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The Tribalisation of Denmark

A thematic study on the political narrative of
Mette Frederiksen

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Almost a year ago the newly elected Prime Minister of Denmark used the term ‘wack’ or ‘gak’ as it is in Danish when she elaborated her thoughts on the European Union – and especially the European Commission. Throughout this year I have studied political speeches, EU-budgets, political tendencies and I have discussed as much. Therefore, I would like to dedicate room to express my gratitude towards Lund University for educating my perspectives and perception of the world. Furthermore, would I like to thank Rasmus Nordqvist for offering a playground, in which I have learned more than any book has ever taught me. Thank you, for the many political battles, we have fought; the ones we won but also the ones that we did not.

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Line Lund Hebbelstrup, Copenhagen, September 4, 2020

Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand the narrative presented by Mette Frederiksen in an interview published in Jyllands-Posten on October 16, 2019 bearing the header *The EU-cooperation is disconnected from the world, we are a part of* through interpretations from relevant experts. In order to extract what can be learned about the Danish future relation to the EU, the thesis examines how four Members of the Danish Parliament and Marlene Wind, a professor from University of Copenhagen, interpreted the narrative of the Danish Prime Minister. The politicians represent the Social Democratic Party, Venstre – the Liberal Party, the Conservative People’s Party and The Alternative, thus the governmental party is represented as well as both sides of the political spectrum. They all hold the position as EU-spokesperson and enjoy a seat in the European Affairs Committee in the Parliament.

The study seeks to answer how the five experts have interpreted Mette Frederiksen’s narrative and how they understand the future relation between Denmark and the EU from the narrative. The study builds on an epistemological perspective within qualitative methodology, as presented by Steiner Kvale and Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz. The thematic analysis have been constructed by tribalism theory as it is presented by Marlene Wind; intergovernmentalist theory as outlined by Stanley Hoffmann and Andrew Moravcsik and lastly the findings have been discussed on the foundation of Hannah Arendt’s thoughts on truths in the realm of politics.

According to the interpretations expressed by the experts in combination with the chosen theory the thesis reveals, that there are certain signs, which points towards that the future Danish relation to the EU is characterised by an intergovernmentalistic future with inhabited tribalistic tendencies.

Keywords: *Denmark, European Union, Tribalism, European Integration, Truth and Politics, Social Democratic Party*

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1.0 Introduction

Ever since an early stage in my life I have had a special interest in trying to understand the motivations of humans, not least political actors and the impact, which motivations can have on the world we live in. For this reason I find it interesting to seek to understand what a given narrative or communicative action can reveal about an actor, their motives and perceptions of the world.

In the period of February 2019 – June 2020 I was employed in the Danish political movement and party The Alternative. I worked specifically for the politician and Member of the Danish Parliament (MP) Rasmus Nordqvist. In my job I was connected to his position in the party as the spokes person for the EU and foreign policy. During my employment in The Alternative I worked especially close with the political negotiations concerning the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 – or in other words: the long-term budget of the European Union (EU). These political negotiations revealed a battlefield between national and international interests as well as various political and normative perceptions of how the EU should develop – a process also known as European Integration.¹ Consequently, I developed a special interest in the various narratives presented as a part of the strategies in the negotiations surrounding the MFF and what these narratives can tell us about political tendencies and how the EU might develop in the future.

For this reason, I wished to use the opportunity of this thesis to examine one of these narratives presented by one of the political actors in this specific negotiation process. Due to my employment in the Danish Parliament, I found myself naturally close to the national parliamentary negotiations of the Danish position in the MFF-negotiations. Hence, I wanted to make use of the special opening to examine the narrative as displayed by the Danish Prime Minister (PM), Mette Frederiksen. To do so, my thesis will focus on how one professor specialised in tribalism and EU, as well as three MP's and EU-spokes persons interpreted an interview published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten (JP) on October 16, 2019, where Frederiksen as then newly elected PM for the first time presented her opinion and priorities concerning the MFF as the representative for Denmark. Five days before the deadline of this thesis, I finally succeeded in getting an answer from the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Unlike the other sources, it is a written answer and not an interview. However, the answers have been included, albeit the answers exist in a different time frame and different nature. The interview from JP, October 16, 2019 will be referred to as the Interview throughout the thesis.

