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# The European Project

*A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of Three State of the Union  
Speeches*

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Kandidatprogram i Europastudier med humanistisk profil

EUHK30, vårterminen 2018

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a qualitative study on how the current President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, views the on-going project of European integration and how he constructs a ‘European identity’. The sample material consists of his three *State of the Union* speeches from 2015, 2016 and 2017, where Juncker reflects on events in the past year and presents the European Commission’s coming proposals. By applying methods of critical discourse analysis, together with theories on neo-functionalism, intergovernmentalism, social constructivism, ‘othering’ and identity construction, the author has attempted to identify any discursive changes in these speeches and thereafter analytically discussed reasons for these changes.

The results show that Juncker shifts from taking a neo-functionalist approach to European integration in the State of the Union speech from 2015, to an intergovernmental approach in the speeches from 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, the appeal to common values as a means of constructing a ‘European identity’ is more prominent in the two later speeches. This thesis argues that these differences are results of major European events, or “crises”, such as the refugee crisis and the Brexit referendum.

**Keywords:** EU, Juncker, discourse, legitimisation, identity.

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# 1. Introduction

“Europe is beset by many crises, but enveloping them all is a crisis that is both broader and deeper: a crisis of public confidence in the European Union itself” reads the introduction of an article in *Politico* on how the refugee crisis culminating in 2015 has exposed a deeper crisis in the European Union, where 28 non-coherent national views and opinions on how to cooperate and deal with the major influx of migrants seemed to almost derail the built up collaboration.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last few years, the European Union has met a numbers of issues that have initiated a debate on the purpose of the European Union and future integration. Apart from the refugee crisis, the British referendum result to leave the Union on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June in 2016 and the increased development of Eurosceptic, right-wing extremist political parties taking hold in many of the EU’s member states have all been contributing causes of the on-going debate of what the purpose of the European Union is.

Mainly, these debates concern how the European Union has acted during these crises, during the aftermath of these events and how the balance between the EU and its member states through such action has presented itself. The debates have raised the question of what the role of the European Union in the process of European integration is and what the function should be.

This thesis will try to map out how the European Commission, here embodied by its president, views the EU’s role in European integration and if and how it has changed over the past three years. This will be done by analysing the discourse of the State of the Union speeches from 2015, 2016 and 2017.

## 1.1. Objective

The objective of this thesis is to map out and analytically discuss Jean-Claude Juncker’s view on the on-going European integration project. This will be done with the help of critical discourse analysis (CDA), including a comparative perspective, as a method of studying Juncker’s three State of the Union-speeches from 2015, 2016 and 2017. The author intends to comparatively review these three speeches, by focussing on themes that are strongly articulated in all three speeches, in order to discern potential inclinations of discursive change and relevant similarities or differences.

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Emmott, “How to Fix Europe,” *Politico Magazine*, October 2, 2015, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/10/how-to-fix-europe-213214> (accessed April 4, 2018).

## 1.2. Research Questions

This thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

- How does Juncker view the role of the European Commission in relation to the EU's Member States in his State of the Union speeches and has the discourse changed between 2015, 2016 and 2017?
- How does Juncker attempt to construct a 'European identity' in his State of the Union speeches and has the discourse changed between 2015, 2016 and 2017?

## 1.3. Previous Research

Previous research on discourse in specifically the European Commission's State of the Union speeches is difficult to find, given that the speeches were only introduced in 2010. However, many books and articles have been published on studies of discourses in the European Union. A relevant example is the extensive study on European discourses conducted by prominent critical discourse analysts Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss. In the article "Analyzing European Union discourses", they present the work where they for six years studied "policy papers, interviews, spontaneous conversations, multi-modal and printed media texts, web-sites, speeches, legal texts, focus groups, opinion polls, etc."<sup>2</sup> Through their investigation, Wodak and Weiss were able to show how the concept of 'recontextualisation strategies' are present in EU decision-making, where discursive elements such as arguments and themes vary depending on setting.

Additionally, the study resulted in a set of theoretical claims on the construction of identities:

- There is no single European identity, as we live with several different local, regional, national and European identities;
- Given how these identities differ from one another, they are context-dependent;
- 'New' forms of communications, such as internet forums and websites, entail new ways of shaping the relationship between discourse, politics and identity;
- There is a standardisation of documents and communication material within the EU.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Wodak and Gilbert Weiss, "Analyzing European Union discourses – Theories and applications," in *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis – Theory, methodology and interdisciplinarity*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2005), 127.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 128.

The theoretical claim on identity construction is a point of departure for this thesis, as how Juncker constructs a European identity will be a main theme in the analysis. Notions on how identities are constructed will be further discussed in the theoretical chapter.

## 1.4. Background and Contextualisation

There are arguably many events and “crises” that together have sparked a debate on the purpose of the European Union. However, the background description of this thesis is limited to the following events as they are some of the most prominent issues discussed in the State of the Union speeches from 2015, 2016 and 2017. Note that the following events are presented under separate titles, but are not considered as separate events. They constitute parts of a series of events that have set off a discussion on the state of the European Union, but are here presented separately as contextualisation for the analytical discussion in this thesis.

### 1.4.1. The State of the Union

The President of the European Commission delivers the State of the Union Address each September, before the European Parliament. The purpose of the speech is for the President to reflect upon events and achievements in the EU over the past year and present the Commission’s priorities for the year ahead. The address is then followed by a plenary debate in the Parliament, which constitutes the start of a dialogue between the Commission and the European Parliament as a means to prepare the Commission Work Programme for the coming year. The current President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has at present held three State of the Union speeches where he, among other subjects, touches upon the issues mentioned in the introduction.

Introducing the State of the Union Address was agreed upon through the Treaty of Lisbon in 2010. In the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission, a Letter of Intent is required to be sent to the President of the European Parliament and the current Presidency of the Council.<sup>4</sup> Although this Letter of Intent constitutes a part of “the State of the Union”, the Letters of Intent will not be items for analysis in this essay, as they are not mainly intended for members of the European Parliament or the Member States.

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *State of the Union 2017* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017), 2. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state-union-2017-brochure\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state-union-2017-brochure_en.pdf) (accessed March 30, 2018).

