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Scandinavia and Covid-19: A discourse analysis on national identity and pandemic strategies

Anna Lagerlöf

International Relations

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Declaration

I, Anna Lagerlöf, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature

Date 15 May 2022

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic started off as "just another virus" emerging in China where most probably thought it would also remain and sooner or later also fade away. Instead, the virus evolved to a pandemic which held its grip of the world for more than two years and is still affecting several countries in the world. Seen from the outside as a rather homogenous group of countries known to cooperate, the Scandinavian states of Denmark, Norway and Sweden opted for different strategies to combat the virus as opposed to what one might had expected. This thesis suggests dominant national identities as one explanation as to why the strategies differed and how the main implication deriving from this – the lack of cooperation among the states – came about. By using the method of discourse analysis and a theoretical lens of poststructuralism and what has been written on foreign policy and national identity, the thesis seeks to explore how representations of dominant national identities are expressed in the Scandinavian states' Covid-19 strategies. Moreover, the thesis also explores the implications deriving from the different strategies. I analyze the official discourse of the Scandinavian states in the form of speeches and statements from political leaders and other front figures during the pandemic and find that differences in national identities have indeed affected the strategies.

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1. Introduction

Emerging in the late months of 2019 in the city of Wuhan in China, the Covid-19 virus turned the world upside down and was declared a world pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 after having spread rapidly around the world (WHO, 2020). Spreading to Scandinavia during the first months of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was an unpredictable crisis and enormous challenge that demanded political action and quick implementation of combat strategies (Hansson & Stefansdottir, 2021, p. 30). Given the fact that the Scandinavian states of Denmark, Norway and Sweden are seemingly similar, share strong historical and cultural bonds and are known to cooperate in the international arenas, many analysts were puzzled when the states opted for different approaches as to combat the virus and protect their citizens. When the pandemic emerged and the first cases started showing up in Scandinavia, what can be referred to as a multi-level stress test commenced. Shortly after the first cases were a fact, both Denmark and Norway shut their societies and borders down leading to significant implications for households and companies. At the same time, on the other side of the border, in Sweden, it was more or less business as usual with recommendations rather than restrictions (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 20).

What was even more puzzling during the first months of the pandemic was the lack of cooperation between the three Scandinavian states. All three countries being of the smaller state size, it is a long tradition of cooperation among Denmark, Norway and Sweden simply because of the firm belief that one is stronger together rather than on one's own. Together with fellow Nordic states Finland and Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden cooperate inter-governmentally and together they form one of the world's most extensive regional forms of cooperation. Nordic cooperation is politically, economically and culturally rooted (Andreasson & Stende, 2017, p. 2). The cooperation also relies on the countries' like-mindedness and the shared values where solidarity is of particular essence (Hansson & Stefansdottir, 2021, pp. 29-30). It was therefore a general expectancy that the Scandinavian states would cooperate and show joint solidarity when facing the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic all three states at the same time.

However, if one had had more knowledge about the Scandinavian states' respective national identities, one could perhaps have foreseen not only the strategies but also the implications that followed. It is against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic that this thesis seeks to

analyze how representations of dominant national identities of Denmark, Norway and Sweden were expressed through their national strategies toward the pandemic. The thesis will not only look at differences (even though these are arguably the most interesting and what has been given the most attention throughout the pandemic) but also at the similarities among the sister nations.

1.1. Research objectives and research question

This thesis has several research objectives. First it aims to explore how dominant national identity traits are expressed in and have affected the Scandinavian states' Covid-19 strategies. Further, it aims to contribute to scholarly literature on the Scandinavian countries and thus further understand the special bond between the Scandinavian countries and also shed light on their differences. Perhaps it will also illuminate what could be perceived as weaknesses in what has always generally appeared to be a solid cooperation.

The objectives of the thesis will be pursued by analyzing official discourse on the matter through speeches and statements by the political leaders and other relevant representatives from authorities. The thesis is based on qualitative research methods, mainly discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is an analytical approach focusing on the importance of language and how language provide meaning to objects. I will draw on a theoretical framework deriving particularly from poststructuralism as it is a theory emphasizing the importance of language and the power of discourse. Moreover, the theoretical framework is based on what scholars have been writing about national identity and other types of policies, mainly foreign policy.

Lastly, another ambition is that the thesis will be useful to students, researchers and others who are interested in studies of the Scandinavian and/or Nordic states, their cooperation and relationship.

The research question guiding the thesis is the following:

How did the Scandinavian states' responses to and strategies toward the Covid-19 pandemic express representations of dominant national identities?

1.2. Structure of the thesis

After this introductory chapter, the remainder of this thesis is organized as follows:
Chapter 2 provides the reader with the relevant background information including an overview of the Covid-19 pandemic itself, the Scandinavian states' initial strategies toward the pandemic and an overview of the states' respective crisis management organization. Here, I observe that Denmark and Norway had similar strategies whereas Sweden's strategy differed. Moreover, I point out that their crisis management organizations provided different prerequisites for how to combat the pandemic. **Chapter 3** presents the theoretical framework for the analysis. It gives a review of existing literature on the topic and argues how this thesis aims to contribute to what has already been written on relating topics. My main claims are that language and national identity are deeply interlinked and that national identities are produced and re-produced through language. This means that language is a powerful tool for governments. Therefore, I have chosen to use discourse analysis as my method. This will be reflected on in **chapter 4** where I also share reflections on my methodology. **Chapter 5** presents the analysis of how representations of dominant national identities are expressed in the Scandinavian states' Covid-19 strategies**. Chapter 6** concludes the thesis with a summary of the main findings from the analysis and some reflections on how the research could be continued. In the conclusion, I also reflect on the implications of the different Covid-19 strategies.

2. Background

This chapter serves the purpose of providing the reader with relevant background information before proceeding to the theoretical framework. The chapter is divided into short sections with brief information first about Covid-19 and the pandemic, followed by the Scandinavian states' initial strategies towards it and also some information about the states' crisis management structures. In qualitative research work such as this thesis, it is important to situate the reader in the right setting for the thesis' research and provide the reader with detailed background information so that no important factors get lost (Bryman, 2016, p. 394). This is the reasoning behind the quite substantial nature of this chapter.

2.1. Covid-19

As stated in the introduction, the Covid-19 virus emerged late in 2019 in Wuhan, China. The virus soon began to spread rapidly and on March 11th 2020, WHO declared it to be a world pandemic (WHO, 2020). When this thesis is written in the spring of 2022, the intensity of the pandemic has decreased, at least in Scandinavia and the rest of Europe, after having had the world more or less in its grip for two years. Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO.org). The level of contagiousness and severeness of the disease evolved throughout the pandemic. During the first wave as this thesis is focused on, the virus was less contagious but more severe as opposed to at the later waves of the pandemic where the new varieties of the virus were far more contagious but less severe.

In January 2020, the Scandinavian states received the first reports of Covid-19 and in February, the first cases of the virus in Scandinavia were discovered. The disease was probably brought in through Danes, Norwegians and Swedes returning from ski vacations in the Alps and through travelers arriving from the UK. As stated above, a few weeks after the first cases of the disease in Scandinavia emerged, WHO declared the situation a world pandemic.

In May 2022, at the time of finalizing this thesis, Denmark has had a total of 3 011 658 registered cases and 5581 registered deaths, Norway 1 424 179 registered cases and 2871 registered deaths while Sweden has had 2 498 388 registered cases and 18 656 registered deaths (Retrieved from ECDC, 2022). As a mean of reference, Denmark has 5,8 million inhabitants, Norway 5,4 million inhabitants and Sweden 10,3 million inhabitants. The vast majority of the cases in Denmark and Norway are from the later waves of the pandemic, where the respective societies opened up after having been more or less in lockdowns. Moreover, as pointed out by Andersson and Aylott, most of the Covid-19 related deaths in Sweden occurred during the first wave of the pandemic (2020, p. 2). The purpose of introducing these numbers is solely to give more information about how Covid-19 emerged in the respective countries, not to act as arguments as to which country had the most successful strategy.

2.2. Brief overview of the strategies during the first wave

Here follows a brief overview of the Scandinavian states' strategies as they were in March through the early summer of 2020. The pandemic can, as has already been stated, be said to be a multi-level stress test (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 20) where the different strategies during the first wave can be described as an "every man for himself" type of situation. The reader will notice that Denmark's and Norway's initial strategies are similar whereas Sweden's differs. However, all three states certainly had the same goal of protecting their citizens but through different means.

First, in *Denmark*, the number of contaminated people had doubled ten times in size in only two days when Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced on March 11th 2020 that all kindergartens and schools were to be closed, no events or gatherings with more than 100 people were allowed and that everyone who could work from home should do so (Frederiksen, 2020a). With this, Denmark was one of the first European states to react and implement measures toward Covid-19 (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 23). A few days later, on March 14th 2020, Denmark went more or less into a lockdown. The government also announced that Denmark was closing its borders and reducing traveling capacity both by air, sea and ground. Both police and the national defense were to guard the borders. All foreigners without certain critical reasons were to be refused entry and sent back at the border control (Ibid).

In Denmark, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen together with Health Minister Magnus Heunicke fronted the Danish strategy towards Covid-19. Both ministers represent the political party of the Social Democrats. Alongside Frederiksen and Heunicke were also representatives from the Danish health authority, Sundhedsstyrelsen.

Similar to Denmark, the number of cases in *Norway* increased rapidly after the first case was discovered in late February of 2020. Around the same time as Denmark shut down, Norway did the same. On March 12th, Prime Minister Erna Solberg announced to the Norwegian people that the government was to implement the strictest and most interfering measures in peace time (Solberg, 2020a). This included closed kindergartens, schools, bars and restaurants and bans on events and large gatherings. In the following days, control measures were implemented at all internal borders (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 25).

Additionally, grandparents were strongly encouraged not to babysit their grandchildren and everyone entering Norway from countries outside the Nordics had to be in quarantine. Everyone working in the health sector was prohibited from traveling abroad. The press conference where all this was announced on March 12th 2020 took place at 1 pm and the new measures were implemented from 6 pm the same day (Solberg, 2020a). In other words, it all happened very quickly.

Norway's (now former) Prime Minister Erna Solberg was the front figure of the Norwegian Covid-19 strategy together with Health Minister Bent Høie. Other ministers were also present during the almost countless press conferences. Solberg and Høie both belong to the Conservative Party. Side by side with the ministers were also representatives from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI) and the Norwegian Directorate of Health (Helsedirektoratet).

Sweden on the other hand, chose a different, more liberal if one will, path during the first wave of the pandemic (Pierre, 2020, p. 479). Opposite to that of their Scandinavian neighbors, Sweden opted to keep the Swedish society relatively open, by not closing elementary schools, stores or restaurants (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 26). When (now former) Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven spoke to the Swedish people on March 22nd 2020, the only restrictions that were implemented were online schooling for upper secondary schools and universities and a ban for events and gatherings with more than 500 attendees (Löfven, 2020a). This was based on the overall goal to ensure that hospitals were not overly crowded, rather than stopping the spreading of the disease completely. As a result, another strategy was formed, rather than a goal in itself, to achieve herd immunity (i.e. that a large part of the citizens become immune to the disease) (Pierre, 2020, p. 482).

In contrast to Denmark and Norway, the ministers, including Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of the Social Democratic party, cannot be claimed to be the front figures of the Swedish strategy during the first wave of the pandemic. Instead, representatives from agencies such as the Public Health Agency of Sweden (FHM) and the Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) were the one leading the press conferences and the ones that were operationally responsible for the crisis management (Pierre, 2020, p. 483). To many, State Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell became the most prominent figure when it came to presenting, explaining and later also

defending the Swedish strategy (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 28). Why this was the case will be explained in the following section.