¹ See section 3.3 in this thesis or Ben Rosamund, "Theorizing the European Union after Integration Theory," in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 80

In order to present the thesis in its context, I will now proceed with a more elaborative introduction.

1.1 Context and Structure

Thirty years ago the Berlin Wall fell; the Cold War ended and the collapse of the Soviet Union followed. This potentially made Westerners believe in the inevitable victory of liberal democracy. In 1989 Francis Fukuyama famously declared “[t]he triumph of the West, of the Western ideas”² and “the end of history as such”.³ This bold prediction from Fukuyama seemed emphasised with the consecutive enlargements of the EU. Especially the Eastern enlargement in May 2004, served for some to prove the superiority of the West, in the context after the Cold War, i.e.. Additionally, years of formulating yet another Treaty of the EU were put to an end, when the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on December 1, 2009. Years of battles over the function and limits to European Integration were put on hold. However, they did not vanish.

Today, it might be stated that Fukuyama was naively wrong in his all-encompassing theorization. History did not end. Instead, we are getting familiar with the erosion of democratic values and the violations of the European Rule of Law in EU nation-states. The European Commission has initiated Article 7 procedures against Hungary and Poland for their continued convergence towards the same authoritarianist sentiments⁴, which Fukuyama had predicted defeated for good. This tendency seems closely related to the blossoming of a new ideological term: Tribalism.⁵ The United Kingdom has left the European fellowship after a polarised referendum.⁶ When looking towards a yearlong close familiarity to the EU: the United States, we see that books have been written to highlight the familiarities between President Donald Trump and other demagogues through time⁷ with the common denominator being a deep disrespect for the finer aspect of democratic integrity.⁸

² Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, No. 16, Summer 1989, 3

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4

⁴ Alice Cuddy, “What is ‘Article 7’ and why was it triggered against Poland?,” *Euronews*, last updated December 20, 2017

<https://www.euronews.com/2017/12/20/what-is-article-7-and-why-was-it-triggered-against-poland->

⁵ For research on the development of Tribalism in Poland and Hungary, see: Péter Krekó & Attila Juhász, “Beyond Populism: Political Tribalism in Poland and Hungary.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Volume 18, No. 3, Fall 2019, 69-81

⁶ Bobby Duffy, Kirstie Hewlett, Julian McCrae, John Hall, *Divided Britain? Polarisation and fragmentation trends in the UK* (London: The Policy Institute, King’s College, 2019)

⁷ Stenven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die: What history reveals about our future*, (Great Britain: Viking, Penguin Books, 2018)

⁸ Stenven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die: What history reveals about our future*, (Great Britain: Viking, Penguin Books, 2018), 23

Thus, in countries around the world, populism is on the rise and the once proclaimed expansion of liberal democracy is no longer increasing – today, studies show that it is decreasing.⁹ Fukuyama has himself cancelled his “end of history”; in fact, he now claims quite the contrary in his book from 2018: *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. The new enemy of the liberal democracy, he warns, is coming with the genesis of identity politics. By which, it can be understood as Fukuyama’s exoneration of the end of history.

But how is the situation in the golden valley of the Scandinavian Utopia, I ask? For centuries, the Nordic Model has enjoyed acknowledgement as being something to strive for.¹⁰¹¹ Maybe this perception has caused Scandinavians to be blinded by the light and neglecting the impact, the global development might have had on the Scandinavian society. Therefore, I wish to dedicate this thesis to investigate, whether carefully chosen sources observe tribalism in a narrative presented by the Danish PM, Frederiksen, in an interview published in the Danish newspaper JP on October 16, 2019. The interview holds the heading: *‘The EU-cooperation is disconnected from the world, we are a part of’*.¹² The interview was published coinciding with the first meeting in the European Council where the long-term budget of the entire EU were to be negotiated, hence the interview must be understood as playing a significant role in the negotiations, since the newly elected Danish PM in this interview establish and publicly presents her attitude and political priorities in the coming negotiations. The Interview will be further presented in [section 1.4](#).