### 1.4.2. The Refugee Crisis

At the end of 2015, almost one million migrants and refugees fleeing war in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan had, since the beginning of the year, made their way to Europe seeking the protection of a new life, many of whom arrived on the shores of Greece and Italy.<sup>5</sup> The great influx of refugees exposed the lack of a coherent European mechanism to deal with the strain on the EU's Member States, especially Greece and Italy. In September of 2015, the Secretary General for the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, at the time the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees, expressed the need for common European efforts and pointed out that the fragmented European approach was not sufficient and said that "[n]o country can do it alone, and no country can refuse to do its part".<sup>6</sup> In the same month that year, the EU Member States agreed on an emergency relocation mechanism, which states that 160,000 refugees are to be relocated from Greece and Italy. In March 2018, only 30,000 refugees had been relocated and Poland and Hungary had not received any of the relocated refugees.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, due to the refugee crisis, one of the EU's four pillars – the free movement of people – was infringed upon, when several member states in the Schengen area reintroduced border controls. In September 2015, Hungary closed its border to Serbia by setting up fences and other EU member states such as Germany, Austria and Slovakia reintroduced border controls, closing parts of the open EU borders in the Schengen area for the first time since it was gradually introduced in the 1990's.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.4.3. Euroscepticism and Brexit

The term "Brexit" denotes the United Kingdom's choice to leave the European Union. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016, the British government held a referendum on whether to stay in the Union or leave. The result from the 72 percent voter turnout was 51,9 percent in favour for leaving the EU and 48,1 percent voted to remain.<sup>9</sup> The UK Prime Minister Theresa May signed the article 50 in the Lisbon Treaty on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March in 2017, meaning that the U.K. intends to leave the EU on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March in 2019, and negotiations with the EU's Chief Negotiator

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<sup>5</sup> William Spindler, "2015: The Year of Europe's Refugee Crisis," *UNHCR*, December 8, 2015, <http://tracks.unhcr.org/2015/12/2015-the-year-of-europes-refugee-crisis/> (accessed April 7, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> J. Clayton, "UNHCR chief issues key guidelines for dealing with Europe's refugee crisis," *UNHCR*, September 4, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/55e9793b6.html> (accessed April 7, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> "Lösning dröjer i flyktingkrisen," *Sydsvenskan*, March 8, 2018, <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2018-03-08/losning-drojer-i-flyktingkrisen> (accessed May 15, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Marjanna Bergman, "Mediterranean: Another weekend of tragedy," *UNHCR*, September 15, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/55f80a906.html> (accessed April 7, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> *Nationalencyklopedin*, "Brexit". (accessed April 2, 2018).

Michel Barnier are currently being conducted. Until the U.K. has formally withdrawn from the Union, the Member State still has a voting right in the European Parliament.<sup>10</sup>

Brexit can arguably be seen as an effect of the growing Euroscepticism in the EU. For instance, one of two passages on “Brexit” on the Encyclopaedia Britannica is found under “United Kingdom Independence Party – UKIP”, a party that started in 1993 focused on leaving the EU. As one of the so-called “hard” Eurosceptic political parties, UKIP advocates disengagement from the European Union and opposes European integration as it has, in their opinion, entailed supranational domination, which in turn has limited national sovereignty. Another example of prominent “hard” Eurosceptic parties are the French Front National, led by Marine le Pen – often noted for its strong anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic political standpoint – and Partij voor de Vrijheid (the Dutch Party for Freedom) with Geert Wilders as the party leader. Among the “soft” Eurosceptic political parties in the EU who do not express complete opposition to European Integration but are in favour of doing so according to a set of ideological, ethnic, geographical and political values, the Italian party Lega Nord can be found.<sup>11</sup>

During the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in votes for Eurosceptic parties. In the last election for the European Parliament in 2014, various Eurosceptic parties won 75 seats out of 751.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1.4.4. White Paper on the Future of Europe

On the March 1 in 2017, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker presented the *White Paper on the Future of Europe*. The purpose of this document was to kick-start a discussion on the future development of the European Union, which is supposed to end with the election to the European Parliament in the spring of 2019.<sup>13</sup>

The paper outlines five scenarios for the way ahead for the EU:

1. Carrying on
2. Nothing but the single market
3. Those who want more do more

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Euroskepticism”. (accessed April 2, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Peter Spiegel and Hugh Carnegie, “Anti-EU parties celebrate election success,” *Financial Times*, May 26, 2014, <https://www.ft.com/content/783e39b4-e4af-11e3-9b2b-00144feabdc0> (accessed May 15, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> “White paper on the future of Europe,” Commission and its priorities. Accessed March 30, 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe_en)

4. Doing less more efficiently
5. Doing much more together<sup>14</sup>

In the White Paper, the Commission does not express an opinion on which scenario the institution deems most suitable, and instead stresses that it is up to the EU's Member States to decide on, in a democratic way, how the Union will function in the future. In the foreword to the paper, Juncker writes "A united Europe at 27 needs to shape its own destiny and carve out a vision for its own future". Based on the following discussion on the future of Europe, it will then be up to the Member States, through the Council, to decide on an action plan for the way forward.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows: first, a theoretical framework is presented where two prominent theoretical approaches to European integration – neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism – are elaborated, as well as theories on the construction of identity – social constructivism and 'othering'. This is followed by a chapter on method and material, where the methodological tools for this essay are presented, as well as a discussion on the primary material. The method chapter focuses on critical discourse analysis as a method and what tools have been used in this thesis to conduct an analysis on the discourse in Juncker's speeches. Thereafter follows a chapter on the analytical findings through the study, in combination with a discussion on said material. The section for analysis has been divided into two themes and four sub-themes, in which elements from each of the three speeches are discussed. Finally, a conclusion to summarise the analysis and answer the research questions is presented.

## 3. Theory and Method

### 3.1. Defining the European Project

The project and process of European political integration is not an easy one to define, as there is no single way to explain the EU's historical fundament, its ideological identity, or the

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<sup>14</sup> European Commission, *White Paper on the Future of Europe – Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025*, March 1, 2017. Accessed March 30, 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white\\_paper\\_on\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf), 16-26.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 3.

mechanisms, which constitute its organisational and administrative essence. However, when studying the process of European integration, two prominent theoretical approaches are most often recurrent: intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism. This section provides an elaboration of the two approaches, as they include key concepts and perspectives that are relevant for the analysis on Juncker's State of the Union speeches that will follow later in this thesis. Thereafter, a brief discussion on social constructivism and its applications on creating a 'European identity' follows.

### 3.1.1. Neo-functionalism

Since the late 1950's, two theoretical strategies for the process of European integration and collaboration in Europe have dominated the debate: intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism.<sup>16</sup> Neo-functionalism argues that integration is primarily a product of the work of supranational EU institutions that have been driven by transnational actors, such as corporations, to set common European rules and laws, which in turn enable economic and political collaboration across borders.<sup>17</sup>

In his book *The Uniting of Europe*, Ernst Haas, the "founding father" of the neo-functionalist perspective, defines 'supranationalism' as a hybrid in which neither a federalist, nor an intergovernmentalist approach of European integration prevails.<sup>18</sup> Haas coined the concept of *spill over-effect*, which means that economic collaboration in one area eventually spreads to other areas, given that cooperation in one policy area requires collaboration in another, and thus patterns of cooperation spreads among the member states and their transnational interaction. The economic collaboration would eventually develop into political collaboration. In this manner of political and economic integration, supranational institutions hold a key role and function as the main drivers of shaping European integration. Traditionally, the European institutions, particularly the Commission, have been regarded as advocates of the neo-functionalist tendency of European integration as they promote a European legal framework.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.1.2. Intergovernmentalism

In the 1960's and 1970's, critique was raised within the scholarly community towards neo-functionalism as European integration seemed to stagnate, and an alternative theoretical

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<sup>16</sup> Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 145.

<sup>17</sup> Jonas Tallberg, *EU:s politiska system* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2010), 32.

<sup>18</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-57* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 526.