2.3. Crisis management organizations and prerequisites

Although very alike in so many ways, the way the Scandinavian states' crisis management organizations are constructed differ to a certain extent. Hence, the prerequisites for coming up with a strategy towards the pandemic can be argued to differ among the states. In this short section I will present both the structure of crisis management in the respective countries but also account for how the structure turned out during the Covid-19 pandemic.

To begin with, *Denmark's* crisis management structure relies on the "sectorial responsibility principle". This means that all authorities are responsible for crisis management for one's own sector. The principle includes all critical functions and responsibilities, political, administrative and those related to law (Beredskabsstyrelsen, 2020).

In Denmark there is also a specific law on epidemics. The purpose of this law is to protect the Danish population from communicable diseases. Covid-19 was added to this list of diseases in 2020 and the law was also revised so that the Danish government could implement more interfering measures to combat the disease (Coronakommissionen.com). The applied changes made it for instance possible for the Danish government to close schools, which was not possible in the earlier versions of the law.

In *Norway*, the crisis management is sprung out of the principle that whatever actor is responsible for a function under normal circumstances, is also responsible for it during crises (Askim & Bergström, 2021, p. 9). Shortly after the first cases had started to emerge in Norway, Prime Minister Solberg announced that it was going to be the Ministry of Justice that was to be responsible for the crisis management (Solberg, 2020c).

Similar to both Denmark and Sweden, Norway's constitution does not have governing guidelines regarding crises in peace time. However, Norway has a Communicable Disease Act that makes it possible for the Norwegian government to implement greatly interfering measures to combat particularly contagious and dangerous diseases. Covid-19 was declared as such a disease on January 31st 2020 in Norway (Coronakommissionen.com). If the disease is

spreading rapidly to a great part of Norway, the Directorate of Health can implement measures on short notice. This was the background used for the first Norwegian lockdown on March 12th 2020. Within the same Communicable Disease Act, the Norwegian government is given the mandate to enforce new laws with the purpose of protecting the Norwegian population (Ibid).

S*weden* has a vast system of autonomous agencies and the general idea of crisis management in Sweden is concerned with the "principle of responsibility". Just like as is the case in Denmark and Norway, the Swedish principle refers to that "the actor responsible for a certain activity under normal conditions is also responsible for that activity during a crisis" (Bynander & Becker, 2017, p. 7). Hence, in the event of a pandemic it is the Public Health Agency of Sweden together with the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency that are responsible.

The structure of the Swedish state is built upon a system of delegation and also a division of responsibility based on geographical matters (hence, each geographical region is responsible for its own region). Neither the geographical responsibility nor the "principle of responsibility" referred to above are established in Swedish law but has regardless of this turned out to be guiding crisis management in Sweden (Coronakommissionen.com). In Swedish law, there are certain special rules that are to be followed in times of crises. These special rules expand the government's mandate to act and enable for the government to implement interfering measures in order to counter a crisis. The type of crises that are referred to in these cases are related to war or the risk of war. A societal crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic was established as, is thus not listed as one of the types of crises which requires these special rules. This means that there are no special rules steering the government as to how to handle a pandemic. Instead, it should be handled as any other societal crisis. Consequently, this affected the mandate of the Swedish government during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, there is no mandate to proclaim state of national emergency as is possible to do in other European countries (Ibid).

Lastly, as for the Scandinavian and Nordic countries *fellow* crisis management, it is worth noting that in 2009, the Nordic countries signed the so-called "Haga declaration". The declaration has the common aim of maintaining a sturdy collaboration without any borders. The purpose is also to establish a common society that is less vulnerable and instead enable

for the Nordic countries to handle serious incidents and crises together (Msb.se). In other words, the Nordic idea has for the last decade been to tackle crises together and borderless.

The institutional framework for Nordic cooperation is to be found in the Nordic Council. The council was founded in 1952 and is in fact the oldest and most encompassing regional cooperation framework between states in the world (Hansson & Stefansdottir, 2021, p. 32). The overall stance is, like has already been mentioned, that the Nordic states are strongest when they stand together (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 41). As pointed out by Hansson and Stefansdottir however, the Nordic states were not prepared to be facing the same societal crisis at the same time (2021, p. 30).

Until now, this thesis has introduced the topic and provided the reader with relevant background information of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Scandinavian states' first responses to combat it and the prerequisites for their crisis management.. The fact that the strategies differed is part of the puzzle I am aiming to solve. In addition, as I have mentioned in the introductory chapter, my objective for the thesis is to explore whether identity had something to do with it.

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter will present the theoretical framework for the thesis. This thesis applies discourse analysis to the topic of national identity, crisis management and Scandinavian cooperation. As discourse analysis is an analytical approach focusing on how language produces and shapes versions of reality, I claim that this is the most suitable approach for my thesis. I make this claim based on the notion that this thesis takes the theoretical standpoint of arguing that the identities of the Scandinavian states are shaped by discourses that are reproduced by the states. These discourses influenced the crisis management and strategies implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic and within these is where the representations of identity are to be found. In this case, the representations are formulated and produced by state officials in speeches and statements. These are not just any representations of national identity, but *dominant* identity representations that have been produced and re-produced over a long period of time for the respective states. This means that the occurrence of national identity within the states' strategies and policies toward the Covid-19 pandemic is to be

expected. This is why my research question refers to in *what ways* the national identities are expressed in the strategies, not whether or not the strategies do express national identities.

First, since the concept of identity is the main focus of the thesis, this chapter will discuss identity within International Relations (IR) theory. Then, the theory and linkage between national identity, crisis management and strategy implementation will be presented. In this part I will also present what is typically written about Danish, Norwegian and Swedish dominant national identities. The chapter will introduce the theories of constructivism and poststructuralism, which includes central theoretical claims of importance to this thesis, especially on the importance of language and identity. The poststructuralist theory approach in particular provides analytical tools to proceed with the analysis of the thesis. Moreover, as poststructuralism and discourse analysis are deeply connected, it is important to provide the reader with the main theoretical claims of poststructuralism (Hansen, 2016, p. 97). Further on, the chapter will introduce some central theoretical claims about discourse in IR. Lastly, a summary of the framework will conclude the chapter along with some reflections on how this thesis fits in with already existing literature. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, pp. 3-4) state that discourse should not be detached from the concept's theoretical and methodological foundations. Therefore, discourse analysis is applied both in terms of theory and method in this thesis and will thus also be discussed in the upcoming chapter on methods.

A large part of the readings I have used for this chapter has described the relationship between identity representations and policy in general but foreign policy in particular. Applied to my study, I consider crisis management strategies and policies to be interchangeable with foreign policy or other policies. Therefore, I argue that the research of other scholars on national identity and foreign policies can be applied to my research on representations of national identity and crisis management strategies.

3.1. Identity in IR theory

Whereas different states' methods of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic is quite a new topic, identity in IR theory is not. Rather on the contrary, identity in the international system is by some said to be central of our understanding of international politics and is commonly used when analyzing states' behaviors (Berenskoetter, 2010, p. 1).

One example of this is the notion that state identity can be said to be the foundation of states' interests, which in turn affects their behavior (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2014, p. 1). It can be viewed as constituted by norms and cultures, but can, according to some scholars, too often be made into sociological questions, where the idea of identity refers to how people are or how they live. The focus should instead be on the fact that identity is a case of discursive and symbolic construction, argues Ole Wæver (2002, p. 25).

Many scholars and theories within the IR discipline are concerned with the idea that identity and language are deeply interlinked with one another. One theory concerned with this is constructivism. Constructivism emerged in the 1980's with the Cold War as a historical backdrop. When the Cold War faded, some IR scholars started to seek answers as to why it had starting to fade and as a result of not finding satisfying answers in the traditional IR theories, the idea of social construction emerged. Constructivism offered criticism toward the traditional IR theories' static material assumptions. Instead, constructivism offers a social dimension to international relations and acknowledges the possibility of change (Fierke, 2016, p. 162). According to constructivists, international relations and the actors within it can be viewed as social constructions. This idea consists of two parts. The first part is the construction itself. Construction occurs when something, a subject or object, is brought into being. When this subject or object, for instance a state, is brought into being it naturally gains some meaning and function within a certain context. The second part is the social part. This comes into play when the subject or object is given another meaning or function in a social context. This could be through norms, social values and cultures. Thus, a state might be constructed of natural materials but is given a historical, cultural and political form from existing in the social world that is the world we live in (Fierke, 2016, p. 163). Constructivism highlights the importance of norms, rules and language.

Another theory concerned with social construction and language within the discipline of IR is poststructuralism. One important difference however is that poststructuralists view the world as constructed in and through text and language and that there is nothing outside of the text. Constructivists on the other hand claim that it is possible to find hard evidence and test theories. Similar to constructivism, poststructuralism also emerged as a theory in the 1980s and during the fourth debate of IR. According to Campbell and Bleiker, poststructuralism is, as most IR theories are, concerned with the role of the state and particularly the analysis of the "practices of statecraft". The practices of statecraft have made the state important within IR

(especially through what poststructuralists refer to as the mainstream approaches). When analyzing the state's role, discourse comes in handy as the main tool of analysis, argue poststructuralists. The concept of discourse is, according to poststructuralism, to be understood as a "specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible" (Campbell & Bleiker, 2016, p. 199). The discursive production of the state's role can therefore be said to be the focus of the poststructuralist approach.

The main ontological claim in poststructuralism is the significance of language. "Things", like states, are provided with meaning and purpose through language. In poststructuralism, language is both social and political and is understood as "constitutive for what is brought into being" (Hansen, 2006, p. 17). By social, Hansen means that language is an array of codes with the purpose of making oneself comprehensible. By political, Hansen holds that language is an opportunity for states to produce and reproduce identities of choice whilst excluding others (2006, p. 18). Thus, through language, states can either include or exclude identities. Another claim about language in poststructuralism is that language is "a kind of practice" (Shapiro, cited in Hansen, 2016, p. 96). This claim leads to the notion that one should not ask whether a statement is true or false, but rather ask and review which norms and values or, as is relevant to my case, identities are being created as a result of the statement (Hansen, 2016, p. 96).

In other words, language is a powerful tool for states. As the objective of this thesis is to explore how representations of dominant national identities were expressed in the Scandinavian states' Covid-19 strategies, it feels natural to opt for a poststructuralist approach. Moreover, as it was poststructuralists that brought discourse analysis to the discipline of IR, it makes even more sense since discourse analysis is the chosen method for the thesis (Hansen, 2016, p. 95). It was because of these assumptions of the power of language that I have presented, that poststructuralist introduced discourse analysis to the IR discipline (Ibid, p. 96).

Scholar Lene Hansen has done substantial work on identity, foreign policy, discourse and poststructuralism. In her book from 2006, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War,* she holds that language is an unstable system consisting of signs that create meaning by a common construction of identity and difference. Ergo, because language is

considered to be inherently unstable, the construction of identity also is. Thus, the application of discourse can strive at producing meaning to structure but, however, never create absolute stability. There will in other words always be instabilities when analyzing language through discourse analysis. Identities are not fixed, but in constant change. Hence, my approach to identities in this thesis is not static and I acknowledge that identities are a constructed phenomenon that changes.

Another important piece of the puzzle to understand identity within the field of IR, is the idea of the Self and the Other(s) and how identity is relational. States' identities also provide, according to Bruce Cronin, a frame of reference for political leaders to structure their relationship with other states (p. 18, 1999). It is not only the Self (the state in this case) which determines national identity according to the theory of poststructuralism, but also the Other. David Campbell holds that any state's identity is dependent on the separation between the Self and the Other (1998, p. 352). Thus, by viewing the Self in relation to the Other, another crucial dimension of understanding identity and policy is added, and further meaning is given to the identity of the Self.

