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# **The Strictest Humanitarian:** A discourse analysis of the Norwegian government's foreign aid and asylum policy

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## **Declaration**

I, Julie Øderud Danielsen, 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.....

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## **Abstract**

During the autumn of 2015, Norway experienced a significant increased influx of migrants as a result of the war in Syria and instability in the region. The government were quick to ensure how Norway would take international responsibility by providing substantial financial contributions in the region, and also by accepting refugees to Norway. Simultaneously as the government consolidated Norway's role as a humanitarian great power and pioneer country in the field of aid, they also proposed a series of tightening measures in the asylum policy. The purpose was to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers by sending a signal of Norway having one of the strictest asylum policies in Europe. This created turmoil in the political landscape and among the general public, and the government was accused of a cold and cynical policy breaking with longstanding Norwegian humanitarian traditions.

However, this is not the first time the Norwegian government has received condemnations for policies contradicting with the humanitarian identity. Weapon export and military involvement have also created headaches for previous governments. Drawing on existent research on Norwegian foreign policy shows that governments have successfully stabilised such destabilising elements in the past. By approaching this issue from a new empirical angle, the refugee crisis, this thesis seeks to investigate *how* the Norwegian government manage to reconcile its strict asylum policy with its claim to be a humanitarian power.

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# 1. Introduction

The date is 01.01.2000, the clock has just passed midnight and the world has entered into a new millennium. Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik is holding his New Year's speech to the Norwegian people: "Norway must be a nation of compassion and solidarity. Let us follow in the footsteps of Fridtjof Nansen through faithful efforts for refugees and needy in other countries. [...] Norway is among the world's foremost in aid. [...] If we are remembered as a solidary Norway, Norwegians have a reason to be proud" (Bondevik 2000). The quote from the Prime Minister's speech is not unique, most political leaders in Norway put a strong emphasize on Norway's role as an altruistic peace nation, major aid donor and a "humanitarian great power" (Leira 2005, Leira et al. 2007, Tvedt 2009).

Let us fast forward to the late summer of 2015. One million migrants are coming to Europe. Thousands are drowning in the Mediterranean, and over 30.000 are finding their way to Norway (SSB 2016). Will Norway prove to be the humanitarian it claims to be? The ongoing refugee crisis caused by the war in Syria led to a discussion on how Norway and the government should contribute and solve this issue. Within the government's documents and texts on foreign policy, there is no doubt that Norway will finance with "record-high" contributions and take a "lead role" in the humanitarian efforts in Syria and neighbouring regions (Solberg 2015a, Regjeringen 2015e, Regjeringen 2015j, Solberg & Brende 2016a, Solberg 2016f, Listhaug 2016a, Regjeringen 2016a). Looking from an asylum policy angle, the moral commitment is more restrained. The political debate is concerning the number of Syrian refugees Norway should accept. 10,000 is set as the "morally good" number, but the government lands on 8,000 after heated discussions (Garvik 2015). The general message is the need for a *stricter* asylum policy and during the autumn of 2015, the government expressed that they would adopt a "strict" line and impose austerity measures in the asylum policy in order to reduce the influx of migrants (Solberg 2015d, Solberg 2015e, Regjeringen 2015i). The year after, in 2016, Norway received just 3460 asylum seekers, the lowest number in 20 years, and one of the sharpest declines in Europe (forskning.no 2016). Then Minister of Immigration and Integration, Sylvi Listhaug, claimed the low numbers are due to Norway "sending a message" by having one of the strictest asylum policies in Europe (Listhaug 2016e, Listhaug & Brende 2016). Norway's self-image as a humanitarian great power has come under strain. How is this strict message reconciled with Norway's self-proclaimed status as a humanitarian heavyweight and pioneer?

This is not the first time government policy is contradicting and destabilising Norway's humanitarian image. Military engagements in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, and weapon export worth billions, have led to criticism that "Norway gives peace prize with one hand, and sells weapon with the other" (Fransson 2016). According to existing literature on the topic, these contradictions does not seem to alter the image of a peaceful and morally good Norway (Leira et al 2007, Eriksen and Neumann 2011). While Norway's status as a humanitarian great power has previously been questioned due to foreign policies and actions *abroad*, during the refugee crisis in 2015, the instability appeared *within* Norwegian borders, and could arguably be more destabilising to the self-image. One of the reasons is that immigration and asylum policy are topics which occupy Norwegians, and have a prominent position in the political debate, especially leading up to government and local elections. According to Statistics Norway, for 28 percent of the voters, immigration was the most important topic when facing the ballot box in September 2017. This was a doubling from the election four years before (SSB 2017a). The political climate reflects this: since the topic is important for many voters, it becomes all the more crucial to have legitimacy in the asylum policy.

Through official reports, press releases at Regjeringen.no and newspaper articles signed by ministers, the government expresses a concern for Norwegian society's ability to receive and integrate such large groups, and fear for the future of the Norwegian welfare state and security if Norway is to experience "Swedish conditions". Simultaneously, the government ensures Norway's aid contribution abroad has never been greater, and in this way consolidating Norway's leading role as a humanitarian abroad.

On the other hand, political opposition and critics who are sceptical to the government's strict line in the asylum policy, are expressing concerns over the image that is now projected of Norway, and how it breaks with the humanistic heritage. They are afraid the future will "judge us hard because of how we treated these people" and feels unwell about "the image that are now being drawn of Norway, which is totally different from the picture we have drawn of ourselves for decades" (Eide 2017).

The opposition and criticism of a strict asylum policy has varied in strength. The debate tends to be heated during periods of tightening and legislative changes in the asylum policy, and upon the presentations of such proposals, which was particularly apparent in December 2016 and April 2017. Whether to return asylum seekers to Afghanistan or not has been an especially inflamed theme between the political parties in the asylum debate, when the so-called



October-children<sup>1</sup> were returned to Afghanistan in October/November 2017. Norway's practices of return have also received criticism from UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Within the discourses a paradoxical pattern emerges: When discussing and presenting foreign policy and, for example, the government's financial contribution to Syria, the Norwegian government expresses it as competing with other European countries in giving the most aid and being the most humanitarian. But when it comes to asylum policy, the government strive to be the strictest in Europe. The same subject, or Other, seems to play contradictory roles in the Norwegian identity project, depending on whether the context is foreign or domestic. In the aid and foreign policy discourse, the foreign Other is constituting an Other that makes the Norwegian Self look morally good and altruistic. The "same" foreign Other, upon arrival in Norway, suddenly poses a threat to Norwegian culture, economy and safety, and also to the positive Norwegian self-image it contributed to create in the first discourse. International responsibility to help is juxtaposed against national responsibility for Norway's own citizens. The discourse seems most stable when the Other is far away. When the Other comes to Norway, it reveals a tension between the discourses, which requires discursive work for the government to stabilise. This is the essence of the puzzle this thesis seeks to solve, formulated into two research questions:

- *How does the Norwegian government manage to reconcile its claim to be a humanitarian power with its strict immigration policy?*
- *How do the representations of the Other and the Self enable and legitimise a strict asylum policy which may otherwise have conflicted with the humanitarian identity?*

Answering these research questions builds upon extant research on Norway's humanitarian identity and foreign policy. As the next section explains, this thesis fills an empirical gap by investigating how Norway's identity is performed by its asylum policy, and theoretical gap by building on Campbell to theorize how the domestic Other can constitute the Self too. The analytical approach of this thesis will deviate from the more conventional migration analysis<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Oktoberbarna*. Afghan children who were unaccompanied minors upon arriving in Norway around October 2015. There was uncertainty regarding age. They received temporary residence permit which would expire when turning 18, which the authorities estimated to be in October 2017.

<sup>2</sup>For example the Official Norwegian Report "Immigration and trust – Long-term consequences of high immigration" [www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2017-2/id2536701/sec1](http://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2017-2/id2536701/sec1) and Statistics Norway's so-called "immigration accounts" [www.ssb.no/nasjonalregnskap-og-konjunkturer/artikler-og-publikasjoner/attachment/327853?ts=15f779396d0](http://www.ssb.no/nasjonalregnskap-og-konjunkturer/artikler-og-publikasjoner/attachment/327853?ts=15f779396d0) Both published in 2017.

which, for example, conduct a cost/benefit analysis. The aim of this thesis is not to find out *why* the government lead a strict asylum policy, *why* they seek to maintain a humanitarian self-image, *how much* immigration costs, or take a normative stance arguing for or against the government asylum policy. This is avoided by developing research questions which emphasis the “how” and “how possible” questions when approaching the Norwegian government’s foreign aid and asylum policy.

Following is a presentation of the literature and research which my thesis is inspired from and draw upon. This section will also locate how the research questions will add new insight to the existing literature on how the government seeks to maintain a humanitarian self-image when faced with destabilising and contradicting events and practices. The extant research on Norway’s self-image and foreign policy will also be elaborated on in chapter 2, where the concepts and context relevant for the analysis will be presented.

Leira et al.’s (2007) publication on Norwegian self-images and foreign policy presents Norway as a nation of peace, a unique and morally exceptional country which shares of its economic surplus with others through aid, and that Norway is a strong contributor to the international community through the UN system. The publication also draws a link between the constitutive relationship between foreign policy and identity: “In order to know what to do, it is essential to know who you are, and in what relationship you are to others” (Leira et.al 2007:8). Foreign policy is about binding together and emphasize the community between us and others. Yet, foreign policy is also about emphasizing what is unique, what sets us apart from others. Through foreign policy statements, the images of the state are created within its own population and other states, and through actions, the same images are reproduced or challenged, strengthened or weakened. If the people no longer recognize the country’s foreign policy, if there is too much of a cognitive dissonance, the entire construction collapses. The foreign policies lose its credibility within its own population if the state through their actions are no longer able to represent the image that people have of themselves. Such destabilising actions and policies include Norwegian weapon export and military involvement, which are in conflict and contradict with the self-image of a humanitarian and peace nation. The report states the government has dealt with these instabilities by adapting and expanding the self-image in various ways to unite military practices with a peace and humanitarian nation. There is, however, not provided much textual examples on *how* the government has made this discursive alteration. Drawing on this previous work marks the point of departure for my analysis, but this

thesis expands into a new empirical case: Norwegian asylum policy. The thesis will provide an in-depth analysis on how stabilisation of the seemingly contradictory representations is made possible by the government. This is achieved by an analysis of government discourse, which will reveal the discursive work and mechanisms applied in order to reconcile a strict asylum policy with a humanitarian identity.

A similar picture of Norway is painted in Eriksen & Neumann's (2011) report on Norwegian identity and Europe. The self-images include a belief in Norway's moral superiority and the idea that Norway is particularly peaceful. As with Leira et al., this report points to that warfare has not altered the notion of a peaceful and humanitarian Norway, but do not go in-depth and demonstrate *how* the government has managed to reconcile these policies with a humanitarian identity. The report also addresses Norway's relationship with countries in the South, and how this foreign Other constitutes an essential part of the Norwegian identity as a humanitarian (Tvedt 2002, in Eriksen & Neumann 2011). Eriksen & Neumann (2011:11) also highlights how immigration has had an impact on what it means to be "Norwegian" and make a notion of identity as articulated and defined when it is put under pressure and confronted with something it is not. This thesis builds on this research and their concept of identity. However, the report does not make a link to how the Norwegian *humanitarian* self-image may be challenged upon facing immigration. Which may not be strange considering there was not much of a refugee crisis reaching Norwegian borders at that time, thus the crisis in 2015 involved a new test of the government's ability to maintain the humanitarian self-image.

Tvedt, in his book on a "humanitarian great power's intellectual history", provides a more thorough presentation of Norway's ambition of becoming a humanitarian great power by analysing Norwegian aid and development discourse through several decades. It includes a small section describing the Norwegian world view was "shook" when the "third world came to Norway" in the 1970s (Tvedt 2002:23), but without going further into how this has potentially affected the humanitarian self-image. This thesis will pick up the thread and acknowledge how the Norwegian self-image, in addition to the world view, is also affected by immigration and the government's asylum policy. From there, an analysis will shed light on how the government seeks to stabilise this instability through language.

There is a general tendency in the research and literature addressing the Norwegian self-image to concentrate on the *foreign* aspects which may affect this, like aid and the aforementioned

weapon export and military involvement. Drawing on Campbell's concept of a "foreign within" (which will be further presented in chapter 3) will make room for how the Norwegian Self can also be constituted in reference to an Other situated within the Norwegian borders. The existing literature points to that destabilising elements have been met with a government response of widening and altering the self-image of Norway as peace-nation. This have ensured the self-image remains legitimate and valid, but has left a gap when it comes to exactly *how* this is done. Therefore, what motivated me to write this thesis is the interest in knowing how the government is stabilising these contradictory practices, down to the detailed level of what particular statements and words are used by government officials. Since previous research does not make a link to how immigration and rejection of asylum seekers affects the humanitarian identity, the event of increased influx of asylum seekers to Norway in 2015 revealed itself as a suitable and relevant empirical case for my analysis on government discourse. Can the Norwegian humanitarian identity withstand further contradiction?

The aim of this thesis is to fill these gaps by taking a closer look at the discursive mechanisms at play, by using the more recent and less addressed case of Norwegian government's response to the refugee crisis and increased influx of migrants to Norway. This analysis will shed light on how the government through language, seeks to stabilise this contradicting gap between a foreign policy relying on Norway's humanitarian identity, and an asylum policy which the government presents as among the strictest in Europe. As the analysis will show, the government is not only seeking to alter and widen the humanitarian identity to fit with a strict asylum policy. The discursive efforts also involve (re)representing the Other in a way which exclude persons from the scope of Norway humanitarian responsibilities making some actions and policies appear legitimate and others unacceptable. This is not an easy task considering how the humanitarian self-image is an important part of the Norwegian population's mental *habitus* (Eriksen & Neumann 2011), and practices seeking to alter this self-image tend to receive strong criticism from political opposition, general public and international organisations.

While extant literature repeatedly mentions "humanitarian great power", there is little sign of the government using the exact phrase. Instead of resting on previous research claiming this is a characteristic of the government's foreign aid policy, the first part of the analysis will provide a considerable amount of textual examples on how the government has (continued to) discursively built up under such a humanitarian identity, while simultaneously promoting a

strict asylum policy. The next part of the analysis will show how the government seeks to reconcile this strict approach with the humanitarian self-image.

The approach and structure of the thesis

This thesis will answer the research questions by adopting a post-structuralist approach and understanding of identity and foreign policy. This is done through a discourse analysis, using Lene Hansen's research design and concepts of ethical, spatial and temporal identity constructions in order to reveal how the government constructs representations of the Self and the Other which stabilises contradicting elements between the foreign and asylum policy. It is an analysis of *governmental* discourse on aid and asylum policy, which is why the majority of the selected text material is retrieved from the government's website Regjeringen.no. With the refugee crisis and high influx of migrants to Norway constituting the main event, the time period has been delineated to 2015-2018.

The thesis is organised into seven chapters, structured as follows: Chapter two will elaborate the context for the analysis looking at existent literature: the history of Norway's self-image as a humanitarian and a presentation of main events in Norwegian asylum policy. Chapter three discusses the theory and methodology that underpins the analysis, here Lene Hansen's research design and understanding of poststructuralist theory will be furthered explained. This chapter will also justify the methodical choices I have made in the writing process of this thesis, and reflect upon potential limitations of the approach. The next two chapters is where the analysis happens. First out is the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, which will elaborate and discuss the government's construction of a humanitarian Self during a period of high influx of asylum seekers to Norway. The second part of the analysis concerns the Norwegian asylum policy, and how the government proclaims to perform one of the strictest asylum policies in Europe, while discursively seeking to minimise the destabilising effect this may have on the humanitarian self-image. The thesis rounds of with a concluding chapter discussing the finding and the trends and suggests avenues for future research.

## 2. Norway’s self-image and asylum policy

For a better understanding of the representations and practices within a discourse, and why and how it was formed, it is necessary to know the context, and history of the involved representations. This chapter will give a brief overview of the existing literature on the Norwegian identity and self-image as a humanitarian great power, relevant for the following analysis in chapter 4 and 5. The idea of Norway as particularly humanitarian and morally good forms the basis for the research question and this thesis. If there is no such self-image, then there is no element of contradiction next to a strict asylum policy. The chapter will also give a presentation of Norwegian asylum policy. The purpose of this section is not to give extensive insight to the history of Norwegian immigration and asylum policy but present the main events and trends from 1970s and up until the refugee crisis reached Norway in 2015.