<sup>19</sup> Jonas Tallberg, *EU:s politiska system* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2010), 32.

approach to integration emerged – intergovernmentalism.<sup>20</sup> Intergovernmentalism opposes the neo-functional assumptions regarding European integration and instead argues that national governments are the main drivers of integration. According to intergovernmentalism, integration is driven by the conscious choices made by Member States through European treaties as a means to strengthen their own objectives in politics. Within this approach, the EU institutions are not regarded as key actors, but rather as instruments for the national governments to drive collaboration in the way that benefits them the most. It is when the member states regard another area for collaboration as especially beneficial for their country that integration and further collaboration is developed.

According to Jonas Tallberg, a professor in political science, neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism are to a great extent complementary. While neo-functionalism describes how cross border collaboration produces new legal frameworks and rules, intergovernmentalism describes how the demand for new European initiatives from national governments creates new treaties. Although these two frameworks of ideas on how to shape European integration differ in regard to who the main drivers are, they share common ground regarding what motivates the drivers of integration: economical interdependency, security policy and identity.<sup>21</sup> Although these are all important issues, the subject of identity will be further discussed here, in connection with the theory of social constructivism<sup>22</sup>, as the construction of identity is a main concept in critical discourse analysis and will therefore be useful for the analytical discussion in this thesis.

## 3.2. Constructing the ‘European Identity’

### 3.2.1. Social Constructivism

Another approach to studying European integration is social constructivism. It gained popularity in social science, including European studies, in the 1990’s and emerged as a response to neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the latter approaches argue that integration is driven by societal actors such as EU institutions and national

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<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Bomberg, John Peterson and Richard Corbett, *The European Union – How does it work?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Jonas Tallberg, *EU:s politiska system* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2010), 32-33.

<sup>22</sup> *While social constructivism can be seen as a Grand Theory within humanist and social science disciplines, I refer here to an understanding of social constructivism as a theoretical approach within international relations, with a particular focus on European integration.*

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Risse, “Social Constructivism and European Integration,” in *European Integration Theory*, eds. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 144.

governments and their own interests, which presupposes that there are pre-set ideas of interests and identities, social constructivists claim that identities and interests are to a certain extent also constructed, for example through the interactions between governments and EU institutions. Social constructivism argues that through interaction with other European actors and institutions, political actors form their positions and identities in the process of various negotiations to reach consensus.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Risse is one of the strong proponents of a social constructivist perspective and defines it as being “based on a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings (culture in a broad sense)”.<sup>25</sup> Our social identity is constructed and the context in which it appears thus affects our identity and consequently our actions. In a European context, according to this logic, EU Member States who identify themselves as being ‘European’ would define their interests and identities after their EU membership and collaborate more closely on a European level, thus driving integration forward.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, Risse has also presented several differing models of construction of European identity and has conceptualised in what way nearly 60 years of European integration has affected our collective senses of belonging, and our loyalties, on various socio-political levels: the supranational, the national, the regional and the local. Risse argues that it is no longer uncontested to say that belonging to one community means that you do not belong to another, but that we instead hold several social identities and he attempts to look at how they relate to one another.<sup>27</sup> Firstly, he presents the approach of ‘nesting’ where regional identities are thought of as a subset of national identities. These are in turn a subset of supranational ones, such as ‘European’. Secondly, identities can be regarded as ‘cross-cutting’, where members of a certain community can belong to another. However, members of the other community do not necessarily also belong to the first community. Additionally, there is the concept of identities being completely separate. Lastly, he presents his approach of ‘marble cake’ where

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Bomberg, John Peterson and Richard Corbett, *The European Union – How does it work?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Risse, “Social Constructivism and European Integration,” in *European Integration Theory*, eds. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 145.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 148.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Risse, “European Institutions and Identity Change: What Have We Learned?,” in *Transnational Identities. Becoming European in the EU*, eds. Richard K. Herrmann, Thomas Risse and Marilyn B. Brewer (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 248.

multiple identities are not separated into ‘nesting’ categories or ‘cross cutting’ ones, but are mixed in a complex manner.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2.2. European Values and Identity

In the Maastricht Treaty of 1993, the member states in the EU declare that they all share the following values and that the Union is built on them:

- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Fundamental rights<sup>29</sup>

While these are European values, they are also American, Japanese and Australian values, and one could consequently argue that they are more universal, than European. According to Gerard Delanty’s definitions of ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ conceptions of identity, these ‘European’ values would qualify as thin. A thin identity offer a collection of common values on which to build a sense of community, but does not form any type of alternative to thick identities. Examples of thick identities are xenophobic and racist ones and tend to be excluding.<sup>30</sup>

In his article *Models of European Identity: Reconciling Universalism and Particularism*, Delanty presents his hermeneutic idea of ‘European Cosmopolitanism’, in which neither ‘thin’ nor ‘thick’ tendencies dominate. European Cosmopolitanism argues that the European identity is built on common historical events, traumas and divisions, and interactions. He exemplifies this by the ‘Europeanisation’ of the holocaust:

“The deterritorialisation and recodification of the holocaust as a European memory was evident in the Intergovernmental Conference on the Holocaust in Stockholm in January 2000. As the holocaust loses its national particularity, it becomes more and more a European memory. As memory ceases to be sustained by particular social and national groups and becomes more and more mediated by culture under the conditions of globalisation, it also becomes more open to new readings.”

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Risse, “European Institutions and Identity Change: What Have We Learned?”, in *Transnational Identities. Becoming European in the EU*, eds. Richard K. Herrmann, Thomas Risse and Marilyn B. Brewer (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 250-251.

<sup>29</sup> European Parliament, “Legislative Train Schedules – Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights” <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-area-of-justice-and-fundamental-rights/file-eu-mechanism-on-democracy-the-rule-of-law-and-fundamental-rights> (accessed May 2, 2018)

<sup>30</sup> Gerard Delanty, “Models of European Identity: Reconciling Universalism and Particularism,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 3, no. 3 (2002): 345-346, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15705850208438841>.

Delanty further argues that whereas the concept of national identity tries to suppress and forget historical events, the concept of European identity rather strives to remember them and build unity in the shared memory.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.2.3. Othering

Another key concept when analysing how identities are constructed is ‘othering’. Othering is a process in which an individual, group or object is discursively used in opposition to the self as a means to strengthen the own identity. Theorist Ruth Wodak explains this as, through the strategy of ‘othering’, a collective identity is created by discerning and emphasising how ‘we’ differ from ‘them’.<sup>32</sup>

## 3.3. Method

This section provides a presentation of critical discourse analysis and the methodological tools that will be applied in the analysis.

### 3.3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis constitutes a broad spectrum of approaches to study language-in-use. It constitutes a theory on how language and text is constructive and constructed, but it can also be used as a method for studying discourse. One of these methods is *critical discourse analysis* (CDA). CDA is not easy to define, as it does not form a unitary position in terms of methodological tools, practices or theoretical premises, but rather constitutes an approach to the study of discourse and communication. Nevertheless, through CDA, a researcher can discern what is implied in a text, as a text cannot explicitly state everything and instead rests on a number of unspoken presumptions. By using CDA, the reader does not only try to examine what the author of said text says, but also tries to discern what is implied.<sup>33</sup>

*Discourse* can be defined in slightly different ways. Some claim that it is a matter of how we use language, while others emphasise how language combined with social interactions creates discourse.<sup>34</sup> James Paul Gee defines the word “discourse” as a way of “combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 355.

