity and Danishness important in the campaign. Again, anti-immigration rhetoric worked well for the ruling party. Helle Thorning-Schmidt succeeded in the election, while the other parties that secured her parliamentary foundation, lost support.

The leader of the Blue Bloc, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, was at this point weakened by a scandal about alleged private spending of public funds during his first term as prime minister (So, 2016, p. 2). His personal popularity had fallen dramatically during the campaign while the media focused on his luxury lifestyle and gave him the nickname “Luxury Lars”. The scandal was reflected in the election result: The Liberal Party lost more than ten mandates compared to the election before. However, because the Blue Bloc as a whole did well, Løkke Rasmussen managed to keep the party leadership and even establish a single-party government in 2015. The major winner in the election was the Danish People’s Party, which became the second largest party in the country, and the largest on the right. However, DPP refused an offer to take part in a coalition together with Løkke Rasmussen’s Liberal Party, arguing that a position in the government would leave the party in a weak strategic position. Løkke Rasmussen’s single-party government was historically weak in terms of parliamentary seats, and was dependent on the support from several other parties, including DPP.

Internal divisions in the Blue Bloc characterized the first phase after the election. Conflicts over taxation and agriculture policy led to speculations about a possible early election. To resolve these problems, Løkke Rasmussen invited the Conservatives and the Liberal Alliance to join the cabinet in November 2016. He thereby strengthened the government’s parliamentary foundation. However, it was, and by May 2017 still is, dependent on the support from the Danish People’s Party. Løkke Rasmussen thus needs to balance the policies of the governing parties against the influence from DPP. This inevitably leads to difficult dilemmas,
especially in foreign policy, as the Liberal Party is a pro-European and pro-free trade party, whereas DPP fights against a stronger Danish integration into the EU. This conflict between the parties became even more salient when Løkke Rasmussen called for a referendum on changing the Danish opt-out from European cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs in December 2015. Løkke Rasmussen argued for more flexible, so-called “opt-ins”, that would allow the government to join some common cooperation bodies in these policy fields, while rejecting others. The government lost this referendum, and the opt-outs remained unchanged. Also the UK’s decision to leave the European Union in June 2016 reinforced the political conflict between the pro-EU Liberal Party and the Eurosceptic Danish People’s Party.

Politically, Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s second period in power has also been characterized by the so-called refugee crisis, which was at its start when the government assumed office in June 2015. The government acted immediately, introducing controversial measures to create an international impression of Denmark as an unattractive destination for asylum seekers. These measures included advertisement in foreign newspapers that informed about the strict policy in Denmark, and the highly debated “jewelry law”, which allows the Danish police to seize valuable items worth more than 10,000 DKK from asylum seekers, in order to cover their stay in the country (Ritzau, 2016). The migrant situation has further strengthened the already potent debate about Danishness and the threat from immigration during the past two years.

It is too early to evaluate Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s second government, yet popularity polls suggest that he has never fully recovered from the scandals that overshadowed his election campaign in 2015. The split and crisis in the Blue Bloc seem to have been resolved with the cabinet enlargement in November 2016, but this has not done much good for Løkke Rasmussen’s personal popularity in the electorate. He has a generally weak position, both as a party leader and prime minister.

The preceding examination of the concrete rhetorical situations helps us understand the specific preconditions before each New Year’s speech in my material. Based on this knowledge, the rhetorical choices of each leader may be easier to interpret: Fogh Rasmussen, as an ideologically engaged politician, was able to start a “cultural war” in a period of time when the multicultural development facilitated value-loaded policies. Backed by an, in the Danish context, unusually right-leaning electorate, he merged deep-rooted libertarian values with a growing concern for multiculturalism, and created enthusiasm for clearer definitions of what it means to be Danish. Thorning-Schmidt adopted important parts of this cultural rhetoric. At the same time, the relatively stable parliamentary foundation of the red-green government allowed her to build a feeling of belonging around the social democratic ideals. Lars Løkke Rasmussen
governed Denmark first as a non-elected crisis-manager, and then as a prime minister with a historically weak support from the voters. This means that he needed to appeal broadly to the electorate, while at the same time satisfying his allies in the Blue Bloc.

Context matters for how prime ministers talk, and how they formulate themselves in the New Year’s speech. However, this should not be read as devaluation of the rhetor’s communicational agency. Rather, the political circumstances form a rhetorical room, where the prime ministers can mobilize the auditors in different ways. In chapter five, I will analyze how the prime ministers use this room to create a feeling of national belonging. Before doing so, we should get a chance to understand another and quite different source of constraint on the rhetor; formal and informal bindings connected to the New Year’s speech as a rhetorical ritual. I will use the next section to examine the New Year’s speech as a special genre of political communication.

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<tr>
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<td>Social democracy</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-Green Alliance</td>
<td>Radical socialism</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Alternative</td>
<td>Environmentalism</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Liberal Party</td>
<td>Social liberalism</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist People’s Party</td>
<td>Socialism</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish People’s Party</td>
<td>Nat.-conservatism</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal Party</td>
<td>Liberal-agrarianism</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>Liberal Alliance</td>
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<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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Table 2: Results of general elections in Denmark, 2001-2015 (percent and number of mandates). The resulting government coalitions highlighted ( Folketinget, 2016).

4.3 The New Year’s speech as a political and festive event and genre

In the first part of this chapter, I focused on the contextual constraints on the prime ministers in a New Year’s speech. These constraints stem both from deep-grounded cultural features, institutional rules, and shifting political situations. Still, after taking these factors into account, the prime ministers are not to be understood as completely free rhetorical actors. The New Year’s speech has a long history, which means that each prime minister is bound to a strict set of rhetorical conventions and norms. Before analyzing concrete instances of New Year’s

5 In 2001, also the Christian People’s Party was represented in the parliament (4 mandates).
6 In 2007, the Liberal Alliance had the name “New Alliance”.

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rhetoric, I will in this section describe the inherited rhetorical premises in the New Year’s speech, which each rhetor not easily can change by themselves.

The first New Year’s speech in Denmark was held in 1940 by prime minister Thorvald Stauning. He became Denmark’s first prime minister from the Social Democratic Party in 1924, and apart from three years, he remained in office until his death in 1942. The many years in power and his uncontested role in the formation of a Danish welfare system made him a unifying figure in society. The speaker’s position as a national symbol, combined with the onset of World War II, constituted the first New Year’s speech as a major political and national event (Melbin and Melbin, 2011, p. 12). Apart from a few exceptions, the Danish prime ministers have kept the tradition yearly since 1940.

Danish writers and diplomats Eva Fischer Melbin and Franz-Michael Skjold Melbin have collected all the News Year’s speeches between 1940 and 2011 in the book Nu gælder det Danmark. They characterize the New Year’s speech as the prime minister’s “most important” speech of the year (p. 823). This is partly because the speech enables prime ministers to speak party politics in front of potential voters, but also because they can define national values and the Danish “we” in their own ways. Without interruptions or critical questions, the rhetors communicate to a broad national audience, which consists of close to half of the adult population in the country (p. 11).

The combination of politics and festivity, which certainly characterizes the New Year’s speech, creates a complex rhetorical genre that is challenging to label. Even the most broad-based rhetorical categorizations are of little help. The basic rhetorical genre schema, which stems back to Aristotle, illustrates this point. According to this schema (table 3), different speeches can be divided into three main groups: deliberative speeches, forensic speeches and epideictic speeches. The first category consists of political rhetoric, mainly about important societal choices about the future. The rhetor’s main goal is here to persuade the audience to believe in their visions. The second category consists of rhetoric about the past, and specifically legal argumentation to prove guilt or innocence, while the third category consists of rhetoric about the actual situation, event, or the concrete audience. Speeches concerning common values and pride are part of this latter category (Villadsen, 2009, pp. 100-103).

In this schematic division, the New Year’s speech falls somewhere in between all three genres. It is certainly political in content: Prime ministers since 1940 have used the speech to argue for their own political goals. At the same time, it has a wider perspective than pure persuasion by party politicians. It is a value-loaded speech, which in many cases functions as a celebration of “the common”. In that regard, it shares many of the characteristics of the
epideictic speech. Finally, it contains judgments and close to legal argumentation about events in the past; justifications of the political choices that led up to the present situation. Thereby, the New Year’s speech combines elements of all classic genres, in such a way that it may be seen as a separate rhetorical category, which does not directly resemble other types of speeches.

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**Genres in Aristotle’s rhetoric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Deliberative</th>
<th>Forensic</th>
<th>Epideictic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience orientation</td>
<td>Participant/judge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spectator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal orientation</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject matter</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Guilt/innocence</td>
<td>Human character, habits, values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Determining what is advantageous/disadvantageous; expedient/inexpedient, useful/harmful</td>
<td>Determining what is just/unjust, legal/illegal</td>
<td>Determining what is noble/shameful, honorable/dishonorable</td>
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Table 3: Aristotle’s genre system. Table based on Jasinski’s (2002, p. 271) adaptation from Hill.

Given the New Year’s speech’s complexity and its ability to collect a large national audience, one would assume that this Danish genre has gathered a lot of academic interest. That is not the case, however. Apart from the previously mentioned non-academic collection of New Year’s speeches, which also contains contextual analyses, there is little work done in the field. One exception deserves to be mentioned: In an insightful paper from 2016, Danish sociologist Kristian Frisk examines the complete collection of New Year’s speeches since 1940, in order to find out how prime ministers have represented the Danish soldier throughout the years. He specifically finds a steady rise in rhetorical connections between military missions abroad, and the protection of the Danish welfare state. According to Frisk, heightened focus on military effort in the New Year’s speeches since the ’90s has contributed to present framing of welfare policy issues as a matter of security.

Another inspirational work is conducted by rhetorician Carsten Madsen (2017), who analyzes the New Year’s speeches by the Danish Queen. In the theoretical perspective of
Maurice Charland’s (1987) constitutive rhetoric (see chapter 3.2), he examines how Queen Margrethe constitutes Danishness through rhetoric. Madsen points out how the Queen, even though she has limited possibilities to argue directly and has a very different role from that of the prime ministers, still uses her limited rhetorical room to construct a national identity. Specifically, he shows how the Queen presents herself as part of the Danish community while she simultaneously upholds a “royal” distance to everyday people (pp. 138-139). Such a balance is worth to keep in mind before the forthcoming analysis of the prime ministers. They too need to appear as “one of us”, while at the same time presenting themselves as special authorities in the public discourse.

The past years have thus brought to the table some interesting research projects that are relevant for the prime minister’s New Year’s speech as a rhetorical genre. However, the need for further insight motivates new analyses, such as those following in chapter 5. Hopefully, the work presented in the next chapter will result in a deeper understanding of the New Year’s speech as a special and important rhetorical genre in the Danish discourse, and at the same time reveal how different prime ministers use and form the genre in their own way.
5. Analysis

The forthcoming chapter consists of two distinct parts. The first part (chapter 5.1) is an in-depth analysis of the rhetoric in Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s New Year’s speech from January 2017. In line with the theoretical and methodological framework, the main goal with the analysis in chapter 5.1 is to establish a repertoire of different social identities that the rhetor switches between throughout a speech, and to evaluate these in the light of the social identity approach and contemporary rhetorical theory. This analysis functions as a preliminary test of the analytical map, in order to develop the framework further. The results from this analysis are then examined in order to understand how the different elements of the analytical map best are to be balanced against each other.

In the second part of the chapter (5.2), I analyze the New Year’s speeches from 2002 until 2016. The goal with this analysis is to investigate if the findings from chapter 5.1 express case-specific characteristics in the speech from 2017, or if they also illustrate important rhetorical means across years, political situations and rhetors. This second analysis is thus important in order to secure that the final analytical map is fit for analyzing national rhetoric in general and Danish New Year’s speeches in particular.

Together, this chapter therefore consists of both an in-depth and a broad analysis of how the prime ministers use a language of social identity to gather their “people” around certain important representations, ideographs and linguistic tokens. This will result in theoretical and methodological insight. However, in the process of theoretical and methodological development, I will also gain empirical knowledge about the national identity different prime ministers try to constitute through their New Year’s speeches. This knowledge is presented and discussed throughout the chapter.

To sum up, the following chapter strives to (1) test and refine the theoretical and analytical framework (research question 1), and (2) provide empirical information about the constitution of national identity through New Year’s rhetoric in Denmark between 2002 and 2017 (research question 2). The analysis is accompanied with important quotes from the speeches, using the official English translation of the speeches from 2003 until 2017, provided by the office of the Danish prime minister. The speech from 2002 is translated from Danish into English by myself, due to the lack of an official translation. Each quote is marked with a reference to line numbered speech manuscripts in English (attachment 1-16). The original Danish versions are found in attachment 17-32.
5.1 Analysis of the New Year’s speech in 2017

Following the preliminary analytical map, which was developed in chapter 3, the first analytical step is to examine which self-representations or social identities, the rhetor, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, uses throughout the speech. How does he present himself as a part of different groups in society, and how does he use these roles in order to form the overall impression of himself as a prototype of “the people”? A close reading of his speech reveals three main self-representations that are repeated throughout the text. Firstly, he represents himself as an ordinary citizen: a family man and a father. Secondly, he represents himself as a political leader, with distinct ideological goals that he wants to reach through more or less concrete policy measures. Finally, he represents himself as a head of state and commander in chief: a national leader on the international political scene. These three self-representations are building blocks in integrated narratives about himself and about the nation, and will be examined in order, beginning with his rhetoric as an ordinary citizen.

5.1.1 The ordinary citizen

The very beginning of the New Year’s speech in 2017 introduces us to an important feature of the prime minister’s rhetorical style: repeated references to personal meetings and anecdotes from his own family life. Already during the opening sentences in his address, the prime minister categorizes himself as part of a family-based social group:

“The last few days many of us have spent time on what we Danes are world famous for – practicing “hygge”. When we want to “hygge” in my family, we watch Matador. (Attachment 1: line 3-6)

The first part of this quote works as a reference to the international interest in the word hygge. Hygge is said to be a typically Danish concept that stands for the happiness and cozy ambiance that arise during low-scale social happenings with friends and family. By referring to the short-lived international buzz around this term, Løkke Rasmussen confirms a national myth about Denmark as the home of a relaxed and happy lifestyle. This is further underlined by the next sentence, where he refers to his own family’s hygge. In the home of the prime minister, they are having a good time, watching the TV series Matador. Matador is a classical drama from the late ’70s that portrays the life in a Danish provincial town in the years before World War II. By referring to the family tradition of watching this series, Løkke Rasmussen categorizes himself as part of the group “family men”, and he underlines that, here, he is like everyone else in
Denmark: “All” Danes have seen this show, but still it “continues to bring together both young and old people” (1:8-9). Watching such a popular show is not at all embarrassing for this prime minister: He has even seen it “twenty times” (1:10). The family-category is thereby used by Løkke Rasmussen to rhetorically place himself at the same level as his “people”, building the ground for a feeling of commonality among individuals that share this particular view on what is typically Danish.

Further on in the speech, he uses Matador in general, and several specific episodes in the series, as allegories for positive developments in Danish society as a whole: the handmaid who created her own business and succeeded (1:19), and the old clothing store that could not accommodate to the new times, and therefore had to give in (1:17). This is the Denmark Løkke Rasmussen approves of: a society where the good ideas succeed, and where the losers of this development find something else to do. Løkke Rasmussen’s Denmark is the society of winners. In line with this, he describes a national history that has brought progress to normal people, and that will continue to do so. Ever since the times portrayed in Matador, he says, Denmark has only developed in one direction: “forward” (1:33).

The present is better than the past. And the future? It can become even better! (1:37)

Future is thus the bearing ideograph in the first part of the speech, and this term is further filled with a distinct content. In Løkke Rasmussen’s world, a better future is best described by people being wealthier, living longer, and having more freedom (1:35). These elements are not controversial, of course. However, in this context, they could signify something more than a prosaic belief in progress. On the one hand, they underline the prime minister’s core ideological values on the business- and profit-oriented right side of the political spectrum. On the other hand, his optimistic tone may also be understood in the context of turbulent politics and an unstable world situation. Met with these challenges, Lars Løkke Rasmussen uses the well-known and safe cultural reference of Matador to provide a counter-narrative for those who have been worried – a counter-narrative that is centered on a better future. The economic turbulence a couple of years ago, and the refugee crisis last year, are forgotten happenings, or they are seen as too small events to actually challenge the overarching narrative of success.

