

# Returning Foreign Fighters to Denmark & Sweden: The Enemies of the State?

A critical security perspective on Denmark and Sweden's approaches to returning foreign fighters from ISIS

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# Abstract

Denmark and Sweden, as the rest of Europe, face a dilemma of whether to repatriate their citizens who travelled to the so-called Islamic State, from the wretched refugee camps in Syria and Iraq after its fall, and how to deal with those already returned. This thesis examines the two countries' policy-approaches and discourses to the issue of foreign fighters (FF's) through a comparative case study, mainly focusing on Denmark, and empirical analysis of statements on FF's from key political actors, using the social scientific method of critical discourse analysis. Moreover, it theoretically examines how securitization processes, national imageries, as well as exercises of governmentality, as a response to public fears and ontological insecurities, can explain underlying mechanisms for, especially the Danish governments' approaches. The main finding was that Denmark has had a stronger political focus and approach to FF's than Sweden, visible in more and harsher security measures, as well as stronger discourses. These have implicated an 'othering' and suppressing of the rights of the perceived 'internal enemy' in Denmark, the FF's, using emotional appeals and realist war-narratives. This can finally be interpreted as an attempt to reinforce the power of the political establishment and the fantasy of a 'stable' Danish identity.

*Key words:* Islamic State, foreign fighters, Denmark, Sweden, policy, discourses, critical security studies

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# Popular Science Summary

This thesis has found that Denmark has had a harsher approach to its citizens, who travelled to ISIS as foreign fighters (FF's), than Sweden, exemplified in their recent implementation of the measure allowing the state to strip them of their citizenship. Using comparative case studies of Denmark as a major case, and Sweden as a minor case for comparison, to make an empirical critical discourse analysis of political statements from prime ministers and other key ministers for both countries, I have examined the discourses around FF's for both countries, as well as how they are linked together with the policies.

The analysis shows that Denmark's harsher approach is also visible in the binary discourse used about FF's, which is exemplified in these statements by key Danish political actors from my analysis; as being "brutalised fanatics", who are "prone to violence" and have "turned their back on Denmark" to "battle under the flag of the extremists" and "go to war against democracy and freedom", "against us and all the values we stand for". This discourse is connected to the practices and helps legitimise them to the public

Sweden has, in comparison had a harder time initiating measures against FF's, resulting in fewer measures, implemented very late and not working retroactively, making them less useful to prosecute FF's. Moreover, Sweden's discourse around FF's is much less harsh than Denmark's, which can theoretically be interpreted as Denmark feeling a bigger need to exclude FF's to protect Denmark and its values, which PM Mette Frederiksen explicitly expresses in relation to new policies against FF's:

*"I think that one of the most important tasks as a government is to take care of Denmark and take care of the Danes and do everything we can to prevent and minimise the threats that could come to us internally and externally, and we take that seriously"* (Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2020b).

The thesis thereby reveals some very traditional understandings of security in both countries, but especially in Denmark, when it comes to FF's, seeing them as 'enemies of the state' who are against Danish values and can be fought with hard measures. However, this view has problematic implications as the Islamist violent extremism of ISIS is ideological, and can therefore be counter-productive, as it can make FF's feel like they are no longer welcome in Denmark, potentially increasing the risk that these individuals radicalise further and become an even larger threat to society. Therefore, this thesis, by comparing and criticising both the Swedish and Danish approach, contributes with new and interesting aspects in terms of how to rethink the strategies towards FF's.

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# 1 Introduction

The aftermath of the fall of the so-called Islamic State (IS) has left thousands of people, including European foreign fighters (FF's), in insecure conditions in refugee and detention camps. European countries, including Denmark and Sweden are currently dealing with the same dilemma: should they repatriate their citizens who travelled to IS in Syria and Iraq, as recommended by the US and Kurdish authorities, even if this means an increased terror-threat to the security of the country? And what is the best way to deal with them, as well as the FF's who have already returned, ensuring the security of the nation, without violating their civil rights? Denmark and Sweden have chosen very different approaches to this difficult issue, both in terms of policies and political discourses around the FF's.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the basis for the hard measures in Denmark as my major case, in relation to its small scope of returnees and previous terror attacks, compared to my minor case, Sweden. To do this, I will first conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of political statements from prime ministers and key ministers for both countries, to analyse how they each discursively construct FF's as a threat and present this, and how this is interconnected with their practices to minimise and eliminate this threat to the public.

Thereafter I will interpret my empirical results and theoretically discuss how these elements play into each other, and with which consequences, using theoretical concepts. These include *ontological* insecurity, connected to how nationalist narratives, constructing FF's as an imagined 'other', are used politically to create public support; the critical security concept *securitisation* of how states label security issues and present them as urgent through discourses to legitimise extraordinary measures, complemented with the concept of *governmentality*; of how states, as a response to public fear, exercise power over their population through precautionary risk management. Hence, this thesis will, with Denmark and Sweden as case studies, both empirically and theoretically provide new insight to why some states, despite not having many IS-travellers, choose hard political practices against FF's, and how they legitimise them through discourses, which are questions not yet answered by previous research.

Some of the biggest terrorist attacks on European capitals in recent time, such as those in Brussels in (2015) and Paris (2016), have proved to involve returnees from ISIS, which has sparked public fear of the threat of FF's in Europe, making it one of the top political priorities. It has furthermore created public support for hard measures against those who have returned, and for keeping those still in the conflict area out, to ensure national security (Birnbaum 2019). Many of the FF's who stayed in IS until its fall in March 2019 are now trapped in refugee and detention camps in the region and have expressed a wish to come back home (Birnbaum 2019).

However, these FF's are believed to be the most hardcore supporters of IS, creating a big dilemma for politicians in Europe regarding whether to follow the US's recommendation to repatriate their FF's and prosecute them at home, or to find ways to keep them out and allowing them to stand trial abroad (Birnbaum 2019; Dworkin 2019). Most European countries refuse to repatriate them, because it has proved to be rather difficult to gather enough evidence from the conflict zone to prove innocence or guilt in court. Therefore, these countries instead increasingly rely on administrative measures recommended by the EU to suppress and keep out the FF's (Boutin 2016:20; Dworkin 2019). Examples of these administrative measures, having preventive purposes, include expulsion, entry and travel bans, control orders, area restrictions and assigned residence, as well as revocation of citizenship and social benefits (ibid.:3).

Despite only having 159 FF's who left to IS, of which a third (50) are presumed dead, approximately 73 returned to Denmark or other countries, and 35 still in the conflict zone (Busk 2019), this issue enjoys great political attention in Denmark, which is reflected in the extensive policies against FF's (see table 1). Like other Western European countries, the Danish government has enabled some of these EU-recommended measures, including the possibility of citizenship revocation. Contrarily, Sweden has abstained from such measures and has in comparison been criticised for having an insufficient and late response to FF's and for not doing enough to investigate and prosecute those who have returned (TT & The Local 2019). Despite having one of the highest number of travellers in Western Europe of 30 pr. million Capita, they only made travelling to support or participate in a terrorist organisation illegal in 2016, without this working retrospectively (backwards). This has created a challenge for Sweden to convict any of its FF's for their war crimes in Iraq and Syria pre-legislation (Swedish Ministry of Justice 2016; Ranstorp 2018). Therefore, out of the 300 travellers, where roughly 150 have returned<sup>1</sup>, only two have been convicted, compared to 15 in Denmark, of which five have been stripped of their citizenship and nine deported (The Hague 2017; Åkerman 2020c; Busk 2019). To determine what explains this difference in FF-approaches I will analyse and compare these for the contrasting cases of Denmark and Sweden:

**Research question:**

*How does the policies and discursive representations of the issue of foreign fighters differ between Denmark and Sweden? What are the implications of these, focusing on the Danish approach?*

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 300 FF's, roughly 150 have returned, 50 assumed deceased and 100 are assumed to still be in the region (Åkerman 2020c).

## 2 Background

During ISIS' war for territory in Iraq and Syria, more than 42.000 people from over 120 countries worldwide travelled to join the fighting. While most of the FF's were from Syria's neighbours -- Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and Jordan -- a shocking number of over 5.000 people travelled from Europe, where many held citizenships (RAN 2017). An estimated 30 % of these have already returned to their home countries (Scherrer & Isaksson 2018). The biggest share of FF's came from France (1910 people), Germany (960 people) and the UK (850 people), but looking at the number of FF's pr. million capita, Belgium (47), Austria (34) and Sweden (30) had the biggest number of travellers to IS in Syria and Iraq (The Hague 2017). The fact that ISIS had the ability to make Europeans from even rich welfare states turn away from their own country and travel to join ISIS, made this phenomenon even more terrifying, as it was contrary to previous beliefs that terrorists were perhaps mentally ill and from poor conditions. Now we know that this is no longer the case.

While many of the FF's and their families returned to Europe before the fall of the Islamic State in March 2019, many also remained in the Caliphate until its fall and were captured; the men were sent to prison facilities, while their wives and children were put in refugee camps. The biggest refugee camp, al-Hol in north-eastern Syria, primarily controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), holds roughly 70,000 women and children, including around 10,000 Europeans, mainly from Russia and France, as well as Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. The prisons contain 10,000 ISIS fighters, whereas 2,000 are said to be foreign and 800 of these from Europe (Mai 2019).

As European countries are reluctant to let their citizens repatriate out of fear for their own security, a humanitarian crisis is unfolding in these overcrowded prisons and refugee camps dealing with challenges of diseases and violence, as well as lack of food, clean water and medicine (ibid.; Birnbaum 2019; Dworkin 2019). Furthermore, the camps are believed to be hotbeds for further ISIS-radicalisation especially for the children who grow up there, learning e.g. ISIS battle songs and values, such as glorification of martyrdom. This situation only gets worse day by day, putting even more pressure on European states to find a solution and has sparked much debate, given that some of the men and women may have committed war crimes, might still be aligned with ISIS ideology and may want to commit terrorist attacks in Europe, thus posing a threat to their country upon return (Dworkin 2019). It is hard to know and prove who is guilty, as well as whether people have joined ISIS or any of the other resistance forces against the Syrian regime<sup>2</sup>, since hard evidence in court is hard is difficult to obtain from the conflict

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<sup>2</sup> This was the challenge in the first prosecution of a FF in Denmark, which led it to ultimately fail (Ritzau 2013).



zone, and likewise hard to distinguish who are genuinely remorseful ‘defectors’ and who are still driven by ISIS-ideology (ibid.)

In absence of any common law or strategy across Europe for how to deal with these returning citizens, European countries deal with the returnees in different ways: some have mostly focused on hard approaches, such as revocation of citizenship, prosecution etc. while others have used ‘softer’ rehabilitative approaches, such as deradicalisation and disengagement initiatives, while others have opted for a mix of the two. Hard approaches have gained the biggest support in Europe, due to widespread public fear, however because of difficulty obtaining enough evidence against the FF’s, most have pushed off any decision of taking them back (Birnbaum 2019). For the FF’s that have already returned, it is uncertain whether these hard approaches have any evidential positive effects or whether they instead push the returnees away into further radicalisation, creating or confirming existing anti-Western sentiments.

Denmark has recently fast-tracked legislation to strip Danes who travelled to IS of their citizenship if they hold another citizenship because of reluctance to prosecute them at home (Danish Ministry of State 2019b). Prime minister Mette Frederiksen said in her opening speech of the parliament in October that Denmark had no interest in taking home the children in the camps, when it means separating them from their mothers who, according to Frederiksen “have no place in Danish society” (Peachey 2019). Yet, children who are still with their mothers are still to remain in the camps, vulnerable and exposed to ISIS-radicalisation (Dworkin 2019).

This crisis leaves the question of why European countries are so afraid of FF’s, both those who have returned and those still in the region, and how this fear is manifested in magnified perceptions of threat through the political attention on keeping the FF’s out and repressing them through administrative measures, in the case of Denmark, compared to Sweden. To get a better understanding of this to discuss it later, I will first lay out my theoretical framework.

## 3 Theory

To better understand the FF-approaches of Denmark and Sweden, and challenge traditional realist perceptions of security and threat from FF's, I wish to understand how they have become such an important security issue on the political agenda through discourses and narratives, and how this enables extraordinary measures against them. For this I will use the Copenhagen School-concept of *securitisation*, the concept of *ontological (in)security* and nationalist imageries. Moreover I will use theories of public fear, the nature of precautionary measures, and the concept of *governmentality* to understand how extraordinary precautionary measures can be understood as a product of fear of the uncertain from the government, reproduced through discourses to control the population. All the theories complement each other by seeing security issues as partially constructed through discourses by the government, implying constructions of “us”, the object of security, and “the threatening other”, the subject of security.

### 3.1 Ontological insecurities, nationalist imageries, and the construction of ‘the other’

In this section, I will describe theory on the appeal of populist discourses, to later be able to analyse how especially, the Danish government's discourses of FF's, compared to the Swedish, appeals emotionally to the public to legitimise measures against FF's, through nationalist fantasies, often built on nostalgia, implicating the construction of the ‘the threatening other’, as a response to ontological insecurities of the public.

To understand the underlying pull-factor to populist narratives in politics, I will use Anthony Giddens's concept of *ontological security*. This concept is often used in international relations (IR) and can largely be understood as the individual's ability to uphold a stable view or ‘natural attitude’ to everyday life. This ability is according to Giddens shaped from early in life, through predictable and stable routines and everyday interactions, and can cultivate a sense of being ontologically secure (Browning & Joenniemi 2017:31; Giddens 1991:36,39,46; Kinnvall 2018:530). The literature of ontological security presupposes that actors prefer stability instead of change, which, as a result of globalisation or other factors causing uncertainty and complexity, can create fears and anxiety, ultimately resulting in ontological insecurity. These anxieties can especially become clear during a crisis, where these stable local identities and structures are threatened (Browning & Joenniemi 2017; Kinnvall 2004:742; Eberle 2019:246). Therefore, change can be perceived as harmful, which can lead to a strong focus on preserving

identities and their security (Browning & Joenniemi 2017:32). This focus exists in some political discourses containing fantasies and narratives of “who we are” attempting to provide the public with a sense of ontological security.

Because all humans, according to Lacanian theory, have a fundamental ontological *lack of essence*, stable identity and certainty, which can never be completely filled, they are in search of an ‘identity signifier’ to cover up this lack, which can be provided by political actors through the use of ‘fantasies’ (Eberle 2019:246-47; Kinnvall 2004:750, 2018:531-532; Lacan 1977:41). Fantasies are often characterised as being binary, providing simplified answers with little or no room for ambiguity (Eberle 2019:248-249). Moreover, they tend to always contain a narrative of ‘the enemy other’ which has taken away from us the ‘object of desire’, here being the nostalgic fantasy of a homogenous, harmonic nation-state, and the stable identity that we wish to obtain (ibid.).