The relationship between the Self and the Other and how it relates to the reproduction of identity is also explored by Ole Wæver. Wæver holds that a large part of poststructuralism is concerned with Self/Other relations. However, even though identities are often shaped by contrast to Others, one should not be *too* occupied with finding the opposite Other, or as Wæver puts it, an antagonist (2002, p. 24). Rather, Wæver argues, it is also rewarding to study friends, neighbors and somewhat like minded in order to give a broader picture to the Self (Ibid). Therefore, comparing the similar neighboring Scandinavian states, as will be done throughout this thesis, with one another is useful to understand the respective national identities. Moreover, Lene Hansen also argues that the Self can have several Selves within oneself, depending on who the Other is. Hence, to once again use the example of Denmark, Denmark as a state can view itself differently when comparing to Norway or Sweden because of the different natures of the Other.

According to Ole Wæver, national discourse of concepts of "we", such as that of a state in this particular case, can when applied to a medium or minor state (as the Scandinavian states) explain their problems and dilemmas (Wæver and Hansen, 2002, p. 20). Applied to this thesis, the concept of "we" can be referred to national identity. Hence the choice of using

discourse analysis as a way of explaining the Scandinavian states' problem or dilemma, which in this case is the Covid-19 pandemic. This is also emphasized by the statement that by uncovering and presenting patterns of thought for a certain country, one is one step closer to make the country's actions more apprehensible (2002, p. 26).

History is also an important building block regarding the understanding of identity, especially according to a poststructuralist approach holds Hansen (2006, p. 55). History and historical experiences are of particular importance when it comes to dominant national identities, since arguably, identities can only become dominant once they have been produced and re-produced throughout history. By making references to historical experiences, as we will discover that both the Danish and Norwegian prime ministers did in their speeches during the pandemic, one is establishing and re-establishing representations of national identity which in turn makes them more powerful (Ibid).

In summary, this section has provided two examples of IR theories dealing with identity, constructivism and post-structuralism and emphasized the importance of language in constructing identities. Moreover, it has identified history as an important factor in understanding national identity. In the next section I will establish and reflect on the link between identity, policies and crisis management to develop the arguments conveyed in this section further.

3.2. Identity, policies and crisis management

Scholar Lene Hansen makes the claim that "identities are simultaneously a product and the justification for foreign policy" (Hansen, 2006, p. 26). As was presented in the introduction to the chapter, this can be applied to this thesis by switching foreign policy with crisis management and strategies toward the Covid-19 pandemic. When doing so, her statement would mean that the Scandinavian states' identities are simultaneously a product and the justification for their respective Covid-19 strategies. It can also be assumed that differences in identities can explain differences in policies. In Hansen's and Wæver's joint book "European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States", it is argued that structures of meaning can delineate policies (2002).

The concept of identities also relies upon the fact that they are created dependent on human and political agency. According to Hansen, national identities such as "being Danish" would not exist if the concept was not re-produced (2006, p. 26). National identities are created and exist because of actions done by e.g. citizens, stakeholders and politicians which in turn act that way because of the idea of national identity which exists for their respective nation.

 In order to understand *Denmark* and Danish identity, the year 1864 seems to be fundamental. According to scholar Uffe Østergaard, during the Second Schleswig War in 1864, Denmark lost not only the war but also a third of its territory. Thus, the state lost a lot of its power. It became a national trauma which has, according to Østergaard, contributed to shaping Denmark's national identity (2012, p. 5).

Moreover, Denmark was, just like Norway but unlike Sweden, in the Second World War (WWII). In 1940, Denmark was invaded and occupied by Germany. The military occupation lasted until the end of WWII in 1945. This has, according to Swedish author Bengt Lindroth, also been contributing to Danish identity. There were many Danes both during and in the aftermath of the occupation who experienced it as extremely humiliating to be occupied and also experienced that the government did not fight back (Lindroth, 2021 p. 92). Østergaard writes that it was the same feeling after the Second Schleswig War (2012, p. 5). Hence, it can be said that the historical experience of these two wars have influenced the Danish national identity both by affecting the importance for the Danish government to take care of their population and come together as one when in crisis, but also for the government to always justify the measures being taken.

As for understanding *Norway* and Norwegian identity, it is important to look at the impact of the state only having been sovereign since 1905. Before, Norway was under Danish and Swedish rule. In 1814, Danish rule ended and in 1905 the union between Norway and Sweden was dissolved. One assumption based on this could be that Norwegians have slightly more nationalism than the other Scandinavian states, simply because of all years in occupation and unions with other countries.

What has also made the Norwegian people more close knit, is the heritage from WWII. As stated above, Norway was also invaded and occupied during WWII. On the contrary from Denmark however, the Norwegian state and people put up a fight against Germany. Even

though the state was still occupied, there was a huge network of resistors who worked tirelessly toward the German leadership, a form of "dugnad" (a concept that will be explained further in the analysis). Some claim that this has also helped in forming Norwegian identity which can be said to be founded on the Norwegian people coming together and working for a common cause.

In terms of both size and population, *Sweden* is the largest state out of the three (if the Danish territory Greenland is not taken into account). This has led to the state being referred to as "big brother", at least in the relationship between Sweden and Norway (Nipen, 2020). Researcher Johan Strang argues that Sweden is more self-confident than the other Nordic states (2020).

Building on the idea of Sweden being a country of self-confidence, Sweden is also traditionally known to be a moral super-power internationally. It is usually pointed out that Sweden views itself as a natural role model and often on its own initiative take on the responsibility of guiding other states in international matters (Dahl, 2006, p. 895). This shapes and re-produces the national identity of Sweden as being exceptional, which will be analyzed later in the thesis.

Hence, tracing back to what Hansen stated about the reproduction of "being Danish", I will give an example. Behind the Danish government's strategy toward Covid-19 lies actions and choices taken on the basis of years of the re-production of Danish identity while putting forward the Covid-19 strategy adds to re-produce Danish identity once more. In other words, the production and re-production of identity can be seen as a circle. Or, as Hansen puts it, as a constitutive relationship between identity and policies (2006, p. 6). This is central to my analytical undertaking of this thesis' topic, since by uncovering the construction of identities, insight is given into how the states legitimize their policies and strategies toward the pandemic. E.g., to use the example of Denmark again, when the Danish government opts to emphasize the responsibility of the collective to contribute and follow implemented restrictions, they are both establishing and re-establishing the idea of Denmark as being a nation where the people come together for a common cause in times of crises.

Accepting the above notion about political agency and the political production and reproduction of discourses and the construction of identity is of importance to this thesis.

Hansen applies this concept to foreign policy as the political agency, but I argue that it is also possible to state that strategy and response toward the pandemic can be political agents. After all, another word for strategy and state response could be policy. Hansen further lays out the explanation that policy and identity can be seen as ontologically interlinked (2006).

In other words, identity can be seen as both an explanation as to why policies (or in this case, strategies) are created and as a product of established strategies. Hence, the Scandinavian states' strategies to combat the virus can be argued to be based on the respective identities but also reproduce the identities.

3.3. Discourse as theory

There is no universal definition of discourse, as it is a concept used throughout a wide spread of disciplines. However, one of the most influential scholars on the topic, Michel Foucault, defines discourse as "(…) a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 12). It is also argued by several scholars on the topic that discourses represent the shared meaning of different phenomena and that the shared meaning is established through *language* (Neumann, 2008, p. 61). In other words, language is key to discourse.

Scholar Jennifer Milliken presents three theoretical claims about discourse in IR theory. The first relates to what is claimed above by Hansen, that discourses are to be understood as systems of signification which construct social realities (Milliken, 1999, p. 229). The second theoretical claim by Milliken is that discourses in IR are productive and reproductive. Again, this can also be found in Hansen's work who holds that language's nature is productive. The third and last theoretical claim provided by Milliken is that discourses are not fixed, but are unstable and transform over time (1999, p. 230). In the next chapter, methodology and methods, I will discuss discourse analysis as a method.

3.4. Summing up the framework and contribution to existing literature

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework of this thesis and provided the reader with some central theoretical claims on identity and discourse in IR theory. Further I have also presented how discourse can produce dominant national identity which in turn affects

policies and crisis management. I claimed that not only do discourse and language produce national identity, it also *re-produces* national identity which has been explained in this chapter. Furthermore, I emphasized the role that language plays in terms of shaping national identity and how national identity in turn affect states' behavior. Since the theory of poststructuralism is even more concerned with the importance of language than constructivism, I have taken the stance that this thesis will use a poststructuralist approach to the analysis of the official discourse in the Scandinavian states concerning their Covid-19 strategies.

With this research, I aim to contribute to existing literature on the topics presented in the thesis. As the Covid-19 pandemic is still to some extent on-going and thus still very relevant, it is my belief that the thesis can contribute by adding to what has already been written within this field. Moreover, as was presented in the introduction, there is a common apprehension that Nordic cooperation is very strong and that whenever there is a crisis the Nordic states help each other. During the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, it became obvious that this apprehension was not always to be true. Therefore, it is my own apprehension that this thesis can add to existing literature on how at least the Scandinavian states can be so similar in many aspects, yet differ as much that 1) the states opt for different strategies during a crisis and 2) the idea of cooperation fails when a crisis threatens the own state.

4. Methodology and methods

This chapter will present, explain and discuss the methodology and the methods within it chosen for this research. The chosen methodology lays the foundation for the planning and execution of the research. Further, what types of methods and how they are used can be considered to be the basis of a research project. The goal for this research is to find out how representations of dominant national identities are expressed in the Scandinavian states' responses and strategies toward the Covid-19 pandemic. This will be done through the use of qualitative strategy and methods.

In the first part of this chapter, I will present my research interest, how my research question came about and also reflect on how I conducted the literature review. Next, I will present my data collection, before I will explain the choice of qualitative method, how discourse analysis

works as a method and go through the steps of discourse analysis I have performed in this thesis. When explaining the choice of qualitative method, I will also offer some comparison to quantitative methods as a way of arguing why qualitative methods was the natural choice for me. Lastly, this chapter will reflect on how to assure quality of data and also address limitations and ethical considerations related to this thesis and the research. Among other sources, Alan Bryman's book "Social Research Methods" (2016) has been particularly helpful in guiding me into the world of methodology and methods.

4.1. Reflections on research interest, research question and literature review

From the offset, I knew that I wanted to write about something connected to Sweden and Norway and their seemingly different ways of handling the Covid-19 pandemic. I was interested in this mainly because I had experienced the differences hands-on as a Swede living in Norway. It was puzzling to me that two countries that were seemingly so similar in many ways chose, at least at the beginning, completely different strategies. Thus, I knew that I wanted to make a comparative design where the phenomenon of the Covid-19 pandemic in at least two different countries was to be examined with the aim of seeking explanations to similarities and differences (Bryman, 2016, p. 65). At the beginning, I was not sure however if I were only to look at Sweden and Norway, all Nordic countries or include Denmark and focus on the Scandinavian countries. After performing some initial research on the matter, I came to the conclusion that it would be interesting and more dynamic to include Denmark in addition to Sweden and Norway. This choice will be elaborated on further on in this chapter. After I settled with the idea of doing my thesis on this topic, I started to think about potential reasons as to why the strategies differed. Again, after having done some initial research on the topic, the idea of adding the lens of identity to the case came up. I realized that this was the puzzle I wanted to solve, how representations of national identities were conveyed in the national Covid-19 strategies and if that could serve as an explanation as to why the strategies differed. Moreover, I was also curious to explore how it also potentially affected the lack of cooperation that was shown throughout the first wave of the pandemic.