The only concern Løkke Rasmussen communicates in his first part of the speech is about the dangers of over-developed technology. He is afraid that “some are left behind” (1:47). More than the concern for other issues of our time, the worry of technological development enables him to unite the people in an inclusive “we”. However, the possible negative consequences are
not emphasized compared to the positive aspects of change. Thereby, this passage confirms the impression of a prime minister who unites his people around an optimistic worldview. Simultaneously, the serious and balanced talk about technology creates an impression of an old and fatherly wise leader: a person to trust, more than a politician to be persuaded by. Rather than the authoritative politician, this is thus the warm family man and the wise person of the people who is talking. The man who takes time to watch TV in his Christmas holiday, and who ends up reflecting on broader topics and developments on behalf of his family and his people. In this rhetorical strategy, the anecdotes about Matador, references to his family and reflections on technical development are used both as means to represent the positive development in Denmark, as a way to meet the people on their own level, and as an introduction to a “pep talk” to his expanded family – his people.

This is far from the only use of the family category throughout the speech. Another interesting instance follows immediately after, when Løkke Rasmussen explicitly represents himself as part of the group “fathers”:

Last summer I had two experiences that are very clear to me. (...) My elder son, Bergur, had got his bachelor’s degree in what is known as International Business. He celebrated that by inviting a group of fellow students for dinner at our home. I did the cooking and waited on the young people. (1:50-56)

In this quote, Løkke Rasmussen uses his position as a family man to connect with the people, but the environment he describes is quite different from the popular gathering in front of an old TV show. Rather, he now represents himself as a kind and caring father in a very successful home. Løkke Rasmussen is not only taking time to spend a whole night with his son’s friends while serving as the leader of the country; it is the prime minister himself who makes the dinner. The described occasion leaves an impression of success. The son has graduated with a bachelor’s degree, and Løkke Rasmussen is not afraid to emphasize the name of the degree, International Business. Nevertheless, he adds the remark “what is known as?”. By doing so, he communicates a distance to the name, as if he recognizes that the title might sound snobbish. The result is then a choice of words that refer to his high-status family life, while at the same time upholding his popular appeal. He continues this argument by referring to the conversation among the youths during the evening:

In the original Danish version, this is expressed by the suffix “som det hedder” (“as it is called”), which makes the rhetorical function analyzed in this paragraph even more apparent. See attachment 17, line 47.
The conversation during dinner was animated – in impeccable English. About dreams. The future. Life. Not until late in the evening did it dawn on me that all the guests were 100 percent Danish. Apart from a young Canadian who actually also spoke very good Danish. None of the young people that evening were afraid of change. They were already moving full speed ahead. Self-assured. Hopeful. Ready to take on the world! (1:56-63)

Here, Løkke Rasmussen strengthens the impression of a group of young students who obviously are doing well: They are global youths who talk in perfect English about their dreams and plans for the future. Yet, he calms down those of the listeners who might be worried about a possible disconnection with the Danish homeland in his son’s group of celebrating students: Apart from one Canadian friend, all of them are “100 per cent Danish” (1:59), and even the Canadian has learned the Danish language. The explicit praise of the pure Danish attribute is worth reflecting upon. On the one hand, this is a sign of an ethnic categorization, where the Danish background is presented as something positive in itself. However, it seems like the Danishness is specifically important to underline because they are all speaking English. Løkke Rasmussen admires an international outlook, which still is grounded in a national fundament. Additionally, he communicates that foreigners who live in Denmark should strive to learn the language; not out of necessity – the Danes around speak fluently English – but out of will and respect. In that regard, it is worth noting how the prime minister emphasizes the Canadian nationality. One could easily imagine that this statement would have communicated something completely different if the friend was merely labeled as a “foreigner”. That would lead the attention towards other groups in society, which Løkke Rasmussen throughout the speech presents in a quite different way: refugees and asylum seekers, or alternatively immigrants from the European Union. What may seem like a detail in the anecdote, is therefore an important marker of ethnicity, which contributes to Løkke Rasmussen’s overarching definition of the ingroup.

In light of this, the group of young students appears like an illustration of the ideal gathering in Løkke Rasmussen’s Denmark: successful Danish students of business who have plenty of dreams for the future. The chef, Løkke Rasmussen himself, has not only raised one of these successful students; he represents the story as if the students fully accept his presence. They do not seem to bother that a father joined the party. In other words: Løkke Rasmussen is the successful representative of the father category, and an embodiment of the Danish, center-right family man. Simultaneously, he is holding up his own son as the personification of the bright future that he talked about in the introduction of the speech.

The anecdote about the son’s friends gets even more interesting when examining how Løkke Rasmussen contrasts it against another event, which he experienced right after the
mentioned graduation dinner. He was then on a bicycle trip with a group of youths as part of an idealistic project for “marginalized boys” that Løkke Rasussen “launched a few years ago” (1:66). According to the prime minister, these boys never learnt anything at school, and they have experienced “one defeat after another” (l:67). This is a story about care and idealism, which balances against the representations of success in the prime minister’s own home. The prime minister’s stake in the organization is demonstrated by him attending the group of underprivileged boys in person. He presents the meeting with the boys as a personal, low-scale, spontaneous initiative to take a bike ride. The meeting made a great impression on him: It made him understand how unfair life is sometimes:

It struck me how big the difference is between two groups of quite ordinary young Danes. (1:75)

Among what the prime minister here calls “ordinary young Danes”, his own son functions as the illustration of success, contrasted against the underprivileged boys he tries to help. Overall, the anecdotes confirm that the prime minister is not afraid of categorizing himself and his family as part of the elite. The prime minister’s elite is, however, given a popular content from the very beginning of the speech: It is the one that watches Matador, that has plenty of time for children, and that enjoys a bike ride now and then with less resourceful youth. Thereby, Løkke Rasmussen succeeds in presenting himself and his own family with a complex identity, which may in itself serve as an eligible token for modern center-right politics in a social-democratic state: the combination of individuality and pride in personal achievements on the one hand, and the care for common values and a coherent community on the other. In Løkke Rasmussen’s Denmark, it is acceptable to enjoy the taste of success, as long as one keeps contact with ordinary people and their concerns.

Løkke Rasmussen further uses the contrast between different groups of young Danes politically to emphasize the importance of a well-functioning school system. According to him, a well-developed educational sector is crucial to secure that no one goes for the “easy solutions” (1:84-85). The term “easy solutions” is here linked to many of the most pressing debates in the international political sphere. One of the easy solutions he mentions is “stopping new technology at the border” (l:87). Others are securing domestic jobs through protectionism, or leaving international and cross-national organizations:

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8 In the original Danish version: “helt almindelige unge danskere” (“completely ordinary young Danes”). See attachment 17, line 69.
And we cannot make the flows of refugees or the terrorist threat go away by opting out of the European and international cooperation that must solve the problems. We cannot build walls against the world. If we do, we will end up locking ourselves in. (1:91-94)

It is interesting to see how Lars Løkke Rasmussen here manages to implicitly transform the story about “boys on the edge” to a metaphor for the destructive movements in international politics. Boys like those need to be helped in order to avoid “easy solutions” in the personal sphere, but these easy solutions are soon given a larger meaning when exemplified by some of the most controversial political issues of the past year. The building of walls, which may be interpreted as an indirect reference to the policy of American president Trump, and the exit from international organizations – a reference to Brexit and growing Euroscepticism in Europe. Such easy solutions are exactly what Løkke Rasmussen does not support. They are designed by the kind of people that are completely opposite from him and his family. They are everything but International Business and fluent English. People who believe in these easy solutions are typically “marginalized”, and they need help – help that they will of course get from the idealist Lars Løkke Rasmussen:

We must ensure that all become winners of the future. This is my message tonight. (1:101)

Here, Løkke Rasmussen presents the second of the most important ideographs of the speech: winner. This term may seem neutral, but is filled with interesting content, which informs us about what Løkke Rasmussen’s model of the perfect Danish citizen – the second persona – looks like. As the preceding analysis shows, Løkke Rasmussen has implicitly communicated that the winner of the future is an internationally oriented person who works hard and who abhors the primitive populism arising in an era of swift societal change. He has illustrated this worldview by referring to his son and the marginalized boys. At the same time, he has presented a story about himself that also characterizes his ideal of the Danish winner: it is the successful, but still down-to-earth person, full of private initiative, who talks with everyone regardless of their social status. In this way, the father and family man Løkke Rasmussen uses a unifying rhetorical strategy, which at the same time contains normative elements.

This use of personal and private self-representations as an “ordinary Dane” is revisited later in the speech, when Løkke Rasmussen again refers to his own life in a way fit for illustrating one of his main political goals. In line 198, the prime minister describes Denmark
as “a welfare society that puts people first. And that is driven by people.” He illustrates this by praising his own Danish teacher in primary school, Mona:

I had difficulties in particular with the present tense -r. When to add “r” to the word “lære” (learn) and when not to? Mona explained it to me: “Try to replace “lære” with a word where you can clearly hear the difference – for example “synge” (sing). Synge. Synger. It doesn’t sound like much. But to me it was great. (1: 204-210).

Here, it is the father of the people who is talking – the man who remembers his own mistakes at school, and who admits that he still does not write perfect Danish. Furthermore, he uses this personal example to come through with a political message, introduced when he praises the individual initiative in the Danish welfare sector. His goal is to allow Mona to teach in her own way, as she did with the prime minister himself. Therefore, the system needs “fewer rules and regulations. Less control” (1:219). A repetition of the ideograph freedom (l:221) helps him to emphasize this message: If one single person could teach the prime minister to write, then individuals are able to take responsibility in a public sector with more freedom. The personal story is thereby another example of how he conducts the complex rhetorical project of defending a social democratic welfare state from a rightist and liberalistic point of view. His perfect auditor, or second persona, does not fit perfectly to the stereotype of a conservative or liberal voter who only cares about private business and looks down at the public sector. Rather, Løkke Rasmussen uses his personal life to praise public workers, yet he praises them as individuals, understanding freedom as freedom from excessive state regulation. Thereby, he manages to fill the ideograph with his own political ideas. He upholds a liberal way of communicating, while at the same time using a unifying and cross-political rhetorical strategy.

While other categories dominate the rest of the speech, the “father” and the “family man” come back towards the end. In the last paragraphs, Løkke Rasmussen returns to the themes from the introduction, by referring to Matador and the positive visions for the future. He points out that, although the technical solutions have changed, people still love a good story, and that even robots or computers cannot change how we are as human beings. Thereafter he refers to one of the answers he got when he asked young Danes to propose topics for the New Year’s speech:

And that is also my message to Victoria who, as one out of many, accepted my invitation to offer some useful advice for this year’s New Year Address. She wrote: “I would really like to hear a little about how young people should not be afraid of the future.” My answer to Victoria and all other young people
Here, Løkke Rasmussen uses the voice of the father, or even the grandfather of his nation’s children, speaking directly to the hopeful youths as a unifying public figure in the center of a broad Danish “we”-category. The message he brings out is positive, and it is once again contrasted against the fear for technological development – a fear that he now rejects. By doing this, he underlines his self-representation as a man of old wisdom and fatherly care that he introduced in the beginning of the speech, and which has to be seen as a core element of his rhetoric. At the same time, he goes against the stereotype of an old man, by rejecting the impression that “everything was better in the old days” (1:295). Thereby, he confirms the established perception of a family man: the old and clever, who keeps track with the youths and new development.

In this strategy, social categorization is not to be understood as a detail or pure ornament. Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s way of representing himself as a part of different social categories helps him to build a personal model that contains ideological elements. These elements are used to communicate what kind of Denmark Løkke Rasmussen approves of, and what his perfect auditor – second persona – looks like: the hopeful and optimistic, global, young, Danish winner. Simultaneously, he creates the ground for an emotional connection to his people: between unceremonious individuals, rather than between a politician and potential voters. Categorization and social identity markers thereby build the foundation for persuasive communication. In the next sections, I will go further into how Løkke Rasmussen combines his self-representations as an ordinary citizen with his presentations of himself as a politician and a head of state.

5.1.2 The political leader

Løkke Rasmussen’s most clear-cut political passages are found in the middle of the speech (1:105-192). Here, he shifts between two different “we”-conceptions. The first “we” refers to the Danish government or even his party, the Liberal Party, while the second “we” represents the Danish nation. It is difficult to draw a strict line between these two categorizations: they are used interchangeably in his description of “the Danish way into the future” (1:111). This unifying expression is closely connected to party-specific political content, and further contrasted against an implicit threat: the risk of not making the “best of good times” (1:137).

One illustrative example of this is found in Løkke Rasmussen’s arguments for a
geographical spread of power and resources in Denmark; he wants to stimulate the districts outside Copenhagen. This topic is emphasized when he speaks about giving “hope to an agricultural sector under pressure” (1:120), the fact that the municipalities should have “freedom to create life both in the country and in the cities” (1:124-125), and most interestingly, when he states that the government moves public work positions from Copenhagen to other places in the country. The following quote is of particular rhetorical interest, not only due to its content, but also because of the way Løkke Rasmussen meta-analyses the importance of different ways of communicative positioning:

And therefore, we are relocating thousands of central government jobs from the Capital to other regions. A moving out or a moving in, depending on the perspective. (1:127-128)

By referring to different perspectives, he communicates understanding for the feeling of being left behind outside of the capital. At the same time, Løkke Rasmussen avoids a strong provocation towards his own power center in Copenhagen. The twin strategy could be seen in the light of both Løkke Rasmussen’s own personal experiences, and the history of his party. The prime minister himself balances his own two geographical identities. As a man who is born and raised in Vejle, in the southern part of Denmark, but who has lived most of his life in the capital, he represents two social groups and identities. This is also the story of his party, which is originally built on the rural protest against urban elites, but has developed to become the main political force on the right of center of Danish politics (see chapter 4). The present Liberal Party therefore mobilizes in the rural areas, based on its legacy, and partly also among the urban elite, based on its current political position. Such mixed geographical support makes the unifying rhetoric more difficult, and Løkke Rasmussen’s choice is one of inter-regional diplomacy.

This “soft” way of underlining a contrast between different groups and interests in the society is soon replaced by a much tougher line later in the speech. Løkke Rasmussen introduces the harder tone with one of very few references to earlier political experiences. From line 109 to 115, he reminds the people about his achievements as prime minister from 2009 to 2011. During the economic crisis, “Denmark became poorer. Unemployment increased. The housing market ground to a halt” (1:144). In this situation, the nation could lean on a stable and strict, but honest leader:

Eventually, I had to face you in my 2011 New Year Address and announce a substantial tightening of the early retirement benefit scheme. And later on a major unemployment benefit reform was announced
at very short notice. It was necessary, but also tough – and it should not happen again. We must make prudent adjustments in time. In order to avoid massive upheavals at short notice. We must take on this responsibility. (1:146-154)

These words signal responsible leadership, carefully balanced against the self-representation as a person who is brave enough to “face you”\(^9\). This is used to communicate courage, but works also as a way for Løkke Rasmussen to categorize himself as a politician who talks openly to the citizens. It is as if Løkke Rasmussen could identify one and each of the auditors as an individual human being: When he talks like that, “everyone” understands that their leader had to make difficult decisions. Simultaneously, he uses the example from his last governing period to actualize the threat of reverse development in the country if the people do not gather around him.

Moreover, by presenting the choices back in 2011 as results of a tough but necessary process to go through, Løkke Rasmussen manages to move the actual policies away from the sphere of ordinary political debates. The measures he refers to were, and still are, contested economic solutions. Løkke Rasmussen, however, does not mention that he had a political choice between different tools to fix the problem. Rather, the choice was simply between doing what he did, and doing nothing. The problem with those who opposed him then, and who oppose him now, is not that they offer wrong solutions, but that they do not offer any solutions at all. This message is underlined when Løkke Rasmussen says that something needs to be done in solidarity with those citizens in risk of falling behind if nothing is done. It is worth noting how Løkke Rasmussen here connects the tough line of cutting in the early retirement benefits to the ideograph solidarity, explicitly challenging the social democratic understanding of this term. Parties on the right have in this narrative saved the welfare system by cutting costs, or actually just by doing anything at all. The contrast line here is made between him, and those who do not want to act – those who do not take the responsibility.