Catarina Kinnvall points out how some political parties and individuals attempt to cover up this ontological insecurity by ‘capturing an imaginary past’, constructed through fantasies of nostalgia of imagined past greatness, with more safety, coherence, and harmony (Kinnvall 2018:525,534-535). This is done through emotional appeal, holding on to a sense of: “*who ‘we’ are, what ‘we’ believe in and ‘who’ is to blame*” (Kinnvall 2018:525). These nostalgic symbols and myths in the imageries of the nation-state assumes the existence of a stable national identity with ‘one set of common values’, such as ‘democracy’, ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’, which are largely unquestioned, being reproduced and given new life and political importance by populist leaders (Ibid.:525,535; Jackson 2007). The myths are often directed towards the imagined “stranger other”, who is not a part of “us” and is therefore threatening to the myth of the homogenous nation state in the present (Kinnvall 2018:526,535). The construction of ‘the other’ is defined by Mountz as ‘othering’:

*“an exclusionary labelling practice, where one creates ‘the other’, a person or group of people that are seen as different to oneself, done through labelling ‘the other’ as deviant or non-normative”* (Mountz 2009, p.328).

This practice is thus used to label an ‘out-group’, which could be migrants, minority groups, women etc., making a distinction between “us” and “the other”, which together with nationalist fantasies of past greatness can help reinforce the belief of being ontologically secure with a ‘whole’ stable identity (Kinnvall 2018:535, 2004:749; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2011:275). These fantasies are moreover especially used politically during a crisis or trauma, where they intensify, along with the public’s need for ontological security, making the public more receptive to these discourses and their promise of ontological security. This way, use of emotional appeal in a time of crisis can be tone-setting in orienting a collective morality and have an impact on both the public and political sphere. Richards (2013 in Kinnvall 2018:533) calls this response to the public feelings ‘emotional governance’.

Hence, these theories indicate that political discursive constructions of “us” and “the threat” through othering, as a response to ontological insecurity and fear, may

prove more relevant to look at, than actual physical danger, when trying to understand the public support for hard measures against FF's. This aspect is supported by critical security theorists, arguing for the discursive nature of security.

## 3.2 Critical Security Studies

To challenge the issue of FF's as an objective military security threat, and instead understand it as a politically, socially, and discursively constructed phenomenon, being used to enable extraordinary security measures against the issue, I will draw on critical security studies (CSS). I will mainly focus on the concept of *securitisation* from the Copenhagen School, focusing on security in a perspective of politics and power, and specifically on the process of how a security issue is discursively constructed by the authorities, and complement this with Luca Mavelli's (2016) theoretical account on precautionary measures using Michel Foucault's (1978) concept of *governmentality*. This, to get a deeper understanding of how this process of securitisation magnifies the public perception of threat from FF's and of how states govern through this fear using precautionary measures, as well as its problematic implications of limited freedom for the FF's, especially in the case of Denmark.

CSS is an academic discipline that started as a response to the realist approach to security studies, to advocate for a social constructionist approach to security. Realism is a central school in security studies assuming that individuals are self-centred and need a security-centred state to maintain order and that states are likewise centred around themselves and are competitive with other states. The main concern of the field of CSS is to redirect security from the traditional realist approach of war, force, military and states, to include many other aspects of threats and security (Buzan et al., 1998; Arrigo 2016:224). CSS-scholars Browning and McDonald (2011:236) for example challenge some of the assumptions in realist approaches to security for being state-centred, viewing the state as being the object of security and the threat as the subject. Therefore, they pose questions of who security is for, how a threat to security is identified, as well as where security discourses come from, and whose interests they serve (ibid.). The CSS-discipline consists of three main schools; The Welsh School, the Paris School and finally the Copenhagen School, whose concept of securitisation I will use in this thesis (Arrigo, 2016:249). Similar for the schools is that they all strongly focus on social constructivism and the power and changeability of social discourses, and thereby argue that security is socially constructed through culture, social identities and shared values (ibid.).

The aim of Barry Buzan (1998) and Ole Wæver (1995), two leading figures within the Copenhagen school, is to construct a wider, more radical interpretation of security studies by examining the logic of security; who decides when something is a threat and who is the subject of securitisation? Moreover, they theorise over the process of securitisation of these threats, using military or not, as well as how security and politics are differentiated. Therefore they are indeed very concerned

with the effect of discourses of security and how it, along with conceptualisations of ‘threat’, being socially constructed, can be used politically through the process of securitisation (Arrigo 2016:224; Browning & McDonald 2011:241).

### 3.2.1 Securitisation

The concept of securitisation developed by Ole Wæver has been the most prominent concept from the Copenhagen school, describing the process in which a normal domestic political issue can become an issue of national security (Arrigo 2016:225; Wæver 1995). Despite having the purpose to criticise traditionalist views of security for being state-centric, the concept in itself can be criticised for the same, having a strong emphasis on the role of the state to label security issues, as well approaches towards them, without considering that of the public and the media. Despite of this I can use it in my analysis, which focuses exactly on the approaches of countries, making the concept still very useful. Browning & McDonald (2011:241-242) also criticise the concept for having simplified assumptions of how security is constructed and practiced from a universal logic, instead of looking at how the discourses vary depending on what or who is the object, and the subject of security, as well as how this changes depending on time, place, as well as the historical, cultural, and political context. Despite having quite a negative logic, the concept’s constructivist aspect of the power of discourses to construct threats and prioritise issues in the name of security, is very useful for my analysis to see how the security issue of FF’s can, at least in part, be seen as socially constructed by the state.

Buzan et al. (1998) divides the process of successful securitisation into three steps that I will use in my analysis: 1) ‘the speech act’: the labelling of issues or developments as security problems, constructing an existential threat to the state(s); 2) the initiation of extraordinary emergency measures to secure the state(s) against the threat; 3) sharing ‘the speech’ act with the audience (the public), affecting them (p. 26; Arrigo 2016:225). In terms of what security is, Buzan et al, argues for its discursive nature:

*“‘Security’ is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat”*  
(Buzan et al., 1998:24).

Hence, they argue that rather than security issues being ‘real’ threats, they are socially constructed through discursive security practices. This can for example be a constructed narrative of terrorists as brutal and extreme (Aly & Green 2010:274). Wæver calls this a *speech act*; the mere utterance or naming of security as a performative act which constitutes it. He strongly underlines that it is the state and its elites who, in the final instance, decides when something is a security problem and when to use the tool of securitisation (Wæver 1995:54-55).

Securitisation is seen as a ‘more extreme version of politicisation’, because of the way issues are presented as existential threats, requiring urgent attention and should be dealt with by the top leaders, using extraordinary measures. (Buzan et al.

1998:23,29). When labelling an issue as a security problem, the discourses of threat are often dramatized and presented as needing utmost priority in order to claim the right for extraordinary measures (ibid.:26). This self-centred altering of existing rules when labelling developments as security issues, claiming the right to extraordinary measures against it, is fundamentally motivated by a fear that the subject will undermine the existing political order and the sovereignty of the state, and not allow for the survival of “us” (ibid.). As they point out: “*Security is survival*” (Buzan et al. 1998:21; Wæver 1995:54). The measures can therefore, according to Mavelli (2016), despite being extreme and undemocratic, still be legitimised and normalised through governmentality, which I will explain further.

The process of securitisation is however not successful without the final step: the public’s acceptance of the speech act around the issue. Hence the definition of security issue is not only up to the elites, but also depends on the acceptance of the public (Buzan et al. 1998:31). If and when accepted by the public, the discourses of threat from central political actors (usually the head of state) can result in a sphere of panic, since the securitising actor cannot control the audience’s reception and interpretation of the speech act (Buzan et al. 1998:34; Browning & McDonald 2011:241). As showed, the CS does not necessarily see security as a good thing, which is why the scholars argue for a *desecuritisation*:

*“Desecuritisation is the optimal long-range option, since it means not to have issues phrased as ‘threats against which we have countermeasures’ but to move them out of this threat-defence sequence and into the ordinary public sphere”* (Ole Wæver 1995 in Buzan 1998:29)

Hence, they argue for a shift out of the emergency mode surrounding issues into a process of normal democratic debate within the political sphere (Buzan et al. 1998:4; Browning & McDonald 2011:246). To get a deeper understanding of the logic behind the extraordinary measures, I will include theory on public fear, precautionary measures and governmentality.

### 3.2.2 Fear, Precautionary Measures & Governmentality

Senior lecturer in politics and international relations, Luca Mavelli (2016) argues that terrorism has had both *subtractive* and *productive* effects on our societies. Subtractive effects refer to the extraordinary, exceptional measures against terrorism have limited the freedom of individuals, because of its pre-emptive and precautionary logic, where action is in some cases based on solely suspicion and not evidence, has been legitimised. The productive effects refer to the fact that the terror threat has become an incorporated element into modern politics, through “*active cultivation of a politics of fear*” (ibid.:237). According to many scholars the magnification of threat from FF’s through the process of securitisation, leads to a disproportionate public fear of terrorism compared to the actual level of threat, (Aly & Green 2010; Mavelli 2016; Hegghammer & Nesser 2015; Barret 2017; Heinke et al. 2018; Byman 2016). This is also the case for Aly & Green’s (2010) study in

Australia, which they argue was because of a developing ‘war on terror’-discourse there at the given time, and conclude that:

*“The fear of terrorism is, in fact, a fear of nothing—an anticipatory fear that hinges on chimera: the ability of the state to induce and influence collective opinion by magnifying the actual threat of terrorism”.* (Aly & Green 2010:270).

Hence, they point to the state as being the source of this disproportionate public fear of terrorism, which in this case relies on the anticipation of threat, rather than the reality of it, by magnifying and sensationalising the discourse of threat (ibid.). Since terrorism is not a known size, but is socially constructed, this governing from the state is, according to Ewald, to a large extent built on “*what one can imagine, suspect, presume or fear*” (Ewald 2002 cited in Mavelli 2016:239). The state tries to govern against the unpredictable and unforeseen through precautionary risk management, based on the imagination of threat consisting of e.g. fear, suspicion, presumptions. (Mavelli 2016:239; Aly & Green 2010:269).

Because of the unpredictable nature of terrorism, the systematic use of imagination of ‘what could happen’ is legitimised as a necessary tool that is continually encouraged within security services such as intelligence, in the attempt to prevent attacks through precautionary and preemptive measures. Hence, in the absence of knowledge, making it impossible to reduce uncertainty, precautionary risk management has replaced science with imagination (Mavelli 2016:241). He highlights two interesting features of precautionary risk management practices; 1) suspicion trumps evidence, a principle that if there is the smallest chance of threat, one should act on suspicion, even though this threat will most likely not materialise; 2) disruptive administrative measures replaces legal prosecution – given that one needs to act on every suspicion, use of other techniques is legitimised in cases of no hard evidence, to ‘limit the threat’ of an individual, even at the cost of his/her freedom, until further evidence is obtained.

Mavelli (2016) suggests that the subtractive effects (compression of freedom) and productive effects (incorporation of threat from terrorism in politics through fear) has resulted in *governmentality* – the use of power to govern populations through terrorism. The Foucauldian concept of governmentality is very complex and has a negative focus on how the population is subject to the state who controls and exercises sovereign power over them through procedures, calculations, reflections and institutions targeting the population, using the security apparatus as its “*essential technical instrument*” (Foucault & Berchell 2007:108). However, it is a useful concept to examine the different approaches to security in relation to FF’s Denmark and Sweden. According to Foucault, this power has a productive aim of optimising, controlling and monitoring the population, not only authoritatively through law, but indirectly through discourses in disciplinary and regulatory institutions, internalising norms and behaviours of production to fit into them, into the body, and thereby subjugating individuals to perceptions of what is ‘normal’ and ‘good’, which he calls biopolitical governmentality (Ibid.; Mavelli 2016:240; Foucault 1978:139). This inscription of norms in the body also implicates an exclusion of individuals who do not fit into these norms. Here discourses of for

example ‘war on terror’ along with and its disciplinary and regulatory security institutions, support narratives of “the terrorist other as an existential threat to our way of life” (Mavelli 2016:240). This narrative further nurtures public fear, and so-called ‘politics of fear’ as a response, with its use of precautionary risk management implementing biopolitical governmentality, legitimising extraordinary measures, which can thus be seen as a governance of terrorism (Ibid.).

To sum up, I have described the concept of ontological security and how nostalgic fantasies of ‘the homogenous nation-state’, implicating ‘othering’ of those who do not fit in, are necessary to cover up a fundamental lack in the individuals of the public. Moreover I have described the Copenhagen school’s view of security, challenging realist views, and their theory of securitisation, focusing on how states and elites label security issues through ‘the speech act’ and use discourses of threat to the public, causing fear, in order to enable the extraordinary measures against the FF’s. Finally, how subtractive, and productive effects of terrorism have both limited our freedom and actively implemented politics of fear, enabling governmentality from the state protecting the public from the unpredictable, while exercising power over the public. These theories all feed into each other, as shown in the figure below, to challenge realist perceptions of security against FF’s in Denmark and Sweden, and understand how FF’s have become an issue of such great political importance today, through discursive security constructions and nostalgic narratives from the government, magnifying the threat, creating fear, which

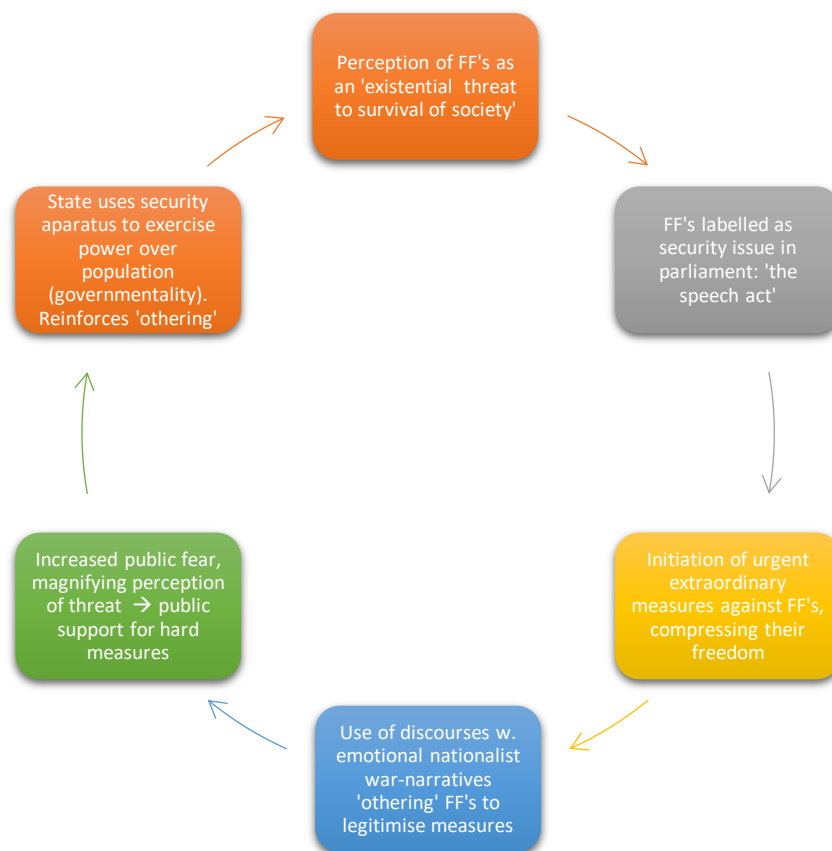


Figure 3: The cycle of securitisation of FF's, including nationalist imageries, public fear and “governmentality” legitimises their precautionary extraordinary measures against the FF’s, compressing their freedom and allows for the state to govern the public.