### 2.1. The Norwegian identity as a humanitarian great power

A search on “humanitær stormakt<sup>3</sup>” on Google shows that the phrase “humanitarian great power” is repeated in various forums and newspaper articles discussing Norway’s role in the field of aid and humanitarian efforts. Some use it ironically to problematise Norway’s self-image and double-standard when it comes to involvement in war and weapon industry, and some use it to describe Norway’s strength, moral commitment and long tradition of solidarity to help the poor.

Tabell 1. Norge som «humanitær supermakt» og «humanitær stormakt» i norske aviser. Kilde: Retriever 2011.

«Humanitær stormakt»	7	12	7	6	16	28	35	34	37	34	41	34	30	15
«Humanitær supermakt»	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	2	3	0	3	4	0	0
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011

Table 1: The use of the phrase “humanitarian great power” and “humanitarian superpower” in Norwegian newspapers from 1998 to 2011 (Carvalho 2013).

The slogan “Norway – a humanitarian great power”, was launched by Jan Egeland in 1990 while he was Secretary General of the Norwegian Red Cross. From 1990 to 1997 Egeland was State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NUPI 2018, Thorsen 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Although more frequently applied in English, the phrase humanitarian *superpower* is not widely used in Norwegian context, here the “great power” is dominating.

When it comes to the government's approach to the humanitarian self-image, the overall mission statement<sup>4</sup> of the Norwegian constitution states the "fundamental values remain our Christian and humanistic heritage. This constitution shall ensure democracy, rule of law and human rights" (Lovdata.no 2014). However, the exact phrase is not much found in government discourse. When searching for "humanitær stormakt" on the government website, the only result is an Official Norwegian Report from 2003 titled "Makt og demokrati" (*Power and Democracy*) stating: "The image of Norway as a moral and humanitarian great power has become a new national symbol, in line with other symbols that form Norwegians' national identity" (Regjeringen 2003). As the analysis later will show, government discourse expresses Norway as a humanitarian actor in other terms than the exact phrase.

### 2.1.1 Foreign policy and identity

Why is it important for the government to promote and ensure a self-image of Norway as morally good and a generous humanitarian? Part of the answer is in the intersection between foreign policy and identity. Foreign policy is about binding together and emphasize the community between a nation's inhabitants and others. On the other hand, foreign policy is also about emphasizing what is unique and what distinguishes a country from others. In this sense, foreign policy can be seen as identity politics (Leira et.al 2007). The self-images related to foreign policy are a necessity: In order to know what to do, it is essential to know who you are, and in what relationship you are to others. The foreign policy loses its credibility within its own population if the state through their actions are no longer able to represent the image that people have of themselves (Leira et.al 2007). This way, to be perceived as good is symbolically important from an interior point of view. Policy makers are keen to show how Norway is a humanitarian donor and how Norwegian money "fix things" (Eide & Simonsen 2009). For the Norwegian population in general, aid is important psychologically, because it feels good to help. "Politicians take this into account [...] and acquire many votes from a policy that plays on people's hearts" (Strand 2013). The Norwegian government, whether it is blue, red or green, will continue an image of Norway as a central donor and problem solver on a global scale (Eide & Simonsen 2009). According to numbers from Statistics Norway in 2017, the support of aid to developing countries is high. 87 percent of the sample says they support development aid. This has remained very stable, supported by between eight and nine out of ten in all surveys from 1993 (SSB 2018). In a poll from 2005, 92 % of the persons asked believed Norway is: "A

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<sup>4</sup> *Formålsparagraf*, also referred to as value paragraph – *verdiparagraf*.

rich nation that shares its resources with others through humanitarian activity and peace work" (NRK 2005). This implies the Norway's foreign aid policy has strong legitimacy in the Norwegian population.

For external use, there is a connection between classic national interests and humanitarian values (Egeland 2017). Norway's role as a humanitarian great power contributes to increased power a "seat at the table usually reserved for the bigger players" in international institutions and processes (Banik & Hegertun 2017). For nations not able to rely on "hard" power such as military power, seeking soft power through responsibility for matters of international peace and security is a way of gaining recognition and influence internationally (Thune 2013, de Carvalho & Neumann 2015). Through showing consistent support for global development, Norway is enhancing its international recognition and reputation as a "humanitarian superpower" (Banik & Hegertun 2017). Another aspect is, as a small country, Norway is deeply dependent on international laws are complied with (Thune 2013, Nyhamar 2011). Violations of international law affect the state's general reputation. If Norway rejects the right to seek asylum and refugee convention or violates the international law, other states will have reason to revise their perceptions of how Norway will act in the future. Violations of international law can be taken as a sign that the state is unreliable (Grung & Malnes 2011). It has always been, and remains, an important goal of Norwegian foreign policy to fulfil its international obligations, and this is due to the desire, by different governments, to achieve a good international reputation (ibid.).

### *2.1.2. The role of the Other*

Countries in "the South" plays an important part of the foreign aid discourse and the construction of a humanitarian self-image (Eriksen and Neumann 2011, Neumann 2010). The government would lose legitimacy and votes if aid reached its original goal of making itself redundant, meaning Norway's identity as a humanitarian is dependent on an Other constantly in need. So, what happens when this Other reach Norwegian borders, will Norway maintain its reputation as a humanitarian? With increased immigration to Norway, it has forced Norwegian governments to relate to the Other in a different way than when the Other was situated far away. This brings us over to the next part of this chapter, immigration to Norway.

### 2.2. Norwegian asylum policy

Behind much of the migration debate in Europe is a significant ethical tension in the relationship between the right to emigrate and the right to immigrate. Emigration is usually regarded as a



human right, whereas immigration is a matter of national sovereignty, which is regulated by the recipient countries (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). How can a state shape a policy that safeguards global justice, but also defend its own national existence? These questions became highly relevant when the Norwegian immigration regime came under acute pressure in autumn of 2015 as the number of asylum applications reached a historical high point<sup>5</sup>.

#### *2.2.1. A soft start and the immigration halt*

In the 1950s, immigration to Norway was minimal. In the early 1970s, immigration was still relatively low, and Norway did not have an immigration policy. After a short period with fairly free reins, the Norwegian authorities introduced external control policy and rules through the "immigration halt" in 1975 which restricted which persons who were allowed to apply for work in Norway (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). The new regulation involved selection, and with this came the categories of who was allowed to enter. In the 1980s, the usual perception of a refugee was "a human being in need of protection," a person which a safe country in the name of humanitarianism had a moral obligation to let in (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014:269). This picture was in contrast to the perception of labour migrants or economically motivated immigrants. Recipient countries are dependent on such categories to navigate between what falls within the scope of responsibility and what does not. This becomes particularly visible during refugee crisis, when many persons are striving for the same label which is reserved for the few who European governments agrees to take in. Categorisation is also an effective measure for the government to reduce the number of responsibilities. Today, as in the 1990s, an economic migrant and refugee invoke a very different set of international obligations the government has committed to follow.

#### *2.2.2. A comprehensive immigration policy emerges*

In the 1980s and 90s, the typical male labour migrant was replaced by new types of immigrants: family members and refugees (SNL 2017). During the 1980s, Norway started placing itself on the immigrant map in Europe, and in 1987 Norway received asylum seekers from 60 different countries (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). In the 1970s and 80s, a new and stricter practice was gradually introduced. In 1988 the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) was established and the Immigration Law (*Utlendingsloven*) was enacted. The law was both an enabling act, giving authority to enforce changes to the immigration policy, but the law also gave foreigners rights

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<sup>5</sup> Solberg 2015d, 2015e, 2016b, 2016g; Listhaug 2016b, 2016c, 2016j, 2017d; Regjeringen 2015f, 2015o, 2016d, 2016f.

and would ensure legal certainty and protection against persecution (NOAS 2013, Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). Highlighting the control aspect, Prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (Arbeiderpartiet) stated in 1987 that “the government has decided to tighten the liberal practice regarding granting residence to asylum seekers who are not genuine refugees and thus not qualify for asylum. It becomes a core mission to reduce the number of asylum seekers who do not qualify for residence in Norway” (NOAS 2013:3). While the refugee policy until the end of the 80s was primarily grounded in a humanitarian tradition, it was now the subject of more ordinary control policy. As the analysis will show, the concept of “genuine refugees” is frequently appearing in the selected text material from 2015-2018.

### *2.2.3. Asylum policy enters the party politics*

Before the parliamentary elections in 1985, the asylum policy had hardly been a topic for political parties. During this election, many parties emphasized Norway’s humanitarian commitments in their programs. At the local elections in 1987, immigration and asylum became a key issue for the first time. It was related to the rapidly increasing number of arrivals. Especially Fremskrittspartiet brought the topic to the forefront and articulated a discontent that existed in parts of the population (NOAS 2013, Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). In 1987 all the parties had a rich section on asylum policy in their programs and the parties’ positions began to occur more clearly. Fremskrittspartiet stood out as sceptical or negative towards immigration. Høyre and Arbeiderpartiet emphasised the realpolitik aspects and wanted to be seen as strict, but humanitarian. Senterpartiet, Kristelig Folkeparti, Venstre and Sosialistisk Venstreparti had a more idealistic approach and emphasised solidarity and compassion (ibid.).

In the 1990s, there was a reorientation towards a more comprehensive refugee policy which included aid, emergencies relief, conflict resolution, international cooperation and support for democracy and human rights development. The policy was intended to reduce migration and pursue lasting effects (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). This line was also consistent with Norway’s international reputation and its humanitarian tradition. The wars in the Balkans and the fear of mass flee speeded up the reform process. The idea of temporary and collective protection was central in this period (NOAS 2013, Bjøntegård 2017). Temporary permits were politically favourable, since they safeguarded the interests of both sides: Temporary permits gave refugees the necessary protection and ensured Norwegian humanitarian obligations. Meanwhile, the consequences for the country were less dramatic, since people were leaving when it was safe to return (NOAS 2013). In the mid-90s the returning of Bosnian refugees

became a central topic. From several sources it was argued the returns were essential to help more people. Return policy was however not well received by all, the parties had different attitudes regarding forced returns of persons who had residence permits. Especially Kristelig Folkeparti and Sosialistisk Venstreparti were strong opponents. Fremskrittspartiet presented forced return as a necessity. Arbeiderpartiet considered the topic as sensitive and tried to avoid provisioning (NOAS 2013). Temporary residence permit and return policy are topics that are highly discussed today, particularly in the case of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan. Such policies still receive widespread criticism, suggesting that immigration has had a destabilising effect on the humanitarian identity long before the refugee crisis reached Norwegian borders in 2015.

When Arbeiderpartiet took over government office in 1996, a more liberal attitude to immigration was signalled. At the same time, was their asylum policy was harshly criticised for being too strict. When Bondevik's first government (Kristelig Folkeparti, Senterpartiet and Venstre) took over in 1997, the softening of asylum policy had been an important part of the election campaign for Kristelig Folkeparti. In the late 90s, Norway emerged as more liberal in asylum issues than most other European country. This was probably the reason why the number of asylum seekers rose sharply at the end of this decade (Brochmann 2003, Bjøntegård 2017, NOAS 2013). The first government statement from the coalition of Arbeiderpartiet, Sosialistisk Venstreparti and Senterpartiet (Stoltenberg-II) in 2005, established that the government would lead a “humane, solidary and lawful refugee and asylum policy”. The government conducted several liberalising changes, but also many retrenchments which placed the government on a new and more restrictive line than before. The government decided Norwegian practices in asylum cases should mainly conform to the practices of other European countries. Another controversial measure was the decision that unaccompanied minor asylum seekers between 16 and 18 years could be granted temporary permits and returned when they are 18. State secretary Pål Lønseth (Arbeiderpartiet) stated the treatment of these children had an important signal effect (ibid.). In the second government period, the return of rejected asylum seekers was highlighted as a priority, and more forced returns were implemented than previously. In 2010, Norway had the sharpest decline in number of asylum seekers across Europe<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> From 17.000 in 2009 to 9.000 in 2010 (NOAS 2013:16)

#### *2.2.4. International conditions and control policy*

Already from the end of the 1980s, it became clear how much the European countries were influenced by each other's policies when it came to immigration. One state's change of policy promptly followed others which has created a dynamic where the most restrictive state's policy often set the standard for the overall development. Governments were afraid of the so-called "magnet effect", which meant countries with relatively liberal policies were exposed to a stronger immigration pressure than others (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). This is also highly visible in today's discourse on Norwegian asylum policy, where the government repeatedly refer to other European countries when presenting tightening in their asylum policy.

In the years after the attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001, the control aspect of asylum and immigration became stronger. Clarification of identity of persons traveling into the country became more important for all European countries (NOAS 2013). The political climate was dominated by the notion of the asylum seekers considered a problem and a threat which must be minimized.

#### *2.2.5. Double-policy and the welfare state*

In recent years there has been consensus among the larger parties to pursue a strict line and reduce the number of asylum seekers coming to Norway (NOAS 2013, Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). However, there exists a double-communication. When it came to the treatment of immigrants who had succeeded in coming to Norway, the distance has been large between Fremskrittspartiet and the other parties. The other parties have sought to communicate tolerance by raising pluralism as a blessing for the country, but still arguing for strict immigration regulations. This duality is particularly visible relating to the welfare state, which illustrates the government's "double policy" (*dobbelt-politikk*) consisting of a hard outside (strict immigration regulations) and soft inside (welfare state). The "double policy" has largely been a political consensus in Norway after the introduction of the immigration halt in 1975. This is also a policy that seems to have support in the population. Several surveys conducted in Norway have showed that a clear majority believes immigrants create a positive diversity. At the same time, a clear majority do not want more immigration (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014).

As the analysis will show, the Norwegian welfare state and the economic security for Norwegian citizens is one of the main arguments for a restrictive immigration and asylum policy. This has long traditions in the Norwegian asylum discourse. The emergence of the costly welfare state has led to the government wanting to consider more strictly who can obtain a

residence permit and thus be entitled to welfare benefits (SNL 2017, Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). The immigration history of Norway has since 1975 circled around the tension of immigration as a burden on or a resource to the welfare state (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli 2014). As the analysis will show, the burden-perspective is very much present in today's discussion on asylum seekers and refugees.

There is an ethical contradiction in the very basis for liberal-democratic states. A citizenship in the national state *must* involve special treatment and an idea that members on the inside share something that outsiders do not have access to. At the same time, a commitment to humanistic ideals of equal treatment and human rights have been central to the development of a modern state tradition. When people migrate across borders, these competing ethical ideals are revealed. How can a welfare state shape a policy that safeguards humanitarian values at the same time as defending its own existence? Or as the research questions ask, how can the Norwegian government reconcile a strict asylum policy with a humanitarian identity?

### 2.3. Chapter conclusion

Norway's reputation and identity as a humanitarian is important in a world where small nations are dependent on their soft power. Equally dependent are small countries on a world order where international laws are followed. Many of the issues and events destabilising a humanitarian identity in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, are also occurring in today's asylum policy: Arguing for a strict asylum policy, temporary residence permits, return of asylum seekers, protecting of the welfare state, and making sure not to be more liberal than other European countries. The government is also occupied with the categorising of immigrants into refugees, economic migrants and labour migrants. Such policies and actions still receive criticism from the opposition and general public and are defended in similar ways as in the earlier history of Norwegian asylum policy. This suggests the destabilising effect of immigration on the humanitarian identity has been present long before the increased influx of asylum seekers in 2015. While this thesis will not account for how previous governments sought to defend and stabilise these events and policies back in the 1970s to 2000s, the analysis will investigate in-depth how these policies are dealt with and argued by the current government today in order to maintain a humanitarian identity, with the 2015 refugee crisis as backdrop.

### 3. Theory and methodology

This chapter will present the methods and choices made in order to answer the research questions stated in the introduction. First, it will address the ontological and epistemological assumptions and justify why a poststructuralist discourse analysis was chosen as a suitable tool to answer these questions. I will draw upon Lene Hansen's understanding of foreign policy/identity nexus and David Campbell's concept of a "foreign within" to develop an analytical framework for making sense of how Norway's government produces and stabilises their identity through their asylum policy, parallel with its humanitarian self-image. I will also elaborate on relational identity construction, and how this can be related to foreign policy analysis in general, and my research questions more specifically. The second section discusses why discourse analysis was chosen as methodology, and an insight to how this analysis was conducted using certain reading techniques and analytical tools will be presented. The third section presents the research design with the selected text material, how this was delineated in terms of timeframe, events and number of Self's. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the limitations of the thesis, and how my own position and bias may affect the findings.