Therefore, we must take action. (1:158)

It sounds like a banal fact that the government wants to “take action” when presented with a financial crisis, but in psychological terms this argumentation minimizes the opposite side to a marginal, not logically thinking and passive outgroup, whereas everyone who believes in

\(^9\) In the original Danish version, Løkke Rasmussen used the words “se jer i øjnene” (“look you in the eyes”). See attachment 17, line 134.
“doing” is included in the “we”-category. This line of argument also prepares the ground for other “necessary, but tough” political messages later in the speech. From now on, Løkke Rasmussen’s solutions are framed as “action”, and contrasted against “passivity”. An example is when Løkke Rasmussen describes a political cleavage between himself, who wants to earn money before he spends it (1:165), and the others. This message is presented in an “obvious” way, and it seems silly to disagree. However, it is clear that the left side of Danish politics is placed in the opposite camp – leftist politicians are the others who want to do everything else, or spend money they do not have, which sounds irresponsible for the wide social category that Løkke represents.

The role as a representative of “action” and “courage” is further illustrated when the prime minister sets different groups in the society up against each other (1:166-180). He starts with setting the educational support to young people up against support for the educational content and research. Thereafter, he compares the interests of old people with the interests of the coming generations: If the elderly work longer, the next generation will inherit a richer country. This on the one hand proves the resolute action from the prime minister, as a representative of an ideologically loaded “we”. On the other hand, the described conflicts between categories of people in the society contribute to split the common “we” into different groups of interests. In terms of social identity mobilization, he therefore first helps establish a broad social category around him as a responsible right-side politician, whereas he thereafter partly goes against this by building the ground for social identification among people who suffer under his priorities, such as students and elderly people. This line of argument nevertheless gives him an opportunity to conclude by a comparison and contrast that unifies most of his national “we” along ethnic lines:

If we spend less money on asylum centres in Denmark. Then we will have more money for welfare and for helping refugees in the regions of origin. If we help more people move from cash benefit to a job. Then those who are in work can have tax relief. So that people are rewarded for working compared to being on benefits. So that many more unemployed people reach out for the jobs that are otherwise filled by foreigners. (1:173-178)

The first part of this quote refers to a conventional argument in the refugee debate, which builds on a presumed trade-off between helping refugees by allowing them to live in a new country, and helping refugees where they “already are” – in refugee camps closer to their original homeland. This is a way of using a humanitarian thematic to argue against humanitarian action.
“at home”. In itself, this argument is not surprising from Lars Løkke Rasmussen and his party, whose government is dependent on support from the right-wing Danish People’s Party (see chapter 4). It is, nevertheless, worth noticing how Løkke Rasmussen explicitly contrasts the money given to asylum centers in Denmark against help given to needy Danish people through the welfare state. This is a clear-cut way of ethnic categorization, where the prime minister uses ethnic loyalty combined with a fear of losing own money to unify his people around certain policies. His line of argument is developing in an even more ethnic direction when he actively constructs a conflict between unemployed Danes and those foreigners who work in Denmark. Asking unemployed people to reach for jobs in order to win positions formerly occupied by foreigners is a quite unmasked ethnical appeal, given that it contrasts ethnic Danes to foreigners who already live in Denmark, and presents a scenario where Danes “take back” jobs – from people with foreign origin.

These arguments become even more important to analyze when interpreting the interchanged use of the terms “refugees” and “foreigners”. The concepts “foreigners” and “refugees” are in this context linked to each other in a way that prepares the ground for more or less intended misunderstandings. When linked to foreigners in the job market, refugees are presented as fortune hunters, rather than real victims. The “foreign workers” are, following that particular interpretation, understood as foreigners typically from third-world countries, who take the manual jobs from honest Danes. On the other hand, given the political context, it seems reasonable to assume that the prime minister here refers to foreigners from other EU-countries, which actually contest the same jobs as Danes in the common market. In that light, he uses the two different terms to mark a contrast between asylum seekers and job seekers. Thereby, he addresses the rising Euroscepticism in the electorate, while at the same time opening up for a free interpretation for those who want to blame non-European foreigners for “taking their jobs”. In all cases, the rhetoric guides negative emotions against the non-Danish outgroup, both Europeans and non-Europeans.

This is an interesting part of the speech because it is one of the most explicit definitions of both the second and the third persona throughout the text. By using an ethnic nation concept, Løkke Rasmussen defines his people according to blood and kinship. The third persona is a model of a certain type of foreigner, who is not given personal agency in the prime minister’s rhetoric. Rather, this foreigner is just a passive benefit receiver or occupier of a job that normally should have been offered to a Danish person. Thereby, the foreigner is not presented as a subject in its own right, but as an external object, represented by the implied third persona
in the text. The ethnical message is further given strength from the surrounded rhetoric of emergency and political encouragement:

We must take action in time. It is possible to close our eyes to challenges for a while. But when we open them again, the problems have not gone away. Indeed, they have only grown bigger. (1:180-183)

Løkke Rasmussen’s “we” is, in line with the previous analysis, to be understood in ethnical terms, and his appeal to quick action implicitly presents foreigners as an immediate threat to Denmark. In the present political climate, this quote also functions as an implicit reference to the populist claims against politicians that do nothing with the “real” problems. By presenting himself as a politician with “open eyes”, Løkke Rasmussen appeals to those of the voters who normally do not trust the political system.

In the new year, the Government will present proposals for how we can lead Denmark – all of Denmark – safely into the future. (1:185-186)

Given the preceding passages, “all of Denmark”, is here more of a reference to both the elite and the “real people”, than a unification of citizens with different origins. Even though the tone in the isolated sentence is filled with tolerance, the expression gets its content from the communicational context, and specifically Løkke Rasmussen’s categorization of an ethnic Danish social group against the others.

It is also worth noticing the link between this ethnic message and references to more “neutral” political issues, such as the tripartite cooperation. Following the ethnical categorization, Løkke Rasmussen’s words about “a solid, Danish tradition” (1:189) of taking community responsibility among employers and employees is to be interpreted in a context of conflict between ethnical Danes and foreigners in the working life. In the Danish political landscape, such attitudes have been most prominent in the Danish People’s Party. The referred quotes could therefore be interpreted as an invitation to the supporters of this party, but also as a reminder of hardened political debate about multiculturalism in Denmark (see chapter 4).

To sum up, Løkke Rasmussen represents himself as the center of a social category that chooses the “Danish way into the future”. This is a broad category, contrasted against two different outgroups: the left side of the political spectrum when it comes to economic policy and welfare, and the non-ethnical Danes when it comes to immigration policy. The first of these outgroups is not mentioned directly, but presented as passive “non-doers” who may set the
positive development at stake, holding obviously illogical political opinions. The latter one is presented as people who threaten the welfare state and the opportunities for “real Danes” in the labor market. Thereby, Løkke Rasmussen fills his model of the second persona and the third persona with concrete content: The second persona is a realistic and logical person who is honest enough to know that welfare cuts are necessary to protect solidarity in the welfare state, and who is not afraid of protecting Danish jobs against foreigners. The third persona is the illogical leftist or the foreigner, who constitute a threat against Denmark. The interchange between an outspoken political “we”-conception and a broader national “we” functions as a means to present own political solutions as self-evident measures, agreed upon by a large ingroup.

5.1.3 The head of state and commander in chief

As we have already seen, the politician Lars Løkke Rasmussen, represents himself as a strong leader capable of making unpopular decisions. This image is further developed and nuanced in the passages of the speech where Løkke Rasmussen most clearly takes on the role as a head of state or a commander in chief\(^\text{10}\). Løkke Rasmussen’s national rhetoric circles around the thematic of “Danish uniqueness”. The prime minister underlines that the Danish set of values and history is special, but at the same time he uses this opportunity to remark that the story of Denmark also contains infamous elements:

> This year it is 100 years ago that Denmark sold the Danish West Indies to the United States. And put a full stop to a cruel chapter in our history. Many of the beautiful old houses and palaces in Copenhagen were built for money earned from the hard work and exploitation of slaves on the other side of the globe. It is not a proud part of Danish history. It is shameful. And fortunately, it happened in the past. (1:241-247)

In this quote, the prime minister takes the responsibility of condemning decisions made by his fellow nationals in the past. The way of expressing this sorrow is strong, but still without a direct appeal to the victims. He avoids saying sorry, and he sees the happenings from a Danish perspective. However, linking the slavery in the West-Indian islands to the “old, beautiful houses and streets in Copenhagen” is a powerful signal, given that the architecture of

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\(^{10}\) The prime minister of Denmark is officially neither head of state nor commander in chief. The monarch holds these positions, but it is the government that in practice leads the country, also in wartime.
Copenhagen functions as a national symbol and a major tourist attraction. Overall, the passage about the past underlines his self-representation as a strong and responsible leader.

The reference to the Danish engagement in the West-Indian islands becomes even more interesting when interpreted together with the next passage. Here, Løkke Rasmussen contrasts the wrongdoings from the past against the Danish military effort abroad the last years, again referring to one of his most used ideograph: freedom:

Today, Danes fight against oppression. For freedom. And we can take pride in that. (1:249)

In the light of Danish affairs in the Caribbean, Løkke Rasmussen transforms the disputed question about Danish soldiers abroad to a self-evident contrast to historic wrongdoings. What Denmark does now, is undebatably good. He further legitimizes this view by referring to ISIL – which has killed thousands of innocent people, including children (1:258-260). According to the prime minister, ISIL is now in trouble. Denmark contributes to that development, and is thereby performing typically Danish values of solidarity and responsibility abroad. The passage helps the prime minister to de-controvert his national security policy. This is rhetorically effective in a context of rising debates about the Danish engagements in foreign conflicts: What Denmark does now is not only fair and positive, it is the diametric opposite to the former crimes. Put together, then, the two historical sections not only work persuasively as a means to silence the opposition against his own security policy, they also work as an underlining of one of his recurring messages in the speech: that Denmark has been, and still is, experiencing a constant positive development.

After these serious examples, Lars Løkke Rasmussen switches from the grave tone as a head of state, to a personal anecdote from his visit in Iraq, where he met two young soldiers. The meeting was obviously very positive and laidback. Unlike most other people in the military, the prime minister himself just calls the soldiers by their first names:

On the base in Iraq, I had a chat with two young men – Frederik and Jens. We sat on the bunk beds. Their accommodation was spartan. Not much space in an overcrowded 10-person tent. Frederik and Jens talked about their strenuous work. But throughout the entire story, their eyes showed determination to put the community before themselves. (1:263-269)

For the third time in the speech, he proves his will and ability to talk with young people – at least boys and men. Here, Lars Løkke Rasmussen represents himself as the “comrade” – a prime
minister who is not afraid of the real life in the field. Simultaneously, by characterizing the soldiers as “young”, he underlines the self-representation as an old and wise, fatherly public figure. Altogether then, the anecdote backs his self-representation as a resolute, but human-oriented, national leader, which was elaborated on in the previous paragraphs.

As with the other anecdotes, the prime minister uses this meeting to communicate a strong message about Denmark. According to him, the two soldiers showed him some qualities that convinced him about Danish superiority:

…their eyes showed determination to put the community before themselves. I am convinced that exactly this feature is part of what makes Danish soldiers perhaps the best soldiers in the world. They are top professional. But they are also people who can cooperate with other people. Trust. Respect. Cooperation. This is very Danish. (1:268-276)

In this way, Løkke Rasmussen represents the soldier as a symbol of national qualities, which he wants to unite the people around. These qualities could be seen as universal values, but the prime minister underlines that they are “very Danish”. Thereby, he draws up a model of the perfect auditor, which is a person who accepts the story of Danish superiority and uniqueness: the special care for the community, the professional attitude and the humanitarian way of helping people outside own borders. Løkke Rasmussen himself is the honest leader, who admits the wrongdoings in the past, but uses those experiences to do better today. He is the man who soldiers can have a reliant conversation with, from human to human. From Frederik and Jens, to Lars. That is what is uniquely Danish, according to the prime minister: brave honest-ness, combined with a down-to-earth and non-hierarchical way of communication.

5.1.4 Summary of the in-depth rhetorical analysis
The preceding analysis shows the important interplay between different social identities during the New Year’s speech in 2017. The beginning of the section elaborated on how Lars Løkke Rasmussen uses his position as an ordinary citizen – a family man and a father – to connect to his people. This social categorization helps him to appear as “one of us”: a prototypical version of the Danish right-oriented man, who enjoys one of the most classical and popular TV shows. At the same time, he presents his family as successful and achievement-oriented. Examples from his own life, and from other social constellations than the political one, help him in presenting value-loaded messages as uncontested. The analysis has provided examples on how his self-representation as part of non-professional social groups functions as an important means
to communicate his belief in a competition-oriented Danish society, a society where success is rewarded and where those who succeed are allowed to show their pride. The prime minister represents himself as a prototype of these values: He is the embodiment of “true” Danishness. Thereby, Løkke Rasmussen draws up a model of both the first persona and the second persona connected to the ideograph winner. As an entrepreneur of identity, Løkke Rasmussen builds an integrated personal and national narrative, which is filled with a political and ideological content about how the prime minister understands true Danishness today.

Simultaneously, the prime minister creates a picture of the unsuccessful Denmark, which is characterized by people who need to work hard to achieve “anything” at school. These are the people Løkke Rasmussen offers help to, while at the same time seeking to correct their choice of “easy solutions”. Thereafter, he uses these people as an implicit metaphor for the populist and protectionist movements in the world right now. Instead of criticizing these global trends directly, the prime minister communicates his concerns through anecdotes. The third persona in Løkke Rasmussen’s rhetoric is thereby given both domestic, international and global content simultaneously, which enables Løkke Rasmussen to be the “kind” prime minister in the domestic sphere, the responsible in the global sphere, and the diplomatic prime minister in the international political sphere.

The language of kindness is further developed into an overarching argument about the welfare state. Løkke Rasmussen uses personal examples from his own life to emphasize the importance of deregulating the public sector. This clearly political or ideological argument is presented in an uncontroversial way by linking it to the main ideographs freedom, winner and solidarity. Individualistically oriented winners should be offered a lot of freedom in the public sector, in order to conduct the national value of solidarity. They are able to take responsibility in a deregulated welfare system. In this way, he fills the debate about the public sector and specifically welfare policies with a content that fits his ideological profile. Such a rhetorical style enables him to applaud the public welfare system while at the same time rejecting the typical leftist discourse. It is worth interpreting this as a contribution to an ongoing discursive and rhetorical fight about the meaning of ideographs such as freedom and solidarity.

Løkke Rasmussen is less conflict-averse and diplomatic when it comes to other domestic political debates, as when he uses a self-representation as a strong and responsible leader to emphasize an ethnical definition of the Danish community. Denmark, and especially Danish jobs, is primarily made for Danes. This tightens the “we”-category and meets the populist trends in the Danish society – specifically the politicians and supporters of the Danish People’s Party, on whom Løkke Rasmussen is parliamentarily dependent. Seen together with
the earlier, and much more sublime, critique of international populism, it is reasonable to assume that Løkke Rasmussen throughout the speech tries to balance concerns for protectionism and intolerance on the one hand, with a rhetoric that resonates in the far-right part of the population on the other. In that regard, it is worth noting how the anti-populist message is delivered implicitly through the use of anecdotes. If the threat from immigration was talked about in a similar implicit way, or if the anti-populism was communicated explicitly, Løkke Rasmussen would be in risk of provoking his political allies and thus challenging the political cooperation environment. The prime minister’s model of the second persona is thereby not as clear-cut and easy as one might think. Rather, Løkke Rasmussen constitutes his perfect auditor as a complex national subject with a divided set of values that is adjusted to the complex political context.

The last part of the analysis was concerned with Løkke Rasmussen’s self-representation as a head of state or commander in chief. It is specifically worth noticing how he defends the present security policy by presenting the Danish contribution to ongoing wars in contrast to shameful events of slavery and exploitation in the past. Thereby, he de-controverts the military operations. This impression is further strengthened when he uses the Danish solider as a national symbol, and connects this symbol to important ideographs, such as freedom, trust, respect and cooperation.

How could these findings then be used to develop the analytical map further? First and foremost, the analysis has illustrated the importance of analyzing different self-representations and social identities in a speech like this. In particular, it was proven helpful to analyze how the rhetor represents himself as an ordinary citizen through references to private life and personal happenings; a political leader through references to concrete policy measures and party-ideological stances; and finally, a head of state through references to the country’s role in the world. This threefold analytical focus works as a clarification of the first part of the analytical map. By integrating his personal, political and national narratives, the rhetor functions as an entrepreneur of identity. In that regard, the analysis has also illustrated how the rhetor can come through with normative messages by appearing as a national prototype, and as an embodiment of a Danish myth.

The rhetorical terms and techniques from the map have been useful in understanding how the different social identities play together and form an overall narrative and a national identity around some particularly important metaphors, tokens and ideographs. Analyzing the language of identity in use has revealed implicit values and norms present in the speech. Insight into these implied values and norms leaves an impression of the perfect auditor – the second
persona – and the excluded one – the third persona. Altogether, an analysis based on the present map therefore reveals how the rhetor constitutes a national subject, with its own overarching ideals and distinct historical understanding of what it means to be Danish.