### 3.3 Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that Denmark has had a harder response to returned FF's, as well as those still in the region, than Sweden and that this is connected to a stronger discourse from key political actors about the FF's, presenting them as an existential threat, which I expect to find in my CDA. I expect that this is both based on, as well as a response to, fear and ontological insecurity, while being an exercise of power and governmentality from the state to control its population through security. Moreover, I expect to find traces of more traditional perceptions of security in my analysis of the Danish political discourse surrounding FF's, as well as in their hard measures against them and that this is linked to Denmark's exercise of power through security. Additionally, that this presentation of threat from FF's, traditional views of security and exercise of power from the state is not as strong in Sweden, as in Denmark, and that this is interconnected to their fewer political practices against the FF's. I expect that this can help explain why Denmark generally has a higher public fear of terrorism, as well as more security measures and policies against their FF's than Sweden, extending penalties, stripping travellers to Syria and Iraq of their citizenship etc., despite having fewer FF's than Sweden. Finally, this fear might be cultivated by the political actors through the securitisation process and exercise of power, to gain public support to implement extraordinary measures. Hence that the measures are a kind of response of risk management to this fear, and an exercise of governmentality.

To sum up, I expect that the abovementioned factors are more important to look at to understand the countries' approaches and discourses of FF's, rather than the actual physical threat from FF's themselves.

## 4 Literature review

The issue of returning FF's has been subject to extensive research in both the academic and policy-oriented field. Both research attempting to determine whether the actual threat of FF's is as big as perceived in Europe, due to the strong political focus, research examining the implications of harsh security measures on FF's, and research analysing and criticising the counter-productive effect of FF-discourses.

Before ISIS, Jihadi movements have never had many FF's from Europe. However recent literature suggests that the threat may not be as big as anticipated and that the fear of terrorism from ISIS-returnees is therefore disproportionate to the actual threat (Hegghammer & Nesser 2015; Barret 2017:5-6; Heinke et al. 2018:18; Byman 2016:71). Many scholars like Hegghammer and Nesser (2015), Barret (2017), Byman (2016), See (2018) and Speckhard et al. (2018) have attempted to tentatively measure 'the threat' of FF's, to recommend policy strategies, which is challenging because of the lack of complete data and overview of the field.

Nesser and Hegghammer (2015:20-21) and Barret (2017:14-25) conclude that influence of returnees has been very limited in ISIS attacks 2014-2017. Several studies point to that most people returning from Syria and Iraq have no desire to commit domestic attacks because they, by making *hijrah* (travelling to IS), have shown more willingness to build up something new in IS, than to destroy their home country (Hegghammer 2013:1; Barret 2017:14-16; Byman 2016). This can, according to Byman (2016:71), also be because the FF's are traumatised or disillusioned, or because their acquired skills may be better fitted for insurgency than domestic terrorism in Europe, decreasing their chance of involvement in these. Instead, Barret suggests that IS-sympathisers who did *not* make hijrah or tried unsuccessfully, may be more likely to commit attacks, than the ones who did, having more willingness to prove their loyalty to ISIS and having especially been encouraged by ISIS to commit attacks on the 'enemy' back home, wherever and however they can (Barret 2017:16; Dabiq 12:3). Despite the share of returnees involved in domestic attacks being small, Hegghammer (2013) however found in his study of returning FF's pre-Caliphate, from 1990-2010 that the terrorist plots with a returnee on board were more likely to happen and be more fatal, which See (2018) and (Olivier Roy 2004 in Heinke et al. 2018:16) also expresses worries about. Hence the literature tentatively indicates that the share of FF's who plot and commit attacks is small, but that the ones who do can pose a big threat.

Studies by Speckard et al. (2018), Barret (2017), Greenwood (2019) and Heinke et al. (2018:18), examine the challenges for the returnees when they return back

home, which are often the same that made them leave in the first place<sup>3</sup>. They all argue that these factors, along with heightened adrenaline levels and PTSD from being in a conflict-zone, can make the FF's more vulnerable to reengage with ISIS or the radical networks that recruited them. Therefore, Heinke et al. (2018:5-6) and Speckhard et al. (2018) underline the importance of strengthening efforts to address these root issues for radicalisation, to keep ISIS from regaining strength and support through recruitment.

Hence, the literature agrees that not all FF's are the same in terms of their engagement to IS, which is why efforts towards them, based on generalisations, might prove to be counter-productive, reinforcing anti-Western sentiments. Jackson (2007), Gleeson (2012), and Sexton (2017) likewise conduct discourse analyses, concluding that use of the words 'terrorist' and 'foreign fighter' also implicates counter-productive generalisations, containing inherent notions of Islamophobia. Therefore, they call for policy makers in Europe to instead distinguish between different types of FF's to make efficient individualised strategies for them (See 2018:9; Speckhard et al. 2018:2-4; Sexton 2017:37-38; Barret 2017-18-19; Heinke et al. 2018; Boutin 2016). These studies all argue that a distinction of the FF's should be reflected in the policies and determine whether to punish or rehabilitate the FF's, which is a difficult challenge, putting pressure on European governments (ibid.):

*“There is a tension in all societies between repressive measures against those involved in terrorism and rehabilitative measures that may put society at increased risk”* (Speckhard et al. 2018:16).

There is pressure on countries to strike a balance between ensuring security for their population, whilst giving those who have defected a chance to start over through rehabilitative measures (ibid.:18), or otherwise risk potentially pushing them to re-radicalise, increasing the threat. Both Heinke et al. (2018:5-6), Barret (2017:26) and Jackson (2007:424) examine how the Brussels (2015) and Paris attacks (2016), both committed by returnees from IS, created an exponentially increased perception of threat from FF's. Moreover, how this marked the beginning of FF's becoming a top priority politically with more systematic prosecutions of FF's, as well as policy-expansions, aiming at targeting terrorist crime more efficiently in Europe. This has implicated going beyond the judicial area, and into intelligence where further control and surveillance of the FF's was enabled, thus limiting their freedom preemptively (Heinke et al. 2018:5-6; Barret 2017:26; Jackson 2007:424).

While many countries have chosen incarceration and criminalisation as a strategy, there is according to Barret (2017:27) and Speckhard et al. (2018:17) still no certain evidence of its effects. In their studies they underline how this strategy poses new challenges to prison authorities in terms of radicalisation, as well as creating dilemmas of the length of the sentences for FF's. The approach of rehabilitation and reintegration has been attempted in many countries and has according to Barret (2017:27) generally failed, because the initiatives have been too resource demanding compared to the effects. Both studies highlight the need for

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<sup>3</sup> These factors, according to all three studies, included unemployment, social isolation, marginalisation, discrimination and less freedom to live out a conservative lifestyle in Western society (Speckard et al. 2018; Barret 2017; Heinke et al. 2018).

more efficient rehabilitation to combat the risk of further- or re-radicalisation upon return and outline suggestions for how this can be done.

In an ICCT policy research paper Boutin (2016:20) expresses a deep worry about the increased use of administrative measures against FF's, caused by a limited access to evidence, functioning as a pre-emptive alternative to prosecution, going around the 'constraints of criminal procedures' (ibid). She further highlights the implications of this tendency, limiting the freedom of these individuals and in worst instance risk violating their human rights, and particularly criticises the revocation of citizenship for being tough and potentially reinforcing perceived discrimination. Therefore, Speckhard et al. (2018) and Boutin (2016) underline the importance of providing the returnees a chance to legally prove their innocence and loyalty to the country and in turn also prove wrong the narratives of racism and anti-Muslim sentiments that ISIS exploits in propaganda. Dworkin (2019) examines the European response to the FF's still in the region (in refugee camps and detention centres) and criticise the countries' wish for the FF's to stand trial in Iraq or in an international tribunal, as problematic, as they risk unfair trials. According to him returnees should be repatriated, prosecuted, put under control, and rehabilitated, instead of being left in risk of illness and further radicalisation (ibid.). Using Denmark and Sweden as case studies, Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup (2008) attempts to explain how some issues receive more political attention in some countries than others and why this varies over time, focusing on the different structures of political party-competition in countries.

To sum up, attempts have been made in the literature to assess whether the 'real' threat of FF's corresponds to that of political perceptions; to uncover and critique the discursive construction of "terrorists" and its counter-productive implications; as well as to compare and criticise the implications of policy-approaches across Europe. However, there is a gap in the literature. While the field of FF's is exhausted with policy-reports, comparing and problematising European approaches to FF's, as well as academic discourse analysis of the political use of 'terrorists', no research has concretely examined the connection between these two aspects, nor compared between Denmark's and Sweden's approaches to FF's, which this thesis will, using social scientific methods.

## 5 Method and methodology

To answer my research questions, I will make a qualitative comparative case study of the response to FF's, using Denmark and Sweden as contrasting cases, and conduct a discourse analysis of selected government documents from the respective countries to get a deeper understanding of the link between the political language and practices dealing with FF's, complementing this with an additional descriptive data-timeline on fear of terrorism.

### 5.1 Case study approach

I will use Denmark as a major case, and Sweden as a minor comparative case, to highlight features of Denmark, helping me get a deeper understanding of its political response to FF's, both in terms of policies and discourses, being very different to the Swedish approach (Mabry 2012:214).

The purpose of case studies is to provide a deep understanding of a topic, whilst including enough information to understand the broader context and complexity of the case (Ibid.:216). Therefore, presenting one case at a time, I will make an overview of the relevant anti-terror legislation and policies related to FF's and combine this with a CDA on political statements from the PM and key ministers to get a deeper understanding of the language used, the process of the policies and how they are interconnected (Ibid.:222). This, to learn more about the mechanisms behind the political responses to FF's, and how they differ between the two cases.

Because of Sweden being a minor case, I will not make this analysis as extensive as the Danish, but rather focus on a few texts from PM and key ministers, representative of the hegemonic discourse of FF's from the Swedish government. Following an interpretivist approach, I maintain a certain openness to what the data shows me, instead of driving the analysis deductively, solely based on my hypothesis, and therefore add relevant data during my research, to provide further understanding of my preliminary results (Mabry 2012:218).

After having made an analysis of Denmark and Sweden respectively, I will compare them, which will function as the foundation for my discussion of the underlying mechanisms and implications, applying theory that can help to open up the data to get a deeper understanding. When conducting a case study, it is very important to recognise the cultural, historical, social and political context and how it shapes particular discourses and perceptions, which I will reflect upon and

actively include when analysing my main case, and comparing it to Sweden, both through the analysis and the discussion (Ibid:217).

The interpretivist approach further encourages expanding with more data, which is why I will complement my findings with a trendline made from the Eurobarometer survey, comparing the public opinion of prioritisation of terrorism for Denmark and Sweden 2010-2018. This, to contribute with an overview, and a more complex and nuanced understanding of the social environment, as well as to support my theoretical interpretation of the empirical results (Ibid.:216). I have chosen to look at fear of terrorism in general, since data specifically on the public opinion of returning FF's is not yet available and will argue that the fear of these is ultimately a fear of terrorism.

### 5.1.1 Sweden and Denmark – Contrasting cases

I have chosen to look at Denmark and Sweden's political responses to FF's, because of their very different approaches, despite sharing many similarities; both historically, culturally, by both being traditional social-democratic welfare states, both located in Scandinavia, which reflects an interesting political difference between the countries.

While Denmark has a reputation for having a strict approach towards FF's, exemplified by its new bill (L38) enabling the revocation of citizenship for FF's, similar bills have been rejected in the Swedish parliament. This, despite the fact that Sweden had twice as many FF's as Denmark, indicating a softer approach and a different political climate (The Hague 2017). The aim of my comparative case study is thus not to make generalisations for all of Europe from these two countries, but rather to make an in-depth analysis of the case of Denmark, using Sweden as a minor comparative case to highlight the Danish tendencies (Mabry 2012:217-218).

## 5.2 Operationalisations

Foreign fighters (FF's) are defined by the UN Security Resolution 2178 as:

*“individuals who travel to a State other than their State of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict”* (UNSCR 2014).

In my paper I will focus on FF's from Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In the field of counter-terrorism travellers to IS are often referred to as foreign *terrorist* fighters (FTF's). For the purpose of my moderately constructivist approach, cf. my CDA, I refrain from using this expression, as it implies that individuals travelling to IS are all terrorists, which is not necessarily the case for women travelling to be “ISIS brides” for the FF's for example, and is therefore a counter-productive starting point

for my analysis. Instead, I will refer to these as FF's even though the term still implicates fighting, which, as I will point out in my analysis, is not the case for all travellers. I will however keep this term and argue that travellers to IS can still be seen to ideologically fight for the terrorist organisation through the act of travelling to support them. The expression 'returnees' refer to FF's who either already have or want to return to their home country in Europe.

'Fear of terrorism' will be operationalised into the Eurobarometer variable asking: "what are the two most important issues facing your country?" where I will look at the number of people who answered 'terrorism'. Despite the survey question not asking directly about *fear* of terrorism, I will still argue that sentiments that terrorism should be the highest priority, can be interpreted as a kind of fear, and from a theoretical perspective, perhaps a feeling of ontological insecurity.

### 5.3 Method – Discourse analysis

In this section I will give a brief introduction to CDA, especially focusing on Fairclough's model, which I will draw inspiration from in my analysis, since it offers an opportunity to connect text analysis to social reality through discourse. The theories work well together with the methods because they all, similarly to the discourse theorists drawing inspiration from Fairclough, argue that social practices are socially constructed through discourses. There are also very strong similarities between the CS-school's three-step process of securitisation and Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse analysis: they both include 'the speech act', which Fairclough calls 'text', and social practices, referred to as extraordinary measures by the CS-school. Both theories argue that (security) practices are socially constructed through discourses communicated and constituted through text or speech.

Richard Jackson broadly defines discourse analysis as:

*"A form of critical theorizing, discourse analysis aims primarily to illustrate and describe the relationship between textual and social processes. In particular, it is concerned with the politics of representation"*  
(Jackson, 2007:395)

Hence, discourse is the link between text and practices, through representation. Moreover, he argues that different approaches within discourse analysis broadly entail an understanding of language as constitutive of meaning, and of discourses as constitutive of social realities; being reproduced by subjects with authority to speak and act, political practices and legitimised forms of knowledge. It entails an understanding of the discourse's necessity to exclude and silence other modes of representation to stand out, and as being shaped, contextualised and changed by history and culture, why it needs to be reformulated and stay open to destabilisation of its hegemony (Ibid.:396).

### 5.3.1 Critical discourse analysis

I will use the interdisciplinary approach critical discourse analysis (CDA), drawing inspiration from the model of one of the pioneers of CDA, Norman Fairclough, as this is one of the most developed methods for theory and research in the field (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:60). CDA views language as a social practice and is often used to highlight power relations in society and how they are constituted and reinforced through language in many different contexts, such as the political, as in my case. CDA is a systematic analysis of language, both spoken and textual in the context of social interaction, unlike other approaches within discourse analysis. The word ‘critical’ refers to an aim to uncover what role discursive practices play in constituting and reinforcing the social world through power (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:63). Fairclough refers to discourse in three different ways: as language in social interaction being both constituting and constitutive; as a language in a field, in my case political language; and as a way of speaking, to add meaning to an object or an experience (Ibid.:66-67).

In his model, he presents language as constituted by three dimensions; text, discourse and social practices, which I will use as an analytical framework in my analysis of discourses in the political language about FF’s (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:68,70). As the model shows, discursive practices mediate between text and social practice in their dialectical relationship of shaping each other (Ibid.:69).