As pointed out by Bryman, the first step in doing research, after having established an area of interest, is to come up with a general research question(s) (2016, p. 378). As is common, my research question has been re-formulated back and forth during the thesis process. In the beginning of the process, I kept the research question quite open in order to allow myself to

find the more narrow direction I was going for along the way. As the thesis work and research unfolded, the research question naturally became narrower. This is, according to Bryman, a common process especially in discourse analysis which is the main method of this thesis (2016, p. 532). Regardless of what strategy is opted for one however, it is important that the research question is narrow enough so that it can guide the researcher through the process. Moreover, sticking with a research question that is too open-ended might lead to confusion about the focus of the thesis not only for the researcher but also for the reader (2016, p. 78).

After having decided on my research interest and the first version of my research question, I began reviewing existing relevant literature. Bryman states that reviewing literature related to one's topic is a central stage when conducting research (2016, p. 90). I have done a narrative review, which is the most common form of literature review. The purpose is to get an overview of what has already been written within the field of study and for it to act as a springboard to the researcher's own research (2016, p. 91). For my literature review, I began by searching through my university's online library and Google Scholar. I used key words such as "national identity", "Covid-19" and "Nordic cooperation" and found numerous books, scholarly articles and media articles on the topic. Then, I skimmed through a great number of abstracts to acknowledge whether it was relevant for my research or not. I downloaded and saved the articles that I found relevant and made sure to loan the relevant books from the libraries of my university and other surrounding universities in Oslo. As I carried out my literature review, I kept taking notes from each article and book in order to make use of the review for the thesis itself. I have used and referred to the readings I did in this process throughout the thesis instead of dedicating a chapter or section of its own to solely the literature review. This is done because I believe it enables for a more dynamic way of using the literature review.

4.2. Data collection and sampling

This thesis uses a qualitative strategy in terms of the research. A qualitative strategy usually accentuates words in the data collection and the consecutive analysis (Bryman, 2016, pp. 32-33). Since this thesis focuses on how language can convey representations of dominant national identity, I make the claim that a qualitative strategy that focuses on words is a logical choice.

Qualitative research generally tends to use purposive sampling in terms of sampling strategies. Purposive sampling means that the researcher samples units to research on the basis that they are directly connected to the research question(s), instead of sample research on a random basis. In purposive sampling the research question(s) act like the guide to what units to sample while keeping the researcher's goals of the research in mind (Bryman, 2016, p. 408). In my case, I wanted to see how representations of dominant national identity were produced in official discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic and I therefore identified that the data for this thesis would consist of official speeches and statements from these official and influential people, such as political leaders (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, p. 12). Thus, I decided to collect data from official speeches and statements from the Scandinavian states' prime ministers, health ministers and also representatives from relevant authorities.

Depending on who was the prominent figure during the pandemic in the respective country, the data from Denmark and Norway mainly consists of speeches and statements from the prime ministers or other members of the minister cabinets whereas the data from Sweden mostly consists of statements from the state epidemiologist but also some speeches from the Swedish prime minister. All these texts have references to the respective Covid-19 strategies. I have collected speeches and statements from what is referred to as the first wave of the pandemic and I have defined this time period to March to July of 2020. The reason that I have chosen to focus my thesis on the first wave is based on two intentions. First, I believe that this delimitates the thesis' scope so that it does not get too broad. Secondly, the Scandinavian states' strategies differed the most in the beginning of the pandemic and I therefore argue that it makes for a more interesting and dynamic case to study.

Within purposive sampling, there are different distinctions that are mainly concerned with the decision of the sample size. For this thesis, I have used a non-sequential approach to sampling. A non-sequential approach to sampling can also be referred to as a "fixed purposive sampling strategy". This means that I as a researcher already at the beginning of my research had established my sample and that there throughout the research were just tiny additions to the sample. As already stated, I made the decision early on that my sample would consist of official discourse conveyed through speeches and documents by the respective states' governments and other authorities since this is where the dominant national identities are produced and re-produced. This approach contrasts to what is known as a sequential approach, where the researcher goes through more of an evolving process in terms of the

sample where the initial sample is added to as the research evolves. Both approaches are guided by the research question, it is the level of how fixed the sample is at the start of the research that differs (Bryman, 2016, p. 410).

All data used for this thesis was published openly on the internet. The speeches from Prime Ministers Mette Frederiksen, Erna Solberg and Stefan Löfven were found on the respective states' governments' webpages in the case of Norway (Regjeringen.no) and Sweden (Regeringen.se), whereas Frederiksen's speeches were to be found on the webpage Dansketaler.dk. On these same pages the speeches of the health ministers were also to be found. Hence, these are all easily accessible. The statements from Sweden's state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell during press conferences were typically cited in Swedish and international news media. These speeches and statements serve as the foundation of the analysis for the research question, "How did the Scandinavian states' responses and strategies toward the covid-19 pandemic express representations of dominant national identities?".

The data I have analyzed, e.g. the speeches and statements, were all in the speakers' native languages of Danish, Norwegian or Swedish. Dunn and Neumann argue that the researcher should not choose discourse analysis as one's analytical tools if one does not have the linguistic competency in place (2016, p. 14). As I am fluent in Swedish and can read and understand Danish and Norwegian well, I believe that I am linguistically competent enough to take on the challenge to translate all quotes I have been using in the analysis to English. To be transparent, I have added the original quotes in footnotes throughout the analysis. I will reflect further on this in the section on how I have assessed data quality.

4.3. Qualitative research and methods and discourse as method

I believe that since qualitative research places more emphasis on generating theory from research (as opposed to testing theory through research as is generally done in quantitative research) it is more suitable for my study (Bryman, 2016, p. 401). As a result of the nature of qualitative research, qualitative researchers are more inclined to provide descriptions and put emphasis on the context of the research compared to quantitative researchers. The emphasis on providing the reader with all relevant background information for the topic, thick descriptions and details of the settings in which the research takes place is important to the qualitative researcher. The reason for this is that within these descriptions and details, the

researcher can find significant information regarding the contexts where the behavior of the objects he or she is studying is shown (Bryman, 2016, p. 394). This serves as the reasoning behind this thesis' quite substantial background information and descriptions of not only Covid-19, but also the respective states' strategies, prerequisites for crisis management and what has already been written about their national identities. There is however a fine line between providing the right amount of relevant descriptions and being too occupied with what might be irrelevant details, or what is commonly referred to as "descriptive excess" (Bryman, 2016, p. 395). This is something for me as a researcher to be mindful about.

Discourse analysis is one example of qualitative methods and the main research method for this thesis. As has been already discussed in the theory chapter, discourse analysis focuses on language. A discourse analytical approach is, according to Phillips and Jørgensen, intertwined when it comes to theory and method (2002, p. 2). Thus, I will share some brief reflections on using discourse analysis as a method too.

As was mentioned in the theory chapter, poststructuralists brought discourse analysis to the discipline of IR. Discourse analysis, Hansen argues, "seeks to provide a 'road map' that shows as accurately as possible the main foreign policy positions and the representations that sustain them" (2016, p. 103). Foreign policy can be switched to Covid-19 policies and strategies and through this, Hansen's statement can be related to this thesis. When applying a poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis as is done in this thesis, the source for the analysis is the texts presented in the data collection. By using these already existing texts instead of producing my own texts through conducting and transcribing interviews, I am able to spend more time on the analysis which was favorable due to the limited time frame of the writing of the thesis (Bryman, 2016, 534).

4.3.1. Research design: Number of Selves, temporal perspective and number of events

When developing a research design for discourse analysis research, three choices in the form of three dimensions need to be settled. These dimensions, as put by Hansen, are number of Selves, temporal perspective and number of events (Hansen, 2006, p. 75).

Number of Selves refers to how many actors that will be examined in the research. In this case, the actors are the Scandinavian states. The Selves in this research are thus Denmark, Norway and Sweden. As the number of events is one, the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the temporal perspective the same, one can make a comparative research design for this thesis. According to Hansen, this option, when one chooses a comparative study of Selves addressing the same event is called the "multiple Self option" (2006, p. 76). As was presented in the theory chapter, one can only understand the Self by understanding the Other(s). Therefore, part of the method to this thesis will be to also view how the respective states related their chosen strategies to those of the Other states and how this further influence national identity.

For the temporal perspective a single, significant moment in history can be chosen. The chosen moments tend to have "a striking character and be the subject of intense political concern" (2006, p. 78). This is a fitting description for the Covid-19 pandemic. When opting to choose one single moment, the research could gain more complexity by adding multiple Selves, as has been done for this study. As mentioned earlier, the choice to focus solely on the very beginning of the pandemic is both to narrow the research down but also because it the first phase naturally was the most significant as it was a new situation for the states.

The third and final dimension, the number of events, goes hand in hand with the temporal perspective in this case. If one event, in this case the Covid-19 pandemic, is chosen, logically the temporal perspective becomes focused on one moment.

4.4. Process of analysis

For the analysis, the process has been as following:
First, I read through the documents and speeches in my data collection. While doing so, I looked both for regularities such as reoccurring themes and phrases but also for significant words or references that appeared to stand out. I also looked for sentences starting with "Denmark/Norway/Sweden is…" or "Danes/Norwegians/Swedes are…" as these are direct examples of how the messenger conveys state identity through language. Therefore, these were the easiest to discover and were consequently what I started to look for. However, there are also examples of more subtle wordings on state's identities. These are a bit trickier to detect. This way of starting the analysis is referred to as using an open coding approach.

When using an open coding approach, the researcher identifies concepts and categories as one is reading instead of having pre-set categories (Strauss & Corbin, cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 574). When I started to identify concepts, I grouped them into categories. These categories were initially made out of the respective states. Ergo, I grouped all concepts found in the data from Denmark in the "Denmark category" and so forth. This made sense to me to begin with. Then, as the coding continued, I identified other categories. These were based on three different relationships for the respective states in which the data provided different representation of national identity. The relationships were the relationship between the state and the population, the relationship between the state and the crisis and lastly the relationship between the state and the rest of the world. As opposed to going with my initial idea of conducting the analysis (state by state), I believe that dividing it into the different categories of relationships enables for a more dynamic and interesting analysis.

4.5. Assessing data quality

Reliability and validity are two important criteria in establishing the quality of research. However, Bryman points out that it can be difficult to achieve this in qualitative research (2016, p. 383). Reliability refers to whether the research's results are possible to repeat or not (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). Even though this might be easier in quantitative research, I still believe that the results of this thesis are repeatable. I base this firstly on the notion that I have thoroughly explained how I have collected and analyzed the data in this research. Secondly, all data I have used is accessible on online platforms open to the public. I have also made sure to include all quotes used in my final analysis in their original languages as footnotes throughout the analysis, to be transparent to other researchers with knowledge of the Scandinavian languages. Thirdly, I have used discourse analysis which is a commonly used method with available guidelines that are easy to access and use. In other words, it is possible for another researcher to collect and analyze the same data as I have done using the same method.

Validity refers to the trustworthiness of the research and the results. Moreover, validity is concerned with the integrity of the research's conclusions (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). This is often difficult to achieve in qualitative research as one generally operates with small samples as is the case for this thesis. As an alternative that is more applicable to qualitative research, one can instead of validity look at the transferability of the study. By providing what is referred to

as a "thick description" of the research's case and sample, which I believe that I have done, transferability is assured (Bryman, 2016, p. 381).

Moreover, it is also important to reflect on the researcher's own role in the study. Therefore, I provide you as a reader with information about me as a researcher in order to ensure transparency and for you to understand as to why I might weigh and interpret my analysis the way I do.