The results from the analysis of Løkke Rasmussen’s speech in 2017, with the following refinements of the analytical map are described in table 4. The next section will examine if these findings are expressions of case-specific rhetoric in the 2017 speech. By analyzing the New Year’s speeches from 2002 until 2016, I aim to gain insight into more general trends in prime ministers’ rhetoric, and let this insight guide a final adjustment of the analytical map.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main analytical question(s)</th>
<th>Words/sentences to search for</th>
<th>Findings in chapter 5.1</th>
<th>Refinements/clarifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor represent him-/herself in the speech as a part of a variety of categories (social identities), in contrast with other categories?</td>
<td>Different “I” and “we” conceptions. Representations of oneself as the center of a social category.</td>
<td>I – the family man I – the father I – the socially engaged I – the strong/responsible leader I – the party politician We – the old and wise generation We – the ethnic Danes We – the government We – the Liberal Party</td>
<td>This step of the analysis should specifically reveal how each prime minister represent him-/herself as (1) ordinary citizen, (2) political leader, (3) commander in chief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor represent him-/herself as a prototype of the national category? How does he/she act as an entrepreneur of national identity, by presenting own policies and ideas as a reflection of the national will?</td>
<td>Expressions that make the leader appear like “one of us”, partially through personal examples and anecdotes. De-controverting rhetoric. “Givens” and self-evident rhetorical points that hide normative content.</td>
<td>- <strong>The dinner</strong> with the son and his friends, used as an illustration of the kind and human family voice, and as an allegory for the caring leader. - <strong>The bicycle trip</strong>, used as an illustration of the socially engaged person, and as an allegory for him as the leader of the Danish welfare state. - <strong>The meeting with the soldiers</strong>, used as an illustration of the down-to-earth commander in chief (first persona), and an allegory for the same quality as a Danish characteristic (second persona). - <strong>The personal school experience</strong>, used as an illustration of his own unpretentiousness (first persona), and as an allegory of his preferred liberal and individual-oriented version of the welfare system (second persona). - <strong>The previous New Year’s speech</strong>, used as an illustration for responsibility and courage as a national leader and an allegory for Danish honesty (second persona).</td>
<td>This step should specifically investigate how the rhetor integrates his/her personal, political and national narratives, which lets him/her appear as the embodiment of national ideals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor draw up a model of the implied speaker (first persona), the perfect auditor (second persona) and “the other” (third persona)?</td>
<td>Stylistic tokens: Unifying metaphors and simile. Adjectives used to describe commonalities between ingroup members, and common and stable characteristics of the outgroup. Dichotomies, contrasts.</td>
<td>- <strong>Specific scenes in Matador</strong>: metaphors for the successful development through market- and profit-oriented policy in Denmark. - <strong>The family</strong>: metaphor for the nation. - <strong>The son</strong>: personification of Danish success. - <strong>Boys “on the edge”</strong>: personification of the populist developments in the world (third persona). - <strong>The soldiers</strong>: personifications of stable Danish values, like trust, respect and cooperation and uniqueness (second persona). - Dichotomies between different groups, most remarkably the contrast between Danes and foreigners in the job market, contributing to an ethnic definition of the national community (second persona and third persona).</td>
<td>This step should specifically translate the psychological insight into textual terms, in order to express how the social categorization pattern is creating a model of an implied speaker, auditor and “the other”. These implied models or prototypes contains norms and values.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How are the rhetor’s self-representations linked together around abstract terms and understandings, and how are these terms filled with ideological content.

How does the rhetor draw upon cultural references present the ideological elements as “natural” or “given” to “the people”?

| Ideographs: high-order abstractions representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. References to “common culture”, traditions, historical events, and so on. | - **Future** – used to underline the constantly positive development as the corner stone of the national narrative.  
- **Winner** – it is allowed to be a winner in Løkke Rasmussen’s Denmark. He wants to make everyone winners.  
- **Freedom** – used both to describe his own visions for the public sector, and to underline Denmark’s success in foreign and security policy.  
- **Trust, respect and cooperation** – presented as the national values conducted by Danish soldiers abroad.  
- **Uniqueness** – repeated reference to Denmark and Danish identity as something unusual and special.  
- **Solidarity** – defined as the courage to cut benefits, in order to save the welfare society. | This step should further investigate how the different implied prototypes in the speech are connected to political and ideological contents, represented as self-evident and “neutral” through the use of ideographs. |

| Linkages between history, ideology and social categorization. | An overarching narrative of positive national development, where the society, through completion, has moved forward towards the better. Unique Danish values such as freedom and solidarity are now being spread throughout the world after recognizing mistakes in the past. | This step should sum up how the overall language of identity contributes to a temporal understanding of what the historical national origin means today and for the future. |

Table 4: Analytical map, including results from chapter 5.1 and following refinements.
5.2. Fifteen years of optimism: An analysis of the New Year’s speeches 2002-2016

In the following section, I will analyze the New Year’s speeches from 2002 until 2016 in order to test the theoretical and analytical framework on a broader set of speeches. One important aim with this analysis is to examine whether the findings from chapter 5.1 express case-specific characteristics in the speech from 2017, or if similar rhetorical means are important across years, political situations and rhetors. The analysis is therefore organized in line with the first row in the refined analytical map (table 4). Accordingly, I will first examine the importance of personal and private self-representations in the speeches. Thereafter, I elaborate on the prime ministers’ rhetorical performance of political leadership. This part goes deeper into the dominant domestic policy topics covered in the material: welfare policy and immigration. Finally, I investigate how the prime ministers rhetorically represent themselves as heads of state and commanders in chief. Rhetorical elements that do not fit into the analytical map will be discussed throughout the section, in order to adjust the map further. The overarching goal with this analysis is thus to secure that the final map provides a series of applicable tools for analysis of national rhetoric (research question 1). Additionally, the analysis will give empirical insight into how Danish identity is constituted through New Year’s speech rhetoric, and build the ground for a more sound understanding of how the New Year’s speech has been used by Danish prime ministers to constitute national identity (research question 2).

The analysis contains important quotes from all the speeches, except one, which is excluded from the analysis: the address held by prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in 2005, following the tsunami catastrophe in the Indian Ocean in 2004. On 1 January 2005, the Danish government knew that at least seven Danish citizens were killed in the tragic events, and that almost 400 were missing. Met with a catastrophe of unknown proportions, Fogh Rasmussen decided to hold a very short New Year’s speech about this single topic (Melbin & Melbin, 2011, pp. 722-723). This is a speech of sorrow, rather than mobilization, and contains few instances of national rhetoric (13:1-93). Thereby, it represents a break with the New Year’s speech genre that I aim to understand. At the same time, this exception illustrates the limitations of my theoretical and analytical symbiosis. The analytical map is not fit for analyzing every speech held by national leaders, but for speeches of national mobilization specifically. Each of the following sub-sections goes through the 14 remaining speeches more or less chronologically from the most recent one in 2016 and back to the speech in 2002.
5.2.1 The ordinary citizens

One major finding from the analysis of Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s New Year’s speech in 2017 was his frequent use of personal and private self-representations to connect with his people, using a fatherly and caring tone. This was combined with anecdotes from face-to-face meetings, often in low-key environments. Overall, this rhetorical strategy left a metaphorical impression of Løkke Rasmussen as the head of an extended family: the nation. In line with self-categorization theory and “New psychology of leadership” (see chapter 3.1), this rhetoric underlined Løkke Rasmussen’s position as “one of us”. These findings contributed to an important clarification of the analytical map, to secure that the analysis of national rhetoric give notice to the personal and non-professional social categories that are present in each speech.

When used in the analysis of the speeches from 2002 until 2016, this analytical procedure however reveals a big variety in how the prime ministers use private self-representations. Although every prime minister represents him- or herself in a personal way, this is done using very different rhetorical techniques. This variety can, of course, be explained by personal rhetorical style and the political contexts.

Nevertheless, as the following analysis will show, the final analytical map should guide the analyst to uncover different personal and private self-representations, and not just the most obvious examples, as found in the speech from 2017.

Starting with Løkke Rasmussen himself: his speech in 2016 does not contain as frequent a use of non-professional self-representations or personal anecdotes as the one in 2017 (for an exception, see 2:167-174). This has to be understood in light of the special context in the first days of 2016. The terror attack in Copenhagen, in which two persons were shot dead by a militant Islamist, happened only a few months earlier. At the same time, Denmark and the rest of Europe were near the climax of the so-called refugee crisis. The prime minister meets this rhetorical situation by using a serious tone in combination with a style of strict but honest leader-rhetoric. This is another tool to appear prototypical in a situation where an external threat has become more salient than before. He is the fighter who represents his people against “the others”, rather than the casual Dane who illustrates national success with stories of private achievement. The self-representation as a national protector is, nevertheless, communicated in a personal way, specifically when the prime minister refers to “the Dane of the year”. In 2015, this title was given to terror victim Dan Uzan after his death. Løkke Rasmussen opens his speech in 2016 by honoring Dan Uzan: “Dan had courage. The courage of kindness” (2:14). Thereby, he represents himself as emphatic, but also concerned and worthy. He underlines that the attack killed “one of us”, and threatened the whole of Denmark. The contrast between the serious and
concerned national leader in the 2016 speech and the more light and popular presentation in 2017 illustrates how the meeting point between a leader and different political contexts prepares the ground for diverse patterns of social identification. This will be further elaborated in the later section about the prime ministers’ self-representations as political leaders (chapter 5.2.2).

In the years from 2011 to 2015, New Year’s speeches were held by social democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt. The analysis of her speeches reveals how she repeatedly uses her family background, her childhood, and her role as a mother to appear as an ordinary citizen – and thereby to counter the critique of her supposedly elitist leadership style. Specifically, she uses these personal anecdotes to emphasize a national ideal of optimism during an economically difficult period in Denmark, and to build an image of the first persona as a trustworthy spokesperson for people who lost their jobs and are becoming poorer. This works as a way to show effective leadership when faced with an internal threat, like the domestic economic problems that dominated her period in power. In this situation, she tries to construct the national identity around a social democratic understanding of empathy and solidarity. To achieve this, she has to appear as a “real” representative of these ideals: She needs to prove that she is an embodiment of the social democracy that she preaches, and connect this model of the first persona to a broader national identity. Her last address, in 2015, opens in this way:

On a Thursday in December I sat on the floor in a living room in Valby. I held six-month-old Holger on my lap. I was paying a visit to a mother and toddler group. (…) Children are wonderful. They are the most important we have. If we are asked about what mean most to us in life, most people will answer: our children. That will surely be my answer. (Attachment 3, line 3-12)

This anecdote makes her appear as an engaged and down-to-earth fellow citizen and a prime minister who meets people at their own level. This is a politician who takes time to visit “ordinary” mothers, and in addition, she follows the regular program of the toddler group, sitting on the floor. Moreover, she clearly refers to the trust between herself and the other participants by underlining that she had a child on her lap, and by using the child’s first name. This is not the description of a meeting between a prime minister and whichever baby, but between a caring adult (herself a mother of two) and Holger. The personal representation is further underlined when the prime minister connects the story to her own role as a parent. Thorning-Schmidt represents herself as part of the group “mothers” in a way that helps her seem like “everyone else”. Just like other Danes, she is first and foremost a caring individual – not a politician. Thus, she gives her auditors a marginal, yet rhetorically substantial, view into
the private life, building the ground for an emotional connection between the leader and her people. This emotional bond is further used to communicate a message about the government’s work for small children, emphasizing the real-felt motivation for the political work she is doing. When Thorning-Schmidt decides to spend more money on childcare, she is not seeking a fast popularity boost or a win in the next election. Rather, she does it out of care and from first-hand experience.

Rhetorically, through these and other similar examples, she also categorizes herself as part of the group “women”, and fills that role with a combination of traditional care and modernity. She represents herself as an illustration of the mother ideals she believes in: the career woman who does not let her role as a prime minister harm her mother’s instinct. In that context, the mother and toddler group is an interesting choice of example, because it enables her to balance between traditional ideals on the one hand and a feminist personal narrative on the other. The mother group, and the explicit priority of “children first” appeals to a broad category of the people on an emotional basis; and in the political sphere, specifically to the more conservative and family-oriented branches of the people. In her role, however, these words are appealing also to the feminist part of society, because Thorning-Schmidt balances her roles as a mother and a national leader – without forgetting what is most important in life.

In her speeches in 2014 and 2012, Thorning-Schmidt shows us other, and even more clear-cut political, uses of her own background, when she categorizes herself as part of the group “daughters”. She refers to her mother’s role as a helper for another old lady – a lady who looked after the prime minister as a child (4:186-187). Thus, Thorning-Schmidt’s family appears as a good representative of the group “social democrats”. Her family is living the social democracy, not only believing in it. Such use of the family category to underline her social democratic identity is also found in 2012, when she illustrates the development of the Danish democracy and the welfare state by referring to her family background:

My grandmother was born in the year 1900. When she was 15 years old, women and servants became entitled to vote. Democracy was rolled out to ordinary Danes. My mother was born in 1937. While she was growing up, Denmark was wrestling free of the war and ration coupons, and gradually many began to enjoy the benefits that in earlier times only had been for the few: telephones, oranges, and roast pork for Sunday Lunch. I was born in 1966. While I was growing up, women were entering the labour market in droves. Denmark got kindergartens, nursing homes and education for the many. (6:18-28)

Here, she connects the birth years of her grandmother, her mother and herself to major positive shifts in political participation, gender equality and social benefits “that in earlier times only
had been for the few” (6:22-23). It is worth noting how this passage links the prime minister as a person, and specifically as a woman, to the history of Danish success and the development of a welfare state. Thereby, it contributes to the creation of an integrated personal, national and social democratic narrative, fortified by elements of feminism. She, and the (primarily social democratic) Danish women with her, represents something bigger: they are the proofs – or embodiments – of how the Danish society developed to its present form of wealth and welfare.

It is also worth noting how Thorning-Schmidt uses experiences from her own childhood to underline her main story about Denmark. In her childhood, she experienced the oil crisis during the ’70s: “In our homes, the temperature dropped a few degrees. And we were told not to take a shower and use the tub” (5:34-35). By referring to this example, she builds up her own trustworthiness in talking about major society shifts: She has seen them herself. Moreover, she categorizes herself as part of the group of “ordinary people”, who actually felt the consequences of the crisis. A similar instance is found in the 2015 speech, when she talks about her childhood in “the western suburbs of Copenhagen” (3:189). The western suburbs are known for their multi-ethnic population with a political orientation towards the left and the Social Democratic Party. Thereby, she brings her real-life experience to the fore. She has lived the problems of ordinary people. In the context of an enduring financial instability in Denmark, this model of the first persona may be seen as of particular importance for Thorning-Schmidt, who throughout her political career met harsh critique for her elitist behavior and snobbish lifestyle. The personal stories she presents throughout her New Year’s speeches create a counter-narrative to this: She is a normal girl with a working class background from a suburb of Copenhagen, who grew up to be the prime minister. She is the embodiment of the unique Danish, social democratic and female success.

The presented overlapping personal, social democratic and national narratives are further strengthened by repeated references to personal encounters she had as prime minister. Among others, she talks about the meeting with a girl in 8th grade who had reading problems (5:158-161), but who attended a special course, which immediately led to success. And she refers to a touching meeting with Laura (3:81-96), who was raised by an alcoholic father. Nevertheless, Laura took responsibility for her own life: She sought help, and got it. Both these stories communicate values of a special solidarity, of liberal responsibility, and most of all, of a unique and superior ability to turn negative trends into something positive. Interpreted together with the repeating references to the prime minister’s own family life, the anecdotes seem to reinforce Thorning-Schmidt’s personal story. She meets girls who were underprivileged, but took their responsibility; she understands them; she sees herself in them.
Thereby, Thorning-Schmidt makes clear which values characterize her model of the second persona: The perfect auditor is not just kind, but filled with a special, culturally inherited, empathy.