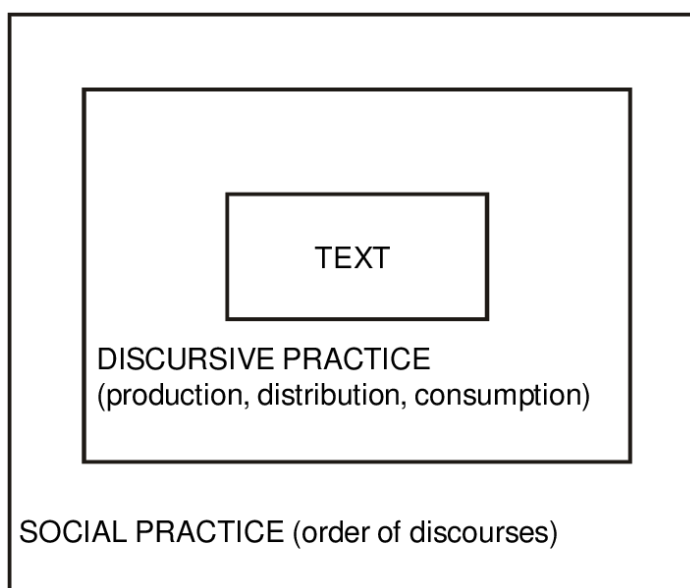


Figure 1: Fairclough's three-dimensional model for CDA (1992:73)

The main aim of CDA is to explore this link between language and social practice. Hence, an analysis should include both linguistic analysis of text focusing on grammar, words, syntax etc. from which discourses are realised; an analysis of discursive practices, which refers to the practice that facilitates the text (production) and determines how the text will be received (consumption); and

whether these reproduce or restructure the existing discourse and thereby the social practice (in this case policies) (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:68-70). Text is not understood as only written language, but more broadly as communicative events, such as speeches, images etc. where language is used (Ibid.:67,71-73). Weldes similarly points to how a text can become loaded with certain representations through *articulation* in the production of the text, such as ‘terrorist’ with adjectives as ‘violent’, which can start to appear natural and be reproduced, if unchallenged,



which can have big implications for social practices (Weldes 1999:98; Gleeson 2012:32).

Within CDA lies the assumption that discursive practices are an important form of social practice, constituting part of the social world and that it is through these that social and cultural reproduction takes place (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:61). Hence, discourse is seen as *constituting* the social world, but also as being *constituted* by it – as both shaping and reflecting it. This way discourses have a dialectical relationship with the social world, where they mutually shape each other (Ibid.).

Fairclough points out that discourses are influenced by societal factors, for example the political system, the media and other institutions (Ibid.:62). In this sense he is not completely post-structuralist like Laclau & Mouffe, believing that *everything* is socially constructed through discourse, but still believe in the pre-existence of these systems and institutions as being historically situated in a dialectical relationship with the social world, which is therefore only partly discursively constituted:

*“Thus, the discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people’s heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real material social structures”*  
(Fairclough 1992:66)

Hence, that objects exist in the physical world, not just in our heads, but that they only acquire their meaning discursively. Therefore, he sees social structures (institutions and social relations), social identities and systems of knowledge and meaning as both discursive and non-discursive (Jørgensen & Phillips.:62,65,67). This understanding of the social world and discourses as being partly constructivist and partly realist, constitutes the ontological starting point in my study, as this openness can provide me a deeper understanding of Sweden and Denmark’s responses to FF’s, who are both discursively constituted, and existing at the same time (Mabry 2012:218).

Fairclough underlines that a text cannot be analysed in isolation and that discourse analysis is therefore not enough to analyse the whole aspect of social practice qua the belief that this is both discursive and non-discursive. Hence, a text needs to be understood in its social context and in relation to other texts, as well as practices, and the discourse should furthermore be connected to theory about culture and the social (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:69). During my discourse analysis I will therefore also pay attention to the *interdiscursivity*; whether the level of combination of different texts and discourse practices (since new ones often draw on previous ones) is high and therefore signals a creative character of going towards social or cultural change; or low, signalling a conventional character in relation to previous texts, which preserves the stability of the dominant discourse and social order, thereby reproducing it (Ibid.:73).

To explore the discourse’s relationship to the social practice and to contextualise my analysis, I make my analysis multi-perspectival by complementing the discourse analyses with an examination of concrete policy-responses, using the two countries as case studies (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:86).

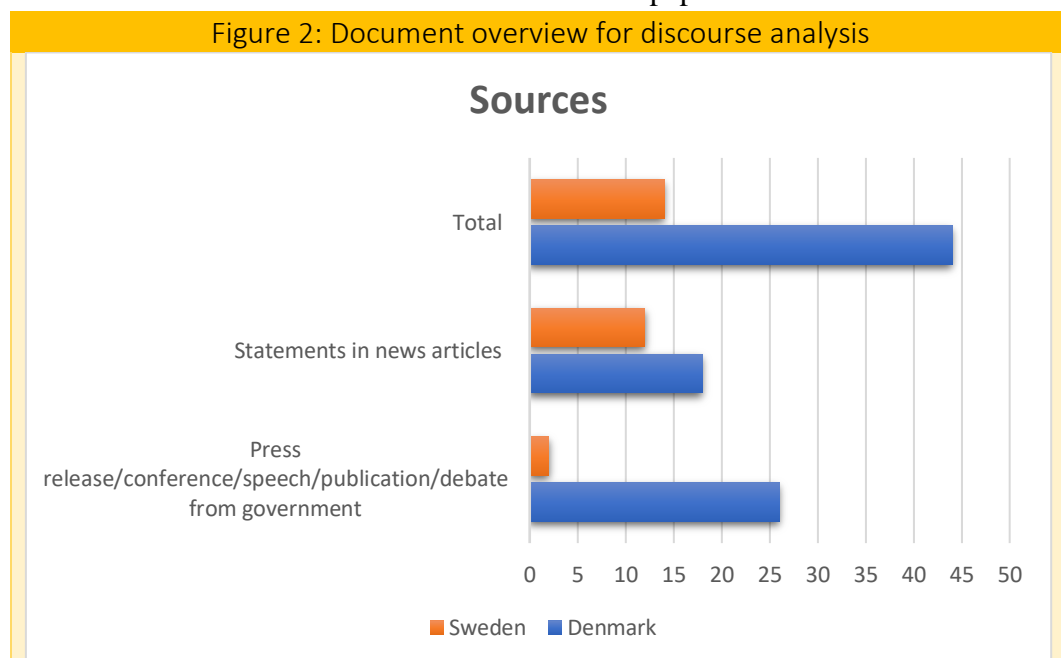
Thereby connecting how the language by which FF's are represented in governmental texts, and the social practices of creating policies and administrative measures to keep the FF's out or suppress them, are mutually constitutive through discursive practices(ibid.:62).

## 5.4 Method for collecting and interpreting material

### 5.4.1 Documents for discourse analysis

Since I will examine the political responses of Denmark and Sweden, in terms of legislation and policies to FF's, the hegemonic discourse that has enabled them, as well as the link between these, I have chosen to look at texts and statements from the PM's and responsible ministers only. However, since Sweden is only used as a minor comparative case, this will also be reflected in the scope of data in its empirical analysis. The discourse around FF's would most likely look very different including an analysis of the media discourse, rather than just the political one, but would not give as clear a picture of the hegemonic discourse from the decision-makers in Denmark, which is what I am interested in.

For the process of my data collection, I started primarily using the parliament-databases to base my analysis on the reliable first-hand data and then went on to add statements of the same individuals from newspaper articles.



For the analysis I analysed all the data, and handpicked statements in the texts from the specific governments, that I found most representative to analyse more in depth and use as examples. For the discourse analysis of Denmark's response, I selected all the government texts I could find mentioning the FF's. These consist of 26 texts in total: five speeches, fourteen press conferences and statements, one political

negotiation, and six government publications or strategies, all directly from the parliament-database (see figure 2). Moreover, I have used 18 news articles with statements directly from PM's and key ministers to make my analysis richer. For the Swedish case, I have mainly used news articles (12) with PM or minister-statements, because of accessibility, along with two government texts. Since the majority of the original texts have been in Danish and Swedish, I have done my own translations of all the selected quotes to English, where I have prioritised direct translation word-by-word over perhaps more aesthetic sentence constructions, which would make a discourse analysis less reliable, to capture as much of the original meaning as possible.

#### 5.4.2 Statistical descriptive data: Public fear of terrorism

To support my theory, I have chosen to extract data of public fear of terrorism from the Eurobarometer 2010 to 2018. I have chosen this time interval because I am mostly interested in the fear of terrorism around the establishment of the Caliphate and a few years before, in order to see how this might play into the fear of terrorism. Since there is no data applicable for 2019 yet, I look at the fear of terrorism until 2018. Even though it would be very interesting to look at the aspect of public ontological (in)securities and how this could maybe help explain increased or decreased fear of terrorism, this would be too complex to include within the given scope of the thesis. The questions of the chosen surveys are largely replicated for each year and the data collected through individual face-to-face interviews with individuals over 15 years, who have been sampled through multistage probability sample from around 32 European countries. The samples for Denmark and Sweden respectively have been around 1000 people from 2010-2018 (see appendix 3) (European Commission 2010-2018).

## 6 Discourse and Policy Analysis

To answer my research question, I will first examine the political discourse of FF's and the practices against them for the Danish case, followed by a comparison with my minor case, Sweden, before interpreting and discussing my results.

Here I will systematically look at the connection between the three dimensions in Fairclough's model: text, discursive and social practices (here legislation), which are combined in many of the government texts. When analysing the texts, I will look at specific choices of words and assumptions drawn about FF's to understand what message the government is trying to convey to the audience (the public) and how this connects to the social practices (policies) of the government. Since a text should always be understood in its social context, as well as in relation to other texts (cf. 5.3.1), I use multiple text examples from PM's and key ministers in the same time period to support my findings and moreover pay attention to to see the text in its context.

### 6.1 Denmark

Denmark's anti-terrorism act, §114 in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Danish Criminal code (2019, §114) was introduced in June 2002 and since developed, and criminalises acts such as: committing terror attacks; financing (§114b) or otherwise promoting individuals or organisations with intent to commit terror (§114e); recruiting others or joining such organisations (§114c); instructing or training others to commit terror (§114d); participating in or financially supporting an organisation with the intention of disturbing the order of society (§114f); participating in an illegal military group/organisation (§114g); distributing weapons of mass destruction illegally (§114h); and travelling to hostile areas of armed conflict without being in service (§114j) (ibid.). In December 2015 it became illegal to join hostile armed forces and in May 2016 to enter or stay in certain areas of conflict, particularly Syria and Iraq to prevent travellers to IS (Danish Parliament 2015b, 2016). Additionally, a new bill (L38) allows individuals who have violated §114 to be stripped of their citizenship if they have another citizenship (Ibid. 2019b).

Since 2015, a total ten bills directly targeting FF's have been proposed and accepted in the Danish Parliament. The former PM, Helle Thorning-Schmidt was the first to propose such a bill (L99) in 2015, making it possible to prevent travellers from going to Syria and Iraq by taking their passport, or deny issuing passports for individuals suspected of going (Danish Parliament 2015a).

**Table 1: Legislation on Foreign Fighters in Denmark**

No.	Name of bill	Date Passed	PM & Ministry / Minister	Short description
1	L 99: Bill to change law about passports to Danish citizens etc., Aliens Act and the Procedure Code	19. February 2015	Prime minister: Helle Thorning-Schmidt Ministry of Justice / Mette Frederiksen	Stripping of passport or denial of issuing of passports for individuals with the intent to travel and join an armed conflict abroad
2	L 24: Bill to change the Criminal Code (joining a hostile armed force)	15. December 2015	Prime Minister: Lars Løkke Rasmussen Ministry of Justice / Søren Pind	Criminalisation of joining a hostile armed force which fights against the Danish state
3	L 23: Bill to change the law about the Danish Secret and Security Services (PET) and the Customs Act (grant PET access to flight-list to monitor against terrorism etc)	21. December 2015	Prime Minister: Lars Løkke Rasmussen Ministry of Justice / Søren Pind	Granting PET more authority and access to monitor against terrorism
4	L187: Bill to change the Criminal Code and dissolution with law, thereby prohibiting Danish territory from supporting warring powers	4. Maj 2016	Prime Minister: Lars Løkke Rasmussen Ministry of Justice / Søren Pind	Administratively prohibiting entry and stay in areas of armed conflict without permission from the authorities
5	L192: Bill to change the Procedure Code and other laws	1. June 2017	Prime minister: Lars Løkke Rasmussen Ministry of Justice / Søren Pape Poulsen	Prevention and combat of extremism and radicalisation and blocking of terror propaganda webpages and financing of terror through public services.
6	L 140: Bill to change Aliens Act, Integration Act, Repatriation act and other laws.	21. February 2019	Prime minister: Lars Løkke-Rasmussen Ministry of Immigration and Integration / Inger Støjbjerg	Introduction of reporting and residence duty of FF's and other rejected foreigners who are a danger to the country by committing crimes, as well as

				increasing penalty for breaking entry ban to Denmark
7	L 38: Bill to change law on Danish citizenship Act and Aliens Act	24. October 2019	Prime minister: Mette Frederiksen Ministry of Immigration and Integration / Mathias Tesfaye	Administrative measure to revoke citizenship of Danish citizens with dual citizenship, when joining a hostile armed force abroad
8	L 83: Bill to change law on Danish Citizenship Act and Foreign Services Act	23. January 2020	Prime minister: Mette Frederiksen Ministry of Immigration and Integration / Mathias Tesfaye	Removal of automatic citizenship for children born in an area included in §114 and limitation of support from the Foreign Services
9	L 130: Bill to change the Criminal Code	Negotiation ongoing. Proposed 11. March 2020	Prime minister: Mette Frederiksen Ministry of Justice / Nick Hækkerup	Increase in penalties for terror-related crime
10	L162: Bill to change the Law of Parental Responsibility	Negotiation ongoing. Proposed 31. March 2020	Prime minister: Mette Frederiksen Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interior / Astrid Krag	Parental custody, residence of child and presence with parents who are convicted of the Criminal Code's terror provisions
Source: Danish Parliament State Archives 2010-2020: <a href="https://www.ft.dk/samling/">https://www.ft.dk/samling/</a>				

### 6.1.1 The SRSF-government 2011-2015

Helle Thorning-Schmidt was the leader of a coalition-government formed by the left-leaning parties; Social Democrats, 'The Radical Left' and the Socialist Folk Party 2011-2015. Around the time of making the L99-bill, PM Thorning-Schmidt, at the Social Democrats yearly congress, condemned the young people joining IS in Syria and Iraq, as well as the hateful environments that manipulates them:

*"I have nothing but contempt for them. They are a disgrace."*  
(Thorning-Schmidt 2014a)<sup>4</sup>.

The strong language indicates her personal attitude towards these "fanatics", as she calls them at a press conference a few days later (Thorning-Schmidt in Ministry of State 2014). Subsequently, she discourages young people who feel tempted to travel, and ask them to think hard before they go and disappoint their families and

<sup>4</sup> All quotes are my own translation from Danish and Swedish to English, cf. Section 5.4.1.

their country, which will have consequences (Thorning-Schmidt 2014a). She moreover saw them as choosing against Denmark:

*“They [FF’s] have chosen to fight everything that Denmark stands for. They have chosen against Denmark. It is their choice and they must take the consequences. The government does not hesitate to interfere. We take their passports. We take their residence permit. We will do everything so that the Syria-warriors will be accountable for their crimes. And we will do everything possible to prevent radicalisation”* (Emphasis added, Thorning-Schmidt 2014b).