<sup>32</sup> Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 1999), 36.

<sup>33</sup> Ingrid Sahlin, ”Diskursanalys som sociologisk metod.” in *Mer än kalla fakta. Kvalitativ forskning i praktiken*, ed. Katarina Sjöberg (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1999), 100.

<sup>34</sup> Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus, *Textens mening och makt* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005), 17.

identity”.<sup>35</sup> Depending on how a speaker uses these attributes in a discourse, he or she creates a certain identity for himself or herself.<sup>36</sup> Thus, a discourse is a way of speaking that provides a certain meaning from a certain perspective, or in a specific *context*. The *context* is the social environment in which the text has been produced and then consumed by the recipient.<sup>37</sup> Discourses provide a context for interpretation, without which we would regard each item of study as something independent without cause or setting. By studying a text, for instance, the critical discourse analysis researcher provides a context for understanding and meaning. The discourse is therefore produced by the researcher, who adds something new to the text.<sup>38</sup> This adds the dimension of the researcher’s role in the study: how does the way the researcher chooses to analyse the material affect the study and the material?

CDA studies the relation between discourse and society, focusing on how one constructs the other. CDA is particularly concerned with how the dimensions of power, dominance and inequality are expressed or resisted by groups of people through texts, meaning that the approach looks at the underlying ideologies that influence a text. This is further explained by Teun A. van Dijk, who in his article *Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis*, writes:

“Among the descriptive, explanatory and practical aims of CDA-studies is the attempt to **uncover, reveal or disclose** what is implicit, hidden or otherwise not immediately obvious in relations of discursively enacted dominance or their underlying ideologies. That is, CDA specifically focuses on the strategies of **manipulation, legitimation, the manufacture of consent** and other discursive ways to influence the minds (and indirectly the actions) of people in the interest of the powerful”.<sup>39</sup>

This objective entails a critical stance against the powerful, and particularly those who abuse their power by means of social influence through discourse. The focus on strategies and structures of the influential elite is what makes the approach *critical* and separates it from other approaches to discursive studies.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, it is important that what is being said within a discourse is valuable and socially and ethically acceptable within that given context – that it is *legitimate*.<sup>41</sup> Critical discourse

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<sup>35</sup> James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis – Theory and Method* (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2014), 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus, *Textens mening och makt* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005), 24.

<sup>38</sup> Mats Börjesson, *Diskurser och konstruktioner – En sorts metodbok* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2003), 23.

<sup>39</sup> Teun van Dijk, “Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis”, *Japanese Discourse* 1, no. 1 (1995): 18.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 18-19.

<sup>41</sup> Eleonora Narvselius, “Critical Discourse Analysis” (lecture, Lund University, Lund, April 9, 2018).

theorist Theo van Leeuwen has identified four important strategies of legitimation, where language is used as a means to legitimize statements and actions. They are as follows:

- *Authorisation*. The speaker or writer refers to tradition, custom, law or persons with particular authority.
- *Rationalisation*. The speaker or writer refers to institutionalised actions and widely accepted social knowledge to legitimise their statement.
- *Moralisation*. The speaker legitimates his or her statement by referring to a prevailing system of values.
- *Mythopoesis/Narrativisation*<sup>42</sup>. The speaker's or writer's narrative conveys legitimation.<sup>43</sup>

These strategies of legitimation can be used separately, and they can be combined in order to make statements and actions discursively legitimate and create a sense of acceptance.<sup>44</sup> In this thesis, the identification of these strategies will be used to uncover how Juncker legitimises his arguments.

The chosen methodological framework looks at how social power or dominance is expressed in a text. Van Dijk argues that the access and patterns of discourse control are closely connected. For example, politicians have control over governmental or parliamentary discourse, whereas most of us mainly have discourse control in communication with people close around us, like friends or colleagues. Given that CDA also includes the process of consumption and interpretation of text, this means that CDA claims that the elite who has access and control over discourse, arguably also possesses some indirect control over the recipients' minds.<sup>45</sup> This aspect of social and discursive practice is also central in Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model for CDA:



<sup>42</sup> Some researchers use the word 'mythopoesis', but I will hereafter use 'narrativization'.

<sup>43</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, (New York/London: Routledge 2003), 98.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>45</sup> Teun van Dijk, "Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis", *Japanese Discourse* 1, no. 1 (1995): 21.

As opposed to textual analysis or linguistic analysis, the text study through CDA puts the text in relation with the context in which it has been produced and therefore gives it relevance for the study of, for instance, politics or other societal phenomenon. Analysing the text itself through textual or linguistic analysis can tell us something interesting about the text, but it would not necessarily make for an interesting societal study.<sup>46</sup>

The model separates discourse into three analytical traditions, which Fairclough notes are indispensable for discourse analysis: text, discursive practice and social practice.<sup>47</sup> The text is for close textual and linguistic study and the researcher looks at the construction of the text itself. The discursive practice looks at the interpretative process of production, distribution and consumption of the text and what function the text fills. The social practice focuses on the relation between the discourse and social structures, meaning that it is something actively produced by society.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, the analysis in this thesis is conducted within the framework of the interpretative research tradition. That does not mean a total lack of objectivism, but allows the researcher's subjectivity to partially influence the processes of interpretation. In other words, the understanding of the analysed messages is partially affected by various preconditions (philosophical, theoretical, others), which should be acknowledged.

### 3.4. Material

The primary sources of this thesis are official transcripts of the three State of the Union speeches, given by the European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker. The speeches have been chosen for this study as their purpose is for the President to reflect on the past year and present the Commission's priorities for the year to come. As the head of the Commission, Juncker forms an authoritative figure and can therefore be said to represent the Commission as a whole. Thus, the State of the Union speeches provide a unique idea of the Commission's view of the European project.

Given that the format of speech entails certain limitations regarding what can be said in terms of length, it also entails limitations to what can be said about the general discourse of the European Commission. However, it is possible to assume that what is being said in the

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<sup>46</sup> Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus, *Textens mening och makt* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2005), 33.

<sup>47</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse* (New York/London: Routledge, 2003), 73.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

speeches is regarded as being of special importance and consequently forms a good foundation for critical discourse analysis.

For the section on theory and method, secondary sources, such as literature and web-based sources, explaining the process of European integration and critical discourse analysis as a method have been used.

## 4. Findings and Analytical Discussion

The following pages present the analytical findings from the State of the Union speeches. The structure of the analytical chapter is divided into two main themes, which are framing the entire essence of the speeches: ‘European Integration’ and ‘European Identity’. However, within both, smaller thematic lines of reasoning are to be found. The analytical chapter is structured accordingly, in two main chapters and four sub-chapters: ‘Neo-functionalism versus Intergovernmentalism’, ‘The Future of the European Union’, ‘Common History and Values’ and ‘“Othering” – the EU 27 and the European Union as a Global Actor’. The speeches examined here are State of the Union from 2015, 2016 and 2017<sup>49</sup>. After each presentation of a finding, a separate analytical discussion for said finding follows. In order to increase intersubjectivity, longer quotations will be presented throughout this section. Furthermore, this analytical chapter also provides an elaboration on what strategies of legitimation Juncker has used to support his arguments. As he uses the legitimation strategies in a similar manner in each speech, they are applied in this thesis as tools to uncover arguments and thereafter to discuss possible differences in his argumentation.