When it comes to Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s first period as prime minister between 2010 and 2011, he had the difficult task of introducing himself as a “real” and trustworthy prime minister in the middle of a term, without a preceding parliamentary election. In this period, Denmark also faced the consequences of the global financial crisis (see chapter 4). Løkke Rasmussen meets this rhetorical situation by combining a language of hope with a self-representation as a responsible leader, ready to make unpopular decisions. To begin with the first point, the following example shows how he encounters the internal threat of economic difficulties by presenting himself as the embodiment of optimism:

I myself was born with the opportunities of Danish society within easy reach. From my first years when we lived in a Workers Housing Association flat in Vejle. And when we moved to Græsted, where I attended primary and lower secondary school, and where I became the first in my family to leave school with the upper secondary certificate. Like so many other young people, I seized the opportunities I was offered. (7:16-20)

Just as Thorning-Schmidt, Løkke Rasmussen appears as a leader who has grown up in modesty. By referring to his childhood in the Workers Housing Association flat, he builds a bridge to the working class in the society, while at the same time underlining his own personal success. As the first student in the entire family, he used his talent to achieve beyond expectations. This was made possible by positive development in Denmark. A small anecdote thus functions as an allegory for his own achievements and the success of his country at the same time. In content, this is similar to the narrative of Thorning-Schmidt, but the elements of personal pride are formulated much more directly by Løkke Rasmussen. His rhetoric reveals a Danish ideal where it is allowed to succeed, and to be proud of one’s own positions. On the one hand, the difference between Løkke Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt may be interpreted as an expression of different gender roles, which allow male politicians to be more proud and openly successful than female ones. On the other hand, this rhetorical contrast also fits with the stereotypical differences between the liberal right and the social democratic left.

Løkke Rasmussen’s merged national and personal narratives of success are formulated even more clear-cut in the explanation of his self-constructed term “the Danish dream” in 2010
“The Danish dream” works, of course, as a reference to the more known “American dream”, but is, according to Løkke Rasmussen, unique:

I have come across Americans who think we are Socialists because taxes are so high in Denmark and Frenchmen who regard us as Ultra-Liberal because we have such a flexible labour market. But we do not want to carry a label. We have our own Danish Dream. (8:75-77).

This reference to meetings with “Americans” and “Frenchmen” makes Løkke Rasmussen appear as the person who stands up for the uniqueness of Denmark in the world. He creates a category of superiority, which he himself is in the center of: He travels around the globe and he defends the Danish right to be special. This role as a proud protector is strengthened when he further illustrates the threat against “the Danish dream” by referring to his own children:

My children’s toys were “Made in China”. We found that to be quite natural in the 1990s. But today as we embark on a new decade and our kids have grown out of toys long ago, we can buy mobile phones that are not only “Made in China”, but also invented, developed and designed by highly skilled Chinese technicians. (8:100-103)

Here, the father category mobilizes feelings of protection and care, and at the same time it creates an image of Løkke Rasmussen as “one of us”. His own children are put to the fore of the discourse as a metaphor for the vulnerable domestic economy, which further illustrates the difficulties Danish businesses are facing together with the “entire Western world” (8:106). The challenge comes from “India, Brazil, Korea, Singapore and China” (8:107-108). In this passage of the speech, he thereby connects his caring role as a father to Denmark and the need to take care of the national community. Thereafter he connects it to Europe, and finally to the Western world. This can be seen as the prime minister’s expanded family tree: The closest and most important social identity stems from the inner family, but this identity is inevitably linked to the national identity, the European and the Western one. In this light, Løkke Rasmussen is the father who takes care of his own children by protecting the Danish branch of the tree. This national protection is important to secure the larger kin in the European and the Western societies. In other words, this is an illustrative example of how the mobilization of family feelings is actively used to raise national sentiments.

Note also how the economic threat from developing countries is closely connected to the global order and “sustaining values” (8:106) that, according to Løkke Rasmussen, the Western “we”-category historically has established. Rhetorically, this transforms the market
competition into a larger fight between dichotomies: bad versus good, sustaining values versus not sustaining values – order versus chaos. Løkke Rasmussen underlines the importance of his argument, by pointing out that Danes should not be afraid, implicitly presenting fear as an adequate and understandable reaction to the situation. Developers and salesmen from Brazil and Singapore are ready to take money and businesses away from the Western world, from Europe, from Denmark – and from “our children”.

In the years between 2002 and 2008, Anders Fogh Rasmussen was responsible for the New Year’s speeches. As explained in chapter 4, Fogh Rasmussen branded himself as an ideological leader who wanted to change Denmark in a liberal and market-oriented direction in the domestic sphere. Internationally, he emphasized the close relationship to the US and introduced a foreign policy of so-called “super-atlanticism” (Mouritzen, 2007, see chapter 4). His political project is clearly expressed through the New Year’s speeches, which are characterized by a serious and value-loaded rhetorical style with few instances of personal anecdotes. References to family life and childhood are almost absent in the speeches before 2011. Instead, Fogh Rasmussen focuses on violent external threats: the war on terror, controversies about Islam and blasphemy, and the “tyrannical” legacy of communism. In such a rhetorical style, the center of the national category is a position of strength, rather than a private and emotional first persona. In accordance with this, Anders Fogh Rasmussen first and foremost becomes emotional when describing his meetings with Danish soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, which will be further elaborated together with the analysis of how the prime ministers present themselves as heads of state (5.2.3). The anecdotes outside the war zone are neither as personal nor as emotional as was found in the rhetoric of Løkke Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt. As here, in his speech from 2008:

A few months ago, I visited the Technical University of Denmark. I met a team of students who had won the world championship for hydrogen-powered cars. Their experimental car achieved the highest mileage to a litre of hydrogen fuel. (10:11-13)

A personal meeting, indeed, but still with a prime minister’s distance to the individuals. However, when it comes to experiences that illustrate the larger civilizational fight between “good” and “bad”, Fogh Rasmussen becomes more emotional. One example from the 2003 speech illustrates this point (see also 10:124-131 and 14:3-18):
We value and guard our traditions, and we take it for granted that we can celebrate Christmas in the
good old Danish way. Some months ago, I met an acquaintance from Latvia, who told about Christmas
in Latvia when the Soviet Communists were still in power. The authorities strongly discouraged the
celebration of Christmas in the Christian fashion. (15:4-9)

Though not as casual and private as the examples from the other prime ministers, Fogh
Rasmussen uses this personal meeting to contrast the free Danish traditions of Christmas with
the oppression in the Soviet Union. This is indeed a way of mobilizing national feelings, and
works as a part of Fogh Rasmussen’s main narrative about Denmark, as part of the free world,
and a country that fights for Western democracy abroad. The example is further used to argue
for an Eastern expansion of the EU. Fogh Rasmussen represents himself as part of civilizational
fights, which he repeatedly refers to throughout his speeches – both the present fight between
the West and the terrorists abroad (see chapter 5.2.3), and the historic fight between the “free
world” and the communists.

In all, the analysis until now has shown how Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Lars Løkke
Rasmussen use personal meetings to appear as “one of us”, and to underline political points
about the Danish nation and the unique Danishness. They represent themselves as prototypical
for what they perceive as Danish, and they create integrated personal and national narratives
that let them appear as embodiments of the nation. In that way, they act as entrepreneurs of
identity. In their style of communicating these personal meetings, Thorning-Schmidt and Løkke
Rasmussen resemble each other, but the categorization patterns lean in different ideological
directions, as expected. Fogh Rasmussen represents himself in a different way, built on a direct
way of communicating, where emotions are saved for the greater fight between the Western
world and “the others”.

What does this mean for the analytical framework? First, the close reading of the fifteen
speeches from 2002 until 2016 reveals that the way prime ministers present themselves as
persons communicate something far less trivial than it may seem like at first glance. Rather,
these personal self-representations are used to express and illustrate values and ideological
stances. However, the section has also showed how different prime ministers use a variety of
techniques to present themselves as embodiments of the national narrative, and that the means
are adjusted to the political context. Løkke Rasmussen, for example, used an anecdotal and
popular form in his 2017 speech, yet a far more strong and strict self-representation in the 2016
speech, due to the circumstances. Thorning-Schmidt used repeated references to own family
life to come through with political messages in her speeches, while Fogh Rasmussen on the
other hand represented himself in line with the classical leader-stereotype; the strong and powerful man. This illustrates the importance of an open and nuanced analytical approach. Analysis of personal self-representations should not be limited to the most clear-cut examples of anecdotes from the private life, as was found in the speech from 2017. Such narrow analytical scope would exclude important rhetorical means and prevent understanding of rhetoric in context. Rather, the analytical map should facilitate the researcher to analyze the personal style the rhetor has chosen, and the interplay between this style and the overall argument, national narrative and identity.

This will be important to keep in mind while reading the next section. There, I will go deeper into how the prime ministers balance their personal and private self-representation against building a model of themselves as politicians who fight for concrete political measures.

5.2.2 Political leaders in the land of solidarity and freedom
Throughout the years, the New Year’s speech has been an arena for presenting political and ideological visions in a favorable way for the government. The genre allows for reflection and longer lines of argument; the occasion is there for the prime minister to present a vision that both unites and provides direction. In this part of the analysis, I will examine how the different prime ministers use the opportunity to come through with political messages, and how they constitute a national identity by presenting these measures as uncontested. I will specifically examine the two main domestic policy topics found in my material: welfare and immigration.

Protecting the welfare: A fight over the content of ideographs. The New Year’s speech could be seen as an arena for a long-lasting and slowly moving battle about two recurring ideographs in the welfare discourse; solidarity and freedom. All three prime ministers constitute a national “we”-category in which different expressions of solidarity and freedom form core elements of their national self-understanding. However, they define these ideographs in very different ways, linking them to a variety of other terms, policy areas, and contrasting social categories. Nevertheless, all three use a distinct style of argumentation, where the opposite side of the debate is not identified in an outspoken way. Holding on to their side of the argument, they use a language that appears neutral. That does not mean that they evade conflict lines between themselves and “the others”. However, these conflict lines are typically made implicit in the speeches. Thereby, they represent the opposition as a minimal and unsubstantial outgroup, while their own policies seem obvious and self-evident. This pattern runs through close to all the speeches since 2002.
The mentioned rhetorical style could be illustrated by quotes from Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s speech in 2016. Throughout this speech, he applauds Danish welfare as a characteristic national feature, while at the same time defining *freedom* in contrast to public systems. This is in line with his speech in 2017, and reflects a national discourse of agreement about the welfare system on the one hand, and Løkke Rasmussen’s wish to shrink public budgets on the other.

… later this year, we will propose tax cuts for those in work. We must show appreciation of those who go to work every day. And we must recognise how gratifying it is to make one’s own money. Fewer Danes must be provided for by the State, and more must provide for themselves. (2:155-157)

In Løkke Rasmussen’s understanding, Danish freedom is to avoid being taken care of by the community. Those who provide for themselves are addressed by the prime minister himself. They are “on board”\(^{11}\), as he formulates it in the following paragraph:

> We must bring all of Denmark on board. And we must bring all Danes on board. (2:161)

Because his right-leaning political message in the first quote is linked to such an uncontroversial cliché in the second, it seems difficult to disagree with Løkke Rasmussen. He places himself in the center of a social group that just wants everyone to succeed. At the same time, the prime minister draws up an implicit contrast between himself and his opponents on the left, who do not want tax cuts, and therefore do not want people to provide for themselves. He presents “them” as if they want Danes to be welfare dependents rather than “on board”. Note also how the “we” is transformed from referring to the government in the beginning of the first quote to a greater “we” in the second, referring to “all of Denmark” and “all Danes”. This transformation allows the prime minister to represent himself as part of a large national majority.

The same way of communicating is seen from the other side of the political spectrum as well, yet in the opposite ideological direction. In her speeches, Helle Thorning-Schmidt repeatedly links the ideographs *freedom* and *solidarity* to the social democratic legacy (5:100-105) and specifically the development of a welfare state (4:87). This imbues these ideographs with political contents. Such a rhetorical style is especially apparent in the 2015 speech, where

\(^{11}\) In the original version, this is expressed by the formulation “*Vi skal have alle danskere med*” (“We want all Danes to come with”). See attachment 18, line 139.
she implicitly constructs a contrast between her own ideology and those “others” who want to implement a zero growth rule in public expenditures (3:264).

... the best thing is that we have maintained our solidarity. We have decided to do so. And not many countries can match that. We have set the right course. Now we must stay the course. There is no room for experiments. We must protect and take care of the Denmark we know. (3:302-307)

The word “experiments” works as a reference to the economic policy of the opposition. Note the rhetorical use of threat and fear in the passage. Thorning-Schmidt makes it clear that another government not only would set the general solidarity at stake, but the whole of Denmark. The voters are in danger of losing the country “we know” if they do not vote for her. Thus, she represents herself and her government as the only “real” leader of the nation.

Another example that illustrates the rhetorical fight over solidarity and freedom is found in her speech from 2014. In line with earlier findings, she here explicitly links solidarity to the social democratic legacy, describing the historical achievement of implementing social benefits and pensions for the elderly. She concludes in the following way:

Brick by brick, we have built a Denmark with great equality and great freedom for each and every one of us. It is the core of the country we represent. A Denmark based on solidarity. And it is for us to decide whether this country should exist in the future. The Government has decided that we will spend more money on our public sector. (4:87-94)

The prime minister claims the right to define solidarity by references to achievements of unnamed actors in a manifold “we”. This “we” may be interpreted either as her party predecessors, the left, the workers, or the whole nation. Thereby she creates the ambiguity needed for her to appear as the center of both a social democratic and a national category, without offending her opponents directly. She further reinforces her position as a prototype of the nation by threatening her auditors with the possibility of total national decay. The described threat comes from unnamed “others”, but could implicitly be understood as the right. It is up to the voters to decide whether the country will continue to exist in the future, meaning that the only country Thorning-Schmidt knows as Denmark, is a country with the Social Democrats in power.

The urge to maintain ownership of the ideograph solidarity may be seen as a reaction to earlier attempts from the right to fill this concept with their own content, which is less directly connected to the public welfare state. In that regard, it is of particular interest to read how Løkke
Rasmussen in his speech from 2011 explicitly takes part in a discussion about how solidarity is to be understood. The following quote leaves the impression of a prime minister who contests a social democratic ownership to the term:

It is not solidarity with the weakest in society to pay those in good health for not working. It is not solidarity with those who are ill to pay the health care personnel for staying at home. It is not solidarity with the person who makes an extra effort to pay his or her colleague for not doing so. Solidarity means that we all pull together in an effort to create new growth and dynamism in Denmark. (7:149-157)

Here, Løkke Rasmussen manages to communicate a lot in a few sentences. First, he negatively defines solidarity in a way that fits his own ideological commitments. Importantly, he does so without rejecting the term in itself. Rather, he claims the “real” ownership to the word. Thereby, he draws up a contrast between him – his party, the right side – and “the others” who have misinterpreted the term. By doing this, he not only accuses the unnamed others of false rhetoric. Implicitly, he also communicates that his opponents believe that solidarity means something else than the self-given sentences in the passage. This is a similar use of social categorization as that in Thorning-Schmidt’s speeches, and fits to present his political view as prototypical for the national category, and thereby gain support for a rightist version of true solidarity.

Similar contributions to the long-lived debate about solidarity and freedom are found in Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s rhetoric as well. He builds much of his political argumentation around the ideological importance of personal freedom in contrast to the state. Protecting this freedom is presented as the only way of upholding the Danish identity. Thereby, he constructs a narrative in which welfare comes as a result of freedom, in contrast to Thorning-Schmidt, who constructs it the opposite way: Freedom comes as a result of welfare. One example that illustrates this point is found in the speech of 2009, where Fogh Rasmussen connects his understanding of welfare and freedom to the conception of Danish superiority:

We must make Denmark a Green Winner Nation. Not with rules and regulations that stifle creativity and enterprise. But with dynamic green growth. (9:173-175)

The unifying notion about potential greatness is directly followed up by an ideological statement that refuses “rules and regulations”. In this context, Fogh Rasmussen uses the opportunity to present a highly contested political issue as obvious and self-evident. No one wants something that destroys the “creativity and enterprise”. Even more visible ideological content, however, is found in the earlier speeches by Fogh Rasmussen: for example when he in
2007 uses a substantial part of the speech to link the freedom term to his understanding of personal responsibility. He does this by listing different areas of society, where the welfare state cannot do the job alone: Even the best services should not take away the responsibility of the individual (11:164-210). This resonates well with Fogh Rasmussen’s very first New Year’s speech in 2002, which was notable for signaling a chapter break from years of center-left governments. Here, Fogh Rasmussen marks his ideological shift towards liberalism, by drawing a clear conflict line between himself and his political opponents:

We used the 20th century to build the Danish welfare state. Now, we are going to develop it into a modern welfare society that fits the life of human beings in the 21st century. The core of the welfare system is that society has taken on the responsibility for solving a range of tasks. That, we are going to preserve. But what will be new, is that we will unite the common responsibility with a personal freedom to choose between different solutions. (16:67-74)

Note how the prime minister here contrasts the “old” welfare state on the one hand and modernity on the other, presenting himself and the rightist adjustments to the national sanctuary as the way forward. He rhetorically underlines this by shifting from calling it a welfare state to a welfare society, marking his modern, future- and market-oriented attitude. The unnamed opponents are the unmodern, backward-looking politicians who uphold a decreetal model, which does not suit individuals in the 21st century. Personal freedom is presented as a new element in the model which points out that his unnamed opponents have created a system that is everything but free. Fogh Rasmussen reinforces this argument by an attempt to fill the ideograph freedom with his own content later in the speech:

We believe that human beings are best equipped to decide for themselves. We do not need experts and “taste judges” to decide on our behalf. (16:122-123)

Here, he introduces a political fight against the over-grown bureaucracy. In an attempt to illustrate his point, he uses an allegory from nature:

If a tree is wedged in the shadow, with the lack of light, it will soon become crippled and energy-less. The more space and light the tree gets, the nicer and more straight it will stand, and the more powerful will the leaves and branches unfold. (16:143-145)

This is a particularly clear example of how Fogh Rasmussen tries to unite his people around some self-evident characteristics of personal freedom in contrast to an internal threat: the
experts, useless national boards and agencies. Just as in Thorning-Schmidt’s and Løkke Rasmussen’s rhetoric, he mobilizes his people on a foundation of threat and fear, constructing a future scenario of darkness and loss if the unnamed outgroup wins political power. This threat is repeatedly used to underline that the prime minister’s own position is obvious. Someone else will push the country in an opposite direction – they are not modern, they are in the dark, and they wither due to lack of light.