The repetition of ‘choice’ reflects her attitude, emphasising the total agency of the FFs, in contrast with views that might be considered more humane implying that people have been ‘driven’ to join IS by poverty, marginalisation or mental health issues, and therefore imply a lack of agency. This presentation of the FF’s agency of having made a very active and deliberate ‘choice’ implies that they are deserving of punishment and condemnation, which legitimises the government’s hard-line approach. The discourse here is that there is no turning back from this choice, which will have consequences, since Denmark will no longer want to help you (ibid; Danish Ministry of Justice 2015). The SRSF-government also worked on a bill to strengthen the Criminal Code, to ensure that it was ready to counter participation and recruitment to armed conflicts, such as juridically being able to call it ‘treason’ to travel to a hostile armed conflict (Danish Ministry of Justice 2015; Olsen & Henriksen 2015). This bill was implemented by the VLAK government in December 2015 (L24) but has to date still not really been used to convict individuals for terrorism instead of §114 (Haislund 2020). Constructing this strong distinction between Denmark and ‘those who fight against it’ in the text, serves as a discourse that has then enabled the social practice of being convicted for *treason*. The discourse attempts to send a strong signal to the public that the government will not sit back but take action to get justice. This message functions as a warning to deter those thinking of going, as these statements were made just around the time of the Caliphate’s establishment, where many people travelled.

In her speech two days after the terrorist attack on Krudttønden and the synagogue in Copenhagen the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, Thorning-Schmidt focused in her speech on the fight against radicalisation, whilst making it clear that the government’s hard approach has nothing to do with Islam or Muslims:

*“This is not a conflict between Islam and the West. This is not a conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. This is a conflict between the core values of our society and violent extremists. Collectively and united we will remain who we are.”* (Thorning-Schmidt in the Ministry of State 2015).

At the same time as clarifying that it would be treason to travel and that the government condemns those who do and will punish them, she also counters the discourse from radicalising ISIS-propaganda that ‘the West is against Islam’, in an attempt to unite Denmark – Muslims and non-Muslims – against the ‘common enemy’ of extremism (Bonde & Bæksgaard 2015). This unifying discourse after the attack had a softer and more idealistic tone than the general discourse. She

furthermore stated that the attack was not society's fault, but that the perpetrator bears the full responsibility (ibid). A few days later, the bill (L99) allowing the government to take away passports from individuals suspected of having intention to travel to Syria and Iraq was passed in the parliament. The day after, 20 February, the government introduced a terror package allocating more means to preventative measures in prison, to intelligence services and military, as well as to give the military intelligence service more power for surveillance against extremists:

*“The government will strengthen the security services’ efforts towards threats from Danish foreign fighters through a strengthening of the defence intelligence service (...) This will be a significant step towards countering any threats from Danish foreign fighters”* (Danish Ministry of Justice 2015)

This surveillance had the purpose to monitor for suspicious activities from individuals, that could lead to a removal of the passport (Mathiesen 2015; Bond & Bæksgaard 2015). Whilst the rest of the package was voted through in parliament, this last element was heavily criticised for giving the military and police too much power and access to personal information for all Danish citizens (Stræde & Dahlin 2015; Kessing 2015). However, a similar proposal from the next government (L23) was accepted later the same year (Jørgensen 2015).

Hence, the practical approach from Thorning-Schmidt's government was mainly hard, which is visible in the texts and the discourse mediating between the text and the practice. The government both warned people against going, because they would then be punished and no longer protected by Denmark and continuously took initiative to target FF's harder, while focusing on the fight against extremism and radicalisation. This hard, yet seemingly 'responsible' discourse to the public had the purpose of demonstrating toughness against terrorists, signalling to the population that the government was doing all it could to keep Denmark safe (Thorning-Schmidt 2014b; Thorning-Schmidt in Ministry of State 2015).

### 6.1.2 The VLAK-government 2015-2019

The following PM of the coalition-government VLAK, consisting of right-leaning parties; Venstre, Liberal Alliance and The Conservatives 2015-2019, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, did not speak as much of FF's in his press conferences and speeches, as Thorning-Schmidt, and often with considerably fewer words in a mostly military context, as for example his speech in parliament 2016, with only a short mention of FF's:

*“On the civil side Denmark increases the support to limit foreign fighters to ISIL. Counter the propaganda. Cut off the financing. And prevent that the terror movement shall regain liberated territories.”* (Rasmussen 2016b)

His language is generally very concise and professional when addressing FF's (ibid.; Rasmussen 2016b). However, in the time of working on the bill to administratively remove FF's citizenship in 2019, which was implemented later the



same year by the next government, he stated in a national news agency that it would have been easier if the FF's would have died in IS:

*"I think we'd all ideally have liked that these people didn't return. I shouldn't be morbid, but there wouldn't be many who'd be upset if these people were not able to come back or went somewhere else. It's not so nice to stand and express a wish for someone to die, but (...) this is a battle against us and all the values we stand for. Therefore, it is hard to wish them the victory and then you must wish for the opposite for your enemy"*  
(Emphasis added, Rasmussen in Nielsen 2019)

Rasmussen seems to focus on a 'war'-narrative, when using words such as 'the enemy' and 'battle'. This narrative could very likely have been borrowed from the American 'war on terror'-discourse having been prevalent within the field of counter-terrorism since 9/11. While framed in a diplomatic way, Rasmussen's statement reveals his traditional view of the distinction between good and evil, with little or no belief that any of these individuals deserve a second chance because of their actions, making them 'the enemy'. Hence, a view that individuals who have travelled to IS are an enemy and therefore a bigger burden for the country than other criminals, who, regardless of their crime, receive a fair trial and punishment. A statement by the government's first justice minister Søren Pind, further supports this war-narrative:

*"Individuals who live in this country must be loyal to Denmark. We shall not accept that militant, extremist groups have success recruiting foreign fighters from Denmark. And when people override their loyalty and choose to go to battle under the flag of the extremists, they have to be aware that they are being kept a close eye on and that it will have grave consequences, when they return"* (Emphasis added, Pind in Danish Ministry of Justice 2015b).

Using expressions of being 'loyal to one's country' and going 'to battle under the flag of the extremists' indicates a continuation of this war-narrative. However, the narratives of the next justice minister, Søren Pape Poulsen (in Westersø 2019), as well as the immigration minister of Immigration and Integration, Inger Støjberg (in Ritzau 2019d) with almost the exact same choice of words, have a more ideological character with similarities to those of the previous government, stating that:

*"The foreign fighters have turned their back on Denmark and have gone to war against democracy and freedom"* (Poulsen in Westersø 2019).

This text contributes to the creation of a discourse that FF's do not belong in Denmark, because they have betrayed their country and are against its values. I will examine this narrative closer in the section about the next government, which uses the exact same phrasing, with even more emphasis (Pedersen 2019; Ministry of State 2019c, 2020c).

This narrative of FF's as those who have chosen to 'turn their back on Denmark' to fight against 'everything it stands for', being 'freedom, equality and democracy' is thereby used as an argument against letting FF's back into the Danish society.

Thereby the discourse is constructed through text in an attempt to gain support for the social practice (the L38-bill) allowing the government to strip FF's of their Danish citizenship (ibid.;Ritzau 2019e).

Despite the government's desire to keep FF's out of Denmark, both the justice minister and the PM underline that they cannot officially deny them entry if they come to Denmark as citizens, and would therefore do everything they can to prosecute them at home instead (Ritzau 2019b,2019c). Frederiksen, the future PM and at this time head of the Social Democrat Party, expressed a wish to keep them out for any price and prosecute them where they have committed their crimes. After some investigation of this option the VLAK-government, however remained pragmatic, despite having the same wish of them not coming back, as they did not want to have any cooperation with Syria's dictator president Bashar al-Assad to prosecute the FF's (ibid). Instead, they cooperated with other European leaders on the initiative of the Swedish government to try to find a solution with an international tribunal to convict the FF's (Ritzau 2019d).

The government's seemingly pragmatic and rational discourse, linked with imageries of war against Danish values of freedom and democracy, might have served their FF-strategy. In terms of the relationship between the three dimensions of Fairclough's discourse model, the discourse from the texts enabled the VLAK-government to be quite active in terms of legislation, as they implemented more initiatives against FF's than any other government (so far). Because of the image of professionalism that they were portraying to the public through a rational militarised discourse of 'war' against 'the enemy', very little use of emotional appeal in the language seems to have been necessary to convey their message and enable the social practices. However, this seemingly rational militarised discourse still somewhat entails some romantic idealised image of war and the nation-state with values, fighting against the 'evil' enemy.

Despite the discourse slightly differentiating from that of the previous government, the overall values around what *actions* should be taken with the FF's did not seem change significantly from the SRSF to the VLAK government. The difference might have been more in the *style* of the discourse, which still shares some similarities and interdiscursivity with the previous government. I will therefore argue that the discourse of the VLAK-government implicates a reproduction of the social establishment, rather than change.

### 6.1.3 The S-government 2019-present

For the analysis of the FF-approach of the current Social Democratic S-government, with Mette Frederiksen as PM, I will use the pamphlet: "We take care of Denmark – 8 initiatives against Foreign Fighters" by the Danish Ministry of Justice (2020) in January as a framework. The issue of FF's has recently been getting more political attention in 2019-2020 than before, in light of the defeat of the Caliphate in March 2019, both in terms of political debates and press conferences, as well as more legislation regarding FF's (4 bills) in a very short period of less one parliament year.

Therefore, I will use most of my analysis on this government's approach and discourse.

The S-government outlined its strategy against FF's only a few months after they passed L38 allowing the government to administratively strip dual-citizens FF's of their Danish citizenship on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (Danish Ministry of Justice 2020; Danish Parliament 2019). The pamphlet is very useful to analyse as it is combining all three dimensions of Fairclough's model; text, discursive-, and social practices. The language in this text is professional, which is expected from a government strategy, yet accessible in its style and word usage for the general public, the audience. The pamphlet shows the government's strong idealism and narrative of what it means to be Danish and where the line is drawn to no longer being a part of Denmark. The language of the title itself indicates a juxtaposition between the government as "taking care of Denmark" *against* the FF's, indicating that they, in contrast, do not. Already here, the government can be seen as 'othering' FF's in relation to 'us', 'the Danish people'. Through the text, a narrative of the FF's as having irrevocably turned their back to Denmark is constructed:

*"[the IS-travellers] have turned their back on us. We are talking about men and women, who have conclusively said goodbye to Denmark and must now take the consequence of their choices and stay away (...) Foreign fighters who have fought against Danish values of democracy and freedom are unwanted in Denmark. When they left Denmark, they turned their back on the Danish state..."*

(emphasis added, Danish Ministry of Justice 2020:4,15).

*"[the IS-travellers] have in our and my eyes made a choice for life. They have betrayed the Danish society and the rest of us. They have contributed to endangering the Danish soldiers' lives. And they have fought a darkened battle against democracy, freedom, and equality. With other words, what Denmark stands for and is built upon. Therefore, they are obviously not welcome in Denmark" (emphasis added, Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2020b)*

In these passages of text, the emphasis is on the decision to leave Denmark to fight for a terror organisation as being an irrevocable betrayal, 'turning their back' on the nation and the 'Danish values of democracy and freedom' it stands for, which is a narrative repeated in various press conferences (ibid.; Danish Ministry of State 2019b, 2020a; Frederiksen 2020), as well as by the previous government (Poulsen in Westersø 2019; Støjberg 2019d). Hence, there is both interdiscursivity from the VLAK- and SRSF-government in terms of views of 'betrayal of Denmark', as well as in the SRSF-government's choice of words about making a decisive 'choice against Denmark, which will have consequences', which is not as surprising, as Frederiksen herself was the justice minister in this government (Thorning-Schmidt 2014b). Frederiksen's use of adjectives, such as '*darkened battle*' adds a more dramatic layer, with references to a war with a 'dark side' of the 'evil enemy', which like the VLAK-discourse might also have been borrowed from the American discourse of 'war on terror'. Secondly, she and her ministers make use of strong

adjectives and descriptions of the FF's, such as "radicalised", "threat", "brutalised" and "prone to violence", which is repeated in several statements from the government, and is directly borrowed from the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET)'s most recent terror-threat evaluation-report (Danish Ministry of Justice 2020:4,16; Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2020b;Ritzau 2019f; PET 2018:6). Such descriptions assign FF's with characteristics of being unpredictable, violent and beyond reasoning, posing a threat to society. Repetition is a way to convey a message and reinforce a discourse, thereby strengthening the 'othering' and juxtaposition of FF's as the 'bad guys' in the discourse, as opposed to the 'good Danish people' and its government, who has the task to protect Denmark, which is a strategy diligently used by the S-government:

*"I think that one of the most important tasks as a government is to take care of Denmark and take care of the Danes and do everything we can to prevent and minimise the threats that could come to us internally and externally, and we take that seriously"* (emphasis added, Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2020b)

In this quote, there is an implicit notion of who is included in the 'the Danes', and who is referred to as the 'internal threat'. This notion is in a sense self-contradictory as the 'internal threat' also refers to Danish citizens, but to citizens who have made the 'wrong' decision in the eyes of the government. The discourse hence constructs a notion that by making 'the wrong choices', one is no longer included in 'the Danish people' but is instead excluded as a second-class citizen. This 'othering' of the FF's serves to justify hard measures of more control against this threat, as well as longer and harder punishments for terror-related crimes.

One of the social practices linked to this text and discourse, is the bill L130 proposing to allow taking FF's in custody, even if they are not charged for other crimes, as well as doubling the prison sentence for having travelled to join a terror organisation from 3-5 years up to 6-10 years (Danish Ministry of Justice:9). The narrative of the brutalised foreign fighter can also be seen as shaping the social practice of a "presumption rule" in the Law of Parental Responsibility (L162), recently proposed by the government and expected implemented May this year, assuming that it is best for the child not to grow up with and have contact to a radicalised parent (ibid.; Danish Ministry of State 2020c). In practice this means that a parent convicted for terror or terror-related activities, cannot have custody of their child, or see it against the will of the other parent. The argument for this is to protect children from growing up with radicalised parents, because of the 'risk' of them becoming radicalised as well (Danish Ministry of Justice:11):

*"Children of Foreign fighters and other radicalised individuals risk growing up in a home in Denmark with a dangerous and twisted world image. We cannot just stand by to this"* (emphasis added, Danish Ministry of Justice 2020:11)

The usage of words about the FF's as being 'dangerous' with a 'twisted world image' constructs a dehumanising discourse of FF's, portraying them as unsuited

for parenthood, legitimising the social practice (L162). The phrasing ‘we cannot just stand by to this’ further signifies that this is an urgent matter that requires immediate action from the state to protect these children. The government is currently working on this policy and investigating the opportunities for placement of children and young individuals in radicalised environments (ibid.).

At the same time, the government have very recently removed the right for children born in conflict areas to automatically get Danish citizenship from their parents (see L83), as it is expected that these children do not grow up in conditions that can ‘be expected to be compatible with Danish values’ (Ibid.:14). The language used to legitimise this implies that it is to avoid the parents coming to Denmark:

*“We do want to help these children, but we cannot do it in a sense that they automatically come to Denmark, because then their mothers and potentially fathers will also accompany them, and that choice would not be the right one for Denmark”* (Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2020b).