As a Swedish citizen living in Norway throughout the pandemic, there is always going to be a risk of me not being fully objective when opting for this type of topic where both states are discussed and analyzed. However, this is a very common situation to be in when it comes to social research. Moreover, it is also fair to mention that because of my citizenship and the state where I live, I am more invested in and have more knowledge about Sweden and Norway than of Denmark. This is true both in terms of the states in general and their responses to the pandemic in particular. Therefore, it is crucial that I am mindful of my own position and provide full disclosure to the reader, as has now been done. On the other hand, it could also be considered to be a strength as I have personal insight and experience from the puzzle I am trying to solve.

4.6. Limitations and ethical considerations

No research is possible without any limitations. Thus, this is also the case for this thesis. Here I will present some limitations I have identified throughout the process of writing the thesis. Thereafter I will reflect on ethical considerations related to the thesis.

One limitation of the thesis could be that I have chosen not to include all 5 Nordic states. By opting to go solely for the Scandinavian states, Finland and Iceland have been left out. As has already been mentioned, the region is commonly referred to as the Nordics and Nordic cooperation is more commonly expressed then Scandinavian cooperation, which perhaps argue in favor of including Finland and Iceland as well. However, I am confident that I made the right choice for my study. The reasoning behind this was both concerned with keeping the research narrow and also related to the question of language. First, if all 5 states had been included, the research would have been very broad which would have affected the sharpness of the research. Moreover, whereas Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are all similar languages

which I am familiar of and comfortable with, Finnish and Icelandic are not, and even though Swedish is an official language in Finland almost all speeches and articles are in Finnish. Therefore, it would be far more room for errors and loss of meaning if speeches and documents from these states would have been included.

Regarding ethical considerations, by using public documents as the main sources for data, a lot of ethical considerations are eliminated compared to relying on interviews or personal information conducted through surveys. However, it is important to reflect on the fact that all speeches and documents which have been analyzed in this thesis have been in other languages than English as opposed to the language of this thesis. As a native Swedish speaker and settled in Norway, it is my firm belief that my skills in the Scandinavian languages are proficient. However, surely some dimensions are perhaps lost when I myself translate Danish, Norwegian and Swedish to English to perform discourse analysis. I therefore acknowledge that some meaning might have been lost in the process, even though I have tried to avoid this to the best of my abilities.

5. Analysis and findings

I have claimed that there is a link between identity, policy and crisis management. This chapter will now take on the analysis of my research where I will demonstrate this link in my case by conducting the discourse analysis that I have discussed in the chapters of theory and methodology and methods. In this chapter I will explore how representations of dominant national identities are reproduced by the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish states and expressed in their Covid-19 strategies. This chapter thus aims at answering the thesis' research question:

How did the Scandinavian states' responses and strategies toward the covid-19 pandemic express representations of dominant national identities?

As was presented in the methodology and methods chapter, speeches and official documents from the Scandinavian governments and authorities are the main subject of analysis. Within these, the states' policies on combatting the pandemic are presented. I have chosen to apply discourse analysis to detect recurring representations of the states' identities. As the speeches

are in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish and I am a native Swedish speaker living in Norway I have translated the speeches to English to the best of my ability. As has been pointed out earlier, the original quotes are to be found in their original language as footnotes throughout the analysis.

The analysis will be done by looking at speeches and official statements from the front figures of the pandemic in the different states as well as related articles and documents. By front figures I mean in the case of Denmark and Norway, their respective Prime Ministers Mette Frederiksen and Erna Solberg and also health ministers and for Sweden mainly their state epidemiologist but also Prime Minister Stefan Löfven. As was presented in the previous chapters, I have made a deliberate choice to focus on the first phase of the pandemic. Hence, the documents and statements which will be analyzed are mainly from March through June of 2020. The first cases in Scandinavia occurred already in the beginning of February but it was in March that the governments started implementing strict measures and formulating their different strategies.

In terms of structure, I will put forward the analysis in three different sections or subchapters. The sections represent three different relationships for the respective states and how they identify themselves within them. I refer to the state as the government in these three relationships. First, the relationship between the state and the population will be explored. This is followed by a second section on the relationship between the state and the crisis, where the way the states view themselves as crisis managers will be analyzed. The third and last section will take on the relationship between the state and the surrounding world, starting first with the smaller world of Scandinavia and then the rest of the world. The notion is that the Scandinavian governments and authorities reproduce representations of their dominant national identities within the different relationships, which is expressed through the speeches and documents. As was presented in the methodology chapter, I have chosen to carry out and present the analysis not country by country but rather divide into these three relationships. The reason for this is that it makes for a more dynamic way of presenting the analysis. Moreover, it also sheds light on the similarities and differences between the states in a clearer manner. Furthermore, I have made the choice of starting with the relationship within the countries themselves before moving on to external relationships.

Before the analysis is carried out, I would like to stress that the purpose of this endeavor is not to choose side or reflect on which strategy was better or worse than the other. Instead, the chapter aims at comparing the findings and reflect on similarities and differences in terms of representations of identity which can act as explanations of how the Scandinavian states' Covid-19 strategies were similar or differed.

5.1. The state and the population

This first section of the analysis will take on the relationship between the state and the population and analyze how the respective states reproduce representations of their dominant national identities in this relationship through their strategies toward the Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, this section looks at how the states (including the government and other authorities) view and convey themselves in relation to the population. As the reader will see, the relationship and the role of the state differ in some aspects in the respective states and are similar in some.

5.1.1. Trust

In democracies, as all three Scandinavian states are, the relationship between the state and the population is precarious, as argued by Klingeman and Fuchs (p. 2, 1995). This argument is based on the very core of democracy. That is the fact that the citizens appoint their political representatives through elections and if the majority is not satisfied, representatives will not be re-elected (Ibid). The relationship between the state, as in the government, and the population is hence fragile and extremely important.

Another characteristic and important factor for the relationship between the state and the population in democracies is trust (Klingeman & Fuchs, 1995, p. 294, 300). Trust is a topic that has been frequently debated and researched in many studies and is part of the social capital of a society (Andreasson, 2017, p. 10). The level of social trust in all Scandinavian countries (and the rest of the Nordic countries) is overall high and does in fact stand out when compared to other parts of the world (Andreasson, 2017, p. 8). Therefore, it is interesting to look into how the representations of the Scandinavian states' identities are shown in how they convey their relationship with their citizens in terms of trust. Trust in the relationship between the state and the population does not only mean in terms of whether the population trusts the

state or not. It is also about the other way around, thus to what extent the state trusts the population. Hence, applied to this thesis, trust does not only relate to the level of trust the population expressed for the state doing their best to protect them, but also the level of trust the state had regarding the amount of responsibility put on the population.

When Covid-19 started to spread in March of 2020 within Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the initial responses presented during several press conferences differed. As has already been presented earlier in the thesis, in a matter of just a few days, Denmark and Norway more or less shut their societies down. Prime Ministers Mette Frederiksen of Denmark and Erna Solberg of Norway both announced in different steps throughout the middle of March that the state borders, schools, kindergartens, gyms, restaurants, bars, spas et cetera were to be closed and that all larger social gatherings were to be banned (Creutz et al, pp. 23-26, 2021). These measures were greatly interfering in the Danish and Norwegian citizens' lives.

Whereas the governments of both Denmark and Norway operated with bans, rules and restrictions, the government of Sweden rather implemented advice and recommendations. Certainly, there were bans, rules and restrictions in Sweden too but not to the same extent as in Denmark and Norway (Andersson & Aylott, p. 11, 2020). This presents an interesting case of how the states produce identity representations of themselves in terms of trust. Researcher Therese Sefton poses the following question in a blog post on the Peace Research Institute of Oslo's webpage: "(…) do Swedish authorities have too much trust in the public? Can people really be trusted to act responsibly without the more extreme measures seen in Norway? On the other hand, one can ask if the Norwegian government doesn't trust its population to follow recommendations and therefore sees the need to implement stricter rules?" (PRIO.org). As Denmark also implemented strict rules and restrictions, the same question asked about Norway can be applied to Denmark. Thus, this question points at to which degree the government trusts the people as was mentioned previously.

Later on in the analysis, I will elaborate on the importance of personal responsibility in Sweden, but I will already now offer some reflections on how this is related to this section's theme of trust. As Sefton writes, Swedish authorities seemed to have a great amount of trust in their citizens. Scholar Jon Pierre confirms this and argues that the Swedish authorities imposed nudges to encourage a change of social behavior (e.g. by providing restrictions regarding number of attendees at larger events, the idea is that people will understand that one

should perhaps not attend large events at all in order to stay safe). Moreover, Pierre also argues that even though there were mostly recommendations and advice, there was always the threat of the authorities having to be forced to implement stricter and more severe measurements if the recommendations and advice was not followed by the population. Such strategy contributes to getting the population to follow the recommendation and advice (Pierre, 2020, p. 485).

In the speeches of the Danish and Norwegian prime ministers there are more examples of the opposite way of viewing trust, e.g. to what level the population trusts the government. Both Frederiksen and Solberg provide justifications for their implemented measures in order to gain trust from their respective population. In Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's speech from March 11th 2020 she says "I am aware that what I, together with the administrative authorities, ask of the Danish people today are large requests. Extremely interfering. We do it, because it works."[1] (Frederiksen, 2020a). Here, Frederiksen acknowledges that the measures taken by the Danish government to combat the virus have large consequences in the Danish people's lives, but she justifies it by stating that she and the government see that the measures they are implementing are working. One can then say that she calls upon the Danish population to trust her, the government and the administrative authorities here.

Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg makes similar statements in her speech at a press conference regarding the implementation of economic measures on March 13th 2020. Solberg says that "We are implementing severe restrictions affecting people's everyday lives and activities in order to slow this down. Our utmost duty is to do what we can in order to prevent spreading of the disease"[2] (Solberg, 2020b). Just like Frederiksen, Solberg here provides the population with assurances that they, as in the Norwegian government, will do their very best to protect the population by slowing the spreading of the virus down. Again, this can be seen as a call upon the Norwegian population to trust her and the administrative authorities.

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[1] "Jeg er klar over, at det, jeg, sammen med myndighederne, beder danskene om i dag, er store ting. Meget ingribende. Vi gør det, fordi det har effekt", Frederiksen 2020a.

[2] "Det vi gjør for å bremse dette, er å legge sterke restriksjoner på folks hverdagsliv og aktiviteter. Vår fremste jobb er å gjøre det vi kan for å begrense smitte", Solberg 2020b.

5.1.2. Samfundssind, dugnad and personal responsibility

Furthermore, within the Scandinavian strategies, there are different focuses on where the responsibility for combatting the virus lies. As will be shown in this section, the Danish and Norwegian governments put larger responsibility on the collective whereas the Swedish government emphasizes the responsibility of the individual. Hence, perhaps, the question of trust is rather about this matter than trust itself.

Throughout the speeches by Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen during the spring of 2020 one word keeps coming back: *samfundssind*. The word is also frequently seen in news articles from that time period. Samfundssind is a compound noun of "samfund" (society) and "sind" (mind) and can be translated to "community spirit" (BBC.com, 2020). The word dates back to WWII where it was used as a call for solidarity and has since then rarely been used by a prime minister in Denmark. After it was first used by Frederiksen on March 11th 2020 during a speech, it became what can be referred to as the pandemic's "catchphrase" in Denmark.