As the analysis so far has shown, a social identity approach reveals how all three prime ministers come through with ideological messages by presenting themselves as prototypical representatives of a large majority in opposition to an unnamed and illogical minority. Important ideographs are defined according to own ideals and connected to the national identity in order to foster a feeling of belonging. This is neither to be understood as a center-right or as a center-left rhetorical style. Rather, it recurs irrespective of the political color of the prime minister, from the 2016 speech by Løkke Rasmussen, throughout the speeches of Thorning-Schmidt and back to Fogh Rasmussen’s very first speech in 2002. A rhetorical mobilization of fear also enables the prime ministers to link welfare and economic politics to other policy areas, and specifically the immigration controversy. The risk of lower pensions and benefits is a suitable foundation for anti-immigrant mobilization, which will be elaborated in the next paragraphs.

“We” – the Danes. The analysis of the broader set of New Year’s speeches shows an interesting development in the rhetoric about immigration, and a steady rise in ethnic categorization from 2002 and until today. This is specifically present in the speech from 2016. Around New Year’s that year, Denmark and the rest of Europe were at the peak of the so-called refugee crisis.

We must all protect and take care of Denmark, especially at a time when historically many people are trying to get to Europe. (2:44-45)

By using the term “protect and take care of Denmark”, Løkke Rasmussen frames the topic as one of internal and external security. He underlines the gravity of the situation, which, he states, will determine “Denmark’s future”. Thereby the prime minister presents the challenges as a risk for the nation as such. This impression is strengthened by his description of the situation as “perhaps the greatest and most complicated crisis we have seen so far this century” (2:50-51). Using the century as the time marker leaves an impression of a crisis of historical dimensions, which would have sounded much less dramatic if, for example, he had said “the
past 15 years”. Such formulations prepare the ground for further crisis-oriented rhetoric, where the prime minister tries to appear as a strong national figure, who meets the challenge with honesty:

Let us be honest with each other – we are challenged: our economy is challenged when we need to spend many extra billions on asylum seekers and refugees. Money that might otherwise be spent on health, education and more private-sector jobs. (2:62-64)

Løkke Rasmussen is not afraid of taking part in a difficult discussion, among “each other”, and talks as if he has something important to tell his “inner circle”. He joins a group of Danes – not as a leader who talks down to them, but as a conversation partner who understands their concerns. This self-representation is made more potent by his way of actively contrasting different groups in society: They – asylum seekers and refugees – are taking the money away from the welfare state. Løkke Rasmussen specifically mentions three areas in the society that are suffering from heightened immigrations rates: health, education and private jobs. Thereby, he reaches out to both sides of the political spectrum: the left, which wants to protect the public care, and the right, which is more concerned about jobs in the private sector.

Moreover, by combining the self-representation of a strong national leader and the rhetorical tone of a casual, but honest face-to-face conversation, Løkke Rasmussen meets both the populist urges for authoritative leadership towards the outgroup, and those for a leader who takes “normal people” seriously in the communication with the ingroup. This rhetorical combination could be interpreted in the context of the past year’s political situation in Denmark and in Europe: He is the strong leader who manages to protect Denmark by avoiding an elitist language, but is also the honest man who talks with, and not to his people. In this regard, it is worth noting how Løkke Rasmussen makes the “otherness” explicit in his speech, by pointing out how the refugees lack even the most basic concept of important values:

Our cohesion is challenged when many arrive in Denmark from altogether different cultures. People who are not familiar with the unwritten rules and norms that are so obvious to us. Because we have grown up in a tradition with freedom, broad-mindedness, gender equality and equality of status. And our fundamental values are challenged as well as our image of who we really are. We Danes are generous. We wish to help. It is an integral part of us as human beings and citizens of a welfare society. It is an integral part of our history as a country. We are open to the world at large and we have a reputation for acting with decency. (2:66-73)
The mobilizing of fear is an apparent characteristic in this quote – a fear of losing the common values that make Denmark special. Yet, similar values are also presented as the reason behind the unique kindness Danes want to show the refugees and asylum seekers. Overall, Løkke Rasmussen, thus, draws a complex picture of the current situation and the Danish identity: First, basic values are threatened by the incoming refugees. In that regard, the prime minister constitutes a “we”-group of solidarity and freedom. These same values make it tempting to help the refugees, but such help would be naïve. In other words, he describes a double-folded misfortune for “the people”: threatened by others who grew up in needy conditions, and then misguided by an inherited wish to help, which may bring the nation into trouble. The individuals of the people are so kind and generous that they at some point need to look each other in the eyes and open up for a realistic and honest talk. Even though their hearts do not want them to do so, their heads (see 2:79) tell them that it is necessary – to “protect” Denmark.

Løkke Rasmussen is not alone in framing refugees as a threat to the nation, while at the same time upholding an image of the unique Danish solidarity. During Helle Thorning-Schmidt’s period as prime minister, she specifically spoke about refugees in 2015. This has to be interpreted in line with a shift in the immigration policy in her Social Democratic Party. In a political situation where the far-right Danish People’s Party gained popularity in the polls, the Social Democrats introduced a harder line, in order to “win back” the working class voters from the Danish People’s party. The New Year’s speech was used to give voters a first glance of the new policy, which later that year was formulated in the Social Democrats’ election slogan: “Everyone who comes to Denmark shall work” (Ritzau, 2015, see chapter 4).

In her speech, she describes how the Danish people give refugees who come to the country a warm welcome: “There is much hospitality” (3:156) she says, reinforcing the Danish self-conception as a helping nation. This builds the ground for her warning that Danes may be too nice: “we must also be able to keep pace” (3:158). In this way she represents herself as the realistic leader, without hurting the Danish pride of being “kind”. In light of the described political context, it is worth noting how she also presents a strict immigration policy as a political victory (3:160-161), implicitly communicating that she is the main champion for protecting the borders. Such a tough line is further reinforced when she describes refugees as one coherent group, and resolutely states that the integration process has failed (3:165-166), regardless of where these people have come from and how long they have been in the country.
What is the track record like if we look at the refugees already living in Denmark? Has the integration of refugees been successful? No. It is a fact that far too many have ended up living on cash benefits. We must not repeat the mistakes of the past. Here tonight, I want to say loud and clear: refugees must not become social welfare clients. (3:165-170)

One important feature of this extract is the linguistic construction of exclusion. She is talking to her own ingroup, and about the outgroup. The refugees are the others – the third persona. “They” are made passive objects, which on the one hand places some of the responsibility of the “mistakes of the past” on the Danish population, while on the other hand depriving those who are talked about of their right to participation, subjectivity and individuality. This way of communicating thus underlines the ethnic categorization while talking about immigrants, which was also found in the 2017 speech by Løkke Rasmussen. Interestingly, she shifts the rhetorical style from here on, by directing her message directly to the new refugees:

If you come to Denmark, you must of course work. You must use the skills you have. You must learn the Danish language, and you must meet and mix with Danish colleagues. You must see how we do things in this country. (3:172-174)

By approaching these auditors, she recognizes the new refugees’ place in the audience, and she invites them to be part of the conversation, unlike what was the case before. However, the content in the passage still underlines an ethnical nation concept, built upon a perception of the unique Danishness and the demand of assimilating to “how we do things in this country”.

While the threat from refugees and foreigners was absent from earlier addresses by Thorning-Schmidt, the same theme was present in the speeches by Løkke Rasmussen in 2011 and 2010. Also in these speeches, he underlines Danish superiority:

Our community is based on values we have fought for throughout generations: responsibility for the common good. Freedom of diversity. Equal opportunities for women and men. These are not values that any political party has a monopoly on. They are our shared values. They are Danish values. And these values are not negotiable. When people decide to live in Denmark, the reason must be that they want to be part of this community. We have room for everybody who can and wants to. (7:177-183)

Here, the Danish pride is closely connected to blood and kinship – values that “we” who actually live in this country have fought for. Immigrants have to assimilate to these values, because “They are our shared values. They are Danish values”. However, this rhetoric is further connected to the expression: “We have room for everybody who can and wants to”. In the
context, this is to be understood as “everyone who lives according to Danish norms”. Simultaneously, he places the responsibility for integration with the group of immigrants themselves, and thereby makes clear that he and other politicians not are to blame for the polarized society: If they just want to, they will fix it. The same slogan was also used the year before, in 2010, yet in a different way. In that speech, Løkke Rasmussen actually states that many of the Danish cultural elements come from abroad, and that such inspirations created what he calls the “Danish golden age” (8:182), without further reference. He thus makes use of this historical parallel to communicate a positive message about immigration, while at the same time warning against “parallel societies”: “it takes determination to make foreign flowers bloom in Denmark. The tendency of parallel societies must come to an end” (8:181-185). This rhetoric is, nevertheless, more nuanced in the manner that negative and positive results of foreign influences are balanced against each other.

The New Year’s speeches from 2009 and 2008 did not contain passages about immigration, yet the cultural conflict due to the caricature controversy and the debate on freedom of speech touched upon the topic in 2007 (see 11:3-44). Cultural protection and Danish pride were the main characteristics of Fogh Rasmussen’s rhetoric about the crisis, but it is worth noting that this rhetoric was balanced against messages about tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions:

> It is freedom of expression that has generated progress in Denmark, in Europe and other free societies in the World. This is the liberty that totalitarian forces are trying to restrict. Each of us has the responsibility for applying freedom of expression in a way that does not generate violence and hatred. (11:29-35)

This balanced rhetoric should be interpreted as a way to stand up for “Danish values”, yet at the same time avoid further provocations. Such tactic is also reflected through the relatively nuanced passages about immigration in the same speech. These passages are placed towards the opposite end of the text (11:186-190), which expresses that the prime minister does not want the immigrant and Muslim population to perceive the topics as linked to each other. The same rhetorical style is found in his speech from 2006, where he emphasizes the ideals of respect towards religious norms and principles (12:140-150), while at the same time stressing that freedom of speech and anti-authoritarianism are important features of the Danish society (12:165-167).
In the years before 2005, a strict immigration policy was one of the main topics in Fogh Rasmussen’s speeches. He takes a different approach than in the later speeches, when he states that the immigration policy has failed for years. Responsibility is thereby directed against the powerful, not the immigrants. Lack of an effective integration policy has built the ground for ghettos where the “men are unemployed, the women are isolated” (14:131-132).

They must be put to work. They must complete an education. And they must be made to understand and respect the values on which Danish society is built. My message to them is this: learn from the immigrants who do well in Danish society. They have a job, they provide for themselves and their families. (14:144-149)

This is the strict prime minister who is talking: a prime minister who knows how to scare his people and to define a common threat from “the ghettos”, and who speaks about immigrants as if they were objects that have to be “put to work”. However, this is also an example of rhetorical division between different groups of immigrants. It is worth noting that the perceived risk here comes from a defined subgroup within the immigration community. Thereby, this is a less ethnic categorization style, where Fogh Rasmussen actually points out the diversity in the group of immigrants. This makes the outgroup a category of choice or misfortune, more than a group determined by nationality or blood, per se. The point is underlined by references to immigrants who are actually succeeding. Those immigrants are welcome; they are applauded, which stands in contrast to the definite ethnical categorization in some of the more recent speeches. A similar example is found in Fogh Rasmussen’s speech in 2003, where he describes a tougher cultural line against immigrants and the challenge from “medieval religious thinking” (15:110). Nevertheless, Fogh Rasmussen also here distinguishes between a non-successful part of the immigrant population and a successful one. He states that “we” have been naïve, without the courage to say openly that some things are better than others.

However, now we shall have to do so. We owe this also to the thousands of immigrants who each day make a positive contribution to Danish society. They go about their job, their school and their studies, and have no problem fitting into daily life in Denmark. (15:126-130)

Even though Fogh Rasmussen speaks in favor of strengthened national consciousness and a more ”honest” line against those who live in contrast to the Danish values, this social categorization creates a quite different ingroup than the later speeches by Løkke Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt. In Fogh Rasmussen’s national “we”, immigrants are included, as long
as they integrate. Also immigrants are invited to feel ashamed and provoked about the life in the “ghettos”. Passages that for many readers will seem like the toughest on immigration in my entire collection of speeches, thus, mobilize the people around a more inclusive “we” than the passages about immigration in the later years.

As this analysis has shown, most of the New Year’s speeches in my material contain important sections about immigration. A close reading of the speeches reveals a steady development in the mobilization of an ethnic Danish “we” in contrast to “the others” – the immigrants. The development is not directly linked to the refugee crisis, but is a gradual shift during the governing periods of the past three prime ministers. This just underlines the special importance of examining rhetoric about immigration in every analysis of national identity – because it uncovers the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the presented nation concept. As will be apparent in the next sections, this mobilization is sometimes reinforced by linking immigration policy to security issues and the Danish contribution in foreign wars.

To sum up chapter 5.2.2, the analysis confirms the utility of analyzing how national leaders present their particular political principles in a unifying way as entrepreneurs of identity. All three prime ministers de-controvert their own political opinions, in order to include their ideological stances into a broader Danish “we”-conception. This de-controverting rhetorical tactic is found both in the passages about immigration and those about welfare policies, which is in line with the findings from chapter 5.1. The preceding pages have thus illustrated the use of analytical terms that can reveal how national leaders present their own political views as part of the national identity. These terms should therefore remain as important elements in the final analytical map.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that only two domestic policy areas have been included in the analysis. Welfare and immigration are, according to my close reading of the speeches, the most important domestic policy topics in my material overall. However, this does not mean that my analytical focus on welfare and immigration gives a complete picture of the prime ministers’ self-representations as political leaders. Another analytical focus could have resulted in different findings. It is therefore of utter importance that the final analytical map reflects that the self-representation as a political leader could be connected to a wide range of different policy topics, and that the choice of analytical focus should follow a profound investigation of the topics in the actual material.
5.2.3 The heads of state: Representing Danish values in the world

My reading of the collection of speeches shows that military action abroad is one of the most consistent topics throughout the past fifteen years, although not mentioned every year as a rhetorical ritual. In the speeches where military action is mentioned, operations are justified through a wide range of arguments, which may be grouped into two broad categories. The first type of arguments links the Danish missions in Afghanistan and Iraq to the protection of the homeland. This builds on an idea that without Danish soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, “they” – the terrorists – would have travelled in the opposite direction to hurt Danish citizens. The other type of arguments emphasizes a need for action due to international solidarity, linked to a presentation of the typical Dane as empathetic and responsible. In other words, the prime ministers shift between arguing for military operations as a way to protect Danish values, and as a way to perform Danish values.