This rule can be criticised for not having the Danish children’s best interest at heart by protecting them from their parents, which is exactly the main argument for implementing the ‘presumption rule’ as described above, but rather punishing them for the acts of their parents (Wolthers 2020). The safety of children is one of the PM’s key issues, which is why she has been criticised by the media on this issue (ibid.;Danish Ministry of State 2020b;). Furthermore, this bill also makes it impossible for individuals who have travelled to or participated in activities that puts Denmark’s security at risk, to receive social benefits, neither in Denmark nor foreign services abroad, which would, in their own words, be “grotesque” (Danish Ministry of Justice:15). Again, strong words are used to emphasise the importance of this issue for the government, and legitimise their practice.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October the parliament urgently passed a bill (L38) to administratively strip citizens of their Danish passports without trial. This was legitimised by text articulating the necessity for the government to do everything to prevent FF’s from entering Denmark, in the light of the situation in Syria and: “an assessed risk that also FF’s with Danish citizenship will exploit the changed security situation to move towards Denmark” (Ibid.:12). The new law has been quite exceptional and unusual in two ways; in the way that it was hastily passed through the parliament, but also in its character of working retroactively and with a very low requirement for evidence(Dahlin 2019). Hence, it is very clear that the current Danish government wants to keep out their FF’s trying to come home, which is also expressed explicitly on multiple occasions (Ministry of Justice 2020; Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2019b, 2020b). In this context, the government expresses their perception of international conventions as *obstacles* to deny FF-citizens entry, as they are ensuring fundamental rights for them (ibid.:4). In a political negotiation in the parliament relating to the at that time newly implemented L38, Frederiksen, in a response to the leader of the far-right party the Danish Folk Party uttered that:

*”It is completely outrageous that we even have to receive these people. This, I think, underlines that some of these international game rules we are subject to and have joined, sometimes protect the wrong people (...) They protect people who have turned their back on Denmark and who have nothing at all to do in our society, and don't protect the rest of us”*  
(emphasis added, Frederiksen in Danish Ministry of State 2019c).

The usage of the word ‘outrageous’ is very strong, making it seem like the mere thought of receiving Danish FF’s seems laughable, which reveals the PM and her government’s idealistic conviction about FF’s. Again, the text is creating a distinction between “us – the right Danes” and the “wrong people” excluding the FF’s from being Danes anymore, because of their irrevocable decision to ‘turn their back on Denmark’ and join a terrorist organisation. This discourse is used to justify urgently treating many of these initiatives, or in Fairclough’s wording, practices against FF’s, even though they are mainly based on suspicion, which then again consolidates the discourse of them being ‘brutalised’ and ‘prone to violence’. By making these kinds of statements against the international conventions, Frederiksen tries to convey a message that she will do anything to protect her country and that Denmark’s safety comes before international responsibilities, adding to an image of her as the ‘the protector of Denmark’. This is another way to justify practices, by getting the Danish public’s support, even though the practices might easily be portrayed as unorthodox and very hard against FF’s in the international community.

For the sake of comparison, the former PM Rasmussen was not resisting international conventions as much as Frederiksen:

*“The reality is that there are some people who have not fallen in battle. Some people who have a Danish passport. You can't just tell them to stay away. That's not how the rules work. And even though it is unpleasant, it is still in our interest as a small country that we have some game rules and keep them”* (Rasmussen in Nielsen 2019)

Rasmussen again shows a relatively pragmatic view of the importance of international conventions and what is, and is not possible, when weighing the pros and cons of being part of it, while Frederiksen portrays the situation as Denmark being *subject* to these rules, *having* to receive these people, while they do *not* protect the *right* people, which reveals her stronger idealistic conviction and basis for thinking ‘Denmark first’.

To sum up, I have conducted a Fairclough-inspired CDA of statements about FF’s from the PM’s and key ministers from the last three governments in Denmark 2011-2020, as well as their political practices towards FF’s. I will further analyse these results, applying theory and further concepts from CDA, after a brief analysis of the Swedish political approach to and discourse around FF’s

## 6.2 Sweden

Even though Sweden, like Denmark, has one of the highest numbers of FF's in Europe pr. capita (cf. 2), it is very hard to prosecute FF's in Sweden, compared to other countries. Since the UN's Security Council through resolution 2178 in 2014 required countries to implement laws suppressing FF's, Sweden only implemented a law prohibiting travelling for terrorism purposes in 2016, which moreover did not work retroactively (UNSCR 2014; Swedish Parliament 2016). Since most individuals travelled in 2014 and 2015 and because Sweden did not pass a law prohibiting belonging to- or supporting a terror organisation, like most of Europe, it has been near impossible to convict individuals, who travelled before 2016, leaving them outside the scope of the laws (Dworkin 2019:7; TT 2019a).

A bill to criminalise support to or membership in terror organisations was only recently passed in parliament in January, after previously having been criticised for going against the constitution of freedom of association, and therefore rejected in parliament (Swedish Parliament 2020; Ridderstolpe 2019). Before it was only punishable to prepare, travel, recruit, or train for terrorist attacks, where evidence that the purpose was terror-attacks, was needed. But the new law only requires proof that the act in question was to strengthen or support terrorist organisations, which makes it much easier to convict FF's (Åkerman 2020a).

Stefan Löfven has been the PM of Sweden with two different governments since 2014 and now again in 2019, both formed by the Social Democrats, with the Swedish Green Party as support, which is why I will look at these together. As with Denmark, neither policies nor discourses specifically directed towards FF's were realised before 2014, which is why I have chosen not to focus on the previous Reinfeldt-government in my discourse analysis.

**Table 2: Legislation on Foreign Fighters in Sweden 2010-2020**

No.	Name of law	Date Passed	PM & Ministry / Minister	Short description
1	2013/14:JuU10: Penalty for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes	27. May 2014	Prime Minister: Fredrik Reinfeldt Minster of Justice / Karin Enström	Penalty for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.
2	2015/16:JuU17: A special criminal liability for travel for terrorist purposes	10. February 2016	Prime Minister: Stefan Löfven. Put forth by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström Ministry of Justice / Morgan Johansson	Criminalisation of travelling for terror purposes.

3	2019/20:JuU13: A special criminal responsibility for conspiring with a terrorist organization	22. January 2020	Prime Minister: Stefan Löfven Ministry of Justice / Morgan Johansson	Criminalisation of association with terror organisations by promoting, strengthen or support terror these. Types of association can be dealing with weapons, ammunition, or explosives; means of transport; lend property to a terror organisations or similar support
<b>Source:                      The                      Swedish                      Parliament                      Archives</b>				
<b><a href="https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/">https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/</a></b>				

### 6.2.1 The Social Democratic and Swedish Green Party-governments

The political discourse around FF's in Sweden has both differences and similarities to that of Denmark. Justice minister Johansson and interior minister Ygeman's expressed in the text justifying the decision to criminalise travelling, training, and support to terror organisations on UN's recommendation, that joining IS in Syria and Iraq was being seen as, in own words, 'unacceptable' (Johansson 2014; Johansson & Ygeman 2015). The main worry was that FF's could potentially acquire skills, a motivation, and a network to threaten the Swedish society (Johansson & Ygeman 2015):

*"[the IS-travellers] are above all a serious threat towards the civilians in the countries they are active in. But they can furthermore pose a threat when they return, since they can have acquired knowledge in how to carry out terror crimes and have a network to help them"* (Johansson 2014).

The reasoning is a relatively pragmatic, and uses phrases like that they 'can pose a threat', 'can have acquired knowledge' etc., which is less definitive and therefore more careful about generalising about FF's than the more assertive Danish discourse. Despite the possibility that they can pose a threat, they are still seen as citizens, for which the state carries responsibility:

*"Our goal is to increase the safety for everyone. Sweden has a responsibility for what our citizens do, both at home and abroad"* (Johansson & Ygeman 2015).

This notion of taking responsibility for its citizens, which is repeated several times in the same text to underline its importance, sounds quite different from the Danish discourse. Generally, the language used about FF's around this time is descriptive and the discourse quite pragmatic (Swedish Ministry of Justice 2015).

However, with time, the government distances itself more from the FF's than before. Despite US' call to Europe to repatriate their FF's, Löfven clearly stated that he is not interested in reaching out a hand for the FF's and helping them home, since they 'made their choice' to travel going against the recommendations from 2011 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and stated that *"Every country can make*



*their choice*” in terms of repatriating their FF’s (Berglund & TT 2019; Expressen 2019). In relation to the recent decision to criminalise supporting or joining a terrorist group (Act 2020:14) justice minister Johansson and the new interior minister Damberg stated that:

*”[the IS-travellers] knew which murder sect they were supporting. Now the ones who have committed terrorist crimes, war crimes or other violent crimes will be held accountable for their actions. The guilty shall be prosecuted and convicted”* (Johansson & Damberg 2019b).

Hence there is a political discourse about the FF’s that they have made a choice, knowing what they were getting into, which is similar to the Danish discourse and also serves to counter the stories from many Swedish FF’s asking for help to come home, explaining that they did not know what IS did and that they are innocent. This discourse enables a justification for the government to not help them home and focus on prosecuting those guilty. Another narrative similar to the Danish discourse is that FF’s are against democracy and freedom, which Swedish society is built on:

*”But those who, by force, want to destabilise our society and create fear in order to affect society’s development and democratic decisions will not make us step away from those principles that form the basis of our democracy”* (Johansson & Damberg 2019b).

*”In the defence of our democracy and basic freedoms and rights we will never be able to protect ourselves against everything. But we must do all we can to secure Sweden.”* (Damberg in Swedish Parliament 2019)

The building up of an enemy who wishes to *destabilise* ‘our democratic society’ also serves to strengthen a narrative of who “we” are as a society, serving to construct a nationalist narrative with the purpose of uniting the nation and reject the ideology of ISIS and its supporters, to securitise “us”.

Nevertheless, Damberg and Johansson rejects the possibility of implementing a law like Denmark’s, stripping citizens of their citizenships, since this, they argue, goes against international law, as well as the Swedish constitution, which would take several years to change (ibid.; Lönnaeus & El-Alawi 2019). Instead, Johansson wants more control over who can become Swedish citizens, in terms of language abilities, knowledge of society and an increased security clearance (ibid). Moreover, the Swedish government has stated that they have no interest in taking away children of FFs’ rights to automatic Swedish citizenship, like Denmark has recently decided, as they clarify that they to protect them and bring them home if possible:

*”Right now, there is a lot of focus on the children in the camps in northern Syria. No child should be punished for his or her parents’ crimes. There shall be no doubt that the government is doing what we can for these children and if possible, they should be brought home.”* (Johansson & Damberg 2019b)

However, because of an unstable situation and therefore limited access to the conflict area, the options to help are limited, according to Johansson (in Lönnaeus

& El-Alawi 2019) and Damberg (in Swedish Parliament 2019). Where Denmark is looking to make rules that can automatically forcibly remove children from their parents, Sweden makes individual assessments to make this decision, thus still questioning their ability to parent, like Denmark:

*“If you are an extremist and have decided to live with a terror sect in a caliphate, it can be questioned whether you are suitable as a parent.”*  
(Johansson in Lönnaeus & El-Alawi 2019)

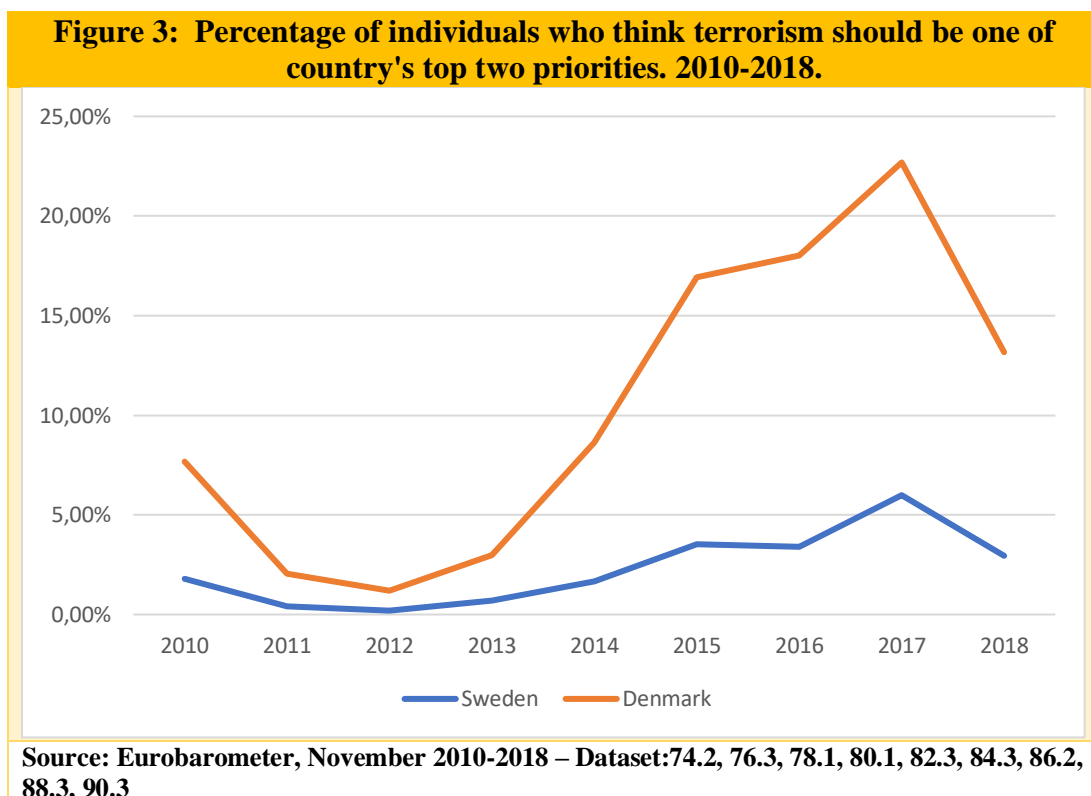
Despite this being seeming similar to the Danish discourse around the bill L162 (to change the Parental Responsibility act), there is still a carefulness, mildly saying that ‘it *can* be questioned’, instead of the more assertive Danish ‘presumption rule’ previously described, assuming that the parents are dangerous for their children in terms of radicalisation. Hence, the Swedish narrative leaves more room for uncertainty in the evaluation of the threat from FF’s, than the Danish. This is supported by Johansson and Damberg’s (2019a, 2019b) statements that there should be individual assessments of FF’s to determine whether there is suspicion and reason for investigation.

Sweden still wants to keep the FF’s still in Syria and Iraq out, like Denmark. but to not let them go free of their crimes, Sweden has furthermore proposed the opportunity for a new international tribunal based in Iraq to prosecute FF’s and other perpetrators of war crimes, for which they have sought international support (Warrell 2019; TT 2019b; Lindstam 2019). Creating this in the region would, according to Damberg and Johansson make it easier to gather evidence. This proposition has however received criticism for placing the burden on a country that never asked for the FF’s and has already suffered enough from IS (Damberg in Warrell 2019; Johansson & Damberg 2019b; Damberg in Swedish Parliament 2019). There are still no recent updates on whether the plans of a tribunal will become a reality soon.