#### 3.1. Poststructuralism, foreign policy and identity

Foreign policy has conventionally been seen as a bridge between two separate and independent realms, the sovereign state and the international, anarchic system (Campbell 1998: 39, 40, 68). This approach makes foreign policy a state-centric phenomenon, an internally mediated response of states with pre-given and settled national identities towards an externally induced situation of ideological, military and economic threat (Campbell 1998:37). According to this understanding, addressing and analysing Norway's domestic asylum policy as foreign policy may be considered a misnomer, and seem inadequate when trying to answer the research questions put forward in this thesis. Here the foreign Other is found within the Norwegian state borders and the discussion surrounding asylum policy do not always occur obvious to belong in the field of foreign policy.

One way to address the domestic versus foreign and suggesting foreign policy concerns the inside as much as the outside, is presented by David Campbell in his *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (1998). Campbell argues it makes little sense to discuss identity and foreign policy solely in separate terms of "inside" and "outside", and identity does not need to be juxtaposed against a radically different Other located outside the borders. The Other can also be internal, either as a *domestic enemy* or a *foreign within*, and

this internal Other can also be represented as a threat to the national identity. For Campbell, there is a constant struggle within a country over defining the national identity and what is considered a threat (Campbell 1998:35). As an example, feminism and homosexuality are, for some, as threatening to national identity as a foreign enemy (Campbell 1998:64).

Campbell's concept of a foreign within offers an analytical framework for investigating the Norwegian government's discourse on domestic asylum policy parallel to the discourse on foreign aid policy and Norway's humanitarian self-image. This is possible due to the Other, in this case refugees and asylum seekers, constitutes what Campbell refers to as a foreign threat within. The Norwegian Self is also defined against this Other, which leads to the contradictory self-images the research questions seek to address.

As mentioned in the introduction and context chapter, foreign policy may be considered as daily nation-building and identity politics. For poststructuralists, identities are relational: they are defined by what it is not. This is undertaken through making boundaries that divide an "inside" from an "outside", a "domestic" from a "foreign", and a "Self" from an "Other" (Campbell 1998:9, Hansen 2006:1, Neumann 2010:125). This focus on the relational construction of identity rejects the notion that identity makes sense in itself, there has to be a comparative element, and as I will get back to, this is articulated through *language*. The same relational logic is applied in the nexus between identity and foreign policy. Poststructuralist theory sees foreign policy and identity as ontologically intertwined; foreign policies rely upon *representations* of identity, but identity is also produced and reproduced through the formulation of foreign policy (Hansen 2006:1,5). Self-images related to foreign policy are a necessity, in order to know what to do, it is essential to know who you are, and in what relations you are to others (Leira et.al 2007:8). Following the same reasoning, Hansen's analytical framework is based on the assumption that policies are *dependent* upon representations of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address (Hansen 2006:5), underlining the relational aspect between identity and foreign policy. Campbell also highlights how policies will be strengthened by the representation of danger (Campbell 1998:71).

Building on Campbell, Hansen (2006:16, 25) suggests the goal of foreign policy is to present a legitimate and stable link between representation of the Self/Other and the policy. When a foreign policy is implemented or suggested, they often must dominate or neutralise other practices that represents other possible identities. When there is a crisis, threat or critical voices destabilizing the discourse, identity is negotiated (Neumann 2010:52, Hansen 2006:5, 28, 112).

If there exists a contradiction, the government must construct representations in a way to reduce this. Politics are the struggle to bring about discursive stability and it requires hard discursive work to maintain things as they are and make something seem stable when it is constantly in flux and negotiated (Neumann 2010:143, 173, Dunn and Neumann 2016:19, 41, 118). This discursive work involves “making a stream of diverse and surely internally contradictory events appear as ordered and relatively neutral – that is, to re-represent them in a way that aligns them to the stories that constitute the Self in question” (Dunn and Neumann 2016:76). A discourse can be destabilised due to critical voices and competing discourses, but also by events. The high influx of refugees to Norway, starting in the early autumn of 2015, revealed tensions in the discourse regarding Norway’s role as a self-claimed peace nation and humanitarian great power, when political leaders at the same time argued for austerity measures in the asylum policies. As the research question indicate, this thesis will uncover the discursive practices which make it possible for Norway to claim to have one of the strictest asylum policies in Europe at the same time as proclaiming Norway’s lead role in the humanitarian field. This is possibly due to certain analytical framework and adherent techniques presented by Hansen (2006) and Dunn & Neumann (2016), which can be applied given the ontological and epistemological assumption of language/discourse, presented by poststructuralist theory.

### 3.2. Reading and analysis

Within poststructuralism, language is ontologically significant; it is only through language that objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures are given meaning and a particular identity and organized in relation to other things (Dunn & Neumann 2016:43,44). For poststructuralists, everything is filtered through discourse. This does not mean that things do not exist outside the discourse, but in order to exist for us, things have to be grasped through discourse (Dunn & Neumann 2016:9). Building on Foucault, Dunn and Neumann (2016:2) understand discourse to be “systems of meaning-production that fix meaning, however temporarily, and enable actors to make sense of the world and to act within it.” To emphasize that these meanings are socially reproduced, discourse analysts often refer to them as *re*-presentations (Dunn and Neumann 2016:2,5). It is this ontological assumption about language that make an analysis of foreign policy through discourse possible. With language being ontological prominent, the practical epistemological attention is on how these policies and identities are articulated (Hansen 2006:20), and how these can be accessed and revealed by the analyst. Hansen (2006) and Dunn & Neumann (2016) suggest two inter-related ways of analysing (foreign) policy and revealing the textual mechanism at play: the first one is the



spatial, temporal and ethical lenses applied when reading government statements, the second one is the process of linking and differentiation.

When reading and analysing the texts selected, there are numerous different methods to use. Hansen states that it is important to begin with “identifying those terms that indicate a clear construction of the Other [...] or of the Self [...]” (Hansen 2006:37). Hansen suggests that the construction of identity is always articulated in spatial, temporal and ethical terms. These are to be used as “analytical lenses that bring out the important political substance of identity construction” (Hansen 2006:42). *Spatial* dimension may refer to geographical space with boundaries, like a country or a region, for example “Europe”, “The South”, and “Sweden”. Spatial identity can also be articulated as abstract political space, or as a mixture with territorially bounded, such as “terrorists”, “international community” and “Non-Western”. *Temporal* identity refers to a possibility of change across time, and may be expressed through progress, development, continuity on one hand and intransigence and underdevelopment on the other. This is an important part of the aid and development discourse (Hansen 2006:43). For example, when describing Norway’s role as a humanitarian and an aid provider, bringing countries in “the South” towards the developed state of the Norwegian Self. A temporal identity construction can also include a Self of its own past or future, as will be presented in the analysis, where the current government warns against a liberalisation of the asylum policy if the previous government get in power again. Understanding identity as *ethically* constructed implies a concern with the discursive implication of ethics, morality and responsibility articulated through (foreign policy) discourse (Hansen 2006:45). When Norwegian policy makers refer to “refugees” or “economic migrants”, “Afghan children” or “adult men”, it invokes different set of moral responsibility and legitimizes different policy options. An “economic migrant” implies no special ethical responsibility to the migrant, but a responsibility for the state to, for example, conduct a cost/benefit analysis to protect the welfare state. Doing something in national interest can also be considered an ethical construction because it implies a moral obligation to put citizens first. Meanwhile, representing asylum seekers as refugees implies an ethical obligation under international law.

The purpose of foreign policy discourse is to articulate these three elements in a way that they draw upon and reinforce each other, creating a stable link between them (Hansen 2006:42). Foreign policy discourse does not necessarily use or articulate these concepts explicitly, the purpose of a discourse analysis is therefore to expose how these mechanisms come into play.

At the same time as identity and foreign policy is stating boundaries between inside and outside, Other and Self, domestic and foreign, there is also constituted a range of moral valuations of superior/inferior (Campbell 1998:74). This juxtaposition is, by Hansen, referred to as practices of *linking* and *differentiation*. It consists of two processes that work together to construct identity: a positive process of linking and a negative process of differentiation (Hansen 2006:17, Dunn & Neumann 2016:112-113). For example, the Norwegian Self can be articulated linking together positive aspects like “morally good”, “developed”, “peaceful” and “gender equality”, and differentiated negatively with a foreign Other constituted as “fortune hunter/un-genuine refugee”, “underdeveloped”, “security threat” and “patriarchal”. The link between some of the positive traits can be destabilised, or a negatively valued term can be referred to as positive in another discourse (Hansen 2006:18). “Strict” is seen as a positive trait in asylum policy discourse, while it is negative in the discourse on foreign aid, thus there appears an instability with the construction of a “humanitarian” Self.

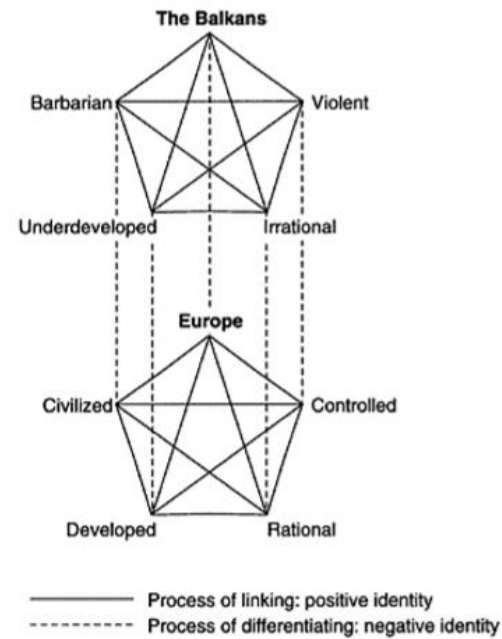


Figure 1. Process of linking and differentiation (Hansen 2006:38)

The representations and identities constructed through language are not neutral or innocuous signifiers, but they have very real political implications, and are therefore associated with *power* (Dunn & Neumann 2016:113). Certain actions and policies are made possible with certain discourses, while other options become unthinkable. When the government is categorising immigrants as “genuine refugees” or “economic migrants”, “adult men” or “children”, it implies a different set of identities, and subsequent a different set of asylum policies. When a government constructs objects, subjects, challenges and threats, it simultaneously suggests policies to address them (Shapiro 1988, in Dunn and Neumann 2016:60). Whoever dominates the discourse and the ability to define identities, holds a lot of social power. There lies great authority behind the power to define knowledge and what is perceived as “truth”. Through linking and differentiation, it becomes visible how the same processes can justify two different policy options, and hence two different Norwegian Selves. Within the aid discourse, the different Other is represented as underdeveloped, but capable of change, and the process of differentiation is a justification for continuing an aid policy that enhance Norwegian image as a humanitarian. While in the asylum discourse, the same process of linking and differentiation

is used to justify a strict asylum policy, since here, the Other is an economic burden on the welfare state, and incapable of change and integration.

A puzzle in the initial part of writing this master thesis was finding an analytical framework and method suitable to analyse how the identity of the Foreign Other in the aid and development discourse changes when the Other is represented in the domestic immigration and asylum discourse. As my research questions suggest, the “same” foreign subject seems to play different parts in the Norwegian identity construction, depending on the context is foreign or domestic. In the aid discourse, the foreign Other is constituting an Other making the Norwegian Self look humanitarian, morally good and altruistic. When the foreign Other cross the border into Norway, they suddenly pose a threat to the Norwegian welfare state and security and destabilises the Norwegian humanitarian self-image they contributed to create in the first discourse. As described above, Campbell offered a solution to this with his concept of a domestic enemy and a foreign within. In order to address the analytical challenge and importance of this observations, this analysis will borrow the concept of a “foreign within” from Campbell, and operate with a distinction between a *Foreign* Other and the *Domestic* Other. The former located in so-called developing countries in the South, and the latter as the migrant arriving in Norway. Both of these Others are found within both discourses, and they serve both similar and different purposes to the Self and the other Other in question, which will be elaborated on in the analysis.

As illustrated above with Campbell’s concept of a foreign within, Norwegian asylum policy can be analysed using the same poststructuralist ontological framework and assumptions as with more traditional foreign policy. This is also supported by Hansen, who states the relational aspect and constitutive importance of identities are not only relevant for foreign policy, but also policy debates more broadly (Hansen 2006: preface). Since Hansen’s Self/Other nexus is discursive, the Other which a foreign policy represents does not need to be physically located outside Norway. The connection between identity, foreign policy and immigration is made clear in the preface of Hansen’s book on post-structural methodology and the Bosnian war, noting how debates on immigration in Europe and North America “concern not only how many people can be allowed into the European Union countries or the United States, but the very identity of ‘Europe’ and ‘America’ and hence what is constituted as ‘foreign’” (Hansen 2006: preface).

As mentioned earlier, whoever holds the power to define policies and identities, holds a lot of authority, which underline the importance of legitimacy when it comes to the policy and identity nexus. The causal relation between identity and policy is co-constitutive (Hansen 2006: preface). When the government articulate asylum policies, they simultaneously articulate identities and representations of the Self and the Other and the other way around. Identities legitimise foreign policies but are at the same time reproduced through the formulations of these very policies. In the words of Hansen: identities are “simultaneously (discursive) foundation and product” (Hansen 2006:19).

If Norway is to be defined as a humanitarian, certain policies must be implemented to enhance this. If Norway is to be perceived as having a strict asylum policy, other policies are called for. At the centre of political activity is the “construction of a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other” (Hansen 2006:25). If there exist an instability, the government must construct representations of the Other, the Self or the policy in a way to reduce this. Continuing the example above, a strict asylum policy towards refugee children implies a different Norwegian Self than one who denies economic migrants residence. They evoke a different amount of instability in the humanitarian discourse.

### 3.3. Why discourse analysis?

As established above, my understanding of foreign policy and identity is based on a poststructuralist ontological assumption that identities are relational and constructed through language. Since foreign policy is dependent on these identities, or representations, the epistemological implication is therefore that (foreign) policy can only be accessed and made sense of through discourse. A discourse analysis seeks to investigate how different discourses produce representations that create a range of possible policies and actions while excluding others, or the other way around, start with a specific policy and show how it was made possible with a certain discourse (Dunn & Neumann 2016:12). Rather than seeing these representations as natural facts, the analyst aims to identify how they have been produced, repeated, naturalised and resisted (Mutlu & Salter 2013, in Dunn & Neumann 2016:4). This involves disassembling the discourses and the corresponding representations. This thesis investigate how the Norwegian Self as a humanitarian great power, which have been present and relatively stable for decades, is maintained in the meeting with the 2015 refugee crisis and high influx of migrants to Norway, and the government’s attempt to establish and impose a strict asylum policy in response.

### 3.4. Text selection and delineation

A discourse is not completely detached from all other discourses. Where the boundaries should be drawn is a choice that must be made for every discourse analysis (Neumann 2010:56). In practice, this means a delineation in time, themes and events, and text material, as illustrated by Hansen's research design (2006:72). This selection process also includes a reflection and justification on why this particular period and documents were picked and not others, and what impact this could have on the analysis.

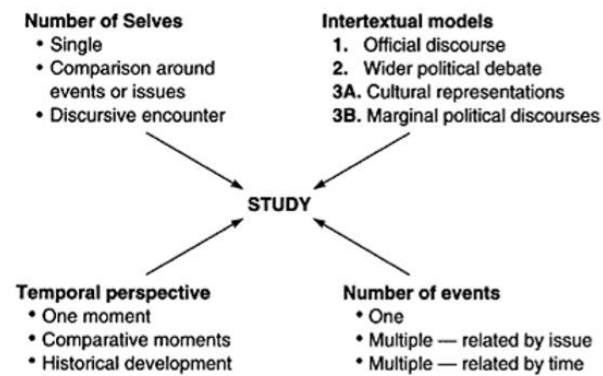


Figure 2. Research design (Hansen 2006:72).

Regarding delineation in time, there is always a question of how big of a span should be covered by the text selection and analysis. Depending on the research question, there could be a focus on discursive changes over time, or a focus on events taking place within the same time period. As mentioned above, when there is a crisis, threat or critical voices destabilizing the discourse, identity is negotiated. Conflict should therefore attract the discourse analyst since the reason is often that something new is happening, which will be met with different attempts of restriction by those who dominate the discourse (Neumann 2010:52, Dunn and Neumann 2016:93). The refugee crisis and the following high influx of migrants to Norway in the early autumn of 2015, represent such an event which put existing identities and representations under pressure, and provoked a reaction from the government in order to stabilise them and promote favourable policies. While the refugee crisis reached Norwegian borders in August 2015, the backdrop of this event started earlier and there will therefore be some text material stretching back to the start of 2015. The chosen text material enables a thorough analysis of a time period with high political intensity and discursive pressure. As mentioned in the context chapter regarding the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, this representation of Norway stretches back several decades. But for the purpose of this analysis and research questions posed, the selected text material used to map the government's humanitarian discourse in the analysis will also be from 2015 to 2018.