In what is often referred to as the speech of the first lock down related to Covid-19 in Denmark, Mette Frederiksen said on March 11th 2020 that "We will make use of *samfundssind.* We will make use of helpfulness. I would like to thank citizens, businesses, organizers, organizations for volunteers, everyone who has, up until now, shown that it is exactly what we have in Denmark – samfundssind. We will make use of that during the next couple of weeks."[3], (Frederiksen, 2020a). In this speech, Frederiksen announced that, amongst other things, all kindergartens, schools and universities were to be closed, greatly interfering travel restrictions to be implemented as well as restrictions regarding participants at large gatherings. Later in the same speech, Frederiksen states that "The Danes have started. We show samfundssind. That is the way to go."[4] (Ibid). The day after, on March 13th, Frederiksen again shows her gratitude towards the Danish people for showing samfundssind and before she presents new restrictions, she states that "Before I present them, from the bottom of my heart I want to thank for the samfundssind that you are showing right now.

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[3] "Vi får brug for samfundssind. Vi får brug for hjælpsomhed. Jeg vil gjerne sige tak til borgere, virksomheder, arrangører, frivillige organisationer – alle, der indtil nu har vist, at det er præcis det, vi har i Danmark – samfundssind. Det får vi brug for i de kommende uger.", Frederiksen 2020a.
[4] "Danskerne er i gang. Vi udviser samfundssind. Det er det, der fungerer." Frederiksen 2020a.

Because samfundssind is a very big part of the solution in order for us to get through the crisis which we are now in"[5] (Frederiksen, 2020b). Thus, in these examples, Frederiksen, representing the Danish government, explicitly says that Danish people have a large sense of community spirit, which then can be translated into stating that it is part of the Danish identity.

Due to the fact that samfundssind had not been commonly used since and was introduced during that time, the word had a strong connotation to WWII for the Danish people. Then, when Frederiksen chose to use the word throughout the pandemic, naturally the word gained another connotation for Danes – the Covid-19 pandemic. By calling upon samfundssind, community spirit, Frederiksen encouraged the collective of the Danish population to take responsibility. The word choice proved to be powerful for and give meaning to the Danish people (the word was even unofficially appointed "Word of the year" by Frederiksen in 2020). However, it is fair to say that some of the power and meaning was naturally given to the word because of the history of it. Even though not every now-living Dane has direct experience of WWII, it is still part of the Danish history and has contributed to shaping Danish identity. As was introduced in the theoretical chapter, history, Lene Hansen argues, is also central to poststructuralist understanding of discourse (p. 55, 2006). Thus, history and historical references have a role in terms of shaping national identity. So, when Frederiksen chooses to time and time again refer to samfundssind during a crisis for the first time since WWII it will obviously have strong meaning. To illustrate the connotation further, Frederiksen even referred to samfundssind and the use of it during WWII in her speech on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Denmark's liberation from Germany in 2020 (Frederiksen, 2020c). Frederiksen also makes the statement that "our history shows what we are made of"[6] and refers to the history of WWII (Ibid).

Connected to the concept of samfundssind, is the Danish word *hinanden.* Hinanden means each other/one another and is to be found throughout the speeches and documents analyzed for this thesis. The word is frequently used by Frederiksen and often in combination with the words "help", "support" and "do it for…". In her speech to the Danish youth with the purpose

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[5] "Før jeg fremlægger dem, så vil jeg af hjertet takke for det samfundssind, som I udviser lige nu. For det samfundssind er en meget stor del af løsningen på, at vi kommer godt igennem den her krise, som vi nu er i." Frederiksen, 2020b.
[6] "Vores historie viser, hvad vi er rundet af." Frederiksen, 2020c.

of extending her gratitude for their efforts in stopping the spreading of Covid-19, from May 5th 2020, Frederiksen tells the youth that it is "(…) reassuring for all others to experience that we have a generation of youth who takes the responsibility. It gives hope, I think, for our common future. We are writing history together now. We are doing it by looking out for each other. And we will make it. Everything will be alright again."[7], (Frederiksen, 2020d). Frederiksen also uses samfundssind and hinanden in the same sentences and during her speech on March 23rd 2020 she said "We show samfundssind in Denmark and it is our joint responsibility to take care of the most vulnerable and exposed. Indeed, we stand together in taking care of our society. In this moment we see the value of the strong social contract that us Danes have among each other"[8] (Frederiksen, 2020e).

Both samfundssind and hinanden seems to be used by the Danish government to encourage the Danish population to follow the restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic. One could derive from this that it is a trait for Danish crisis management strategy to as a community work together. Hence, it could be argued that part of the Danish identity is a sense of community spirit and this is then reproduced in the speeches and the policies held by the most prominent persons during the pandemic. It appears therefore to be important to Danish officials that Denmark is a state where collectiveness is of the essence.

Similar to the Danish word and concept of samfundssind, the word *dugnad* is to be found throughout the speeches by the Norwegian government during the first wave of the pandemic. Dugnad can commonly be used in housing cooperatives, schools and non-profit organizations where it is given the meaning of gathering people/students and parents/members to participate in fulfilling tasks related to the respective organization. However, when used in the sense that it was by the Norwegian government during the pandemic, dugnad has a similar meaning as samfundssind and does hence refer to a feeling of solidarity, togetherness and an urge "do it together for the country". Dugnad is a core concept in Norway that, more or less, everyone is familiar with.

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[7] "Og det er faktisk også betryggende for alle os andre at opleve det, at vi har en generation af unge, som bare tager ansvaret på seg. Det giver håb synes jeg, for vores fælles framtid. Vi skriver historien lige nu. Vi gør det ved at passe på hinanden. Og vi skal nok klare det. Det bliver godt igen." Frederiksen, 2020d.
[8] "Vi viser samfundssind i Danmark, og vi står sammen om at passe på de mest sårbare o gudsatte. Ja, vi står faktisk sammen om at passe på vores samfund. Lige nu ser vi værdien af den stærke samfundskontrakt, vi dansker har med hinanden." Frederiksen, 2020e.

The spirit of "dugnad", like samfundssind did for Denmark, impregnated Norway's approach throughout almost all of the pandemic but perhaps especially at the start. Alongside Prime Minister Solberg, Minister of health and care services (health minister) Bent Høie also frequently referred to "dugnad" during many of his numerous speeches and press conferences. In his speech from March 20th 2020, "Dugnaden vil vare lenge" ("The dugnad will continue for a long time") the minister informed the Norwegian people that this dugnad is not yet over, but encouraged everyone to continue to work together to reduce the contamination and protect the vulnerable.

Furthermore, if March 11th is the day of the first lock down Denmark, March 12th is that day for Norway. On March 12th, prime minister Solberg announced that the Norwegian government was implementing the most interfering measures in peace time. She emphasized in her speech at the press conference that it was "crucial that all of Norway's citizens participated in the dugnad in order to decelerate the spreading of the disease"[9] (Solberg, 2020a). Solberg concluded the speech with the words "In Norway, we stand together when called upon us. We mobilize for 'dugnad' and cooperation in small and large societies. It is now more important than ever."[10] (Ibid). When doing so, the responsibility is put on the collective, rather than the individual.

Whilst Sweden also implemented measures which interfered in the Swedish population's everyday lives, they were far less interfering. Even though some rules and restrictions, such as limitations regarding number of participants at social gatherings and capacity limits in bars and restaurants (Creutz et al, p. 25, 2021), were implemented, Sweden's strategy instead consisted mostly of recommendations and advice.

Rather on the contrary then from Denmark and Norway, one of the most prominent things which keep coming back in Sweden's strategy, documents and speeches held by Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and State Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell is *personal responsibility*. When Löfven spoke to the Swedish people on March 22nd 2020, he made

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[9] "Derfor er det nå helt avgjørende at alle landets innbyggere deltar i en dugnad for å bremse smitten", Solberg 2020a.
[10] "I Norge står vi sammen når det gjelder. Vi mobiliserer til dugnad og samarbeid i små og store lokalsamfunn. Nå er dette viktigere enn noen gang.", Solberg 2020a.

several regards which emphasized the importance of personal responsibility. The speech was one of the very few held by Löfven during the pandemic.

"The only way to succeed is through responding to the crisis as one society where everyone takes responsibility for oneself."[11]

"In this moment, we all have a great own responsibility."[12]

"There will come a few, decisive moments in life where you have to make sacrifices not only for yourself but also take responsibility for the sake of your surroundings, for your fellow human beings and for our country."[13]

"No one is alone in this crisis, but all of us have a great responsibility. All of us."[14]

"I know that the situation can feel challenging. But it is everyone's duty to follow the authorities' advice. Yours too, as well as mine."[15] (Löfven, 2020a).

These quotes emphasize the idea of the importance of personal responsibility in Sweden and re-produces the image of the state as relying largely on the states' citizens ability to follow the rules and recommendations without being "forced" to. The quotes also reflect the strong culture and tradition of Swedish legislation emphasizing individual liberty and the responsibility of individuals to protect themselves and the community from crisis, which in this case is the spreading of the disease (Askim & Bergström, p. 7, 2021). This is for instance to be found in Sweden's Communicable Diseases Act where particular responsibility is put on each individual to choose their own way of protecting themselves.

Furthermore, during the first wave of the pandemic, Swedish authorities advocated recommendations and advice rather than restrictions and rules. Arguably, this was also one of

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[11] "Enda sättet att klara av detta är att vi möter krisen som ett samhälle där alla tar ansvar för sig själv, för varandra och för vårt land.", Löfven 2020a.
[12] "Nu har vi alla ett stort eget ansvar.", Löfven 2020a.
[13] "Det kommer några få, avgörande stunder i livet då du måste göra uppoffringar inte bara för din egen skull utan också för att ta ansvar för din omgivning, för dina medmänniskor och för vårt land.", Löfven 2020a.
[14]"Ingen människa står ensam inför denna kris, men varje person har ett tungt ansvar. Varenda en.", Löfven 2020a.
[15] "Jag vet att läget kan kännas tufft. Men att följa myndigheternas råd är varje persons plikt. Också din – och min.", Löfven 2020a).

the things significant to Sweden's strategy that was the most remarkable to others (Pierre, p. 480, 2020). This is connected to the advocacy for personal responsibility. During a press conference on April 7th 2020, Löfven stated that "In Sweden, the population trusts authorities to a great extent. It enables for people to follow authorities' advice to a large extent.[16]" (Regeringen.se). By saying this, Löfven provides justification for why the state has chosen to mainly focus on advice and recommendations rather than rules and restrictions. This phenomenon is discussed by Jon Pierre who points out that there are different perceptions of the government being the "regulator" when it comes to changing social behavior of people in order to decrease the spreading of the disease (which is the main goal of all three states in this case). Pierre writes that one way of thinking of the government as a regulator of changing social behavior is through implementing strict and interfering measures with a firm hand. Another way of being the regulator can be through more subtle steering, such as giving advices and recommendations. Pierre also points out that when institutions have high trust from the population, the institutions can rely greater on more subtle steering to gain the desired change of social behavior (p. 480, 2020). Hence, this can be related to the previous section on trust.

Whereas the Norwegian concept of dugnad is part of the Norwegian backbone and Danish concept of samfundssind is so rooted in Danish minds as something to bring out in times of crises, Sweden does not have the same foundation. There does not seem to be a word similar to samfundssind or dugnad in the Swedish language. This does, however, certainly not mean that the concept does not exist. Even though the focus is on the personal responsibility, Sweden's Prime Minister Löfven also connects the idea of personal responsibility to the idea of it contributing to the greater good together. In his speech to the nation on March 22nd, he stated that "I am confident that everyone in Sweden will take their responsibility to do your utmost to ensure other's health, help each other and therefore be able to look back at this crisis and be proud of your role, your contributions for your fellow humans, for our society and for Sweden"[17] (Löfven, 2020a). Hence, there are similar traits to that of Danish samfundssind and Norwegian dugnad even in the Swedish society. Also, in the speeches and documents from both Denmark and Norway there are statements on personal responsibility.