**Protection through war.** The first type of argumentation was made salient in Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s speech in 2016, following the terror attack in Copenhagen in 2015:

> We must fight the terrorists as the murderers and criminals they are. Both when they kill innocent people in Iraq and in Syria. And when they attack us here in Denmark. (…) That is why we are allocating more resources to the Police. And that is why Danish soldiers are participating in international efforts against terrorism. I wish to thank all Danish women and men in the Police and the Danish Defence. At home and abroad. You protect and take care of Denmark! (2:33-40)

Here, Løkke Rasmussen mobilizes his people around the present military policy by referring to the widespread fear after a terror attack. The military and the police are both placed in the same category of Danish defenders. By presenting the operations abroad as a mission to protect “us here in Denmark”, the prime minister manages to define the opposition against military engagements as an opposition against “our common security” – the security “at home”. Simultaneously, Løkke Rasmussen presents the “we”, here understood as himself and his government, as the protectors – the ones who fight “for us”.

Such a connection between foreign missions and the security in the domestic sphere is strengthened by the following passage, where Løkke Rasmussen talks about the refugee crisis, as analyzed in chapter 5.2.2. By referring to immigration immediately after speaking about military action and the terror attack in Copenhagen, he reinforces a feeling of immediate and continuous threat. Løkke Rasmussen underlines this point by using the same expression about the prevention of terror attacks, the international missions and the so-called immigration crisis: “protect and take care of Denmark” (2:40-45), which is the reoccurring slogan throughout the
speech. Following this line of argumentation, immigration is the link between terrorism in war zones and terror attacks on Danish soil. In sum, such a link thus enables Løkke Rasmussen to argue in favor of his opinions in three different policy areas as self-evident measures to keep Denmark safe.

This is particularly interesting, given that the perpetrator of the Copenhagen attack was born and raised in Denmark, and had ethnic ties to Jordan: He was neither an immigrant, nor had he any connections to the war zones where Danish soldiers are engaged. The only common feature between the terrorist from Jordan, the population in the war zones and the majority of immigrants in Denmark is the Muslim faith. Psychologically, however, this way of talking makes sense as a way to address a real-felt need to “protect” the homeland, and to legitimize controversial missions in the Middle East. In this light, it is worth noting how Løkke Rasmussen makes clear that the real conflict line does not go between the West and Islam, but between “light and darkness”, “freedom and tyranny”, and “kindness and cowardly evil” (2:30-31). While explicitly rejected, however, this still works as an implicit presentation of the West and Islam as a, if not supported, yet understandable dichotomy, in line with ”light versus dark” and ”freedom versus tyranny”. What he communicates is not that this dichotomy is false, but that the real conflict line is to be found somewhere else.

A similar way of communicating is found in Løkke Rasmussen’s speech in 2011, then following an attempt to attack the secret service in Denmark:

We Danes will not compromise on our open society. On democracy. On freedom of expression. These are values that are firmly rooted in every Danish citizen. And they are values we must stand guard over. Therefore, we need to continue fighting the terrorism that threatens both our security and that of other countries. As we do in Afghanistan. (7:198-202)

Here, the justification of war is based on national identity and the operation abroad is framed as a way to protect this identity. Note how the prime minister underlines that the mentioned values are “deeply rooted” in every Danish citizen12 and that “we must stand guard” over these values – these roots. This is a way to communicate the threat as fundamental – it is not just an everyday risk, but an existential, almost civilizational crisis. Such rhetoric resembles what Anders Fogh Rasmussen used when he explicitly addressed the opponents of the wars, in 2009:

12 An expression that is not linked to citizenship was used in the Danish version: “Enhver dansker” (“all Danes”). See attachment 23, line 180-181.
Yes, it does serve a useful purpose. (...) We live in a new world. A world in which terrorists can strike anywhere – also in Denmark. A world in which the defence of our security begins far away from Danish soil. Afghanistan must not be allowed to become a safe haven for terrorists again. That is why we are in Afghanistan. (9:53-61)

Fogh Rasmussen is the protector of “our security”, and the prime minister strengthens the feeling of fear by underlining that the terrorists may attack “everywhere”. Simultaneously, he links such acknowledgement to his understanding of “the new world”. Thereby, the opponents he addresses are put in a category of people who do not understand what is actually happening; They do not understand that the defense of the country begins far away from Danish soil – they are backward-looking, unmodern and even an internal threat against Denmark.

Solidarity through war. The following way of arguing differs from how the topic is talked about in the speeches analyzed so far, in that the contribution to the war is presented as a sign of Danish superiority and the unique Danish values, rather than a way to protect it. This is specifically apparent in the rhetoric of Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Her speech from 2015 begins with a reference to South Africa and the remembrance of Nelson Mandela (4:3-13). The prime minister underlines how Denmark was the first country to abandon trade with the apartheid regime: “In South Africa, they remember Denmark”, she states, before she follows up with paying homage to Danish soldiers abroad. Denmark has an international reputation, which is the reason why Denmark is in the front when chemical weapons in Syria shall be destructed, and why “for more than 10 years, we have contributed to performing an important task in Afghanistan.” (4:18-19). This type of argument enables the prime minister to create a narrative of a special nation that is willing to help others: Denmark is a small country, filled with positive values, and it is a superior international actor. The implicit comparison between the fight against the apartheid regime and the war against terror makes the military mission seem uncontroversial, and places the action of Danish soldiers in a favorable light. The quote is thus also an interesting example of how Helle Thorning-Schmidt connects security policies to a wide range of topics – international as well as domestic ones – such as the economic situation and the EU integration process. These connections fill both the military action and the connected policies with a new content:

When I meet people abroad, they very often mention Denmark’s engagement in Afghanistan and our effort to protect the population of Libya. This contribution will be remembered for many years to come. The sharp missions are important. But Denmark does more than that. Much more. (6:218-222)
She continues by referring to the Danish fight against world poverty, and to Denmark as a country on “the side of democracy” (6:225) in the Arab Spring. By linking military operation to foreign aid, war-zone activity is framed as empathetic sacrifice, and as an expression of kindness that characterizes the Danish identity. Moreover, the reasoning is followed up by a reference to expectations in advance of the Danish presidency in the EU (6:232-233). She states that she wants to use the presidency in the EU to “move Europe a small, but important, step forward in the right direction” (6:243-245). Linkage of her own EU policy with “empathy” in the world and the ”protection” of people abroad, enables her to present the Union and her European policy as part of a unified narrative about Denmark as a positive and proud contributor on the world scene. Rhetorically, the described connections make it possible for Thorning-Schmidt to include more or less controversial policies as given parts of the national narrative, taking debated issues away from the ordinary political debate. Simultaneously, the prime minister takes a step out of her role as a politician with clear opinions on these issues. Instead, she represents herself as the center of the national category and her opponents as antagonists against the national will.

Another particularly important element in the presentation of missions as a way to perform Danish values, is connected to the Danish soldier as a symbol or personification of what Denmark is proud of in the world. In line with the findings from the 2017 speech, the Danish soldier is repeatedly held up as the embodiment of what makes Denmark unique. Such symbolism is reinforced by references to personal meetings between the prime ministers and individual soldiers in Afghanistan an Iraq. Both Fogh Rasmussen, Thorning-Schmidt, and Løkke Rasmussen describe relatively emotional meetings with the troops. Note for example how Thorning-Schmidt in 2012 uses her personal meetings with soldiers to underline a national consensus on the issue:

The Danish soldiers in Afghanistan. I have visited you and I have seen how impressively you perform your task. I am proud of that. All of Denmark is proud of that. (6:210-211)

In psychological terms, this is an explicit way of presenting oneself as part of the large ingroup, while opponents, who do not share the same unconditional pride in operations abroad, are defined out of the Danish category. Thorning-Schmidt represents herself as the prototype of Danish values – a prototype of “us”. This impression is strengthened by the personal meeting, where Thorning-Schmidt takes a role as the “eyes of the nation”: She is the witness who brings the truth from the field back to her country.
Similar rhetoric is found in 2009, when Fogh Rasmussen uses his personal meeting with soldiers to praise them being representative of Danish values.

You inspire us to take a responsibility ourselves. And not just us to take a responsibility ourselves. And not just offload the task onto others. (...) It is this attitude that commands respect for us Danes in the world at large. It is this attitude that is necessary to respond to challenges and opposition. And it is also this attitude that is now going to strengthen our resolve to ride out the economic storm. (9:76-81)

Here, the soldier is used as an illustration of the Danish hero, directly connected to the reputation of Denmark abroad. Fogh Rasmussen makes clear that the operations show empathy and responsibility for others. In this particular quote, it is interesting to see how the soldiers first are applauded for the concrete work they conduct. Then this effort is abstracted to illustrate everything good, and finally, directly connected to something typically Danish – to the second persona. This second persona works hard, makes sacrifices and believes in Denmark. When this is further connected to his own economic policy, it works as an implicit reference to his domestic opponents. He is on the team of the heroes, against the opposition. He sees opportunities, he helps others beside himself, and he conducts a policy that saves both the economy and the world. Opponents are thereby presented as the small group of people who do not want Denmark to be respected in “the world at large”.

The same personal content is also found in other of Fogh Rasmussen’s speeches, as when he, in 2008, represents himself as a leader in the field who stands up for soldiers. He talks with them while sharing “field rations” (10:76), giving the impression of a leader who wants to experience and see the reality as it is. This is connected to explicitly formulated emotions, which constitute national pride around the soldier, as a symbol of Danish and Western, superiority, cleverness and courage:

In May, I visited the Danish soldiers in Afghanistan. Whilst sharing the field rations, I talked with the men and women who put in an altogether extraordinary effort to help others. Being there in the group of young Danish soldiers filled me with great joy. With pride in their skillfulness. With admiration for their attitudes and values. With gratitude that they have so bravely volunteered for such dangerous service for Denmark. (10:76-80)

This argument is further elaborated on later in the speech:
We cannot just sit on our hands, close the curtains, and hope that evil will go away. We have to join forces with other free and democratic societies to defend freedom and human rights. I am grateful that so many volunteer to serve Denmark in the hotspots of the world. (...) You contribute to fostering freedom, peace and progress. And you show that Denmark can make a difference in the world. (10:113-120)

It is of particular interest to see how the prime minister continues the speech by connecting the soldier, as a national hero, to his own European policy: “We can also make a difference in Europe” (10:124). In an emotional way, Fogh Rasmussen use the next passages to remember how Denmark in 2002 was a facilitator for an enlarged European Union, and to argue for an abolishment of the Danish opt-outs from the EU cooperation. This is similar to his rhetoric in 2004, where he refers to the “communist dictatorship” (14:4) in the past. The EU enlargement is talked about as a “vitamin boost” from new member states that “believe in freedom” (14:20), before the prime minister continues the speech by honoring the Danish effort for peace in Iraq. In Fogh Rasmussen’s narrative, the heroic fight in Afghanistan and Iraq expresses the same values as the fight for a more integrated Europe: It is a civilizational fight on behalf of the “free world”. He refers to this integrated fight repeatedly throughout his speeches, and he does it in a rather emotional way.

Fogh Rasmussen’s reoccurring expression of emotions in the international policy area should be interpreted in light of his overall super-atlantic framing (see chapter 4), which was constituted in his very first speech in 2002 – only months after the terror attack in New York and Washington D.C. on September 11. Here, he clearly emphasizes the civilizational threat to “the free world”, and he draws up a conflict line between the West, built on values of “personal freedom, democracy, human rights and tolerance”, and the others. Accordingly, Fogh Rasmussen in this speech appears as one of George W. Bush’s closest allies in the fight against “evil”:

We will fight terrorism without making compromises. And in that fight against the evil, the US does not stand alone. (...) I am proud that Denmark can make a contribution. And to those who are going to take part in these missions, I say: we are thinking of you. We are thankful that you, in this way, make an effort for your country and for freedom and peace in the world. (16:26-34)

A similar presentation of US-led military action was repeated and underlined in his speech in 2004, when summing up the effort to establish freedom and democracy in Iraq.
I am confident that the liberation of the Iraqi people was and remains worth all the costs. (14:39–40)

This early framing of the fight as a conflict between pure evil and pure good is a characteristic feature of Fogh Rasmussen’s rhetoric, which may have formed the public discourse in a way that is reflected in the more recent speeches.

Altogether, the analysis in chapter 5.3.3 shows a continuity in how the prime ministers talk about war operations abroad from the onset of the war on terror in 2002 and until today. It points out that all three prime ministers interchangeably use different rhetorical strategies, which were combined in the 2017 speech. Most of the prime ministers’ statements seem grounded in Fogh Rasmussen’s framing of the issue in his first speeches: as a fight for Western-style democracy. However, while the international debate has put these missions in a less favorable light, the war rhetoric has been steadily more focused on the personal sacrifice by individual Danish soldiers. In a context of rising critique against these wars, it is easier to unite around the individual effort, than around the contested effects of the missions. Similarly, a fear of terror attacks against the Danish democracy may work as a better mobilizing tactic than principles of democracy abroad. In both cases, the foreign missions are used to constitute Danish national identity as superior, free and emphatic.

The preceding sections have focused on the prime ministers as military leaders. The military action takes up significant parts of close to all the speeches in my material. Moreover, the passages of speech about wars abroad contain specifically good examples of the rhetoric of national identity. In that regard, it is important to note that this topic is linked to other fields of international politics in a way that makes the preceding analysis comprehensive. EU affairs, foreign aid and the international refugee situation are issues that repeatedly have been linked to Danish military strategy and the soldier as a national symbol. Nevertheless, these topics are also talked about without such connections, and could therefore have had their own sections in the analysis. Which specific topics to focus on is a choice that each researcher has to make, based on their research question and empirical material at hand. Therefore, the analytical map has to provide flexible terms and techniques that can easily be adjusted by each researcher. Examination of national leaders’ self-representations as heads of state, without an explicit analytical requirement of analyzing their roles as commanders in chief, will secure the needed flexibility. This clarification of the map will allow analysts with a wide range of different research questions to analyze a broader set of topics than those connected to security policies.
5.2.4 Summary of the broad rhetorical analysis

The preceding analysis contributes to a broader understanding of how the rhetoric of social identification helps Danish prime ministers to constitute a national “we” through the yearly New Year’s speech.

Firstly, the analysis reveals a wide range of different means that Danish prime ministers use to constitute feelings of national belonging through a language of identity. The leaders shift between three main self-representations: that as an ordinary citizen, or more precisely, an individual person; as a political leader; and as a head of state. These self-representations serve different goals. The first one allows the leader to represent him-/herself as a prototype of the national community. He or she is “one of us”. Through the use of emotional expressions, references to personal meetings and anecdotes from own-lived life, all prime ministers, and specifically Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Helle Thorning-Schmidt, create integrated personal, ideological and national narratives. This lets them appear as leaders who “do it for us” – they fight for the people and embody the national ideals. Analyzing this prototypical self-representation does not only reveal a model of the implied author, the first persona; it also gives us a first impression of what the perfect auditor, the second persona, looks like.

Secondly, as political leaders, the prime ministers function as entrepreneurs of identity, by linking their own policy goals to a broader national story, presenting ideological stances as obvious and natural. This is done through a process in which uncontroversial and unifying ideographs are filled with ideologically loaded content. In the concrete policy areas of welfare and immigration, the leaders appear as national protectors who secure the “Denmark we know” from “the others”. When it comes to the welfare topic, the analysis showed that the representation of “the other” is not limited to external threats, but that also internal opposition is represented as an outgroup. This internal outgroup is rhetorically constructed as illogical, and as a threat to the “common will”. When talking about immigration, the prime ministers continuously strengthen their ethnical categorization and thereby emphasize a cultural threat to the “national family”.

Finally, the prime ministers represent themselves as heads of state by underlining the soldier as a national symbol. This contributes to a de-controverting of contested security policies. Such impression is reinforced by the interchanged representation of military action as a way to perform Danish values, and as a way to protect the same values. Furthermore, the contribution to wars abroad is linked to other policy areas, such as the economy and immigration policy. On the one hand, other policy areas are thereby presented as more
important and pressing, while the security policy on the other hand is presented as a noble and integrated result of a national consensus.

The main findings are presented in the analytical map on the next page. In addition to providing empirical insight, the preceding analysis of the New Year’s speeches between 2002 and 2016 has shed new light on the analytical map, which was developed through chapter 3 and further tested in chapter 5.1. First and foremost, the analysis has proven the utility of a theoretical combination of social identity theory and contemporary rhetorical theory to understand a broader set of speeches. The theoretical terms tested in chapter 5.1, continue to be useful when used across years, rhetors and political contexts. However, the broader analysis has clearly illustrated the importance of flexibility and nuance when analyzing national mobilization through rhetoric.