The choice of data should be structured according to the research question posed and the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumption (Dunn and Neumann 2016:91). This thesis and its research questions seek to investigate government asylum policy through discourse, which makes it beneficial to go straight to the main source, the government website

*Regjeringen.no*. Hansen's starting point is that the smallest item of study for the discourse analyst is the statement, the explicit discursive articulation (Hansen 2006:37).

A relevant concept within discourse analysis is *intertextuality*, that is, how texts are tied together and refer to each other as a way of building both arguments and authority for their constructions of identity and foreign policy (Dunn & Neumann 2016:108, Neumann 2010:20, Hansen 2006:8,11). This can be done by making direct quotes or by adopting key concepts and catchphrase (Hansen 2006:7,51), for example the concept of Norway as a humanitarian great power, or the phrase "Swedish conditions", which will be elaborated on in the analysis.

According to Lene Hansen's (2006:57) four intertextual models for delimiting text, I will mainly use *Model 1 Official Discourse* which consists of official statements and policy texts, but I will also make some use of newspaper articles. Official discourse is significant to study, because it is articulation made by political leaders with official authority. Government officials and policymakers are located in a larger political sphere, meaning their representations draw upon and are shaped by the representations articulated by a large number of individuals, institutions and media outlets (Hansen 2006:7). Government texts play a prominent role in the discourse, since they are often referred to and quoted from, and have wide reception (Neumann 2010:52, Dunn and Neumann 2016:93). The majority of the included text material is found on the government website, making the analysis more accurate when coming from a primary source. Politicians may be mis-quoted in newspapers, and the journalists' own opinions may affect the article. The government website consists of an extensive search base and archive, with a possibility to search for documents based on politician, ministry, and thematic, among others. In order to find relevant texts, I searched for documents relating to "immigration", "refugees", "asylum policy", "humanitarian" etc. In addition, I also looked specifically on the information pages of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Public Security and Prime Minister's Office, and the personal pages of the associated ministers, where all the press releases and speeches are also sorted under. The total number of texts from the government website used in the analysis is 98, and the distribution of texts will be displayed in the table below.

I will also make use of *Model 2 Wider political debate*, including the opposition, which also embraces political texts, party manifesto, debates, speeches, statements, newspaper editorials. Most of the selected text materials from *Regjeringen.no* (official discourse) signed by a specific minister, have also been published in newspapers and media websites like *Verdens Gang*,

Dagbladet, Aftenposten and NRK, parallel to the publishing on government website, making up an intertwining of Hansen's model 1 and 2. I have also included some general newspaper articles (written by journalists, and not found on government website) in the analysis, where direct quotes and statements from government officials may give further insight or highlight a particular point. Newspaper articles will give a useful context, like oppositional discourse and what criticism has destabilised the discourse, how the government's policy representations have been received, as well as the government respond (or lack of) to the criticism and how they have sought to stabilise the discourse. Newspaper articles are primary sources as long as they are taken from the time period under analysis. But in order to avoid obtain observations and opinions not my own, I have mostly concentrated on articles where politicians are directly quoted. In the process of finding relevant articles, I applied search words like "refugee", "refugee crisis", "asylum policy" and so on within the selected timeframe. The relevant articles often made reference and linked to other similar articles which fit my search requirements. The search process and number of newspaper articles selected are not as thorough or extensive as with the government documents, due the government discourse and documents constitute the main focus and largest share of the selected material. 25 newspaper articles were used in the analysis, and the distribution of texts is presented in the table below.

There exists a lot of literature on the topic, so one of the challenges is to not get lost in all the possible text material. At what point have enough text been covered? According to Dunn and Neumann, the discourse analyst should aim to identify the main positions within a discourse by reading an extensive amount of texts, ideally from a wide variety of sources, media and genres (Dunn and Neumann 2016:100). On the other hand, politics are not about an infinite number of different opinions, but rather between relatively clearly defined positions (Neumann 2010:62, Dunn and Neumann 2016:8). An analysis can be said to be complete when, "upon adding new texts, one finds that the theoretical categories one has generated also work for those new texts" (Dunn and Neumann 2016:101). Meaning, after a while the discourse analyst will reach a saturation point where new text will only repeat the existing representations and constructions already discovered. A lot of the texts found on the government website was repetitive and often contained the exact same phrases. It is a discursive insight to map out, not only that certain representations or phrases are repeated, but also to what extent they are (re)occurring. Since most of the government documents were short texts like press releases, speeches and newspaper articles, I was provided the possibility to cover a vast amount of texts.

Hansen (2006:47) suggests identifying a small number of two or three “basic discourses”. In order to have a comparative dimension, the basic discourses should advocate different policy options, where at least one should be dominant, and the others should be in response to and criticizing the other. There will be a brief presentation of the oppositional discourse’s critique of the government’s asylum policies in the wake of increased influx of migrants to Norway, and how the current government deals with this. But the main focus and emphasis of this thesis and its analysis is the governmental discourse and how the government stabilises its two seemingly contradictory discourses of asylum and aid policy which surfaced during the event of the refugee crisis during the early autumn of 2015. As suggested above, in addition to critical voices and competing discourses, a discourse can also be destabilised by events which put “particular pressure on links within a discourse” (Hansen 2006:40). The high influx of asylum seekers to Norway represent such an event.

As the research questions in this thesis suggests, there will be a focus on the two discourses surrounding the Norwegian aid policy and asylum policy. For the purpose of the thesis and analysis, I have labelled them the Humanitarian Great Power discourse and Strictest in Europe discourse. Together, these two discourses offer a different comparative element than suggested by Hansen. The main comparative element is the *two Self’s* these two discourses construct, stemming from the same government. They are not criticising each other’s policy options, but the policy options that follows the different Self’s make up an un-stabilising element to each other which the government is trying to minimize through discursive work. The government discourses and policy options have received different degrees of criticism and resistance from oppositional parties, organisations and general public, which offers rival constructions and representations of the Self/Other-policy nexus. This thesis will only look briefly into the critical voices, most of the attention will be on the government’s response to the high influx of asylum seekers, and the attempts at stabilising and legitimising their policies when met with criticism.

The comparative element of the basic discourses does also consist of a temporal dimension. The Humanitarian Great Power discourse is older and have remained relatively stable since the 1970s (Tvedt 2002) during different government periods. It occurs quite separate from the Strictest in Europe discourse, until the event of the refugee crisis brings them together and the government has to find a way to make the two stable side by side.



Regarding events, the first part of the analysis addressing the Humanitarian Great Power discourse in the time period 2015-2018, is mostly concerned with the war in Syria and instability in the surrounding region.

Looking at Hansen’s research design again, the analysis will focus on technically *one event*, the high influx of migrants to Norway starting in the early autumn of 2015. However, it stretches out over the time period 2015 to 2018 and includes several occasions of policy changes and subsequent criticism which intensifies the discourse and calls for discursive work from the government. Therefore, describing it as strictly one event is a bit simplistic, since it evolves over several years. Also, the Strictest in Europe discourse mainly respond to the domestic issue of influx of migrants to Norway, but the Humanitarian Great Power, on the other hand, is more concerned with the war in Syria and instability in the surrounding region.

The analysis comprises of how the *two Selves*, the Humanitarian Self and the Strict Self. The event of the refugee crisis and influx of migrants to Norway brings them together since the latter Self is making up a destabilising element to the former, and the government has to discursively reconcile the two.

The distribution of the selected text material<sup>7</sup> which forms the basis for the analysis is as follow:

Ministry	Author
Prime Minister’s Office	Erna Solberg <sup>8</sup> : 15 General press releases/news: 3
Ministry of Justice and Public Security	Sylvi Listhaug <sup>9</sup> : 23 Tor Mikkel Wara <sup>10</sup> : 2 General press releases/news: 25
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Børge Brende <sup>11</sup> : 8 Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide <sup>12</sup> : 3 Nikolai Astrup <sup>13</sup> : 8 General press releases/news: 5

<sup>7</sup> Where a minister is stated as the author, the reference will be correspondingly. If the government text is a press release or news statement with no known author, it will be referenced to as “Regjeringen 20xx”.

<sup>8</sup> Erna Solberg (Høyre), current Prime Minister (August 2013-)

<sup>9</sup> Sylvi Listhaug (Fremskrittspartiet), previous Minister of Immigration and Integration (2015-2018) and Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration (January 2018-March 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Tor Mikkel Wara (Fremskrittspartiet), current Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration (April 2018-)

<sup>11</sup> Børge Brende (Høyre), previous Minister of Foreign Affairs (2013-2017)

<sup>12</sup> Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide (Høyre), current Minister of Foreign Affairs (October 2017-)

<sup>13</sup> Nikolai Astrup (Høyre), current minister of International Development (Januar 2018-)

Other Ministries	Press releases/news: 6
Interviews and statements gathered from newspaper articles	NRK: 6 Verdens Gang: 3 Dagbladet: 2 Dagsavisen: 4 Aftenposten: 6 Adressa: 1 Klassekampen: 1 Fedrelandsvennen: 2

As can be observed by the distribution of text sources above, there are some names recurring more often than others in the selected text material, the most prominent is Sylvi Listhaug (Fremskrittspartiet). As the previous Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration (January 2018-March 2018), and Minister of Immigration and Integration (2015-2018), it is not extraordinary that Listhaug regularly commented on the issue and was often cited, it just reflects her crucial institutional position within the discourse.

With regards to party context and the difference in political manifestos regarding aid and asylum policy, this thesis will not go into detail, since the main focus is official governmental discourse. However, it can be relevant for some parts of the analysis to bear in mind that Fremskrittspartiet has established itself as more critical towards immigration than other parties, which is apparent when looking at certain representations of the Other, both of migrants and political opponents. This is more visible within the realm social media and on the party's website. Since the main focus of this thesis is official government discourse as a whole, there will not be any strong emphasis on how the different governing parties individually address the asylum policy outside official government documents, even though it could add an interesting dimension to the analysis.

### 3.5. Reflections on limitations and bias

Conducting discourse analysis implies many choices must be made, all with strengths and weaknesses associated with them. Methods are often understood as an approach to represent something from an objective and external point of view. However, embracing a poststructuralist approach means an acknowledgment that the observations and information we generate about the world is based on subjective interpretations, not objective facts. It is important to reflect on how these subjective interpretations will affect the gathering of data and the analysis. Potential

pitfalls that should be avoided, like the analyst's own biases and political standpoint, maintaining the ability to denaturalise events and discursive mechanisms, and not get "home-blind" (Dunn and Neumann 2016:85). One way of avoiding this is to strive for transparency regarding the choices made and personal bias which can affect the research.

Situated on the left side in the political landscape myself and given the government under scrutiny in my analysis is orientated on the right side of the spectrum, there is always a possibility of my personal views and opinions affecting how I observe and interpret text. Due to the discourse analyst is not able to assume an objective position outside the discourse, claiming full subjectivity and no influence of personal opinion, is unviable. To mitigate this, the discourse analyst has to be as transparent as possible regarding methods and the choices made. Also, with discourse analysis one does not pick texts that are unusual or rare, but rather selects texts that are representing a broader pattern within discourse. This notion of a broad scope will help prevent the discourse analyst from choosing specific texts to support his or her preconceived ideas. While I started with a broad scope and gradually narrowed my analysis when I discovered certain representations reappeared more often than others, I still kept an eye out for instabilities and representations which differed from the already established patterns of meaning. This way, to minimize the possibility of turning "home-blind" and lose the ability to denaturalise the information put forward in texts (Dunn and Neumann 2016:85).

Most of the selected text material is in Norwegian, and the translations have been made by me. The translations have been done bearing in mind that meaning can be lost, altered or added when translated from one language to another, which I have tried to avoid to the best of my language skills.

The majority of the selected data are texts written and published under the name of government officials and/or ministries. This reduces the risk of text having been through an interpretative third part before reaching the discourse analyst. Where I have made use of other sources like media and newspaper articles where government officials have been interviewed, I have focused on direct quotes to avoid any misinterpretations or text tinted by the journalists/newspaper's possible biases and personal views. Also, all the texts found on the government website and newspaper articles are available to the public and links are provided in the reference list to ensure transparency.

A limitation to this research is that the comparative aspect is blunted by the limited time frame. By only focus on one period in time (the influx of refugees to Norway), and with a timeframe of 2015-2018 regarding text selection, this analysis says something about the *current* government. This do not qualify for concluding whether there is a general Norwegian trend and continuation from previous governments, or if it is something distinct about this government due to different position in the political landscape. I did consider making comparative analysis to the Balkan war in the 1990s and the following influx of refugees and asylum seekers to Norway, and how the government respond to this. However, the mass of material and practical reasons made it less feasible. For example, gaining access to government documents and general newspaper articles were more challenging (and costly), not to mention my own lack of contextual knowledge about the general discourse and situation in that time period made it too time-consuming of a task with the time I had at my disposal. On the other hand, the benefit of a smaller timeframe is the possibility to go more in-dept in the material, cover more texts, and focus more closely on the process of events unfolding and stabilizing which provides a more thorough analysis of the government discourse at a specific period of time.

### 3.6. Chapter conclusion

This discourse analysis will take a poststructuralist approach to foreign policy, identity and language. Lene Hansen's concept of ethicality, spatiality and temporality, and David Campbell's notion of a "foreign within", will provide useful analytical tools to reveal the discursive mechanisms at play in the government's discourse on foreign aid and asylum policy. When we now turn to the analysis, these reading techniques will display how the different constructions of the Other contribute to the government's work of reconciling its strict asylum policy with a humanitarian identity.

#### **4. Norwegian foreign aid policy – The Humanitarian Great Power**

Let us go back to Lene Hansen's intertwining of identity and foreign policy: "The goal of foreign policy is to create a stable link between representations of identity and the proposed policy" (Hansen 2006:16). Discursive constructions of identity, as expressed in government articles, speeches and statements, reflects and legitimizes not only the policies that are carried out, but also create and shape the prerequisites for these policies. How does the current government express and support the image of Norway as a humanitarian great power? And, how is this humanitarian Self maintained when met with a "strict" Self in the asylum policy? There is a seemingly stark instability: One would surely expect a humanitarian great power would be leading the benevolence towards refugees. This would have offered a stable identity/policy nexus and would have prevented the government from critique by the political opposition as "cold and cynical" (Fedrelandsvennen 2017b), "un-solidary" and "breaking with long traditions of Norway taking humanitarian responsibility" (Verdens Gang 2017d). The two next chapters conduct a discourse analysis of how the government sought to stabilise this contradiction of a humanitarian identity and a strict asylum policy.

While most of the previous literature presenting Norway's humanitarian self-image dates back to before the increased influx of migrants in 2015, the following section will present government discourse from 2015 and onwards. As mentioned above, the phrase "humanitær stormakt" only appears in the government discourse as an Official Norwegian Report from 2003 and can hardly be said to be widespread used by the government. Hansen (2006:46,82) talks about basic discourses as ideal-types, meaning *analytical* constructions, and representations of what a phenomenon would look like when its internal logic is fully maximized (Dunn & Neumann 2016). The ideal-type character of discourses implies that they are often modified, and variations constructed over time. Discursive variations occur within a basic discourse, and texts referred to might not be in complete concordance with the ideal-type basic discourses. Different actors like governments, international institutions and so on, may not use identical words and phrases, but the different representations and policies are systematically connected and share key points, illustrative of a broader discursive pattern and can reflect a widespread discourse, nonetheless. Although not expressed explicitly, this analysis will present discursive examples of how the government underpin and express the representation of Norway as a humanitarian great power in other ways than using the exact phrase.

#### 4.1. The Foreign Other in the South

According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway's development policy is designed to promote economic development, democratisation, implementation of human rights, good governance and measures that can "lift people out of poverty for good" (Regjeringen 2018d). Priority is given to children and education, humanitarian assistance, health and vaccination, climate change mitigation, and human rights. The Norwegian Self is represented here as an economic generous aid giver and constructs an Other in need of development and financial support to reach the developed end-state the developed Self represents. This offers a *temporal* dimension commonly found in development and aid discourse: an articulation of progress, development, continuity on one hand and intransigence and underdevelopment on the other (Hansen 2006). To exemplify how identity relies on foreign policy and the representation of an Other; if the Foreign Other actually were to be lifted out of poverty "for good", Norway would have a hard time stabilising its identity as a developed humanitarian great power.

Parallel with the temporal aspect, the Foreign Other construct a Norwegian Self with *ethical* obligations towards the Other. Illustrated by Erna Solberg commenting on the war in Syria and the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean: "We are affected as fellow human beings. But we are also affected because Norway [...] is a major humanitarian actor. We have a responsibility to act" (Solberg 2015a).