### 4.1. European Integration

This section presents an analytical discussion on differences regarding how European integration should be created and driven, as expressed by Jean-Claude Juncker in his three SOTEU-speeches. First, a discussion on how tendencies of neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism are articulated differently in each speech will be presented. This is followed by a discussion on how Juncker views the future development of European integration and how it should be created.

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<sup>49</sup> Hereafter, the State of the Union 2015, 2016 and 2017 will be referred to as SOTEU 15, SOTEU 16 and SOTEU 17. ‘SOTEU’ is the abbreviation used by the European Commission in social media.

#### 4.1.1. Neo-functionalism versus Intergovernmentalism

The neo-functionalist tendency in the discourse, defined by Ernst Haas as an approach to integration where neither a federalist nor intergovernmentalist tendency dominates<sup>50</sup>, can be found throughout SOTEU 15. In this speech, Juncker takes a defensive stance against the critique from Member States that the EU is not taking enough responsibility regarding the refugee crisis. In doing so, he makes a clear distinction between the EU institutions, primarily the Commission, and the Member States, establishing a division concerning the supranational and the national dimension:

“There has been a lot of finger pointing, not enough fingerprinting, but too much finger pointing in the past weeks. Member States have accused each other of not doing enough or doing the wrong thing. And more often than not, fingers have been pointed from national capitals towards Brussels. Brussels is always accused if Member States are failing. If Member States are not doing their job, Brussels, the Commission, and the European Parliament is accused of not doing their job.”<sup>51</sup>

“[...] I believe that the European Union is not in good health, but I also believe that it is not my job merely to criticise the state of the European Union. We have also carried out a number of reforms over the past year – to my mind important ones. We – that is, the Commission – adopted a European Agenda on Migration. I do not accept the claims that the Commission has been idle in the field of migration. Just this morning I heard on German television German ministers, from Bavaria, criticising the absence of the Commission. Yes, I was on holiday. But, of my ten days’ holiday, I spent four days working on Greece and three days on migration. [...]”<sup>52</sup>

In the second quote, Juncker uses *authorisation*<sup>53</sup> to legitimise his arguments. By noting that German ministers have claimed that the Commission has not done what they are supposed to do and then pointing out that he has spent most of his holiday working, he draws a parallel between himself and the Commission, consequently arguing that he represents the Commission. This gives authority to his claim that the Commission is very active, in carrying out reforms. Thus, he discursively presents himself as an authoritative figure. Furthermore, by pointing out that the Commission has done a lot regarding migration, he further divides the supranational from the national, by separating the work from the Commission from that of the EU as a whole.

The first of the quotes presented above is then followed in the speech by a number of proposals and actions taken by the Commission to help refugees, seemingly used to show how

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<sup>50</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-57* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 526.

<sup>51</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2015” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 9, 2015). [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state\\_of\\_the\\_union\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state_of_the_union_2015_en.pdf), accessed February 27, 2018. 49.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>53</sup> *Methodological tools will hereafter be presented in italics.*

the work of the Commission can bring about collective action in the EU where it is currently lacking, and the national governments are failing. The infringement proceedings mentioned below are tools for the supranational level to take command and force actors on the national level to take action. Thus, the main drivers for European integration in Juncker's discourse are the supranational institutions, and a neo-functionalist approach can be identified:

“But these standards, honourable Members of Parliament, need to be implemented entirely and respected everywhere in Europe in practice. And this is clearly not the case. Before the summer [...], the Commission started a first series of thirty-two infringement proceedings to remind Member States of what they had previously agreed to do. [...] We are doing, we are legislating, and we are not implementing. It's a matter of credibility that Member States are implementing and respecting commonly agreed international and European laws. A second series of infringement proceedings will follow in the days to come.”<sup>54</sup>

In accordance with the words of van Dijk, we can here discern strategies of manipulation, legitimation and manufacture of consent as Juncker uses *rationalisation* to legitimise the Commission's actions taken against Member States. By stating that the standards must be implemented and respected all over Europe and that it is a matter of credibility, he appeals to a notion of common sense.

Similar discursive elements that divide the supranational from the national are found in SOTEU 16, where Juncker admonishes the national governments for not implementing all decisions taken on EU level. However, one aspect that becomes prominent when studying the speeches from 2016 and 2017 is that citizens are not as central in Juncker's first speech from 2015 as they are in the two later speeches. Although, they are to some extent mentioned in the 2015 speech, the national level and its citizens are key elements in SOTEU 16 and 17. A stronger intergovernmental tendency is found in SOTEU 16:

“It is in your national parliaments that committed speeches on Europe are needed from everyone. Saying ‘yes’ out loud in Brussels, but acting at home as if you were not at the table where joint decisions were taken is incomprehensible, illogical and inconsistent. European citizens must no longer be taken for fools. They must be looked in the eye. People are tired of the feuding between the institutions, they are put off by the ludicrous, petty jealousies between the Member States and the institutions, and they hate the constantly repeated misrepresentations, half-truths and lies. People expect tangible results from Europe and expect them to be implemented promptly.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2016” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 14, 2016 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/c9ff4ff6-9a81-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, accessed February 27, 2018. 56.

By building on the emotions of citizens, Juncker uses a *moralisation* strategy in urging Member States to implement decisions taken on EU level and addresses the need to increase citizens' trust in the European project. The central argument is not that the EU institutions do not perform, but that the work is not implemented by the Member States and consequently further conveyed to European citizens. Connecting the problem that Member States are not implementing to the last sentence of the quote where Juncker expresses that there should be results from Europe, implies that Juncker regards work in the EU, and thus European integration, as something that should be formed by Member States, and not mainly from a supranational level. Thus, he expresses a more intergovernmental approach than in SOTEU 15.

Furthermore, the close connection to citizens is found throughout SOTEU 16, as Juncker presents the Commission's proposals and action plan for the coming year as tools to achieve four goals in what he calls "*a positive agenda of concrete European actions for the next 12 months*"<sup>56</sup>:

- A Europe that preserves our way of life
- A Europe that empowers
- A Europe that defends
- A Europe that takes responsibility

Each of these points is discursively connected to citizens and Juncker links the Commission's proposals to how they would benefit the citizen, clustered under these four overarching goals. The way in which the new proposals are presented differs from SOTEU 15, where they are more or less listed as answers from the Commission to common European issues. In the speech from 2015, they are presented in a way that corresponds to major international problems, such as the refugee crisis and the global climate challenge. However, they are not focussing on individual citizens and involving the national level in the way that they are in SOTEU 16. The proposals in the narrative of SOTEU 16 are to a great extent connected to 'European values' and a 'European identity' and will therefore be discussed further in the next section of the analysis. Nevertheless, the discursive connection to citizens and the active role national governments play in the European integration indicates intergovernmentalism.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 56-63.