To sum up, I have, as with Denmark conducted a CDA of statements from the PM’s and key ministers about FF’s from the last two governments in Sweden 2014-2020, as well as their policies towards them. In the following section I will analyse my results in depth, applying theory to understand my results.

## 7 ‘The homogenous nation of Denmark’ and ‘the threatening foreign fighter-other’

In this chapter, I will apply the theoretical framework on my cases, starting with Denmark’s political approach to FF’s, followed by a comparison to Sweden’s to get a deeper understanding of my results from the case- and discourse analysis and open them for further interpretation, before discussing them. To support my analysis and get a more complete picture of the difference in the cases, I will first include data from Eurobarometer on the public fear of terrorism in Sweden and Denmark, which I will connect to the FF-issue:



As shown in figure 3, there is a big difference in the public opinion on whether terrorism should be one of the country’s top-two priorities between Denmark and Sweden 2010-2018. When looking at the numbers for Denmark, the share of individuals who think terrorism should be one of two of the country’s top priorities increased considerably from 2013 to 2017. The public fear in Sweden, however, is generally much lower than in Denmark and does not change as drastically over the years. The Copenhagen-attack on February 14, 2015 can most likely help explain the biggest increase of 6.41 % of the Danish population from 2014-2015, while the

Stockholm-attack April 7, 2017, can also most likely explain the peak in 2017, with an increase of 2.6% of the Swedish population from 2016-2017. This attack can perhaps also help explain the peak of public fear in Denmark in 2017. Hence, the domestic terrorist attacks in each country might explain some of the increases in the public fear of terrorism but still does not help explain why the increase in Denmark from 2012 is more notable. An explanation could be that the Danish public is simply more affected by the reporting of terror attacks in other Western European countries<sup>5</sup> than Sweden, perhaps because of different media coverage or other factors<sup>6</sup>

Since Islamist-motivated terrorist attacks in Western Europe peaked in 2016 and 2017 (see appendix 2), and that many of the known large-scale attacks that have been excessively covered by the media have been Islamist-motivated, such as the attacks on Brussels, Paris, Barcelona and London, this has very likely affected the public mood around terrorism-efforts in all of Europe. Since some of these attacks (Brussels 2015 and Paris 2016) have involved FF's, either in the planning process or execution, this has further sparked public fear and debate on the threat of FF's, which might help explain the hardened discourses around these over time in both Denmark and Sweden. While media-coverage could be an explanation to the higher increase in the public fear of terrorism in Denmark than Sweden, I will argue that discourses from the state have a high level of power to determine the urgency of security issues, as well as affect the public (and perhaps the media's) perception of threat, which is supported by my theoretical framework, such as the concept of securitisation.

The analysis of the Danish response shows that the tone revolving around FF's has grown stronger for each government since 2014, when FF's started becoming an important political issue in Denmark. While the SRSF-government's discourse clearly condemned people travelling to fight in Syria and Iraq, framing it as a choice 'against Denmark' that they were not going to stand by but take action against to prevent and punish, the discourse was not as strong and as frequently used, as those of the following governments. This can most likely be explained contextually; that the issue of returning FF's was not yet as securitised on political agenda in Denmark so soon after the establishment of IS, as it is today. Had they been in power during the current events and debates about FF's, the discourse of the SRSF-government could potentially have been stronger.

My analysis indicates that the VLAK-government's approach to FF's was more pragmatic with a large focus on security policies against FF's, including increased punishment, more authority to intelligence services to control and monitor FF's, and tightening of immigration laws and residence permits. Moreover, they were

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<sup>5</sup> Under the assumption that attacks in countries with geographic and cultural proximity might influence each other's public opinions. Looking at the number total number of terrorist attacks in Western Europe from 2010-2018, does not show a notable increase (appendix figure 1). However when just looking at Islamist-motivated attacks, which, despite the rise of far-right attacks, are still the most lethal in the world (GTI 2019), the increase is to the increase of public fear in Denmark (appendix figure 2).

<sup>6</sup> Another factor could also be because that the Swedish public might perceive other issues, such as immigration and integration as more pressing than terrorism. But since these issues are also important in Denmark, I will argue that there is still base for questioning this interesting discrepancy.

more very willing to cooperate internationally to find solutions, than the current S-government, both in terms of respecting international conventions and by participating in European negotiations for creating an international tribunal to convict war criminals abroad. However, this pragmatic and military discourse also implicates a rather realist discourse of 'war', with losers and winners, enemies, and a battle between 'good' and 'evil', as criticised by CSS. The VLAK-government's discourse thereby did not comment much on the characteristics of FF's as humans but presented them more as another 'enemy' or 'security issue' undermining the survival of society, which should be dealt with strategically. Drawing on the CSS-theories, this discourse is a way to securitise the issue of FF's as an imminent threat, in order to legitimise their disruptive, extraordinary security measures of surveillance, based on suspicion, being undemocratic (cf. 4), as it limits the freedom of potentially innocent individuals.

The discourse of the current S-government likewise serves to make a distinction between Denmark and 'the enemy', however through using more emotional appeal, ascribing the FF's with characteristics of being 'brutalised' and 'fanatic' criminals who are 'prone to violence' and have made 'their choice to turn their back on Denmark and Danish values', where it would be 'grotesque' and 'outrageous' if FF's could continue to live in Denmark with the same rights as before. This narrative likewise serves to securitise the issue of FF's, presenting them as an existential threat to "our society" requiring urgent attention, to justify and legitimise the government's use of extraordinary measures, such as the recent implementations of L38 and L83. The narratives used to securitise the FF's exclude them from *belonging* in Denmark, within Danish values, resting on assumptions of a homogenous nation-state with the same values, which can be understood as building on an imagined homogenous nation-state and from that strengthen an image of 'who we are', much like in populist discourses. Thereby the government is 'othering' the FF's through nationalist imageries, which, as the theory points to, can appeal to the public by reinforcing fantasies of a whole identity and hereby temporarily cover up the anxieties and fears that cause ontological insecurity. In this framework, the emotional appeal in the discourses can be seen as an attempt to (emotionally) govern the public's fear of terrorism by providing a temporary feeling of ontological security, while at the same time intensifying and cultivating this fear by magnifying the threat from FF's through the securitisation process. This process labelling FF's as a serious security issue, through which the extraordinary security measures by the state can be legitimised and get public support. These mechanisms can, as Aly & Green's (2010) study also suggests, most likely help explain the disproportionate public fear of terrorism in Denmark, compared to Sweden as shown in figure 3, in relation to both having had one terrorist attack. The current government of Denmark hence uses more emotional discourses 'othering' the FF's, than both the previous governments, despite the use of emotional appeal in the previous SRSF-government, where Frederiksen was also he justice minister.

Despite the different political orientations of the governments, this does not seem to have affected the overall values around and measures against FF's. There seems

to have been a consensus across the governments about the necessity of implementing policies against FF's, which is also visible in the high level of interdiscursivity. Especially Rasmussen's and Frederiksen's governments have explicitly expressed a wish to keep FF's out by all means and both worked to find a way to strip these individuals of their citizenships, resulting in bill L38 during the Frederiksen-administration. The difference instead lies in the discourses. The VLAK-government's FF-discourse can be characterised as having very realist views of FF's as a security-issue, through their war-narratives, also containing patriotic nationalist sentiments. This is perhaps not so surprising from a right-oriented government. The discourse of the S-government, 'othering' the FF's by presenting them as excluded from "us", presuming a homogenous stable Danish identity conveyed through emotional appeal, can be compared to the anti-immigration-discourses from far-right parties in Europe and resembles characteristics usually reserved for the discourses of the right-wing populist party Danish Folk Party. This is perhaps surprising for a left-leaning government and shows that political FF-approaches in the case of Denmark does not rely on traditional political orientation.

In this sense, it is possible to see a development of the discourses hardening over time, with a stronger emotional appeal and urgency, magnifying the threat, during the conflict in Syria and Iraq, culminating in the fall of IS. Hence, the strong interdiscursivity through the last three governments from 2014-2020, indicates that the discourse of FF's has largely been reproduced, while varying slightly in style and growing harder. In this sense, following my CDA-framework, the texts and practices forming the government-discourses have both been coherent and directly linked together, as both constituting and constituted by each other, albeit in different constellations for each government. This, both in terms of the policy-expansion and the hardening discourse, mutually reinforcing each other, especially since the initiation of the new S-government. Thus, this interdiscursivity between the governments indicates the reproduction of the establishment.

## 7.1 Discourse and policy comparison

The Swedish political discourse has some similar tendencies to that of the Danish, however in a somewhat milder version. It is quite pragmatic, attempting to rationally explain the need for specific social practices, like the Danish VLAK-government, albeit without the same war-narrative. Moreover, it also has some of the same notions of "us", the 'homogenous nation state', othering the FF's, like the Danish S- and SRSF-governments, but to a milder extent, and likewise use less words with emotional appeal around the FF's, such as 'dangerous' and 'brutalised'. The discourse is not as based in generalisations as the Danish one, and allows room for individual assessments and the idea that not all FF's are the same. Like the Danish discourse, however, I will argue that the Swedish discourse has recently hardened compared to the start of the issue in 2014, which, as previously mentioned, can be explained by the establishment and the fall of IS.

Sweden thus has a softer discourse and fewer, less harsh policies around FF's, indicating that it has the same 'positive' relationship between text, discourse, and practices regarding FF's as Denmark, albeit milder. Hence that softer discourses mean less, or softer policies, and vice versa. However, making FF-policies in Sweden seems to be a bigger challenge, which complicates this comparison. Some of the government's numerous attempts to make initiatives against FF's, visible from the texts, have been voted down in parliament because of lack of consensus on the approach, or because it was going against constitutional principles, making these new laws harder to implement for Sweden than they were for Denmark. Hence, the attempted policies, and the discourse around FF's in Sweden indicate that the Swedish government would have liked to make more policies towards FF's if they could, as they often talk about initiating more measures against FF's that are eventually not realised. An example of this is when the government tried to implement an early version of the law (2020:14) criminalising membership or support of a terror organisation for years, before the bill was accepted in parliament. This portrayed Sweden as being lacking in action for years, compared to other European countries. The lack of consensus caused the initiatives against FF's to be blocked, might be explained by Sweden's growing political polarisation, especially on the immigration issue, in comparison to Denmark, which was a widely discussed issue during the Swedish election in 2018, causing difficulties to form a government (Jensen 2018; Thorup 2018).

The harder discourse and approaches, and therefore the stronger political focus on FF's in Denmark, than Sweden, can perhaps be explained by societal factors, but perhaps also by the structure of the political party competition as argued by Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup (2008). This is their explanation to why Denmark had more political focus on immigration in the 90's than Sweden, which affects the different immigration-approaches in the two countries today (ibid.). Since the issue of FF's are in many ways overlapping with the immigration issue, this could help explain the different levels of political attention to FF's in the two countries.

Hence Sweden has had less political focus on the issue of FF's than Denmark, which is visible in the fewer, less harsh policies, and softer discourses. In the following section I will discuss this in relation to the approaches further, together with their implications.

## 8 Discussion

After having analysed my CDA-results in a theoretical framework and compared the discourses from the two countries, I will discuss how the overall approaches differ and which implications they have, focusing on the Danish case.

Based on the interpretation of my results the Danish approach against FF is very hard, focusing on longer penalties for all who have travelled to Syria and Iraq; removal of passports, citizenship and social services, also for children born in conflict zones; loss of child custody upon return; and more surveillance and permission to raid homes without previous court clearances. Most importantly, because of the difficulty collecting evidence, some of these practices have, what Mavelli refers to as a 'disruptive', administrative character, allowing the state more power to exercise them on individuals, based on assumptions and suspicions, instead of evidence in court, not giving the FF's the guarantee and justice of the legal system, which (cf. 4) is a worrying tendency all over Europe. The administrative measure of revocation of citizenship as implemented in Denmark has the purpose of preventing the return of the FF's by taking away their civil rights, and is a way for Denmark to shift the responsibility for these individuals to other countries, instead of having to take responsibility itself.

From a critical security perspective, this measure, along with the other extraordinary measures in Denmark taking away rights of both adults and children, can be seen as motivated by a fear that the FF's pose an existential threat to society by potentially being willing to commit domestic terror attacks, and a fear that the children perhaps follow in their parents' footsteps, which is reproduced by the political discourse. Hence, the Danish precautionary approach to security is based on fear, suspicion and imaginations of what the FF's might do, making them the subject of security, despite having no empirical evidence that they even pose a bigger threat of committing attacks at home, than other IS-supporters who did not travel, as previously mentioned (cf. 4). The same tendencies are not as visible in Sweden, who are lacking in action in terms of how their policies enable them to conduct investigations and prosecute FF's, resulting in them only having convicted two, compared to fifteen in Denmark (Busk 2019).

The harsher discourse and policies around FF's of Denmark, compared to Sweden, can most likely explain why a bigger share of the Danish public, compared to the Swedish, thinks terrorism should be one of the country's top priorities. This can be interpreted as the public perception of threat from terrorism being bigger in Denmark than in Sweden and has magnified drastically since 2012. This indicates that the public has, in Wæver & Buzan's own words, 'accepted' the Danish government's 'speech acts', 'othering' the FF's by presenting them as threat, as a part of the process of securitisation of FF's.



Since the discourses of FF's from these 'speech acts' in Denmark have been stronger than in Sweden, this, together with the political polarisation and judicial difficulties, can help explain how Denmark has legitimised so many more extraordinary measures against the FF's than Sweden. The stricter approach in Denmark than Sweden is perhaps not so surprising, as it is the same pattern as with the integration and immigration-politics in the 90's, where Sweden had a more liberal approach and less focus on the immigration-issue than Denmark (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008).

Drawing on the governmentality theory, the underlying mechanisms of the Danish approach can be explained as the state governing through this perceived threat, both by magnifying it, and by compressing the freedom of FF's and suspects, through security techniques building on presumptions and suspicions from a systematic use of imagination of 'what could happen', as a legitimised tool of precautionary risk management (cf. 2). The securitisation process of FF's in Denmark, where the state labels them as an existential threat to everything 'Denmark stands for', through binary nostalgic nationalist imageries and traditional perceptions of security, implicates the othering of FF's. This othering of FF's by the government can from a theoretical perspective be seen as an attempt to maintain a stable identity, anchored in imageries of 'Danish values', which, following the theory, is something the population needs, to securitise subjectivity, in order to feel temporarily ontologically secure.

As previously mentioned, Denmark has many policies and administrative measures directed against the FF's based on generalisations, which becomes clear from these discourses about the FF's. The generalising assumptions of FF's in the 'threat-narratives', which the extraordinary measures rests upon, is that individuals, who have travelled to IS, have also actively participated in their violent crimes and are therefore 'brutal' and 'dangerous'. Moreover, they are assumed to have acquired knowledge and incentive to carry out attacks or to radicalise and recruit for IS upon return. However, the 'threat-narratives' fails to include the nuances of the issue; that some men, as well as most women and children can be innocent of having participated in the murderous activities of the Islamic State and are perhaps only guilty of having travelled to and supported IS, or have regretted their decisions and want to take their punishment to come back home.