These representations are stabilised by repeatedly referring to Norway's generous aid budget and billions of kroner contributed abroad on humanitarian relief. As with the number of asylum seekers arriving, Norway's contribution to Syria and the overall aid budget is characterized as "historically" and "record high" in the text material from the same period (Regjeringen 2015e, 2015j, 2016a; Solberg & Brende 2016a, Solberg 2016f, Listhaug 2016a).

The dissemination of Norway's actions in connection with the war in Syria plays an important part in stabilising the Norwegian humanitarian Self. Norway has "increased the humanitarian budget" (Solberg 2015a, 2015d, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d; Brende 2017a; Søreide 2018a; Regjeringen 2016d) and makes "significant humanitarian efforts" (Brende 2017b; Søreide 2018b). Never before has there been given so much money to a humanitarian crisis (Brende 2016b; Regjeringen 2015e, 2016a) ensuring over 1% of gross national income (GNI) is spent as official development assistance placing Norway at "the top of the world" (Brende 2017a). While the phrase *humanitarian great power* is not exactly used, the representations share the same pattern of meaning: Norway is a heavyweight internationally when it comes to financial contributions to the world's poor and conflict stricken.

In January 2018, the government reinstated the Minister of International Development, after the ministerial post was dissolved in October 2013<sup>14</sup>. A review of the publications from the Minister of International Development, Nikolai Astrup, reveals there is a consistent focus and articulation of Norway's "global leadership role" in the humanitarian field (Astrup 2018b, 2018d). The goal of the Norwegian financial contributions is to "save 35 million human life within 2030" (Astrup 2018f, 2018g). There is also a continued focus on Norway's large contribution and how the aid budget making up one percent of the GNI, which is "a lot, compared to almost all other donor nations" (Astrup 2018c, 2018e, 2018f). The re-introducing of a Minister of International Development can be seen as a way of enhancing the importance of Norway's aid and development policy as part of the foreign policy and self-image, which will make the humanitarian Self more robust when facing the instability following a strict asylum policy.

#### 4.2. The European Other

The measure of GNI per capita is presented as the prime evidence of a country not only is dedicated to helping the world's poor, but also better than other countries who are not fulfilling the 0,7% target. This brings us over to the other representation, the one involving other European countries. In addition to mentioning the amount of money spent, there is also a comparative dimension, making sure Norway is not only an average humanitarian, but a great one. Pushing the Foreign Other to the background, and bringing other European aid giving countries to the foreground. Here the Norwegian Self is an initiator and aid-champion among European countries, which consists of other (often less) aid giving countries. In addition to the "record-high" amount of aid Norway is spending, other discursive practices stabilising the Humanitarian Self involve describing Norwegian aid as "world-class" and in "world-top" (Brende 2017a; Solberg & Brende 2016a), and, as mentioned above, Norway is among the countries spending the most when looking at GNI per capita (Regjeringen 2015e). Judging by statements from the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of International Development, the war in Syria has confirmed Norway's place in this imaginary global humanitarian-championship. Norway is among the countries who has contributed the most in Syria and neighbouring areas to "alleviate civilians' distress and suffering" (Solberg & Brende 2016a; Solberg 2016f). Norway has also pushed other European countries to provide more aid

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<sup>14</sup> From 2013 to 2018, the development policy belonged to the Minister of Foreign Affairs area of responsibility.

by taking initiatives at donor conferences (Solberg & Brende 2016a; Brende 2016b), showing how Norway have taken, and will maintain, “a global leadership role in the humanitarian field” (Solberg 2017f). This illustrates how the representation of a Norwegian humanitarian Self is not only dependent on a linking and differentiation with a poor and underdeveloped country located in the South, but also other European peer countries in order to be a great power in the field humanitarianism. When moving over to the asylum policy in the next chapter, we will see how this is flipped upside down, when the European countries compete in having the strictest asylum policy.

#### 4.3. The intersection between the Foreign and Domestic Other

As the research questions imply, the identity of a humanitarian Self is challenged when the global refugee crisis came to Norway during early autumn 2015. In other words, the instability appears in the intersection between the Humanitarian Great Power and the Strictest in Europe discourses, when the Foreign Other reaches Norwegian borders and becomes *Domestic*. When the spatial identity of the other changes, who is the Norwegian Self in this regard: A humanitarian great power, or the strictest country in Europe? The research question boils down to this: How are the two Norwegian Selves combined and stabilised when faced with the Domestic Other? Is the Domestic Other an economic burden to the welfare state and a threat to the Norwegian society, or is the Domestic Other a moral obligation in need of financial help and protection and an enhancer of the Norwegian Self as a humanitarian great power? And finally, if there is tension between these representations, how is it reconciled?

The answer is to be found where the Humanitarian Great Power discourse overlap with the Strictest in Europe discourse. A close reading of the press releases, statements and articles from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show the Humanitarian Great Power discourse tend not to comment directly on the immigration situation and asylum policy within Norwegian borders. Hansen (2006) refers to three ways for a government to respond to criticism and destabilising elements: alter the policy-identity construction; acknowledge events and facts but explain them within the discursive framework already in place; or ignore and silence the challenges and criticism. Discourses seek to reach closure and stability, but there will always exist contradicting elements or open spots which a discourse has to “leave in silence to present itself as stable” (Hansen 2006:128).

However, there are some exceptions where the Humanitarian Great Power discourse do address elements and challenges within the discourse on Norwegian asylum policy. This



include the return of asylum seekers to Afghanistan (Brende 2016f), the 5000 asylum seekers who came across the northern Norwegian borders from Russia (Brende & Listhaug 2016), and re-allocation of the aid budget to cover up for expenses relating to the Domestic Other in Norway rather than the Foreign (Regjeringen 2015e). The few times the foreign aid discourse touch upon issues regarding the Norway's asylum policy, it is to assure that Norway has followed rules and regulations which are in line with international responsibility and the humanitarian identity.

These topics have received criticism from both political oppositions and international organisations like the UNHCR. This reveals how the Humanitarian Great Power discourse is destabilized when having to relate to policies that comes in the wake of the Strictest in Europe discourse, which may explain why the discourse does not address these issues as often. The stability of the humanitarian discourse relies upon keeping the strictness discourse out. These overlaps and instabilities will be further discussed below and will show how, on the other hand, the Strictest in Europe discourse and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security often comment on foreign affairs and the Foreign Other, and more frequently draws legitimacy from the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, than the other way around. Which is not very sensational given that the aid discourse is well established in Norway and has been relatively stable since the 1970s (Pharo 2015; Tvedt 2003), and the governments focus on a *strict* asylum policy has gained importance and relevance only the recent few years. As this analysis will suggest, rather than the strict asylum policy destabilising the claim to be a humanitarian great power, the latter actually legitimises the government leading a strict asylum policy.

#### 4.4. Chapter conclusion

The existing research on Norwegian foreign policy presented in chapter 2, established that there is a notion of Norway as a humanitarian great power. However, since the basis of this thesis rests on an assumption that the *government* claims such a self-image, it was necessary to provide a presentation on this. If there is no such self-image within the government discourse, then there is no element of contradiction next to a strict asylum policy. This chapter has helped to highlight and consolidate that a humanitarian self-image does appear in government discourse, and also is present in the selected time period of 2015 and up until today. Now that this has been established, we can move over to the second part of the analysis, which will look at how the Norwegian government has sought to stabilise a strict asylum policy with a humanitarian identity.

## 5. Norwegian asylum policy: Strictest in Europe

It is clear the influx has a strong connection with what signals a country sends out. Norway must lead a strict and fair asylum policy and first and foremost provide assistance to the neighbouring areas and prevent migration. It is still there we can help the most. Norway cannot accept large numbers of immigrants over a long time. This could affect the Norwegian welfare model and create major challenges in our society. (Listhaug 2016e).

The Norwegian self-image as a humanitarian nation is based on helping a *foreign* Other located in “neighbouring areas”, a popular generic term for countries in Middle East, Africa or Asia. What happens to this representation when the Other suddenly is situated within Norwegian borders and becomes *domestic*? Can the identity of a humanitarian Self doing good to the Foreign Other remain stable while arguing for strictness towards the Domestic Other? This is the puzzle that motivated me to write this thesis, and the following part of the analysis will present my findings.

The following sections will present characteristics of the government’s discourse on Norwegian asylum policy and identify discursive mechanism constructing different representations of the Self and the Other, and how they legitimise certain policy options that appear contradicting. The analysis aims to explain how Norway’s “strictness” approach and the subsequent policy making and austerity measures, are defended in ethical, spatial and temporal terms through language, simultaneously with maintaining a humanitarian Norwegian Self. The structure of this chapter will not follow a chronological timeline but present the analysis in thematic findings relating to representations of the Self and the Other. These representations include a “strict” Self which constructs the Other as a threat to the Norwegian welfare state and economy. There is also the articulation of a rational Self struggling against a naïve political opposition, which leads us to the well-used phrase “Swedish conditions” and the representation of the Other as a threat to security. The analysis will look at the representation of the European Other and see how Norway’s neighbouring countries also play a part in constructing a strict Norwegian Self and the quest for a strict asylum policy. As a Humanitarian Great Power, there is also an important element of ethicality and moral in the articulation of the Other within the asylum policy, and the government’s responsibility (or lack of) towards the Foreign versus Domestic Other. This will be illustrated by the government’s construction of “neighbouring areas” and “genuine refugees”, where the ethical and spatial aspect of the dividing between the Domestic

and Foreign Other is more clearly articulated. Asylum seekers from Afghanistan are frequently mentioned in the selected text material defending the government's asylum policy and constitute an important part of the asylum debate. This will therefore be dedicated a separate section of this analysis. But first some context related to the selected timeframe will be presented, followed by the concept of a "strict asylum policy", and a brief presentation of the oppositional discourse.

#### 5.1. The refugee crisis in Norwegian context

The asylum situation in Norway is an ongoing event and part of a larger development with increased number of refugees and migrants who come to Europe (Garvik 2018). 1.3 million asylum applications were registered in Europe in 2015 (Solberg 2016b). During the early autumn of 2015 there was a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers who arrived in Norway, especially from Syria and Afghanistan. According to the government, the total number of 31 145 "put the whole country under pressure" (Solberg & Listhaug 2016). Not since the Balkan wars in the 1990s had the influx to Norway been greater (Garvik 2018). Throughout the government text material, this influx of migrants to Norway and Europe in 2015 was frequently described as "historic" and "record high"<sup>15</sup>. As comparison, in 2014 there were 11.480 applicants, and in 2016 the number was a "historic" and "record low" (Solberg 2016g, Listhaug 2017f) at 3.460 applicants, and the lowest in 20 years. 2017 saw approximately the same number, and this year per November 2018 counts 2.882 asylum applications (UDI 2018b). While the war in Syria serve as the backdrop of the refugee crisis and the austerity measures promoted within the asylum policy by the government in 2015 and 2016, the asylum policy and debate in Norway also revolves largely around asylum seekers from Afghanistan and other countries which constitute a larger share of the number of asylum applications<sup>16</sup>. This is apparent in the selected text material, where asylum seekers from these countries tend to be represented as "less genuine" than Syrian asylum seekers, which I will get back to later on.

What is the reason for the "historic" decline in 2016? Stricter border controls in neighbouring countries and the rest of Europe is one explanation (Garvik 2018), but at the same time the government claims this sharp decrease is also credited to the austerity measures they introduced within the asylum policy and the "signal effect" this had (Listhaug 2016e, Listhaug & Brende

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<sup>15</sup> Solberg 2015d, 2015e, 2016b, 2016g; Listhaug 2016b, 2016c, 2016j, 2017d; Regjeringen 2015f, 2015o, 2016d, 2016f.

<sup>16</sup> Top six country background of asylum seekers to Norway per November 2018: Turkey 723, Afghanistan 432, Syria 396, Eritrea 249, Iran 119 and Iraq 97 (UDI 2018b).

2016). As a response to the increasing influx in 2015, the government presented austerity measures and suggestions for a legislative tightening in the asylum policy in November 2015, December 2015, and April 2016. The government's attempts to make the Norwegian asylum policy "stricter" led to various reactions from oppositional parties, organisations and individuals, which will be presented below.

## 5.2. A "strict and fair" asylum policy

Throughout the period, the government asserted that Norway must lead a "strict and fair asylum policy". Which brings us to the most prominent representation when looking at the Norwegian government's asylum policy discourse: A Norwegian Self presented as strict. For the purpose of this thesis, the discourse has been labelled "The Strictest in Europe discourse". The phrase occurs frequently in newspaper articles, both as direct quotes from government officials and as journalists and other politicians' and individuals' descriptions of the government asylum policy. When presenting tightening measures in the asylum policy in December 2016 and April 2017, both Sylvi Listhaug and Erna Solberg ensured that the government's new line would make Norway "among the strictest in Europe" (NRK 2015, Dagbladet 2016) The word "strict" itself appears repeatedly in the selected government text material and is the most used adjective to describe Norway's asylum policy. The word is applied in different ways: Norway have a "strict asylum policy"<sup>17</sup>, immigration to Norway is "strictly regulated"<sup>18</sup>, Norway must pursue an asylum policy which is "strict and/but fair"<sup>19</sup>, "strict and clear"<sup>20</sup> and "strict and sustainable"<sup>21</sup>. The word "strict" is to a greater extent found in the text material signed by Sylvi Listhaug (see footnote 17-21), but it also appears in general government material and texts signed by different government officials, including the Prime Minister, making it a key representation capturing the overall government discourse on asylum policy as well.

The phrase "strictest in Europe" has been contested. As indicated, it has mostly been stated by and linked to Sylvi Listhaug, at the time Minister of Justice, Public Security & Immigration and Deputy Leader of Fremskrittspartiet. While the Prime Minister, and leader of Høyre, Erna Solberg have kept a lower profile in the media on the topic. When asked before the election in September 2017, if it is a goal to have Europe's strictest immigration policy, the

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<sup>17</sup> "Strict asylum policy" (Listhaug 2016h, 2016f, 2016e).

<sup>18</sup> "Immigration to Norway is strictly regulated" (Regjeringen 2015p).

<sup>19</sup> "Strict and/but fair asylum policy" (Regjeringen 2015h, 2016d, 2016f, 2018f; Solberg 2016a, 2016b; Listhaug 2016a, 2016e, 2016g, 2016i, 2017a; Stang 2017, Sandberg 2017b).

<sup>20</sup> "Strict and clear" (Sandberg 2017a, Regjeringen 2016i).

<sup>21</sup> "Strict and sustainable" (Listhaug 2016d, 2016i).

Prime Minister replied: “No, but it is a goal to have a strict immigration policy” (NRK 2017a). As mentioned in the methodology section, there will not be an emphasis on party affiliation since the research question focus on government discourse, and the text material which forms the basis for this analysis is selected with that in mind. All the nuances presented in this analysis appears *within* the same government discourse on asylum policy, since the selected text material is found on the government website and in this material, Sylvi Listhaug speaks as a minister on behalf of the government.

In the early autumn of 2015, when Norway began to experience the increasing influx of asylum seekers, the government started talking about a tightening in the asylum policy and to be strict, since it was important to “send a signal” to reduce the number of migrants wanting to come to Norway and to “get the costs down” (Solberg 2015d, 2015e). This was done while also ensuring how Norway “is the sixth largest donor country to the region [Syria], and the second largest in relation to the population” (Solberg 2015d). This is a recurring observation; arguing and defending austerity measures within the asylum field and be strict at home, at the same time as mentioning Norway’s humanitarian contributions abroad. As with the number of asylum seekers arriving, Norway’s contribution to Syria and the overall aid budget is characterized as “historically” and “record high” in the text material from the same period. This way, the Humanitarian Great Power discourse helps stabilise and legitimise the representation of a Norway who is strict towards asylum seekers and the Domestic Other.

In order to “send a signal” a reduce the number of migrants to Norway, the government has produced text material specifically aimed at asylum seekers considering going to Norway. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security Facebook campaign and information page “Stricter asylum regulations in Norway” (Regjeringen 2018g) warns against travelling to Norway unless you have a genuine need for protection. An information film shows dramatic images from the smuggler route in Europe while a voiceover tells that many have lost their lives or been exploited on the road. In the language of English, French, Arabic, Farsi and Pashto, the government ask, “Why risk your life and use your savings to pay smugglers when you will not get permission to stay?” (Regjeringen 2018g). Ministry of Justice's own figures shows 11.5 million people have visited the page and the short-movies has been viewed 21 million times (Klassekampen 2017). The government also have “campaigns in Somalia and Sudan just to prevent further migration” (Solberg 2015a), and Norway contributes financially to international campaigns, to raise awareness of danger of migration and inform about the conditions in Europe

(Klassekampen 2017). When expressed like this, the government argues for a strict asylum policy through an ethical concern for the safety of migrants, thus preventing migration is a way of saving lives, which coincides more with the humanitarian image of Norway.