Regarding the shift in approach to integration, it is relevant to mention Fairclough's concept of contextualisation, where the content of a text to a certain extent is dependent on the setting in which it is produced.<sup>57</sup> When SOTEU 16 was given, the British referendum had recently been held, resulting in the United Kingdom choosing to leave the Union. This fuelled the international debate on the future existence of the European Union even further, and some anticipated a so-called "domino-effect" resulting in other Member States choosing to leave the EU. Juncker addresses this concern in the beginning of SOTEU 16, by stating that "the continued existence of the European Union is not under threat" and urging the U.K. to leave the union as soon as possible in order to stabilise the situation.<sup>58</sup> Facing the unprecedented event where a Member State chooses to leave the Union could arguably be a reason for discursive change in Juncker's speeches. He shifts from a neo-functionalist approach in the discourse to an intergovernmental one and connects the new proposals to citizens. In my interpretation, this could be a result of the criticism from the increasingly popular Eurosceptic parties, such as UKIP, who argue that the EU's supranationalism infringes on their national sovereignty.

Moreover, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, Jonas Tallberg argues that neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism can be regarded as complementary, in that neo-functionalism answers how new legal proposals and policies are produced, while intergovernmentalism explains how the demand for these is created.<sup>59</sup> In SOTEU 17, Juncker expresses that a balance between the two approaches is necessary in order to drive European integration forward:

"As ever, there will be a degree of give and take. The Commission's proposals to reform our Common Asylum System and strengthen rules on the Posting of Workers have caused controversy, I know. Achieving a good result will need all sides to do their part so that they can move towards each other. I want to say today, as long as the outcome is the right one for our Union and is fair to all its Member States, the Commission will be open to compromise."<sup>60</sup>

By stating that as long as the outcome of the common asylum system is beneficial to all EU Member States, the Commission will be open to compromise, Juncker appeals to a notion of

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<sup>57</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse* (New York/London: Routledge, 2003), 72.

<sup>58</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, "State of the Union 2016" (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 14, 2016 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/c9ff4ff6-9a81-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, accessed February 27, 2018. 55.

<sup>59</sup> Jonas Tallberg, *EU:s politiska system* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2010), 32-33.

<sup>60</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, "State of the Union 2017" (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 13, 2017 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/9c03bbc3-982d-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>, accessed February 27, 2018. 112.

‘common sense’. Hence, he uses a *rationalisation* strategy to support his argument, which according to van Leeuwen’s definition is when the speaker refers to widely accepted social knowledge to legitimise their argument. The statement “[a]chieving a good result will need all sides to do their part” highlights that Juncker no longer regards the supranational EU institutions as the main drivers of integration, but rather that a balance between all stakeholders is required. Consequently, this statement illustrates how the notions of neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism can be regarded as complementary. In this context, this is also in line with the social constructivist approach that interaction between EU institutions and Member States constructs interests, and can consequently drive integration forward.

#### 4.1.2. The Future of the European Union

A main difference that separates SOTEU 17 from the two previous speeches is that the future of the European Union is a central issue addressed throughout SOTEU 17. As mentioned in the background section of this thesis, the European Commission published the White Paper on the Future of Europe in March 2017, in which five scenarios for the European Union in the years to come were listed. The purpose of this reflection paper was to spark a debate among Member States and citizens, and the debate on the White Paper is addressed by Juncker in SOTEU 17:

“The future of Europe cannot be decided by decree. It has to be the result of democratic debate and, ultimately, broad consensus. This House<sup>61</sup> contributed actively, through the three ambitious resolutions on Europe’s future which I would particularly thank the rapporteurs for. And I want to thank all the colleagues that participated in the more than 2,000 public events across Europe that the Commission organised since March.”<sup>62</sup>

Juncker states that the construction of future European integration cannot be formed by a supranational institution, such as the European Commission, but instead has to be formed through interaction between both EU institutions and Member States. The usage of the phrases “cannot be” and “has to be”, indicates a sense of certainty and he *rationalises* this argument. When stating that it must be a democratic process and thanking officers from the Commission that have participated in public workshops and seminars, he discursively

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<sup>61</sup> *The European Parliament, where the State of the Union speech is held.*

<sup>62</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2017” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 13, 2017 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/9c03bbc3-982d-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>, accessed February 27, 2018. 116.

connects the process of integration to citizens and the national Member States and demonstrates more of an intergovernmental approach, than a neo-functional one.

Furthermore, Juncker encourages the recipients to not give up on the European project in all three speeches. However, there are differences in regards to optimism versus pessimism and who bears the main responsibility in ensuring European integration. To illustrate the differences in the three speeches, extracts from the conclusion of each speech are presented here in a chronological order. Given that they are the conclusions of the speeches, it can be argued that they constitute the most important messages that Juncker wants to convey:

“I am proud of the Commission that I have the honour to preside over, proud that during the first months of our term of office we have been able to send the two legislators great projects of legislation, regulation and content that were part of our programme, were part of the ten priorities on the basis of which I was elected [...]. All is not well, we don't live in an ideal world, and the world would be a better place if we ourselves were better; and so it is to this task that we must apply ourselves. I know that Europe has its weaknesses, but I know how much weaker the continent would be if the European Union did not exist. So, Europeans, do not give up. Let us continue the fight!”<sup>63</sup>

“But what are we teaching our children now? What will they inherit from us? A Union that is unravelling in disunity? A Union that has forgotten its past and has no vision for the future? Our children deserve better, ladies and gentlemen. They deserve a Europe that preserves their way of life, defends them and protects them. It is time that we – citizens, institutions and governments – all took responsibility for building that Europe together. [...] History will not remember us. But it will remember our mistakes. Let us not be guilty of mistakes that would destroy the European dream.”<sup>64</sup>

“Europe was not made to stand still. It must never do so. Helmut Kohl and Jacques Delors, whom I had the honor to know, taught me that Europe only moves forward when it is bold. [...] Now that Europe is doing better, people tell me I should not rock the boat. But now is not the time to err on the side of caution. We started to fix the European roof. But today and tomorrow we must patiently, floor by floor, moment by moment, inspiration by inspiration, continue to add new floors to the European House. We must complete the European House now that the sun is shining and whilst it still is. Because when the next clouds appear on the horizon – and they will appear one day – it will be too late. So let's throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the harbour. And catch the trade winds in our sails.”<sup>65</sup>

The first quote illustrates how Juncker in SOTEU 15 discursively points out the Commission as having the main responsibility of driving European integration forward, by stressing how much legislation has been brought forward by the institution and that they have followed the

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<sup>63</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2015” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 9, 2015). [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state\\_of\\_the\\_union\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state_of_the_union_2015_en.pdf), accessed February 27, 2018. 61.

<sup>64</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2016” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 14, 2016). <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/c9ff4ff6-9a81-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, accessed February 27, 2018. 65.

<sup>65</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2017” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 13, 2017). <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/9c03bbc3-982d-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>, accessed February 27, 2018. 125.