These generalisations, can therefore be criticised for being counter-productive for the overall preventive aim, since not taking the perspective of the individual when making security- as well as rehabilitation measures, most likely make these efforts less efficient, while they risk increasing already existing anti-Western sentiments and perceived discrimination from the FF's. This way the government risks worsening the level of threat from the FF's who have already returned, as well as the additional FF's in the conflict areas who might make it back home. Moreover, the discourses might also negatively affect the IS-supporters who did not manage to travel to IS who, as Byman (2016) suggested, might have a bigger drive to prove their commitment, and therefore potentially cultivate their motivations for resistance against the Danish society.

Since the FF's most likely do not pose as big a threat as anticipated (cf. 4), the construction and perception of threat of FF's in the Danish political discourses, which in turn legitimises extraordinary measures against them, should be questioned. I would therefore argue for a desecuritisation of the FF-issue from the Danish government especially. This in terms of nuancing the binary and generalising FF-discourse, to differentiate them in e.g. different levels of involvement, as suggested in previous literature, to make individual assessments of each case when deciding how to proceed. This, in order to disengage them most efficiently, instead of labelling and reinforcing the othering of the FF's as a threat to the 'stable Danish identity'.

Moreover, in terms of reconsidering the strict measures, which, except for providing the public and the government with a sense of more security, are far from guaranteed to solve the issue in the long run. There is, cf. 4, not yet any evidence that hard measures, such as longer prison sentences, even work to eliminate this 'threat', but contrarily that prisons can function as 'hotbeds' for further radicalisation. Likewise, the measure of revocation of citizenship could in the worst instance result in human rights violations<sup>7</sup>. It is also especially dangerous as it does not treat all citizens or criminals equally, but discriminates a certain type of criminal, because of the act of travelling, presuming guilt rather than proving it. There is not yet any evidence that FF's, by travelling to IS are on average more dangerous than other criminals or extremists, which however seems to be a dominant underlying assumption in the political discourses of e.g. Denmark and can therefore be criticised for being discriminatory against individuals having committed this type of crime.

Therefore, to maintain 'Danish values' of 'democracy and liberty', these values should apply to all citizens, offering equal treatment, which is why Denmark and Sweden should repatriate the FF's in Syria and Iraq, as recommended by US and Kurdish authorities, and prosecute them at home, as is their right. Moreover, Denmark especially should open up for more flexible definitions of FF's to avoid discrimination and ensure that FF's feel encouraged to reintegrate into society (after their sentence). Hence, instead of holding on to a strong focus on preserving identities through nationalist narratives and 'othering' of the 'enemy', implicating an eternal search for a stable identity to feel ontologically secure, the Danish government should, as a part of desecuritisation, accept that this identity can be found through accepting change, which does not necessarily change 'who we are'. And moreover, let the public create their own perceptions of threat from the FF's.

Although not all FF's are an existential threat to society (cf. 4), as presented in the Danish political discourses, it would still seem sensible to have policies enabling a systemised assessment of all returnees to evaluate the needed action. Hence, a balance between the Danish and the Swedish approach would arguably be ideal; A

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<sup>7</sup> The FF's expulsion from their home country can result in death penalty or torture in the country they are in or that of their second citizenship. This is the situation for British-Bangladeshi IS-bride Shamima Begum, who has recently been left stateless by the British government, based on the assumption that she could get a Bangladeshi citizenship through her parents. The Bangladeshi authorities has now denied her citizenship and she risks facing sentence by death in Iraq (Boutin 2016:21-22; Bowscott 2020; BBC 2019).

more pragmatic discourse like Sweden, but with more action like Denmark, however not as hard, to successfully get justice for individuals guilty of terrorist-crimes, while ensuring their legal rights, and individually assess their rehabilitation needs, to avoid contributing to anti-Western sentiments and further radicalisation.

## 9 Conclusion

In this thesis I have answered my research question of how Sweden and Denmark differ in their approaches to the FF-issue and what the implications are, focusing on the Danish approach. This has been done through a comparative case study, including a CDA-analysis of government texts from the PM's and key ministers, analysing one case at a time, to find hegemonic political discursive representations of FF's and combine them with the associated FF-policies (practices) to get an overall picture of the approaches before comparing them.

Based on my analysis, the Danish FF-approach has been and is harsher than the Swedish, in terms of practices focusing on longer penalties for all who have travelled to Syria and Iraq, as well as removal of passports, citizenship and social services, also for children born in conflict zones; loss of child custody upon return; and more surveillance and permission to raid homes without previous judge clearances. The three different governments in Denmark have, except for some variation, had a largely similar response to FF's; however, with the discourse growing stronger, especially since the fall of IS, where this has become an issue of top political attention.

Here Sweden's policies to FF's, in comparison only including criminalising on travelling to conflict areas with terrorism-purposes, as well as associating with or supporting a terrorist organisation, have come quite late, without working retrospectively, giving them mostly symbolic, rather than practical significance for convicting FF's of crimes pre-legislation. In terms of discourses, the Swedish is more pragmatic and careful, allowing for differentiation and individual assessment, compared to the Danish construction of FF's as an existential threat that needs immediate action through extraordinary measures, which is quite binary.

The analysis showed that the Danish political discourse around FF's, has been 'othering' the FF's, through binary perceptions of them as 'having turned their back to Denmark', using nationalist fantasies of what "we" as a nation stand for, building on nostalgic imageries of 'past greatness' of the homogenous nation-state of Denmark. Moreover, it contains traces of realist perceptions of security, with narratives of 'the good and the bad guys', who can be 'fought' using hard measures. This emotional appeal can be interpreted as an attempt to offer ontological security to the public, as well as to create urgency around the issue. These narratives also risk creating fear, which might explain the remarkable increase of the share of the Danish population from 2012-2017 who found that terrorism should be one of the top two issues for the country. Compared to the same data for the Swedish population, this topic is the most important priority for a much bigger share of the Danish population, than the Swedish one, despite both countries having suffered one large terror attack each. In my thesis I have argued how this can be explained by the different discourses. As public fear for an issue often creates public support

to hard measures against it, the Danish state can be seen as having purposely cultivated public fear by magnifying the threat-image of FF's through discourses, in order to get public support to legitimise their extraordinary measures. These measures which are disruptive and arguably undemocratic in nature, due to their administrative character, also contributes to this 'othering' of the FF's and have the potential implications of discrimination and at worst violating human rights for the FF's. The government's precautionary risk management, can be seen as using the security apparatus as a technical instrument to exercise governmentality over its population, to internalise norms and behaviours of the system and thus strengthen their image of being a strong state governing the public.

Thus, the comparison with Sweden, using of social scientific methods, has highlighted new and interesting features of the Danish approach to FF's, providing insight that previous research has missed; of how narratives constructing FF's as a security issue and threat (securitisation), thereby 'othering' them, to implement harsh measures to protect and govern the 'Danish people' against them, can be explained by fears and ontological insecurities, as the government's attempt to preserve the fantasy of a stable Danish identity.

It should however be noted that the conclusions are based on my own interpretations of the connection between the theories and the empirical data at my disposal, and therefore does not necessarily reflect the 'real' underlying reasons behind the governments' and countries' approaches. Moreover, by only focusing on the PM's and 2-3 key ministers for each government, the thesis might have missed important factors behind the approaches that including the political opposition, the media or the public opinion could have given me. Moreover, the thesis, based on its delimitations has not been able to conclusively answer *why* the FF-approaches are so different in the countries, but is only making suggestions, based on the case study and available previous literature. This would be interesting to further examine through a bigger historical and political analysis of the countries' political environment. To learn more about the role of the public in the mechanisms described in the thesis, it would for future research also be interesting to quantitatively test, through multivariate analysis, how much of the public opinion of FF's could statistically be explained by terrorist attacks, conditions theoretically creating ontological insecurities and trust in the government to provide security.

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## 10.1 Empirical Data for Denmark

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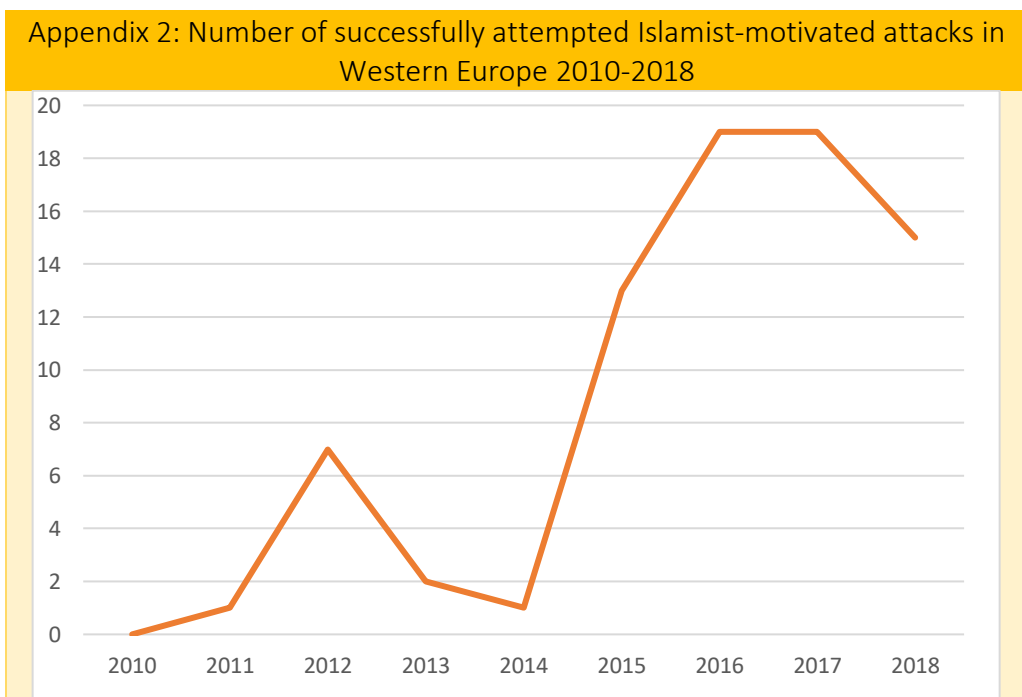
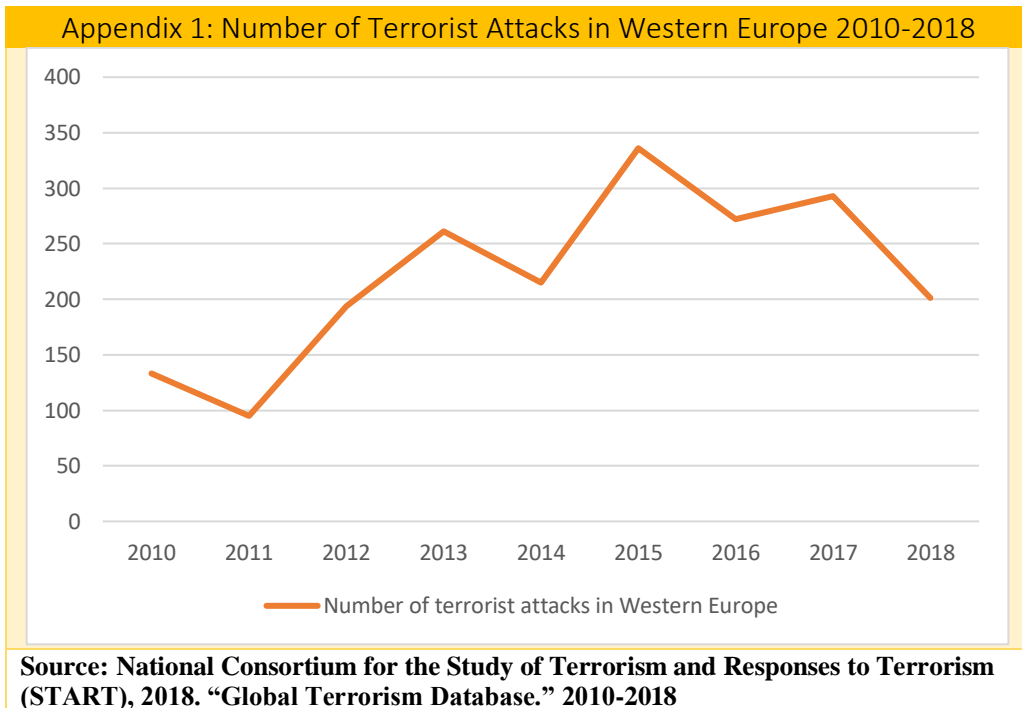


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# 11 Appendix

## 11.1 Appendix 1 & 2 - Global Terrorism Dataset



**Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2018. "Global Terrorism Database." 2010-2018**

The Global Terrorism Database is a detailed overview of all recorded terrorist attacks globally. When deciding which terrorist attacks to include in the timeline, I have chosen to just look at the attacks in 'Western Europe' and exclude 'Eastern Europe' in the Global Terrorism Dataset, since my case studies, DK and SE are both located in Western Europe, and because I assume that they are mostly affected by terrorist attacks on countries of close proximity, both geographically and culturally. Since my study is focused on Islamist terrorism, I have only included attacks perpetrated by 'jihadi-inspired extremists', 'Muslim extremists', 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)', 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)', as well as 'Palestinian extremists' and 'Sunni Muslim extremists' (which have only committed one attack each). The Global Terrorism Dataset has only included attacks that have been attempted and have either been successful or unsuccessful, and in my study, because I am looking at public fear, I choose to look only at successful attacks to get a clearer picture, as I expect these to be more relevant, when looking at their effect on public fear of terrorism.

The methodology is described on the website as following:

- The database—sourced by unclassified media articles—contains information on multiple dimensions of each event. More than 100 structured variables characterize each attack's location, tactics and weapons, targets, perpetrators, casualties and consequences, and general information such as definitional criteria and links between coordinated attacks. Unstructured variables include summary descriptions of the attacks and more detailed information on the weapons used, specific motives of the attackers, property damage, and ransom demands (where applicable).
- A multi-disciplinary team of University of Maryland faculty members developed the GTD data collection methodology by applying fundamentals of social sciences and computer and information sciences. The process starts with a pool of more than two million open-source media reports published each day. The GTD team combines automated and human workflows, leveraging the strengths and mitigating the limitations of each, to produce rich and reliable data.
- Automated Processes
  - Initial Boolean filters of articles
  - Natural Language Processing
    - Remove duplicate articles
    - Location identification
    - Clustering similar articles
- Machine Learning (ML) models identify most relevant articles.
  - Machine-Assisted Workflows
  - Present analysts with high-validity, topically clustered source articles.
  - Prompt human assessment of sources with unknown validity.
  - Prevent creation of duplicate entries.

- Analyst feedback informs ML models.
- Research Analyst Tasks
  - Assess source validity.
  - Review relevant source articles; apply GTD inclusion criteria to identify unique terrorist attacks.
  - Populate database with attack characteristics according to established coding rules.

Detailed information including definitions of terms, and data collection methods can be found in the GTD Codebook: <http://start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf>. Users of the GTD should carefully consider the implications of data collection methods and, in particular, interpret trends over time with caution.

## 11.2 Appendix 3 – Eurobarometer Sample Size

<b>Appendix 3: Eurobarometer Sample size</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
<b>2010</b>	1049	1020
<b>2011</b>	1009	1022
<b>2012</b>	1001	1029
<b>2013</b>	1001	1019
<b>2014</b>	1004	1023
<b>2015</b>	1001	1018
<b>2016</b>	1006	1029
<b>2017</b>	1000	1002
<b>2018</b>	1020	1015