### 5.3. Oppositional discourse and criticism

The increased influx of migrants during the autumn of 2015 created turmoil in the political landscape, especially relating to the tightening in the asylum policy presented by the government in December 2015 and April 2016. All political parties in government and Storting state in their political manifesto “Norway must fulfil its international obligations” and help refugees (FrP 2018, Høyre 2018, Ap 2018, Venstre 2018, SV 2018, KrF 2018). The disagreement lies in the definition of who should be classified as a refugee and in need of protection, how many should Norway accept, and how (where) they should be helped.

Part of the destabilization of the humanitarian Self is not because of a strict asylum policy itself, but the result of political opposition, organisations and individuals’ criticism towards the government’s asylum policy. The criticism from oppositional parties is mainly regarding how Norway is accepting too few refugees (Garvik 2015) and is too strict towards the asylum seekers which have arrived. The government’s asylum policy has been characterised as “cold and harsh” (Dagsavisen 2017d), “un-solidary” and “breaking with long traditions of Norway taking humanitarian responsibility” (Verdens Gang 2017d). There is also a general concern that the policy is disregarding Norway's commitment to international conventions, violates human rights and Norway’s international obligations (Aftenposten 2016c, 2016e).

International organisations like the UNHCR has also described the government’s asylum policy as “un-solidary and violating international conventions” and leading to “fear and xenophobia” (Verdens Gang 2016c). The return of asylum seekers has been criticised by the UN and Amnesty (FN 2016; NRK 2016; Aftenposten 2016g, Dagsavisen 2017c; NRK 2017d), and the UN Human Rights Committee has accused Norway for inadequate treatment of unaccompanied, minor asylum seekers (Dagsavisen 2018a).

Common for most of the criticism is that it claims the government’s strict asylum policy is contesting Norway’s humanitarian identity, contradicting with its foreign aid policy and reputation as a pioneer in the field. By presenting the Norwegian Self and its asylum policies as cynical, cold, and breaking with international law and obligations, the Other is represented as more genuine in need of help and requiring Norway’s moral commitment. The discursive work of the current government consists of challenging these representations and re-represent

them in a way that will legitimise the policies in use and stabilise the Strictest in Europe discourse.

#### 5.4. Protecting the Self: The welfare state and future of our children

Migration puts the Norwegian society to the test. Especially regarding the Norwegian welfare state's sustainability. It is therefore necessary to impose a restrictive, lawful and responsible immigration policy. [...] The government's goal is a sustainable welfare society. We must succeed if we are to deliver the society to our children in as good condition as we received it from our ancestors.

Government declaration (Solberg 2018b).

The welfare state and the immigrant-as-a-burden perspective has played a crucial role in the Norwegian immigration debate since the 1970s. As the Norwegian welfare state has increased, so has the need to protect it and ensure its sustainability. This becomes particularly visible when faced with a large number of “outsiders” wanting to become members of the Norwegian state. Already in October 2015, a few weeks after the refugee crisis and increased influx of asylum seekers reached Norwegian borders, the government announced a concern regarding the economic costs and the expenses and the effect it would have on the Norwegian welfare state and economy (Solberg 2015e; Regjeringen 2015g, 2015h, 2015i). Ministry of Justice and Public Security therefore announced it was “necessary to tighten the regulations to reduce the number of asylum seekers to Norway” (Regjeringen 2015i).

As shown above, Norway’s financial expenditure on the Other plays a crucial role in stabilising the Humanitarian Great Power discourse. When we now turn to the Strictest in Europe discourse, we will see that the discourse is leaning on the (moral) legitimacy from the economic aspect of the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, but also drastically deviating from it, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Following this, a major representation within the Strictest in Europe discourse is a Foreign Other portrayed as a burden on and a threat to the sustainability and future of the welfare state and Norwegians’ economic security. As a wealthy and generous humanitarian great power spending large sums on aid, arguing from an economic perspective when justifying its strictness towards the Other (in Norway) is a discursively challenging gap to bridge.

A significant part of the government discourse presents the refugee crisis in terms of a cost and benefit perspective, which seems to push the ethical questions to the background. Or rather, shift the moral responsibility from providing safety for the Other, towards protecting the Self

and the welfare of the Norwegian citizens. Norway's welfare state is often made out to be a major pull-factor and a reason for Norway receiving a disproportionate share of refugees because of "more generous schemes than our neighbouring countries" (Regjeringen 2015g). This underpins the idea that a proportion of the asylum seekers coming to Norway are economically motivated rather than having a genuine need for protection, which is an effective way of avoiding moral responsibility towards the Other. This is a common way of discrediting the Other and reducing the gap between Norway's strict policies on one hand and humanitarian efforts on the other. The representation of an un-*genuine* refugee is appearing throughout the Strictest in Europe discourse, which will be more covered in a section below.

The government legitimises leading a strict asylum policy by in various ways representing the Other as a "burden" that needs to be addressed. These representations of the Other serve the purpose of legitimising the government's policies which are in place to deal with and minimise this so-called burden. At the same time is this representation of the Other occluding and marginalizing the ethical and legal obligation associated with "refugees". For example, by representing the Other as a burden on the welfare state by spreading a notion of asylum seekers and immigration as putting welfare services provided to Norwegians at risk (Regjeringen 2015g, 2015l). In an interview in *Aftenposten*, Listhaug express she is "worried about the future of my children" together with a concern for her parents and Norway's financial ability to provide for adequate nursing homes for the older generation with the potentially high number of asylum seekers arriving (*Aftenposten* 2016a). "If we do not get control of the number coming to Norway, it will mean that we must cut into the welfare programs and services we have become accustomed to" (*ibid.*). This implies the number of refugees should be reduced in order to take care of the Norwegian inhabitants, meaning the ethical responsibility towards Norwegians should be privileged over the concern for refugees. For example, by granting extra money to the municipalities "in order to avoid compromising the welfare benefits of the citizens," the Other is illustrated as a burden at the same time as the government is represented as actively addressing the issue (Regjeringen 2015l). Adding a sense of "unfairness" towards the general Norwegian population, the government paints a picture of refugees as recipient of preferential treatment and financial benefits (Regjeringen 2015g, 2016g) it "would take years for Norwegian born to obtain" (*Aftenposten* 2016a). The government suggested in April 2016 a series of austerity measures and changes in the welfare schemes for refugees to "remove the special privileges" in order for this group to be treated equally with Norwegian citizens. The government underlined the importance of avoiding having "welfare schemes arranged in a way



so more people choose to come to Norway" (Regjeringen 2016g). Regardless of policy option used, strictness towards the Domestic Other will appear as means of protecting and considering the Norwegian populations' interests.

The government makes a temporal move which is discursively effective, when referring to a future Norway that will look different: "If we get continuing high numbers of asylum flow to Norway, we will find that our welfare model, which is built over several generations, will change. Our children and future generations can grow up with another standard of welfare systems and services" (Listhaug 2016i). By also stating how it is "the ones who struggle the most who will lose" if the social security network and public welfare services are threatened adds an ethical element to the mix (ibid.). If the government does not ensure control over the asylum flow and reduce the number of migrants, a future Norway will not be able to provide its citizens and "our children" adequate health care and welfare services. The argument was supported by the Official Norwegian Report "Immigration and trust – Long-term consequences of high immigration" and Statistics Norway's so-called "immigration accounts" (SSB 2017b; Regjeringen 2017d). Both reports state the Norwegian welfare model is vulnerable and immigration to Norway will put it to the test due to, among other factors, lower occupational participation among immigrants. The government is pursuing a strict asylum policy today in order to be able to fulfil its governmental responsibility and tasks in the future. If not doing so, the consequences will be severe, particularly for the Norwegian citizens already struggling. Adding to the temporal aspect: "We also lay the foundations for a policy that is sustainable in the long run in a situation of major asylum flows in the future", said Minister of Finance Siv Jensen in a press release 2015 when notifying how the high influx of asylum seekers challenged the sustainability of the welfare state (Regjeringen 2015h).

There lies an instability in the repeated mentioning of the generous amount Norway spends on aid helping the Foreign Other, but arguing from a cost/benefit perspective when proposing and defending a tightening in the asylum policy in Norway. As mentioned above, the discourse appears most unstable when arguing for an ethical privileging of the welfare of the Self over the Other, since the Humanitarian Great Power discourse draws upon historical Norwegian solidarity towards the Other, and the welfare state is also resting on a notion of equality, solidarity, and humanistic ideals. However, by maintaining and safeguarding the welfare state, the Self is represented as a humanitarian "at home" towards Norwegians.

In addition, by presenting the welfare state as a defining and distinctive characteristic of the Norwegian society, “painstakingly built over generations” (Listhaug 2017d), and the Other as an outside, compromising and altering element contributing to the government is not able to “maintain the welfare services and schemes we are used to” (Listhaug 2016b), gives the government the discursive maneuver to implement stricter asylum policies on the basis of protecting its own population. The government *has* to act a certain way (strict) in order to fulfil its national and ethical duty to protect the welfare state, not for the sake of being strict, but out of necessity. This resemble what Hansen, building on Wæver (Buzan et al. 1998), refers to as a *securitizing* of the discourse (Hansen 2006:30). Security is an ontological necessity for the state, not because the state has to be protected from external threats, but because the state’s identity rests on them. The national Self (or in this case the welfare state, which is an integral part of the Self) needs protection against a threatening Other. Due to the authority that lies within speaking on behalf of a nation’s and its inhabitants security (in this case, welfare and economic security), the security discourse has spilled over into different areas of the political sphere not traditionally associated with the classical realist military security of the state. According to Hansen (2006:44), when governments legitimise policy as “national interest” it gives political leaders the “power to make authoritative and far-ranging decisions”, and this is an articulation of responsibility that overrides international responsibility. Once a challenge or threat is articulated by the government, the government is expected to do something about it. Serving as another example, is the phrase “Swedish conditions” which resemble the more traditional security focus, which will be introduced and further discussed later on.

##### 5.5. The intersection between strict and humanitarian – The money-paradox

Looking at economic questions and how financial expenditure is presented, there is a clear deviancy between the two discourses when seen through an ethical and spatial lens, which require a closer look. Financial contributions on the Other in so-called developing countries in the South, are a big part of Norway’s image as a humanitarian great power and hence a stabilising element of the discourse. Contrary, in the Strictest in Europe discourse, as presented above, the Other constitutes a burden to Norwegian economy and the financial costs should be reduced to protect the welfare state. Which leads us to a money-paradox: Spending money on the Other far away is good and should be encouraged, spending money on the Other situated in Norway is a burden and should be reduced.

The construction of the Other can be divided into a Domestic and a Foreign Other, depending on geographical location (spatiality), but also perceived moral responsibility (ethicality). This distinction allows for discursive nuances contributing to lessen the instability between the two discourses and there occurs an overlap between some of the representations.

In short, money spent on the Foreign Other (aid) is presented as good within both discourses and stabilises the image of Norway as a humanitarian nation. On the other hand, expenses related to Norway's intake of asylum seekers (Domestic Other) is characterised as a burden on the welfare state within the Strictest in Europe discourse, while this is not commented on in the Humanitarian Great Power discourse. However, reallocating finances from the *aid* budget to be spent on the Domestic Other in Norway is supported within both discourses (Solberg 2015e; Regjeringen 2015e, 2015h).

This shows the Strictest in Europe discourse does not completely oppose the idea of spending money on the Domestic Other. Using parts of the aid budget to cover refugee-based measures and expenditures in own country is described in beneficial manners: It is in line with international regulations and obligations (Regjeringen 2015e, 2015h), and described as a "long and accepted practice" (Solberg 2015e), both in Norway and other countries. When asylum seekers come to Norway "we must take care of them here. This is also aid" (Solberg 2015e). This may seem to break with a discourse where the general tendency is to articulate the act of spending money on the Domestic Other as a burden and something to be avoided. However, this does not need to be a discursively contradictory element of the Strictest in Europe discourse. This is money already meant for the Other (although Foreign) and does not need discursively justification. As shown by the survey presented earlier in the thesis regarding Norwegians attitudes towards aid, they tend to be positive and supportive regarding Norway's contributions. This money is not referred to as a burden at the expense of Norwegians' welfare services, which is contrary to the examples laid out above, where the costs associated with asylum seekers were presented as special treatment and something at the expense of Norwegians' welfare, making the Other a threat and burden to the economic security. This way, the aid money (already meant for the Foreign Other) spent on the Domestic Other, stabilises the gap since it is reducing the amount of money meant for Norwegian welfare recipients is spent on refugees and asylum seekers.

However, the government's practice of reallocating the aid budget to be spent on refugees in Norway is also presented as a hurdle for Norway's humanitarian mission abroad. The government expresses how this makes it harder for Norway to provide aid in "surrounding

areas” because “large portions of the budget must be used to help those who come here” (Solberg & Listhaug 2016) creating a “vicious circle [...] so there are more asylum seekers coming to Europe” (Listhaug 2016e). This representation underlines the need to be strict in order to protect the Norwegian welfare state, with the end result that more money is left over to be reallocated to the aid budget (Solberg 2016f) since “fewer asylum seekers to Norway gives the opportunity to help many more people in need [...] in their neighbouring areas” (Regjeringen 2016). There is a duality to this representation, the government must defend and promote their practice of spending aid money on the Domestic Other in Norway, at the same time as arguing for austerity measures in order to reduce the number of Others to Norway. The government articulates that they are not against spending money on the Domestic Other in Norway since they are genuine refugees, *but* it is better to spend the money in “neighbouring areas” since it will provide help for more people. By presenting the Foreign Other as a more genuine recipient of Norwegian aid and a way for the government to do *more* good, the government are able to present the austerity measures as in line with the foreign aid policy discourse. By doing this, the government implicitly legitimises their strictness towards the Domestic Other by leaning on an ethical identity construction, since the end result will be more help for more people, and that is a (morally) good thing.

The contradictions revolving Norway’s money spending make it evident that it is not the act itself of spending money on the Other that is the burden, but the spatial aspect of the Foreign Other becoming Domestic. This explains the efforts of why bother arguing for austerity measures towards the Domestic Other in Norway from an economic concern, if the saved costs will be presented as spent as aid on the Foreign Other anyways. The element of spatiality and how the Other is different and addressed differently depending on their whereabouts, can be linked to the temporality and spatiality of the development discourse’s construction. The Foreign Other, which is recipient of Norwegian aid, is capable of change and development. As a Domestic Other, they are hard to integrate and adjust to the Norwegian society and hence an economic (and security) burden. It is important for the government to represent the Foreign Other as a recipient of Norwegian aid and the Domestic Other as a burden on the Norwegian economy, in order for the respective policies to appear stable and legitimate.

There is a general tendency within the Strictest in Europe discourse to lean on the legitimacy from the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, by making intertextual references to its representations and policies. This is mainly done by repeatedly referring to the generous amount

Norway spend on aid *abroad* when presenting austerity measures and tightening in the asylum policy at home. When presenting the legislative changes in the asylum policy in April 2016, the government asked that the tightening should be seen “in context with the government's policy in other areas” (Solberg 2016b; Regjeringen 2016d) referring to a “significantly increased humanitarian support” (ibid.), and Norway’s role as initiator and organizer of donor conference. Together with statements like Norway having a “record-high budget for humanitarian aid” (Regjeringen 2015e, 2015j, 2016a; Solberg 2016f; Listhaug 2016a) maintains the image of Norway as humanitarian great power and best in class when it comes to aid and helping them where they are. This works to stabilize the ethical argumentation found in the Strictest in Europe discourse. By leaning on the moral legitimacy from the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, the gap between the actions and policies that make the two discourses contradicting, is reduced. This also work to downplay the criticism that may come in the wake of arguing for austerity. This shows how the government does not ignore or silence the humanitarian discourse in order to achieve stability, but rather actively use it to legitimate their strict discourse. This works well since the humanitarian discourse is well established, legitimate and fairly stable in Norway.