Work Programme set out at the beginning of his mandate. He stresses that the EU is not in its best state and *rationalises* his argument for continued European collaboration, by emphasising that Europe would not be as strong without the European Union and the discourse consequently implies a neo-functionalist tendency. This argument can be interpreted as a method of *narrativisation*, in that a reference to previous wars on the continent is implied and that Europe was weaker when the EU did not exist – that is, for example, during the two World Wars.

The second quote differs quite significantly in that Juncker here presents more of a combination between a neo-functionalist approach and an intergovernmental one as he emphasises that future collaboration within the European Union should be built by citizens, supranational EU institutions and national governments together. Moreover, he uses strategies of *moralisation* and *narrativisation* in combination to support his arguments. By appealing to the recipients to think of coming generation, he builds on their emotions as well as linking his argument to the future.

The third and last conclusion provides a more optimistic outlook than the two previous ones. Here, Juncker discursively paints a more positive picture of the future by stating that the EU is doing better than before and metaphorically refers to the European integration project as a ‘house’ that needs increased collaboration “while the sun is still shining”. He further *authorises* his argument by referring to two former advocates of European integration, namely previous German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and a former President of the European Commission Jacques Delors, and strengthens his own line of reasoning by stating that they too believed this to be the right course of action.

## 4.2. The European Identity

The following section aims to answer the questions of how the ‘European identity’ is constructed in Juncker’s three speeches and if there are any tendencies of discursive change. First a discussion will be presented on how references to common history and common values as a means to construct a ‘European identity’ differ in the speeches. This is followed by a discussion on how the concept of ‘othering’ is used.

### 4.2.1. Common History and Values

The research presented here is based on the first State of the Union speech made by President Jean-Claude Juncker, held in the European Parliament in September 2015. As described in the

background section of this thesis, 2015 constituted the culmination of the influx of refugees to Europe. The strain this posed on the resettlement systems in Europe, caused massive disagreement within the EU, as many Member States closed their borders and opposed cooperation across borders.

The migration crisis and the lack of solidarity and unity in the EU is the first issue addressed by Juncker in this speech. He argues that there is a need to remember our shared and common history, and uses strategies of *rationalisation*, *narrativisation* and *moralisation* to legitimise his arguments. Relevant examples are found on the third page of the transcribed speech:

“[...] This is not a time to take fright. It is a time of humanity and human dignity. We Europeans, all of us, we should remember well that Europe is a continent where nearly everyone has at one time been a refugee. Our common history is marked by millions of Europeans fleeing from religious or political persecution, from war, from dictatorship, from oppression. [...]

Have we really forgotten that after the devastation of the Second World War, 60 million people were refugees in Europe? That, as a result of this terrible European experience, a global protection regime – the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees – was established to grant refuge to those who jumped the walls in Europe to escape from war and totalitarian oppression? We Europeans should know and should never forget why giving refuge and complying with the fundamental right to asylum is so important. A fundamental right to asylum is one of the most important international and European values. We should not forget that.”<sup>66</sup>

The reference to “European values” in the penultimate sentence implies that Juncker appeals to a common European identity, or perhaps rather to remembering that there should be solidarity among European states as well as citizens. The sense of community is discursively constructed and strengthened by the usage of phrases such as “We Europeans”, “Our common history” and “this terrible European experience”. Much in line with Delanty’s notion of cosmopolitanism, Juncker reminds the recipients of a very traumatic shared history and is seemingly constructing the European identity based on this shared history. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Holocaust is a past event that Delanty argues has been subjected to ‘Europeanisation’ and can be used as a cautious reminder of the dangers of national identity.<sup>67</sup> Thus, by referring to the World War II as a common European history, Juncker is discursively attempting to form a unifying European narrative through memory, which in this context is stronger than the national identity.

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<sup>66</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2015” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 9, 2015). [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state\\_of\\_the\\_union\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/state_of_the_union_2015_en.pdf), accessed February 27, 2018. 48.

<sup>67</sup> Gerard Delanty, “Models of European Identity: Reconciling Universalism and Particularism,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 3, no. 3 (2002): 345-346, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15705850208438841>.

As mentioned above, the construction of a common identity is based on the common past and one can therefore argue that Juncker uses the strategy of *narrativisation* to legitimate his argument for increasing collaboration in the EU when receiving refugees, by linking his arguments to the past. The reference to the violent historical wars on the continent seems to imply that Juncker regards the European Union as a peace project. History is used as a reminder of why the European Union was originally established. The phrasings “fundamental right to asylum” and “[i]t is a time for humanity and human dignity” denote an appeal to common sense and emotions. Juncker thereby uses the legitimisation strategies of *rationalisation* and *moralisation* to urge member states to take action.

The historically connected European narrative to past wars on the continent is even more prominent in SOTEU 16. Juncker uses the same legitimisation strategies in the speech from 2016 as the one in 2015 by narratively referring to the past on several occasions in the speech and urging the recipients to remember why the nations of Europe began collaborating.<sup>68</sup> However, these references are only seen in SOTEU 15 in connection with the refugee crisis, whereas they are prominent throughout the entire speech in SOTEU 16. This arguably implies that there was a greater need than the year before for the Commission to remind the recipients in 2016 why collaboration the European Union is so important:

“I am convinced that the European way of life is something worth preserving. I have the impression that many seem to have forgotten what being European means. What it means to be part of this European Union, of this Union of Europeans. To remember why European nations chose to work together.”<sup>69</sup>

This quote is extracted from the first of the goals in Juncker’s positive agenda for the European Union for 2017: “*A Europe that preserves our way of life*”. By using the phrase “our way of life”, Juncker connects European citizens to a common identity. The discourse in this speech is more heavily relying on the individual citizen, which is further strengthened when Juncker says that the European Union is a “Union of Europeans”, and he connects the EU to the individual citizen in a way that is not done in SOTEU 15. The issue addressed here is that many people no longer regard themselves as ‘European’ and that Europe’s national identities have become more dominant, by noting that “many seem to have forgotten what being European means”. Moreover, the discourse in his presentation of upcoming proposals

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<sup>68</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2016” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 14, 2016 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/c9ff4ff6-9a81-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, accessed February 27, 2018. 55-57, 61, 65.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 56.

from the Commission throughout SOTEU 16, is closely connected to the European identity, which can be interpreted as there being a need to discursively strengthen it. A relevant example to illustrate this can be found in another section of the speech where Juncker presents another of the cornerstones in his positive agenda, titled “*A Europe that empowers*”:

“The European Union should not only preserve our European way of life but empower those living it. We need to work for a Europe that empowers our citizens and our economy. And today, both have gone digital. Digital technologies and digital communications are going into every aspect of life. All they require is access to high-speed internet. We need to be connected. Our economy needs it. People need it. And we have to invest in that connectivity now. That is why today, the Commission is proposing a reform for our European telecommunications markets.”<sup>70</sup>

As mentioned earlier, SOTEU 16 was given shortly after the Brexit-referendum. Given that the choice to leave the union was based on a popular vote, it was therefore the choice of British citizens and it arguably illustrates scepticism from citizens towards the EU. In my interpretation, this scepticism from European citizens towards the EU is one of the reasons behind the change in Juncker’s discourse where he concretely shows European citizens how and why the EU matters, given that he focuses significantly more on citizens in SOTEU 16 than in the speech from 2015.