Throughout the analysis, I have revealed weaknesses in the preliminary analytical map, which will inform a final adjustment in order to secure that it takes the diversity of rhetorical means and self-representations into account. The analytical division of main self-representations into three broad categories – the ordinary citizen, the political leader and the head of state – works generally well, yet the first category of interest should be adjusted to the person, rather than the ordinary citizen. The analysis, and particularly the examination of Fogh Rasmussen’s speeches, showed that it is fully possible to represent oneself in a personal manner, without frequent references to “ordinary” meetings and popular activities. Moreover, the preceding chapter has clearly underlined the importance of adjusting the analytical focus in accordance with the empirical material at hand. I focused on some policy areas and topics that were specifically important in Denmark in the period. However, the broad analysis revealed that some topics, which were important in one or few speeches, did not get the deserved attention. Another focus would have given other results, and the analytical map should be flexible enough to fit with different research questions. Too narrow definitions of what an analyst should search for in the material would prevent a real understanding of rhetoric in context.

Table 5 shows results from chapter 5.2 and following refinements. The final map is thus nuanced and adjusted to secure that the theoretical symbiosis can be used in a variety of projects about rhetorical mobilization of national identity. In the next chapter, this map is presented in a more parsimonious way, together with a broader discussion of my findings and concluding remarks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original analytical question(s)</th>
<th>Words/sentences to search for</th>
<th>Refinements from chapter 5.1</th>
<th>Findings in 5.2</th>
<th>Final refinements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor represent him/herself in the speech as a part of a variety of categories (social identities), in contrast with other categories?</td>
<td>Different “I” and “we” conceptions. Representation of oneself as the center of social category.</td>
<td>This step of the analysis should specifically reveal how each prime minister represents him/herself as (1) ordinary citizen, (2) political leader, (3) head of state/commander in chief.</td>
<td>The prime ministers vary greatly in how they present themselves – specifically when it comes to non-professional self-representations. While Løkke Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt emphasize their role as an “ordinary” citizen, this analytical focus did not shed light on the rhetorical strategy of Fogh Rasmussen. Self-representations as politicians and heads of state were important and consistent across years.</td>
<td>The division of broad self-representations works well, yet the non-professional presentation style should include a wider set of rhetorical strategies. The analysis also showed that the self-representation as a head of state goes beyond rhetoric on military action abroad. Therefore, the analysis should reveal how each prime minister presents him/herself as a person, a politician and a head of state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor represent him-/herself as a prototype of the national category? How does he/she create national identity, by presenting own policies and ideas as a reflection of the national will?</td>
<td>Expressions that make the leader appear as “one of us”, partially through personal examples and anecdotes. De-controverting rhetoric. “Givens” and self-evident rhetorical points that hide normative content.</td>
<td>This step should specifically investigate how the rhetor integrates his/her personal, political and national narratives, which let him/her appear as the embodiment of national ideals.</td>
<td>- All prime ministers try to form the national identity in accordance with their own ideological positions. They present loaded statements as self-evident parts of a national “we”. - Thorning-Schmidt and Løkke Rasmussen use their childhood as metaphors for the positive development in Denmark and their own political profile, which is presented as “typically Danish”. - Fogh Rasmussen uses his rhetorical style to emphasize Denmark’s place in “the free world”.</td>
<td>The analysis should reveal integrated narratives, but not solely focus on anecdotes and examples from own life. Rather, the overall rhetorical style, with or without references to personal and private experiences, may play together with the ideological and national narratives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor draw up an ideological model of him- or herself (first persona), the perfect auditor (second persona) and “the other” (third persona)?</td>
<td>Stylistic tokens: metaphors and simile. Adjectives used to describe commonalities between ingroup members, and stable characteristics of the outgroup. Dichotomies, contrasts.</td>
<td>This step should specifically translate the psychological insight into textual terms, in order to express how the social categorizations are creating a model of an implied auditor and “the other”. These implied models contain norms and values.</td>
<td>All of the prime ministers create a perfect auditor who accepts Danish superiority and sees Denmark as a small but powerful country in the world. Immigrants and an unnamed domestic opposition are threats against the unity, and presented as third persona. At the same time, the second and third persona contain very different content elements from speech to speech. This proves that each prime minister tactically uses the speech to form national ideals and an adjusted national role model.</td>
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<td>How are the rhetor’s self-representations linked together around abstract terms and understandings, and how are these terms filled with ideological content?</td>
<td>Ideographs: high-order abstractions representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal (McGee, 199b, p. 435). References to “common culture”, traditions, historical events and so on.</td>
<td>This step should further investigate how the different implied prototypes in the speech are connected to political and ideological contents, represented as self-evident and “neutral” through the use of ideographs.</td>
<td>Ideographs are actively used in all speeches. The fight over ideograph content becomes specifically apparent when the prime ministers speak about concrete, domestic policy areas, while all prime ministers use ideographs of responsibility and safety about the international operations abroad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the rhetor draw upon cultural references to present the ideological elements as “given”?</td>
<td>Linkages between history, ideology and social categorization.</td>
<td>This step should sum up how the overall language of identity contributes to a temporal understanding of what the historical national origin means today and for the future.</td>
<td>To see all measures together reveals both similarities and differences between prime ministers: All of them present a positive and optimistic narrative about Danish development. This development is, however, under threat. Denmark is a unique and superior small nation that is challenged by illogical measures proposed by the opposite political camp, and by immigration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How are all the elements found during the first steps of the analysis combined in a unified story?</td>
<td>Linkages between history, ideology and social categorization.</td>
<td>This step should sum up how the overall language of identity contributes to a temporal understanding of what the historical national origin means today and for the future.</td>
<td>Overarching narratives should draw on insight about all the different analytical steps above, yet focus specifically on how the national identity is linked to the past and to possible threats in the future.</td>
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Table 5: Analytical map, including results from chapter 5.2 and following refinements.
6. Discussion and concluding remarks

This research project had two main goals: First, I wanted to develop a cross-disciplinary analytical map fit for the analysis of unifying national rhetoric. This map was to be grounded in a combination of the social identity approach and rhetorical theory, and tested through one in-depth analysis and one broader analysis of New Year’s speeches in Denmark (research question 1). Second, through the process of theoretical and analytical development, I aimed to gain empirical understanding of how Danish prime ministers constitute their national community through the New Year’s speech (research question 2). In the following chapter, I will sum up my answers to both research questions in order, beginning with the theoretical outcome of the present work.

6.1 A cross-disciplinary analytical model: Does it work, and is it worth it?

How we talk and formulate ourselves, affect how we, and the people around us, see the world, how we act in that world, and how we interpret our surroundings. Political leaders are among the most important rhetors in society; they talk in front of large audiences, which gives them unique power to constitute the social reality, to define central problems of our time, and to guide collective action (Reicher & Hopkins, 2004). I believe that profound analysis of political rhetoric thus is important, in order to understand social power in general and political influence in particular. What the rhetorical field has lacked, however, is an understanding of the social psychological mechanisms that lie behind rhetorical mobilization. Rhetoricians have traditionally been concerned with power and the constitution of commonality, but have, in my opinion, been reluctant to base their theories on the psychological premises of group formation and social identity. One reason for this reluctance is fundamental methodological and philosophical disputes. The textual approaches in the field of rhetorical theory have been seen as incompatible with psychological research dominated by experimental methodology. However, social psychology has a lot more to offer than experiments. The recent development in critical social psychology and the social identity approach should encourage scholars to leave scientific cleavages behind.

My goal was to bring “unknown friends together”, in order to find out how the social identity approach can be combined with contemporary rhetorical theory in an analytical map fit for analyzing how political leaders constitute national identity through speech (research question 1). The first step in this process consisted of theoretical symbiosis. This
work clearly illustrated that the social identity approach and rhetorical theory of collective identity provide compatible perspectives, and, even more importantly, that both fields contain elements that have been lacking in the other theoretical and analytical framework (chapter 2 and 3). Through focusing on the basic premises in the theories, rather than old scientific cleavages, I found interesting similarities: Both perspectives see comparison and contrast as driving mechanisms of group and identity formation, which is in line with poststructuralist principles. Also, the understanding of meaning and identity as fluid and flexible is common, and both the social psychological and rhetorical perspectives emphasize that national identity is created through an intersubjective process. This means that the two perspectives actually reinforce each other. Developments in social psychology, which was first grounded in experimental methodology, are backed by the humanistic and textual approaches from rhetorical research and vice versa. This adds trustworthiness to both fields. Merging these perspectives may thus be a noble motive in theoretical terms, but does it actually work in practice?

The analytical tests in chapter 5.1 and 5.2 prove that the theoretical and analytical symbiosis functions in the analysis of both one single speech, and a broader set of speeches. More importantly, the analyses show that both the social psychological terms and the rhetorical terms add value to the practical analysis. In analyzing national rhetoric, it seems necessary both to understand group formation processes, and to look for concrete textual expressions of social identity. Nevertheless, the analyses clearly illustrated the need for practical refinements of the preliminary map. During the first in-depth analysis of the New Year’s speech in Denmark from 2017, the theoretical symbiosis was tested and further adjusted, in order to balance the elements from the two scholarly traditions against each other and reveal how the different terms and techniques could be used together (chapter 5.1). This prepared the ground for a broader test as well as further adjustments in order to secure that the final map is applicable to a wider set of texts (chapter 5.2).

The final analytical map is thus fit for an analysis of unifying national rhetoric that takes the basic social psychological premises of group formation into account. The gradual development of this map has been illustrated by analytical tables throughout the text. Now, it is time to present it in a more communicative and parsimonious way – as a five-step plan where each step is linked to concrete analytical questions (table 6). The analytical steps need not necessarily be conducted in sequence. Rather, in the process of textual analysis, it may be fruitful to go back and forth between the steps.
None of the analytical steps in the map is particularly groundbreaking in itself. These are questions that have concerned both social psychologists and rhetoricians for ages. However, the map shows that the combination of social psychology and contemporary rhetorical theory could guide a comprehensive analysis of national rhetoric.

Throughout the thesis, I have showed that two perspectives that are not normally combined, each add unique knowledge to an analytical map. The map contains terms that until now have been solely used in their fields of origin. However, they can be used together; these unknown friends have a lot to learn from each other. This may be disputed in the respective fields, and I acknowledge that a merging of perspectives may violate some hidden premises or challenge self-understandings in the two respective academic milieus. I want to underline that I have used the terms from different theories and added my own clarifications. This is done in a conscious, yet potentially contestable way. In that regard, it is of utter importance to remember my own position and my own goals: I am not neutral, and I have not treated the theoretical

### Table 6: Simplified analytical map, consisting of five analytical steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main analytical question(s)</th>
<th>Words/sentences to search for</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the political leader represent him-/herself as representative of different social groups in contrast to other groups – as (1) an individual, (2) a politician, (3) a head of state?</td>
<td>Passages of speech where the leader appears as part of a social group, either in the personal, the party-political or the international sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are the self-representations contributing to create integrated personal, ideological and national narratives?</td>
<td>Self-representations and references to own life that create a personal narrative with ideological implications – a narrative that is “naturally” connected to a national self-understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do the integrated narratives implicitly communicate norms and values through linguistic tokens and ideographs?</td>
<td>Allegories, metaphors, symbols, contrast, simile and ideographs containing normative elements, yet presented as uncontrooversial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the overarching set of norms and values build an implied model of the perfect auditor, second persona, and the excluded one, the third persona?</td>
<td>Expressed norms and values that, taken together, reveal a national prototype – an implied auditor who accepts all the normative premises in the speech – and a prototype of the excluded one – a person who is not part of the community, who is not talked about or defined as “the other”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altogether, how does the leader constitute a national subject – an identity and a connected overarching narrative for this subject?</td>
<td>The overarching argument; a national identity and grand narrative provided for a constructed national subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contributions in an “objective” way. Rather, I have my own interests in creating a common ground for two scientific subfields in which I am deeply engaged. I thus encourage the reader to, instead of taking the present work for gospel, critically evaluate the premises and conclusions throughout the thesis. I especially welcome further developments of the analytical map, so that rhetoricians, social psychologists, and political scientists get even better tools to understand national mobilization in the future.

The theoretical work has been an important part of this research project. However, in the process of theoretical and methodological development, I got a chance to specifically investigate the unifying rhetoric in the Danish New Year’s speeches throughout the past sixteen years. The next section will discuss and conclude my empirical findings from these analyses.

6.2 Constitution of national identity through the New Year’s speech in Denmark

In the empirical analyses, I used the combined insight from social psychology and rhetorical theory to investigate how the prime ministers have used the special event of the New Year’s speech to come through with their own visions of Danishness. The goal was to provide insight into how the Danish prime ministers from 2002 to 2017 constitute Danish national identity in their New Year’s speeches (research question 2).

The concrete findings from the in-depth analysis and the broader analysis are already summed up in chapter 5. The overarching take-away message is that Danish prime ministers use the New Year’s speech to constitute a national “we”-category by connecting their personal identity, their political identity and their identity as a head of state to a broader national narrative that underlines who “we” are, compared to “the others”. In the center of the “we”-category, is a model of the second persona: the implied auditor who accepts all the values in the speech, and believes in the rhetor’s national narrative. The prime ministers’ rhetoric is unifying in the sense that each rhetor wants to create a coherent national community that gathers around this second persona. However, coherent groups are also excluding, and the analyses have shown how Danish prime ministers fill the national category with certain content and emphasize the borders of the ingroup. Outside the borders, is the third persona: a model of the subject that is not part of the ingroup – that is ignored or even suppressed. The representations of a second persona and a third persona, share some basic features across prime ministers and political contexts: All of the prime ministers emphasize freedom and solidarity. They underline Danish superiority, and reinforce the myth of Denmark as a small but powerful country in the world. Immigrants and an unnamed and irresponsible domestic opposition are threats against the unity, and presented as third persona. Nevertheless, the analyses have also shown how the second and
third persona contain very different content elements from speech to speech. This proves that each prime minister tactically uses the New Year’s speech to form national ideals and to build an adjusted national role model.

Danish leaders use a feeling of national belonging to mobilize people and to create a foundation for political shifts. Dramatic events and the overall global development since 2000 have illustrated that the national community is no less relevant today than when prime minister Thorvald Stauning introduced the very first New Year’s speech in Denmark in 1940. I believe that insight in national rhetoric requires profound analysis of the individual national leader, speech by speech. Understanding such concrete instances of national rhetoric is, in my opinion, a major task for the social sciences of today. Instead of speculating about how so-called “identity policies” are guiding the development in Denmark and elsewhere, social scientists should investigate the concrete political language of identity. The current thesis is one contribution to this, yet it is important to remember that I have only investigated a small part of the rhetorical constitution process in one single country over a limited number of years. My work does not provide general conclusions or final answers. What it should provide, however, is one perspective on how the Danish identity is formed and upheld, which may inspire other scholars to investigate this topic even further from other perspectives.

In line with the interpretive approach to science, I believe that other researchers, in other situations and with other previous experiences, will read the material I have analyzed in a completely different way, and I encourage them to do so. Therefore, I also want to be clear about my own perspective. As a master’s student of Political Science, situated in Norway, I have analyzed the speeches from a certain position. I have built my understanding on an already existing impression of Danish society and politics, which is inevitably formed by biased information and prejudice. Most probably, I have also ignored contextual facts that Danes themselves would have emphasized, and I have sometimes searched for confirmation of existing expectations instead of gaining bright new insight. However, my position as an “outsider” might also have helped in the analytical process. I may for example have found elements that inborn Danes would have ignored as “givens”, and thereby emphasized rhetorical means that are easier to detect from a distance. In all cases, a researcher has to be situated “somewhere”, and every interpretive analysis is a result of the meeting between people, between values, ideals – and between contexts. I believe that such meetings move us forward – towards a better understanding of social identities, politics and nations.
Literature


Attachments

**Attachment 1-16:** English translations of the New Year’s speeches held by the Danish prime ministers from 2002 until 2017. Attachment 1-15 are official translations downloaded from the web page of the prime minister’s office: http://www.stm.dk/_a_2765.html. Attachment 16 contains the author’s own English translation of the New Year’s speech from 2002. All speeches are given line numbers, and handed in to the Department of Political Science on a memory stick. The attachments are also available online: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/44oa4iitdeefj1b/AABkElhLx_dFSdwjIZVkyT_wa?dl=0 (password: NewYear).

**Attachment 17-32:** Original Danish versions of the New Year’s speeches held by the Danish prime ministers from 2002 until 2017. Downloaded from the webpage of the prime minister’s office: http://www.stm.dk/_a_2371.html. All speeches are given line numbers, and handed in to the Department of Political Science on a memory stick. The attachments are also available online: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/44oa4iitdeefj1b/AABkElhLx_dFSdwjIZVkyT_wa?dl=0 (password: NewYear).