#### 5.6. The European Other

Most of the representations so far in this thesis have consisted of an Other originated from a distant country outside Europe, usually a migrant or a potential as such. However, as briefly shown in the foreign aid discourse, the constituting Other to the Norwegian Self can also be other European countries. When the government talks about “sending a signal” and “being among the strictest in Europe”, it is other European countries which serves as a comparative Other to the strict Norwegian Self. While the government makes a point of comparing Norway with other European countries in terms of who give most aid and accepting more refugees, this representation offers a similar but reversed representation whereby Norway should strive to have the strictest asylum policy in Europe in order to attract fewer asylum seekers. The goal is to not be perceived as more liberal in the asylum policy field than “other European countries it is naturally to compare us with” (Regjeringen 2015h, Regjeringen 2016h; Listhaug 2017f; Solberg 2015d) in order to avoid receiving a disproportional share of asylum seekers (Regjeringen 2015g; Adressa 2016). During the presentation of the government’s tightened asylum policy in April 2016, both Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Minister of Immigration & Integration, Sylvi Listhaug, highlighted how “attractive” the Norwegian welfare state is compared to other European countries, and how this is a pull-factor on economic migrants and non-genuine asylum seekers (Dagbladet 2016). To counteract this negative effect, the

government needed to “make sure that we are not more liberal than our neighbours, therefore we must pursue a strict [asylum] policy” (ibid.).

As mentioned in chapter 2, already from the 1980s it has been evident how much European countries are influenced by each other's policies when it comes to immigration. This tendency is even more apparent today, and the government often argues and defends the tightening with direct reference to how other European countries are also doing it: “Norway is by no means alone in executing necessary and sustainable measures to deal with the extraordinary migration challenges of today. The other Scandinavian countries have also implemented or announced tightening of asylum rules to limit the arrival of asylum seekers” (Solberg & Listhaug 2016). Presenting other European countries as strict, justifies and legitimise asylum policies and austerity measures put forward by Norwegian politicians, and presenting Norway as *stricter* than these countries sends a signal to potential asylum seekers who will choose a destination country based on where it is easiest to get residence (Listhaug 2016c, 2017f) or where the level of welfare services is high (Solberg 2015d, 2015e). Countries with a less strict asylum policy than Norway are represented as facing major challenges relating to immigration, like Sweden, which will be elaborated on below (Solberg 2015d; Listhaug 2016b, 2016e, 2016i; Wara 2018).

The construction of Norway as more generous and humanitarian than other European countries, is severely destabilised by the introduction of a European Other Norway has to be stricter than. This sums up the puzzle in the research questions: How is the government to stabilise these two contradictory representations of the Self? Judging by the text material analysed, Norway does not want to be perceived as more morally superior than other European countries regarding the *Domestic* Other, but more good towards the *Foreign* Other. The first part does not exclude the second when the argument rests on the same notion that is seen throughout the discourse: Norway is best in class when it comes to be humanitarian towards the Foreign Other, but to do so, Norway has to be strict towards the Domestic Other. This is a recurring observation in the text material; Norway's “strictness” is presented as a part of the humanitarian mission and thus the Humanitarian Self.

## 5.7. The rational Self and Naïve Other: Swedish conditions and political opposition

Norway has the opportunity to succeed with integration if we manage to keep the number to be integrated at a responsible level. I am extremely happy that Sosialistisk Venstreparti's asylum policy has never been fully implemented in Norway. Then we would have been in an even more difficult situation. You only have to look to Sweden (Listhaug 2016i).

As presented in the previous section, the constituting Other to the Norwegian Self can also consist of European countries. When it comes to countries Norway have to be stricter than, one country stands out. Sweden and *Swedish conditions* have obtained a prominent position in the discourse, which represent a condition Norway must avoid for all its worth. The exact term "Swedish conditions" is not found in the text material on the government's website, but appear in various forms such as "we will fight against such conditions in Norway" (Listhaug 2016h), or "such conditions cannot be accepted in Norway" (Listhaug 2016i) when describing Sweden's immigration policy and the number of asylum seekers they received. The government discourse paints a rather dark picture of the situation in the neighbouring country: Around 130 foreign fighters in Syria have been recruited from six risk areas in Gothenburg, parallel communities with 52 areas in Sweden defined by the police as particularly dangerous and lawless areas, include criminal gangs, children carrying weapons, drugs sold freely and masked groups having stoned police cars. The basic social values in these areas have crumbled (Listhaug 2016b, 2016e, 2016h, 2016i). Looking at the references, it is evident that this representation of Sweden is carried out by government politicians belonging to Fremskrittspartiet. By "Swedish conditions", Fremskrittspartiet means a collective term describing the "various negative consequences of excessive immigration and society's failure to acknowledge and address the issues" (NRK 2017b). "Society", judging by Listhaug, refers largely to political opponents located on the left side, most often Arbeiderpartiet and Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Listhaug 2016e, 2016f, 2016h, 2016i, 2018a). The opposition is addressed as "naïve" (Listhaug 2016i), "it is time to grow up" (Listhaug 2016h), "less strict than Sweden" (Listhaug 2016e), leading to "significantly more [asylum seekers] arriving through family reunification" than if Frp and the government's policy was adopted (Listhaug 2016f).

The general tendency in the material is to construct the Norwegian Self and current government as a rational, fair, active and security-oriented counterpart to this alternative Norwegian Self as naïve, passive, emotionally driven political opposition. This opposition, with their misguided sense of morality, is jeopardizing the security and welfare of Norwegian citizens by wanting to

receive a high(er) number of asylum seekers and potential criminals. Through linking and differentiation, a negative representation of the political opposition is constructed, which also paints a picture of the Foreign Other as dangerous and a problem to be solved. The line of reasoning behind the representation of a naïve opposition and Swedish conditions is as follows: Liberal asylum policy leads to more immigration, resulting in poorer integration, which causes Swedish conditions. This representation performs three purposes: Showing how large immigration to Sweden has led to Swedish conditions, meaning higher crime rates and burden on the welfare state. Second, it links this to political opposition in Norway and suggests their more liberal asylum policies would be a catalyst that brings the Norwegian society towards Swedish conditions. Thus, the current government, with its strict asylum policy, represents the only option and counterforce preventing this scenario from happening in Norway.

The current government presents their asylum policy as the least strict alternative for preventing Swedish conditions, meaning any softening will lead to more immigration, and a step closer to Swedish conditions. Through the asylum policy discourse, the current government are constructing and legitimating a constant need for stricter regulations and a tightening in the asylum policy. This process is presented as repeatedly obstructed by political opposition who votes against these “important and necessary” tightening measures in the asylum field promoted by the government (Regjeringen 2016f; Listhaug 2016f, 2017i). Rather, the opposition is described as actively counteracting the government’s recommended asylum policy: “Arbeiderpartiet and the majority of the Storting have [...] introduced several incentives that make it easier for groundless asylum seekers to get residence in Norway. It is negative for Norway and it is negative for those who really need help” (Helgheim 2018). This way, if there were to be an increased influx or some issues related to asylum seekers, the current government have waived their future responsibility and can point to how they tried to impose stricter asylum policies but were hindered by the naïve and irrational Other/political opposition.

The warning against Norway becoming like Sweden, has both a temporal and spatial dimension. By depreciating the opposition’s moral argumentation, there is also an ethical part to the representation. Whose welfare and security should weigh heaviest when adopting policies, the asylum seeker’s or the Norwegian citizen’s? Which political parties offers the best solution? The government discourse repeatedly articulates how the opponent’s policy will lead to a disadvantaged situation, such as deteriorated security or reduced welfare services and financial instability for the citizens. By frequently presenting a grave situation in Sweden due to



excessive immigration and poor integration caused by policies carried out due to (misplaced) kindness, morality and solidarity, it delegitimizes and devalues whatever liberalising arguments the political opposition may put forward, as naïve and irrational. If one is not strict, the welfare state and security of the Norwegian populations is jeopardized.

Another aspect of this representation is how it creates a temporal construction of the Self (Hansen 2006:44) by simultaneously articulating a *Previous* Norwegian Self consisting of the above-mentioned political opposition (mainly Arbeiderpartiet and Sosialistisk Venstreparti) who were previously in government, and a potential *Future* Self (if they get into power again in the next election) as an Other to the *Current Government* Self. This way, there is a temporal dimension to the discourse, what will the *Future* Self/Norway look like if the opposition get into power? “You only have to look to Sweden” (Listhaug 2016i). Sweden and Swedish conditions represent a failed Other, that could potentially turn into a Norwegian Self if the opposition gains legitimacy in the population and wins the election.

At the same time as the government express Swedish conditions will not happen in Norway while they are in power, they are also dependent on the presence of a threat, or on the brink of happening in Norway, for this representation to have a momentum. As mentioned above regarding the Other posing a threat to the welfare state, security is an ontological necessity for the state, because a state’s identity (and its foreign policy) rests on representations of threats and challenges the government needs to address (Hansen 2006:30). The national Self needs protection against a threatening Other: in this case, Swedish conditions. If there was no articulation of Swedish conditions, it would have been difficult to construct a naïve and insecure opposition, and hence the current government as a counterweight and alternative. The line of reasoning stands and falls on the external and potential internal threat that Swedish conditions constitutes.

After several incidents of cars set on fire and stones thrown at police and firefighters in Oslo East during June 2017, there was a debate about whether Swedish conditions were now evident in Oslo and Norway. While Minister of Immigration and Integration, Sylvi Listhaug warned against Swedish conditions in Oslo, the Minister of Justice and Public Security (from the same ministry and party), Per Willy Amundsen refused to use the term (Dagsavisen 2017b). “To say that it is ‘Swedish conditions’ is an excessive exaggeration. The police have control and re-arrange resources to prioritize this” (Aftenposten 2017b). Minister of Finance and Fremskrittspartiet party leader Siv Jensen suggested the car fires were connected to a “headless immigration policy” led by Arbeiderpartiet (Dagsavisen 2017b). Claiming there are signs of

“Swedish conditions” in Oslo creates an instability since Fremskrittspartiet has been in government, and has had the Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration post since they came into government in 2013. They are basically saying the Ministry of Justice, Public Security and Immigration has done an insufficient job in preventing Swedish conditions. It requires discursive work to stabilise the construction of a threat at the same time as claiming the government is doing satisfactory job. By implying the troubles in Oslo East were the result of immigration happening under preceding governments and the current government offers the solution and prevention to further escalation, the government seeks to stabilise the discourse. Another way of stabilising this is projects an image of Norway on the *verge* of Swedish conditions. This gives the impression that the current government has the situation under control, but the Swedish conditions are not far away if the asylum policy were to be more liberal.

#### 5.8. Moral responsibility of the Self: Genuine refugees versus economic migrants

We must remember that we have a responsibility for Norway and we have a responsibility to help as well as we can. We do this through strengthening the neighbouring areas, contributing where the migrants are, and promoting proposals that make it more difficult for economic migrants to get residence in Norway. That way, we can use the resources to help many more people in the neighbouring area rather than helping few in Norway.

(Listhaug 2016e).

One representation found in the Strictest in Europe discourse is a continuation of the Humanitarian Great Power discourse: Norway as a humanitarian nation fulfilling its moral responsibilities towards the Other. The representation is spending a lot of money on aid, and ensuring that Norway has, and will fulfil, its obligations towards refugees according to international law and obligations (Listhaug 2016a, 2017a, 2017c; Listhaug & Brende 2016; Solberg 2015a, 2015d, 2018b; Stang 2017; Regjeringen 2015o, 2017a; Brein-Karlsen 2017). Pointing out these actions that are commonly perceived as morally good, is an efficient way of drawing moral legitimacy and do not require a lot of discursive work. What *does* require discursive work is excluding people from the category that Norway are supposedly morally obligated to help. Arguing for a tightening in the asylum in a time where the number of refugees in the world have not been higher since World War II (FN 2017), revoking citizenship after many years of residence in Norway, and sending children and families back to Afghanistan, requires discursive justification and an altering of representations and Norway’s responsibility

towards them. To stabilise this, the asylum policy discourse needs a humanitarian representation accompanying and complementing the Strict self.

This humanitarian Self within the asylum policy discourse makes up a contradicting Other to the strict Self, and together they constitute a dichotomy within the *same* discourse. Therefore, as opposed to the foreign aid policy discourse, the government needs a humanitarian representation which also emphasises and legitimises the need to be “*strict and fair*” (my emphasis, Regjeringen 2015h, 2016f, 2016d, 2018f; Sandberg 2017b; Stang 2017).

The purpose of this ethical argumentation is for the government to adjust and alter its moral obligations towards the Other, and thus stabilising the contradiction between a strict asylum policy and a humanitarian self-image. The ethical identity of the Other is not an objective measurement or automatically occurring, it is continuously constructed through language by those who have authority within a discourse. To alter the perception of what is perceived as a moral obligation is an effective way of influencing the scope of Norway's moral responsibility and reducing the gap between the humanitarian Self and the Strictest in Europe discourse. Specific for this thesis is the government's categorising of migrants in to groups which invoke different ethical and spatial responsibilities for the government to act upon. These involves articulations of *genuine refugees* versus *economic migrants*, and helping the Other in *neighbouring areas* versus helping the Other in *Norway*.

Already in April 2015, before the influx of migrants to Europe had reached Norway, Prime Minister Erna Solberg ensured Norway would take international responsibility and take in refugees and contribute with significant funds in neighbouring areas (Solberg 2015a). The Prime Minister also stressed the importance of distinguishing between “those with a genuine need for protection” and “other migrants” (Solberg 2015a), and this is where the main focus of the government's discursive works lies: Constructing categories of moral responsibility through references to *genuine refugees* and *neighbouring areas*.

The phrases “genuine refugees”, “genuine need for protection” and the distinction between refugees and “economic migrants” occur frequently in the government discourse (Listhaug 2016a, 2016b, 2016e, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017j; Solberg & Listhaug 2016; Solberg 2015a, 2015d; Wara 2018). By constantly repeating and referring to *genuine* refugees with a *genuine* need for protection, it implies that there also are un-genuine refugees pretending to need protection at the expense of others. These are asylum seekers the government try to hinder

by leading a strict asylum policy. Together with a focus on how the high costs associated of asylum seekers poses a burden on the Norwegian welfare system or even a security threat, the government legitimises their strictness towards those who do not fulfil the criteria of protection. Being strict towards un-genuine refugees provides “trust in the asylum system” since it ensures that the refugees Norway are helping are genuine (Wara 2018; Solberg 2015a; Listhaug 2016e, 2016g, 2017c, 2017g, 2017h; Regjeringen 2015b). A strict asylum policy also results in fewer (groundless) asylum seekers to Norway which will reduce costs, meaning more money can be spend as aid in “neighbouring areas” (Solberg 2016f, Regjeringen 2016).

In October 2018, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security announced the government suggests increasing the number of resettlement refugees from 2.120 in 2018 to 3000 in 2019. This possibility is credited to the government’s strict asylum policy, resulting in fewer arrivals and faster returns of persons “without a genuine need for protection”. Yet again, a strict Norway leads to a more humanitarian Norway - to those who are genuinely in need of it (Regjeringen 2018h).

One of the most prominent articulations of spatiality, is the concept of “neighbouring areas”. The expression is rather vague and refers to the asylum seekers’ country of origin or countries in the immediate vicinity (meaning Africa or Middle East, not Europe). The phrase occurs frequently in the government discourse<sup>22</sup>, and is often mentioned together with the articulation of responsibility and genuineness: “The Government believes Norway should take responsibility, both by receiving genuine refugees through UN and ensuring the lowest possible asylum flow to Norway, so that we can contribute the most economically in the neighbouring areas of war and conflict where the majority of those without money to travel to Europe reside” (Listhaug 2017d). In the government discourse on asylum policy, “neighbouring areas” constitutes a geographical location where Norway’s moral obligations and responsibility towards the Foreign Other exceeds the Domestic Other situated within Norwegian borders, which is a discursive move stabilising the two discourses as they interact.