Much like the structure of the presentation of proposals in SOTEU 16, Juncker connects the Commission’s proposals to how they benefit the individual citizen in SOTEU 17. Additionally, when presenting his personal view on the future of the EU, he particularly stresses that collaboration in the Union should be built on the European values and principles and he presents them as freedom, equality and rule of law:

“For me, Europe is more than just a single market. More than money, more than a currency, more than the euro. It was always about values. [...] In a Union of equals, there can be no second class workers. Workers should earn the same pay for the same work in the same place. This is why the Commission proposed new rules on posting of workers.”<sup>71</sup>

This could imply that Juncker deems the need to create a stronger collective sense of community, thus constructing a common European identity, as still being necessary. While Juncker is not actively arguing for strengthening European identity in the quotes presented in this section, such a vision is implicitly visible in his line of reasoning in the quotes presented

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>71</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2017” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 13, 2017 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/9c03bbc3-982d-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>, accessed February 27, 2018. 117.

above. As mentioned previously, within CDA the researcher should both see the visible and the implied, which may be of relevance in this particular context. As Thomas Risse argues, social identities are constructed and it can be argued that constructing a stronger collective feeling of unity, including identity, could give more legitimacy to institutions at the supranational level. And constructions of such identities constitute a hope for many neo-functionalists.

#### 4.2.2. ‘Othering’ – the EU 27 and the European Union as a Global Actor

In the presentations of new proposals in SOTEU 16, elements of ‘othering’ can be found. For instance, the context of a steel industry in crisis is presented in the speech, attributed to what Juncker expresses as unfair competition from China. Additionally, the dairy sector was struggling due to regulations from Russia. By mentioning these countries in opposition to the EU, Juncker uses the concept of ‘othering’ to discursively create a sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. In line with the arguments of Ruth Wodak, this both strengthens the European identity and also legitimises the proposals from the Commission as the recipients are reminded that the issues are not there because of the EU, but rather that the EU is trying to help.

“Being European also means standing up for our steel industry. We already have 37 anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures in place to protect our steel industry from unfair competition. But we need to do more, as overproduction in some parts of the world is putting European producers out of business and the noble European steelworkers out of work. This is why I was in China twice this year to address the issue of overcapacity. This is also why the Commission has proposed to change the lesser duty rule.”<sup>72</sup>

“A strong part of the European way of life that I want to preserve is our agricultural sector. The Commission will always stand by our farmers, particularly when they go through difficult moments as is the case today. Last year, the dairy sector was hit with a ban imposed by Russia. This is why the Commission mobilised €1 billion in support of milk farmers to help them back on their feet. Because I will not accept that milk is cheaper than water.”<sup>73</sup>

The usage of “Being European” and “the European way of life” denotes that there is an ‘other’ used in opposition to ‘us’. In these instances, Russia and China are discursively created as ‘them’ to strengthen the European identity. By pointing out that the Commission is helping both the steel industry and the agricultural sector through their work and proposals, Juncker discursively ties the Commission to the citizens, within this collective European identity.

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<sup>72</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2016” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 14, 2016 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/c9ff4ff6-9a81-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, accessed February 27, 2018. 58.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 58.

Furthermore, forms of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ are also found in SOTEU 17, where the United Kingdom is used in opposition to the rest of the EU and its remaining 27 Member States:

“I also want to thank the 27 leaders of our Member States. Days after my speech last year, they welcomed my agenda at their summit in Bratislava.<sup>74</sup> In doing so they chose unity. They chose to rally around our common ground. Together, we showed that Europe can deliver for its citizens when and where it matters.”<sup>75</sup>

“Our 27 leaders, the Parliament and the Commission are putting the Europe back in our Union. And together we are putting the Union back in our Union. In the last year, we saw all 27 leaders walk up the Capitoline Hill in Rome, one by one, to renew their vows to each other and to our Union.”<sup>76</sup>

Even though the U.K. is officially a full member of the European Union until the country has withdrawn from the union on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, Juncker narratively excludes the U.K. from the rest of the EU by not acknowledging Theresa May as a leader of one of the Member States of the EU. Additionally, using the word “together” strengthens the bond between the remaining EU 27 and consequently excludes the U.K. from the European identity, thus establishing the U.K. as ‘them’.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis applies critical discourse analysis, paired with theories on integration and identity construction, in order to investigate how Jean-Claude Juncker views the role of the European Commission in relation to the EU’s Member States, how he discursively constructs a European identity through his State of the Union speeches and if there are discursive changes from 2015–2017. The sample material consists of Juncker’s three State of the Union speeches from 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The first research question concerns how Juncker discursively presents the relation between the supranational level and the national level. The presented analytical findings show that the discourse in the speeches differs in that Juncker presents a neo-functionalist approach to European integration in SOTEU 15, whereas more of an inclination towards intergovernmentalism can be found in the speeches from 2016 and 2017. This thesis argues

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<sup>74</sup> *During the Bratislava Summit in 2016, 27 Heads of State (excluding the United Kingdom) met and committed to the Bratislava declaration and roadmap, which constituted a set of objectives for concrete action in the EU for the next six months that followed.* <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2016/09/16/> (Accessed May 13, 2018)

<sup>75</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, “State of the Union 2017” (European Parliament, Strasbourg, September 13, 2017 <https://publications.europa.eu/sv/publication-detail/-/publication/9c03bbc3-982d-11e7-b92d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF>, accessed February 27, 2018. 110.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

that the differences are most likely due to the disagreement among Member States and the EU institutions caused by the refugee crisis and thereafter the increase in Euroscepticism. Given that the British referendum in 2016, which resulted in the U.K. leaving the European Union, was based on the British citizens' opinion, this thesis argues that it led to Juncker attempting to establish the proposals from the European Commission among the individual citizens and highlighting how they would benefit from the actions in SOTEU 16 and SOTEU 17.

Furthermore, the crises discussed in this thesis have contributed to an increase in references to common European values and identity, which is the topic of the second research question. In SOTEU 15, we can find references to common history, functioning as reminders of why European nations chose to work together and consequently presenting the EU as a peace project. In the two later speeches – notably given after the Brexit referendum – the references to common values are more abundant and appear to imply a need to construct a common European identity in a way that is not prominent in the speech from 2015. The strengthening of a European identity can also be found in the speeches where Juncker applies mechanisms of 'othering', when referring to China and Russia, and ultimately the U.K. Although it is not explicitly stated in Juncker's speeches, there are discursive tendencies implying that he attempts to construct such an identity, and these findings have been discussed in this thesis.

Given the restricted time frame of this work, the study is limited to these three speeches and looks at how Juncker, as the head of the European Commission, presents the institution's view of European integration and identity. For future research, it could therefore be interesting to conduct a more extensive study on the European Commission's view on these issues, by investigating how several authoritative figures within the institution present their views and by extending the time period during which these statements have been presented.

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