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[16] "I Sverige har befolkningen en hög tillit till myndigheter. Det gör att människor följer myndigheters råd i hög utsträckning.", Löfven 2020b.
[17] "Jag är säker på att alla i Sverige kommer ta just sitt ansvar för att göra sitt yttersta för att säkra andras hälsa, hjälpa varandra och därför kunna se tillbaka på den här krisen och vara stolt över just din roll, dina insatser för dina medmänniskor, för vårt samhälle och för Sverige.", Löfven 2020a.

The fact that there is no explicit concept as samfundssind and dugnad in Sweden does perhaps still expose a difference in mindsets of the respective states' citizens and in the national tradition and culture. Moreover, even though there are traits of personal responsibility in Denmark and Norway too the dominant thing is the notion about collective responsibility. This was evident when analyzing and comparing the speeches and documents. This points out a significant difference, where it appears as if the responsibility is put on the collective in Denmark and Norway and on the individual in Sweden.

As a result, one could say that in the case of Norway and Denmark, the relationship between the state and the population relies both on the sense of the togetherness (samfundssind and dugnad) but also on the idea that the state is responsible for protecting the population. In Sweden's case on the other hand, the relationship between the state and the population rely more on personal responsibility and the role of the experts.

5.2. The state and the crisis

Closely related to the previously analyzed relationship between the state and the population is the relationship between the state and the crisis. Within this relationship lies representations of how Denmark, Norway and Sweden identify themselves as crisis managers. As I have pointed out earlier in the thesis, the different states have different structures for their crisis management. Thus, the prerequisites for their crisis management differ and this is obviously to be taken into account when analyzing to some extent. This section will also point to historical experiences as they have played an important role in shaping dominant national identities as has been pointed out earlier in the thesis. Moreover, references to historic events are being made both by the Danish and Norwegian prime ministers throughout the speeches.

Tracing back to the previous section, the concepts of samfundssind (Denmark) and dugnad (Norway) are coming back as important ideas for how Denmark and Norway view themselves in the relationship between the state and the crisis. As crisis managers, it seems important for the two states to convey the message that the handling of the crisis should be done together.

First, since samfundssind was used during both WWII and the Covid-19 pandemic, which are both crises in different ways, one could then argue that is a word and concept Denmark uses during crises and as part of their crisis management strategy.

Moreover, for Denmark, an important notion is the idea that the Danish government is doing their utmost best to protect the Danish people. Prime minister Frederiksen presented for instance on March 13th that the Danish borders were to be closed. When doing so, she framed it by saying "Everything that we are doing now; all pre-cautions we are doing, all decisions we are making. All these are at risk of being undermined if we continue to have the same level of travel activity in and out of Denmark. This is excelling the risk of continued spreading of the disease."[18] (Frederiksen, 2020b). She continues, "If we do not do this, we are risking that both human, health related and economic set-backs become far worse"[19] (Ibid). By stating this, Frederiksen is justifying the government's strategy and also conveys the idea that even though the implemented measures are interfering, the alternative is far worse.

Another decisive word in the speeches and documents from Norway is "fredstid". Fredstid translated from Norwegian to English is peace time. On March 12th, prime minister Solberg announced that the measures that then were launched were "(…) the most interfering measures in peace time"[20] (Solberg, 2020a). By peace time, Solberg referred to the time since WWII. Solberg makes another reference to this in her speech two days after, on March 13th, and says that "Last Thursday the most severe measures in peace time were implemented"[21] (Solberg, 2020c). She continued by saying that "As a consequence of the measures that were implemented on Thursday, this crisis went from being a health-related crisis and a biological crisis to being national crisis affecting all sectors"[22] (Ibid).

By referring to the restrictions and imposed rules as the most interfering in peace time, the Norwegian government provided the Norwegian people with the context of pandemic being related to war. This context, where the pandemic arguably was held like being the biggest

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[18] "Alt det, vi gør herhjemme; alle de forholdsregler, der bliver taget, alle de beslutninger, vi træffer. Dem risikerer vi bliver undermineret, hvis vi fortsætter rejseaktiviteten ind og ud af Danmark. For det øger risikoen for fortsat smitte.", Frederiksen 2020b.

[19] "Fordi vi risikerer, at hvis vi ikke gør det her, så bliver omkostningerne både menneskeligt, sundhedsmæssigt og økonomisk langt, langt større.", Frederiksen 2020b.

[20] "(…) de sterkeste og mest inngripende tiltakene vi har hatt i Norge i fredstid.", Solberg 2020a.

[21] "På torsdag innførte vi de strengeste tiltakene vi har hatt i fredstid.", Solberg 2020c.

[22] "Som en konsekvens av de tiltakene som ble gjort på torsdag, så gikk også denne krisen fra å være en helse-krise og en biologisk krise til å bli en nasjonal krise som spenner over alle sektorer.", Solberg 2020c.

crisis since WWII for Norway, impacted the Norwegian people's mindset toward the strategy. Just like was the case in Denmark, it provides a powerful connotation to the Norwegian people which immediately makes people want to contribute. As was pointed out in the case of Denmark, history is an important factor in poststructuralism and it helps in shaping and re-produce identity. As author Bengt Lindroth points out, WWII has impacted Norwegian identity. War lingers on for several generations and is inherited not intellectually but emotionally, is the main case Lindroth makes (2021). Consequently, one could say that WWII affected Norwegian identity and by referencing to it in prime minister Solberg's speech and the strategy presented in it, the Norwegian government reproduces the identity trait of having been in war and knowing what great sacrifices are. Thus, when Solberg puts Covid-19 in the same context as WWII and implements restrictions with great impact on the Norwegian people's everyday life, it becomes a powerful tool for the government.

Furthermore, Solberg said in her speech from March 18th that "During good and bad times, CEOs and industrial workers have been standing shoulder to shoulder. Together, we have all contributed to the foundation of the society of welfare. When terror and accidents have struck, we have made our way through it together. When our freedom has been threatened, Norwegians have done everything for each other."[23] (Solberg, 2020e). By saying this, Solberg frames the Norwegian way of handling crises as something that is done together.

Moreover, by making references to the war, times of terror and occurrences of accidents, one can argue that the mind goes to the idea of the state protecting its inhabitants from evil. Thus, when introducing largely interfering measures, such as more or less forcing people to stay at home, Norway's government sends a signal of doing everything they can to protect the population from transmission of the virus. This is again similar to what happened in Denmark.

As for Sweden, the historical experience from WWII differed from that of Denmark and Norway. Even though some might argue differently, Sweden did not partake in WWII and has not been in war for more than 200 years and consequently do not have the same collective memory of war (Lindroth, 2021, pp. 10-12). Therefore, it was not possible for prime minister

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[23] "I opp- og nedgangstider har direktører og industriarbeidere stått skulder ved skulder. Sammen har vi alle bidratt til å bygge velferdssamfunnet. Når terror og ulykker har truffet oss har vi kommet oss gjennom det i fellesskap. Når friheten har vært truet, har nordmenn gitt alt for hverandre.", Solberg 2020e.

Stefan Löfven to make powerful references to times of war as prime ministers Frederiksen and Solberg did.

5.2.1. The significance of the messenger

As was introduced earlier in the background chapter, as crisis managers, the states opted for different front figures for leading the crisis management. As this differed to such a large extent among the states, I cannot present the analysis without mentioning it. In Denmark and Norway, the prime ministers together with the health minister were the frontrunners of the pandemic. In Sweden, it was experts in the field who were the most visible. Jon Pierre writes that in most states, frequent visibility of the prime minister or equivalent is an important part of showing the public that the ongoing crisis is taken care of at the highest level (2020, p. 483). This was obviously the case for Denmark and Norway. In Sweden however, the structure is different. It was made clear from the very beginning that the Swedish government would follow the expertise and advice of the public health agencies. Of course, Denmark and Norway's governments also relied heavily on the expertise and advice from their respective public health agencies. Moreover, there were always representatives from these agencies present during the press conferences where updates were given on the pandemic or new restrictions were presented in Denmark and Norway. However, it was always the prime minister, health minister or another minister who introduced the press conference. Thus, for Denmark and Norway as crisis managers during the Covid-19 pandemic it seemed important that representatives from the cabinet of ministers took the lead whereas for Sweden it was more important to front expertise directly from the experts themselves (Pierre, 2020, p. 483).

Swedish prime minister Stefan Löfven and the rest of the government were questioned regarding the absence of them during the pandemic and asked about who was really in charge of the Swedish strategy. Löfven then replied by stating in a speech from June 3rd that "the government always leads the country and I lead the government" (Andersson & Aylott, p. 6, 2020).

We have now gone through how the governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden created representations of their identities within the speeches and documents relating to the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of their relationship with the population and how they view themselves as

crisis managers. Now, it is time to add another layer of analysis and look at the relationship among the states and the relationship among the respective states and the rest of the world.

5.3. The state and the rest of the world

I have previously discussed the concept of the Self and Other(s) as something important for understanding identity in IR. Therefore, I will now analyze the way Denmark, Norway and Sweden convey themselves in relation to the Other(s) which in this case is both among each other but also the rest of the world. Through their strategies and in the representations of identities, the way they view themselves in their relationship to the rest of the world become visible. The section will start with looking at Sweden and the traits of exceptionalism shown during the pandemic and then move on to how Denmark and Norway view themselves and acted compared to the rest of the world.

5.3.1. Exceptionalism

One often hears about *Nordic* exceptionalism, which is based on the notion that all five Nordic countries typically score high in different rankings on societies with highest level of trust, less amount of corruption and other desirable traits of democracies (Andreasson, 2017, pp. 13 and 17). Typically, in a crisis, neighboring or like-minded states would compare strategies with one another. Naturally, this is tracing back to the idea of the Self and the Others as was presented in the theoretical framework and some reflections on the matter is in place. It is thus natural for Denmark, Norway and Sweden to compare with one another as was also done, but also in this matter, Sweden stood out. This has to do with what is referred to as the *Swedish* exceptionalism which is one representation of dominant national identity for Sweden. Swedish exceptionalism is thus to be found within the idea of Nordic exceptionalism.

In newspapers almost all over the world, there were headlines and articles discussing the Swedish strategy. This was also the case within the fellow Scandinavian states. The general apprehension was the feeling of being perplexed about the Swedish strategy as it was so different from the other states at the same time as the spreading of the disease excelled and death toll was high. It was also common that media, scholars and your average guy on the street expressed criticism toward the Swedish strategy. For instance, the New York Times'

referred to Sweden as the "pariah state" in June 2020 (Andersson & Aylott, p. 2, 2020). However, this did not seem to concern the Swedish government and the public health agencies too much. Instead, former Swedish state epidemiologist, Johan Giesecke, referred to the Norwegian measures as "draconian and unnecessary" and also stated that "We are right while Europe is wrong" (cited in Sefton, 2020).

Scholars Andersson and Aylott argue that these traits of Swedish exceptionalism are not a new phenomenon but a deeply manifested identity trait. As a matter of fact, they claim, the Covid-19 pandemic was the third crisis in 11 years were Sweden's strategy deviated from the rest of Europe's. During the swine flu in 2009, Sweden had the most ambitious vaccination program in the world and when the great wave of migration into Europe happened in 2015, Sweden was significantly later with implementing border controls than other seemingly likeminded European states (p. 2, 2020). These are examples that show that Sweden repeatedly has chosen a different strategy during the last couple of years in their crisis management.