Already in April 2015, the Prime Minister in her statement to Storting regarding the situation in Syria and the Mediterranean, made several comments on how Norway could and should provide more help in the neighbouring areas rather than accepting more refugees in Norway. This was argued from a cost-effective perspective, but with a humanitarian touch: “The cost of settling 1000 refugees is estimated at around one billion kroner over a five-year

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<sup>22</sup> «Neighbouring areas»: Listhaug 2016e, 2017b, 2017d; Solberg & Listhaug 2016; Solberg 2015a, 2015d, 2016b, 2016f, 2018b; Wara 2018; Regjeringen 2015c, 2015e, 2015h, 2015j, 2016d, 2016i.

period. This means that instead of settling one refugee in Norway, we can help 14 refugees in camps or 27 refugees outside camps in the region” (Solberg 2015a). By this, Solberg expressed the necessity of discussing whether “it is appropriate to increase the number of quota refugees or whether we should prioritise helping even more war-affected families in another way” (Solberg 2015a). This discursive work of re-redirecting Norway’s moral obligation from asylum seekers in Norway, to Foreign Others located in the South, adds a spatial dimension to Norway’s moral responsibility. Consolidating this perspective is the current Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration Tor Mikkjel Wara. He claims Norway has an asylum system which “favours the few”, and sums up why Norway’s moral obligations should be directed at the Foreign and not the Domestic Other:

What about the 85 percent left in the neighbourhoods and the bottom billion that are so poor they do not have the resources to leave their home? For every dollar spent on a refugee in the neighbouring areas, \$ 135 is used in rich host countries. This is an unfair, very expensive and ineffective way to help people. Even altruists should seek to be effective altruists. The ethical right thing to do is to use resources on those in the neighbouring areas. Then we can help as many as possible

(Wara 2018)

Here we see a clear link to the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, which this representation and phrases coincides with and draws a significant amount of legitimacy from. Spending money on the Foreign Other equals morally good, and also more moral than helping them in Norway. The discursive work implies Norway should prioritise spending resources on the Foreign Other rather than the Domestic Other, and thus helps legitimate a strict asylum policy. While it is often perceived that people feel more empathy and morally obligated to help people who are (geographically) closer to you, the government is trying to reverse this: One should feel more obligated to help the Other situated far away. The government seeks to consolidate the humanitarian identity by locking it to the Foreign Other, where it appears most stable. The decadelong humanitarian self-image is based on helping persons located in the South, so when the Other suddenly appeared at the Norwegian door step, the government has kept on reinforcing and re-representing the construction of a humanitarian Self doing good for the foreign Other situated far away. By re-directing the sense of moral obligation from the Domestic Other in Norway to the Foreign Other in the “neighbouring areas”, the representation and asylum policy discourse is more in line with the Humanitarian Great Power discourse, and therefore more stable. However, the government’s work of attaching its humanitarian identity to the Foreign Other makes this representation inherently unstable. It is unlikely that the government will stop receiving criticism for their policies which exclude the Domestic Other from Norway’s humanitarian responsibility.

“Neighbouring areas” also describe the home of the “majority of those without money to travel to Europe reside” and the “poor which do not have the resources to leave their home” (Listhaug 2017d). This representation implies the Other residing in these locations are more genuine recipients of Norwegian money and help, and the asylum seekers reaching Norway are less genuine than the “poorest left behind” by virtue of having resources to travel to Norway (Listhaug 2017d; Wara 2018). This makes it easier for the government to discard the Domestic Other as less genuine and thus less in need of protection.

When Norwegian policy makers use terms like *genuine* refugees or *economic* migrants or helping more people “in neighbouring areas” versus helping less people in Norway, it constructs asylum seekers into the respective groups. This groups invokes a different set of moral responsibility which helps the government legitimise their policy. The distinction between genuine and un-genuine refugees gives the government room for maneuver to be strict without be perceived as immoral. When Norway helps the people that are defined within the scope of its moral obligations, Norway is morally good. When Norway is not helping people that are *not* classified as a morally obligation to help, Norway is “strict, but fair” since this is necessary in order to protect the asylum system and the refugees with a genuine need for protection. Constructed this way, Norway is never *not* helping people they are obligated to help and is strict due to moral intentions, both towards the genuine refugees and the Norwegian population. This dividing of the Other into migrant versus refugee and un-genuine versus genuine is a crucial move to legitimise a strictness and enables the humanitarian self-identity to be preserved.

#### 5.9. Afghanistan – Safe for the Other but not for the Self?

The increased influx of asylum seekers Norway faced in the Autumn 2015 was mainly a result of Syrians fleeing the civil war (SSB 2016). Most of these applicants were perceived as genuine refugees having a genuine need for protection (Solberg 2015d) and were granted residence permit (SSB 2016). Therefore, when the government talks about austerity measures, “sending a signal” and to be strict, it is other groups of Others who are the main target. A country which stands out in this regard is Afghanistan, which constitutes the second largest group applying for asylum in Norway (UDI 2018b) and has been the at the centre of widespread media attention and political debate regarding Norway’s asylum policy.

While Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official travel information "advises against all travel to or stay in the country" (Regjeringen 2018a), Norway is among the countries in Europe conducting most forced returns to Afghanistan (Amnesty 2018), since UDI has classified (part of) the country as safe (Regjeringen 2016h). The government have been criticised, not only by political opposition, but also UNHCR and Amnesty (NRK 2017d, Amnesty 2018, FN 2016, Dagsavisen 2017d) for going against UNCHR's recommendations when returning asylum seekers to areas considered unsafe.

The Norwegian practice of returns to Afghanistan got renewed attention and led to a fierce debate between political parties in October/November 2017 regarding the return of the so-called *Oktoberbarna* and temporary residence permits to unaccompanied minors. The criticism of the government's policy on return and temporary residence permits, was met with several articles by the government seeking to legitimise the policies. The government response included claims that a halt in the returns to Afghanistan would cause Norway to be more liberal than "Sweden, Germany and other European countries", and thus make Norway a "free haven" in Europe for Afghan citizens (Listhaug 2017f, 2017g, 2017h). At the same time, the government ensured everyone with a *genuine* need for protection would receive it, which is at the core of the asylum institute. But they also underlined how returning those who are not entitled to asylum is a founding element of the Norwegian asylum institute and crucial in order to maintain "trust in the asylum system" and prevent "irregular migration" (Solberg 2015d; Listhaug 2017f, 2017g, 2017h; Wara 2018).

Due to children is specially protected under several international conventions and rights, and a common belief that children require extra care and protection, it is more challenging to legitimate the "strict, but fair" asylum policy from a humanitarian point of view. Like with *genuine* refugees, the government can cast doubt on the genuinity of the asylum seekers age. The asylum seekers can claim to be children, but it is the Norwegian authorities who decide. This is well illustrated with the term October *children* itself. Some suggest they should be referred to as *boys* or *men* (Sollien 2018) since they have, according to Norwegian authorities, turned 18 when they are supposed to return to Afghanistan. The government ensured in 2016 that no unaccompanied minors had been sent back to Afghanistan, since the "persons media have referred to as unaccompanied minors had been identified as adults by the immigration authorities" (Brein-Karlsen 2016). Regarding the identity as a *genuine* child, the articulation follows somewhat the same reasoning as with *genuine* refugees. If the children are not identified

as genuine (i.e. there is uncertainty regarding stated age) the moral obligation to help is less pressing, and the Norwegian representation as strict is less in conflict with the humanitarian discourse.

Although seemingly unstable to the Humanitarian discourse, the government's strict approach towards children is mostly argued for from an ethical line of reasoning. Unlike the previous representation, where there is a focus on the Other constituting a threat to, for example the welfare state or the security, the text material revolving children do not mention them as a burden. Rather, there is a stronger concern for the safety of the child and the journey *to* Norway is presented as threat to the Other. The arguments mainly rest on what the government refers to as in "the best interest of the child" (Listhaug 2016c; Sandberg 2017a) and how "fleeing is the opposite of safe [...] The fact is that to be on the run, regardless of cause, is not the best interests of the child" (Listhaug 2016c). The government discourse represents children travelling alone as left in the hands of cynical human traffickers and exposed to violence, abuse, death, and other incidents that "Norway cannot ignore". Hence, Norway's responsibility and "most important job" is to prevent children from leaving their family and embarking on a dangerous journey in the hope of residence in Norway, underlining the importance of a strict asylum policy, also towards unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (Listhaug 2017c, 2017f; Sandberg 2017a). Therefore, it was important that the "Norwegian regulations are to be tightened and amended to counteract such travels" and the proposal of austerity measures was presented as a solution to this and the children risking their lives (Listhaug 2016c).

At the same time, the government project an image of the child's caretakers in Afghanistan as cynical, selfish and acting against the best interest of the child, by forcing their children on a dangerous journey to Norway. Listhaug describes them as "anchor children" (*ankerbarn*), which the parents have sent in advance with the intention of applying for family reunification (Bahus 2015; Aftenposten 2016a; Listhaug 2016c). The reason articulated for promoting the contentious legislative changes was that "too many children are forced to flee by their families. To prevent this, we must make it less attractive to send children alone as refugees to a foreign country [...] Making residence in Norway temporary will make this less attractive" (Listhaug 2016c). Said with other words: The best interest of the child is to prevent cynical and ignorant parents from sending children who are not in "real danger" (Listhaug 2016c) on a dangerous journey from Afghanistan to Norway and this is done by sending a *signal* to the parents through being strict towards the Domestic Other (child) already in Norway. By placing the reason for the children unsafety on the family and caretakers in Afghanistan, the



responsibility and cause of insecurity is shifted towards the action of the parents and not Norway's strict asylum policy. On the contrary, it is the government's tough stance that will save the lives of Afghan children since the parents are unfit to do so if Norway does not send a signal. This representations of the Other creates a humanitarian Norway who, by being strict towards the unaccompanied, minor Domestic Other, is saving the lives of the children. This contributes to a representation of a Norway who is strict towards the Other out of selfless concerns for the children's safety, and not for self-oriented reasons.

#### 5.10. Chapter conclusion

The overall purpose of this thesis was to investigate *how* the Norwegian government reconcile their strict asylum policy with a humanitarian self-image. By analysing the government discourse and looking out for discursive constructions of the Self and the Other, this chapter has mapped out the different mechanisms applied by the government in order stabilise a strict asylum policy discourse. The government mainly seeks to maintain its humanitarian self-image by altering the moral obligation towards the Other. This is done through constructing the Other into different categories which implies different moral responsibilities for the humanitarian Self to fulfil. These representations include ethical constructions such as "genuine refugees" and "economic migrants, spatial constructions of "neighbouring areas" and Norway, and temporal and securitized representations of "Swedish conditions" and the welfare state.

## 6. Conclusion

By studying the Norwegian government's foreign aid and asylum policy with a poststructuralist approach, this thesis has sought to unveil the textual mechanisms applied by the government to stabilise the contradictory gap between a humanitarian self-image and a strict asylum policy.

The purpose of the thesis was to answer the following research questions:

- *How does the Norwegian government manage to reconcile its claim to be a humanitarian power with its strict immigration policy?*
- *How do the representations of the Other and the Self enable and legitimise a strict asylum policy which may otherwise have conflicted with the humanitarian identity?*

The first part of the analysis focused on the government's discourse on Norway's foreign aid policy. Although not directly referring to Norway as a humanitarian great power, the government puts heavy emphasis on Norway's role as a humanitarian and pioneer within the field of aid. This is mostly undertaken through a strong focus on, and repetition of, the financial contributions abroad and how this exceeds other European countries. Especially the war in Syria has, according to government discourse, consolidated Norway's position in the international aid hierarchy.

The second part of the analysis sets out to answer the research questions posed. The government manage to reconcile its claim to be a humanitarian power with a strict asylum policy by: a) leaning on the moral legitimacy of the foreign aid policy discourse, b) constructing representations of the Other and the Self, which alters Norway's ethical responsibility towards the Other, and c) securitizing certain representations within the discourse.

The first one is simple enough, the Strictest in Europe discourse leans on the moral legitimacy of the Humanitarian Great Power discourse by repeatedly referring to the generous amount of aid Norway spend abroad. Press releases and statements regarding the government's austerity measures and tightening in order to achieve a strict asylum policy, is usually accompanied with a reference to Norway's humanitarian identity and financial contributions. This has led to the thesis making the general claim that the asylum discourse is resting on the legitimacy of the foreign aid policy, as a way of stabilising the gap between them.

In addition to this, the government performs a considerable amount of discursive work to make the strict asylum policy appear more in line with a humanitarian self-image. The government needs to construct categories which defines and limits what Others fall within

Norway's responsibility to help. This work entails constructing representations of the Other and the Self, which alters Norway's ethical responsibility towards the Other. This altering results in the strict asylum policies are not as conflicting with the humanitarian self-image. This is similar to what is noted in the extant literature addressing how the Norwegian government has previously responded to the destabilising elements of weapon export and military involvement: by altering and widening the humanitarian identity.

Lene Hansen's concept of ethical and spatial constructions of identity have been particularly helpful in breaking down how the stabilisation occurs. Combined with David Campbell's notion of a "foreign within", it has contributed to reveal the nuances of discursive moves undertaken by the government to stabilise the discourse. Through an ethical and spatial construction of the Other, the government has reduced Norway's moral obligations towards them. These constructions consist of making an ethical distinction between "genuine" and "non-genuine" refugees, and a spatial distinction between "neighbouring areas" and "Norway". The result is a differentiation in the ethical responsibility of Norwegian government. Both "genuine refugees" and "neighbouring areas" are representations Norway have a moral responsibility to help. Contrary, "non-genuine refugees" or "economic migrants" situated in Norway are portrayed as persons hindering the government's humanitarian mission abroad. The government's work of excluding persons from Norway's scope of responsibility generally causes widespread criticism from oppositional parties, the general public and international organisation. Ethical identities and categories are unlikely to ever achieve full consensus, which has left these representations inherently unstable. Although full stability will probably never be accomplished, the government's ethical and spatial constructed identity of the Other has made the strict asylum policy *less* unstable and contradictory to the humanitarian identity.

An effective discursive move the government also apply is to *securitize* certain aspects of the asylum policy discourse. The main representation is the Other posing a burden on the welfare state and a threat to the economic security and welfare of Norwegian citizens. This puts the government in a position to argue for a strict asylum policy through an ethical prioritizing of Norwegian citizens over refugees and asylum seekers.

Another example of securitization is the threatening and temporal representation of "Swedish conditions". This construction also enables the government to maneuver around ethical obligations towards the Foreign Other, in order to keep the Norwegian society safe. The only way to obtain this safety is to reduce the number of Others, which is achieved by leading

a strict asylum policy. At the same time, this representation constructs the political opposition's asylum policy as too liberal and a catalyst for this "condition" to happen in Norway if they get into power, which contributes to legitimising the government's strict approach.

"Swedish conditions" brings us over to the role other European countries play in Norwegian government's strict asylum policy. To avoid ending up like Sweden, Norway has to be considered among the strictest in Europe in order to not receive a disproportionate amount of asylum seekers, which are drawn to the far north because of a generous welfare state. This reveals another instability with the discourse. The European Other constitutes an Other which the Norwegian Self has to be both *stricter*, and also *morally* better than. Again, the ethical and spatial lens and concept of a "foreign within" offers an ability to observe the discursive nuances appearing in the government discourse. Stability is achieved by differentiating Norway's moral responsibility between the Domestic and the Foreign Other. Norway has to be stricter than other European countries towards the *Domestic* Other, and morally better than European countries towards the *Foreign* Other. Being strict towards asylum seekers and economic migrants in Norway is articulated as a prerequisite for the government to be able to conduct and accomplish its humanitarian mission towards the genuine refugees situated in the South. According to government discourse, Norway is never *not* helping persons they are obligated to help. Which has a major stabilising effect on the humanitarian self-image.

Previous literature and research on Norway's foreign policy and humanitarian self-image has shown how previous governments have managed to reconcile contradicting policies with a humanitarian self-image. Although there are apparent remaining instabilities, the current government has through discursive work managed to construct representations of the Self and Other which overall make the strict asylum policy seem less in conflict with the humanitarian identity. This can largely be attributed to a Norwegian foreign aid policy which is well-established, legitimated, popularly rooted, and have been relatively stable in Norway for decades. However, Norway's humanitarian identity, and what it should include, will continue to be contradicted, disputed and altered. After all, one of the defining traits of the political and social world is it is always in flux.

#### 6.1. Suggestion for future studies

As touched upon in chapter 3, a limitation to this research is a lack of comparative aspect due to a narrow time frame. One way of widening the time span would be to look at government

discourse under previous immigration peaks and compare it with today's situation. These previous peaks took place under different governments, which would add an additional layer of comparability regarding party context.

During the initial phase of text selection, I considered the possibility of including social media in the selected data material. It seemed like a good way to spice up the analysis, but due to the massive amount of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts stretching back several years in time, it became evident that this element would change the original research agenda and direction of the analysis. When you include social media, you are suddenly in a grey zone and the line between government official, party politicians and private person is blurred out. This leaves room for more distinctive articulations of the Other, may it be political opponents or asylum seekers. There exists little literature on how to address social media in a poststructuralist discourse analysis, but given the ontological assumptions about language, it should be approached as any other text. Since it has not been done much research on the role social media play in official government discourse, it would have made it all the more interesting to look into it, but it would require a master thesis on its own. Hopefully, someone will fill this research gap. Afterall, a Facebook-post can shake up a government, get oppositional parties to call for a motion of no-confidence in the parliament, and result in a minister resigning her post<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Sylvi Listhaug (FrP) resigned as Minister of Justice and Public Security 20.03.18 after the turmoil following the wake of her Facebook post claiming Arbeiderpartiet considers "the rights of terrorists are more important than the security of the nation" after they (among other parties) voted against the government proposal to deprive terrorist-suspects of their Norwegian citizenship without going through a judicial process.

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