All three states compared with one another and it was perhaps mostly done during the first wave of the pandemic. When Denmark opted to close their borders in the middle of March of 2020, Sweden's State Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell commented the decision by saying that "it has historically been a completely meaningless measure" [24] (Tegnell, 2020a). Tegnell also stated that he was "very skeptical of lockdowns" and in June he told Reuters, as a response to whether the Swedish strategy was experimental or not, that "I think a number of countries should have thought twice before taking the very drastic measure of a lockdown. That's what's experimental, not the Swedish model" (cited in Reuters, 2020).

Thus, whereas Norway and Denmark followed each other's steps closely to the extent that you could almost rely on the fact that whatever Denmark chose to implement, Norway would implement the same thing only a few days after, Sweden chose their own path. Moreover, one Swedish apprehension of the Danish and Norwegian strategies were that they were far too political rather than based on scientific proof of what was best health wise. This was argued by FM's Director-General Johan Carlson in July 2020. This could be said to serve as a justification for the Swedish strategy. Ergo that the idea of the Self (Sweden) having a

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[24] "Historiskt har det visat sig vara en fullständigt meningslös åtgärd", Tegnell 2020a.

strategy based on science and careful levelling of health impacts compared to the Others (Denmark and Norway) that based their strategies on political power demonstrations.

Whereas Sweden stood out from most of the crowd of other European states, Denmark and Norway's strategies had more similarities with those of the rest of Europe. Like was stated above, Norway followed Denmark's lead whereas Denmark looked to the rest of Europe to see what they were doing and then implemented similar measures.

In summary, in this chapter I analyzed how representations of dominant national identities of the Scandinavian states were expressed in the states' respective official discourse. The analysis illustrated identity traits such as the important of personal responsibility for Sweden and collective responsibility for Denmark and Norway. I also argued that the historical experience of WWII has affected Denmark and Norway's national identities and that the governments reproduce this identity trait by referring to the war in their speeches throughout the pandemic. Furthermore, I claimed that a dominant national identity for Sweden is the sense of exceptionalism. These identity traits were all expressed in their Covid-19 strategies and the differences as well as the similarities in the national identities can explain the differences and similarities in the strategies.

6. Conclusions and final reflections

Again, the purpose of this thesis has not been to "choose side" or interpret what strategy was the most successful. Rather, the aim has been to shed light on whether the states' identities have influenced their crisis management during the pandemic. The objective of this thesis has been to explore if the Scandinavian states' identities can explain their responses to the Covid-19 and how these dominant identity traits were expressed in the strategies. Additionally, the objective was also to examine whether the different identities affected the states' cooperation during this time. In this concluding chapter of the thesis, I will summarize the main findings for the research question. I will also present some further reflections on the *implications* of the Scandinavian states Covid-19 strategies and particularly how the strategies affected the states' cooperation. Like I mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, the lack of cooperation during the first wave of the pandemic was puzzling to many analysts. Therefore, I have included this in this wider conclusion.

I will also share some final reflections on other potential explanations to my empirical puzzle as a way of proposing suggestions of ways for this research to be continued.

6.1. Research question and answers

The research question guiding this thesis has been:

How did the Scandinavian states' responses and strategies toward the covid-19 pandemic express representations of dominant national identities?

The research question has been discussed throughout the thesis and the analysis was presented in chapter 5. In the analysis I argued and showed that representations of the dominant national identities were indeed expressed in the official discourse of the Scandinavian countries. The official discourse in this case was expressed in speeches and statements of the political leaders and leaders of other authorities of Denmark, Norway and Sweden where the states' respective policies and crisis management strategies have been presented. I have based my arguments and analysis on a theoretical framework deriving mainly from the IR theory of poststructuralism and previous research on the relationship between national identity and foreign policy.

Overall, in all three states' strategies toward the Covid-19 pandemic there have been representations of the respective states doing their best to protect and lead their population through the pandemic with the available means. Within all three states, there is a high level of trust both from the population to the government and vice versa. It is however expressed differently, naturally as the national identities differ.

In the case of Denmark, I have argued that representations of dominant national identity traits of collective responsibility and an overall feeling of collectiveness and historical experience from WWII were manifested in their strategy toward the pandemic. For Norway, similar identity traits have been identified as representations in the Norwegian strategy. For Sweden, representations of the dominant national identity of personal responsibility were visible throughout their initial strategy. The Swedish exceptionalism is also a dominant national identity that was re-produced in the Swedish strategy. I have also pointed out that beyond the

representations of dominant national identities, the respective strategies also depended on the conditions provided in national crisis management structures. The reason as to why Denmark and Norway opted for strategies that were more similar can also be based on the fact that their government's mandates to act was different compared to what the Swedish government could and could not do.

6.2. What are the implications?

As held by Dunn and Neumann, the method of discourse analysis enables the researcher to analyze how meanings (and in this case representations of identity) are produced and attached to certain subjects and objects (2016, p. 12). This use of discourse analysis is what we saw in the previous chapter. Discourse analysis can also be used to explore the bandwidth of possible effects and outcomes of certain discourses. It works the other way around too, as is more relevant to this thesis, where the researcher can proceed from a certain effect or outcome and analyze the discourse leading to it (Ibid).

Thus, the lack of cooperation among the Scandinavian countries during the pandemic is a certain effect to which I can apply discourse analysis to see how it came about. As was stated earlier in the thesis, there is a common apprehension of the Nordic or, as is more accurate to this thesis, Scandinavian states having each other's back. Therefore, most probably could have never imagined that when a crisis emerged, the states would have difficulties in cooperating. However, scholar Johan Strang points out that even though the cooperation may have been doing well in some areas, there has traditionally been very little focus on Nordic cooperation in terms of social and welfare questions (p. 2, 2016). This became visible during the Covid-19 pandemic. The fact that the states' cooperated poorly during the start of the pandemic has been heavily criticized and many voices have been raised regarding the need of prevention from this ever happening again when another crisis comes around.

Researchers Kristin Haugevik and Ole Jacob Sending identifies a puzzle relating to this matter in their article "The Nordic Balance Revisited: Differentiation and the Foreign Policy Repertoires of the Nordic States" from 2020. The puzzle is concerned with that even though all Nordic states' governments have expressed ambitions to extend their cooperation and recognizes the benefits which would come with it, in combination with support from the public, there does not seem to have been made any progress in Nordic cooperation on foreign

policy (p. 110, 2020). It is suggested by the authors that the lack of cooperation on the matter is concerned with the urge for the arguably small to medium sized states to distinguish themselves from the others and promote their own niches. This can be related to the discussion of exceptionalism that was presented in the previous chapter. As has been seen throughout this thesis, Denmark and Norway rely heavily on collective responsibility and the sense of samfundssind and dugnad whereas Sweden's niche is personal responsibility. Moreover, it seems more important to Sweden to go their own way and emphasize their own exceptionalism. Having these different benchmarks means that the different states chose different strategies and this did in turn affect their ability to cooperate. The fact that the Scandinavian states cooperated so poorly during the pandemic's first wave can be argued to affect people's lives to a larger extent then the national rules, restrictions, recommendations and advice.

6.3. Suggestions for continued research

As with all research projects, there is no single answer to any puzzle. I have offered the explanation of dominant national identity traits as to why the Scandinavian states opted for the strategies they did and how it affected their cooperation, but there are of course other reasons behind strategies that would be interesting to follow up with continued research. Beyond national identities and the structure and culture of crisis management, there were also other important mechanisms that mattered and there were not only differences.

Beyond national identity are more formal preconditions and means that hinder or at least obstruct cooperation among the Scandinavian countries. In November 2021, the Finland-Swedish former politician and Director of the Secretariat of the Nordic Council, Jan Erik Enestam, put forward a report on Nordic civil crisis management. The report presented 12 areas for improvement and proposed solutions which would in turn strengthen the Nordic cooperation and further prepare the states for the next crisis. Among Enestam's proposed solutions one finds for instance:

- Give the responsibility for Nordic cooperation during crises to the ministers of Nordic cooperation and make it clear that the responsibility is theirs.
- Establish a Nordic unit for crisis management and preparedness, similar to the NORDEFCO cooperation (Nordic defense cooperation).

Enestam also suggested to create a collective Nordic form of passport to facilitate travel, examine the possibility to have a joint supply of material for crises and to strengthen the Nordic language knowledge in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Enestam puts forward other suggestions to as to increasing the level of cooperation between the Nordics and these are all "practical" measures. Thus, solely understanding and respecting that there are different national identities do not enable for further cooperation but can perhaps be of help along the way. Instead, there are formalities and structures within the realm of Nordic (and therein Scandinavian) cooperation that need to be updated in order to secure better cooperation when the next societal crisis hits (Enestam, 2021).

The vision of the Nordic Council of Ministers is for the region to be the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030 (Norden.org). In order to achieve this, cooperation during crises needs to be enhanced. Enestam's report together with the Finnish Institute of International Affairs' (FIIA) report "Nordic cooperation amid pandemic travel restrictions" that have been referred to throughout this thesis both serve as part of the foundation as to how Nordic cooperation can be improved. I do however believe that through further understanding of how different the different states' national identities are, analysts as well as "ordinary people" can add another layer of understanding as to how it can be challenging for the states to cooperate.

Furthermore, as this thesis was focused solely on the first wave of the pandemic, where the strategies seem to have differed the most, it would certainly be interesting to analyze the following waves, as well as the aftermath, of the pandemic too. Moreover, when this is written in the spring of 2022, Covid-19 is officially not considered to be a communicable disease anymore by the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish governments. Thus, it would also be interesting to sometime in the future review the outcome of the strategies with more distance to them. This has already been started by several other researchers and will most certainly continue to be explored. Moreover, as the pandemic evolved and continued throughout 2020 and 2021, there naturally were some changes in the states' strategies. This would have been interesting to explore further. Even though Sweden still stayed more open than Denmark and Norway did throughout the pandemic, it was the Swedish strategy that changed the most by moving more toward the Danish and Norwegian strategies.

All three states' strategies have been scrutinized both by state appointed commissions, media and others. No state was given solely praise. Rather on the contrary, all states received their respective doze of criticism. Denmark was criticized mainly because of isolating the elderly, children and youth. Moreover, the closed borders and travel restrictions also received criticism. This was especially expressed by those who were directly affected by this, such as commuters and Danes who owned vacation homes in Sweden (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 24). The rapid changes that the Danish government implemented to the already existing law on epidemics, including the possibility to close schools, have also been criticized. Critics hold that all changes were not motivated (Coronakommissionen.com).

For Norway, the main subject of criticism was the travel restrictions and control measures at the border to Sweden. This affected not only the 12 000 Swedish commuters working in Norway but also the countless Norwegians with vacation homes in Sweden and the cross-border shopping where Norwegians go across the border to Sweden to shop everyday commodities (Creutz et al, 2021, p. 26).

Sweden's strategy was, as has already been mentioned, subject to fascination and disbelief from the international community. It was not only the international community that questioned the strategy however, the Swedish Covid-19 commission was also tough on the strategy. At first, the idea of achieving herd immunity seemed appropriate and clever, but when the level of immunity among the Swedes was tested throughout the pandemic it became obvious that it was far more difficult to achieve than had been conveyed by the authorities (Pierre, 2020, p. 487). The Covid-19 commission also pointed out several weaknesses in the way the Swedish elder care system is structured and how these are part of the reasons as to why the Swedish death toll was so high (Coronakommissionen.com).

The outcomes of these commissions and analyses of the strategies are already pointing on interesting and important strengths and weaknesses. It will be interesting to see what the future analyses when the pandemic is (hopefully) only a memory will look like. What is more, perhaps the pandemic will even serve as an historical experience that produce new or manifests existing dominant national identities for the Scandinavian countries.

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