In order to analyse the presence of tribalism in the narrative presented by Frederiksen in the Interview and what it might indicate, I will focus on what we can learn from the Interview in a context of tribalism, European integration theory and the nature of political narratives. I will be interviewing the EURECO Professor and Director of Centre for European Politics at Copenhagen University, Marlene Wind. Wind is furthermore the author of *The Tribalization of Europe: A defence of our liberal values*, which I will lean upon in the setup of my theoretical framework. Furthermore, I will interview four MP’s and EU-spokespersons from four various parties

⁹ Zselyke Csaky, “Nations in Transit 2020 Dropping the Democratic Façade,” *Freedom House*, accessed May 29, 2020 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2020/dropping-democratic-facade>

¹⁰ Cathy Strongman, “Copenhagen really is wonderful, for so many reasons”, *The Guardian*, April 7, 2012 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/07/copenhagen-really-wonderful-reasons>

¹¹ Leaders, “The Nordic countries - The next supermodel”, *The Economist*, Volume 406, Issue 8821, February 2, 2013, 9 <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2013/02/02/the-next-supermodel>

¹² Translated from: ‘EU-samarbejdet er frakoblet den verden, vi er en del af’

Marchen Neel Gjertsen and Michael Hjöllund, “‘EU-samarbejdet er frakoblet den verden, vi er en del af’,” *Jyllands-Posten*, October 16, 2019 <https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/Indland/ECE11685135/eusamarbejdet-er-frakoblet-den-verden-vi-er-en-del-af/>

representing both political wings in the Danish Parliament. All four spokespersons are represented in the European Affairs Committee in the Danish Parliament and will offer first hand experiences and knowledge in order to investigate whether a specific tribalistic characteristic can be observed in the narrative of the PM's interview.

I will structure my thesis in accordance with Steiner Kvale's approach as presented in his book *InterView* from 1997. I will "not ask 'how' the collected qualitative expert interviews must be analysed before the investigation's 'what' and 'why' have been answered. "Content and purpose precede the methodology".¹³ Therefore, I will introduce my thesis with a presentation of the context in which we should understand the Interview, followed by the theoretical framework. First hereafter, will I proceed with a description of the methodology, a presentation of the chosen sources and the examination of the collected interviews. Following I will through a thematic framework study, how the interviewees experienced the Interview and which indicators and consequences, they believe, from a normative understanding, the Interview reveals, which will enable me to study the existence of tribalism in the narrative. The focus on 'what' the experts interpret and perceive from the Interview, will in combination with the 'why' this can be characterised through the chosen theoretical framework assist me in answering the 'how' of this thesis. This will enable me to approach my thesis with an epistemological attitude, which will help to secure a genuine, impartial investigation in my search to offer an answer to my research question, which will be presented hereunder.

1.2 Research Questions

The thesis will be built around a main research question and two supporting questions. The main question is represented in bold.

- In which context can the Interview given in Jyllands-Posten on October 16, 2019 be understood, and why is it significant?
- What do the experts interpret from the narrative presented in the Interview?
- **How can we understand the existence of tribalism and the future of the Danish process within European Integration based on the Interview?**

¹³ Steiner Kvale, *Interview*, first edition. (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 179

1.3 Research Object: The Interview

The goal of this thesis is to examine the narrative presented in the Interview through the interpretations of chosen experts. Hence, the object of this thesis is the Interview. In this section, the Interview will be presented.

In October 2019, Frederiksen had held the office as Denmark's PM for about four months. The Danish Parliament had just opened on October 1, 2019¹⁴ and on October 17-18, 2019, the newly elected Danish PM participated in her first meeting in the European Council, where the contents of the MFF were to be negotiated.¹⁵ On October 16, 2019, the Danish newspaper JP published the Interview¹⁶ with the Danish PM, Frederiksen, where she for the first time since the election publicly announced her views on Denmark's role in EU-policy and her views on the ongoing negotiation process about the MFF. The Interview resulted in public comments from various fronts. EU's Budget Commissioner at the time, Günther Oettinger (German, the European People's Party (EPP)), calls Frederiksen's comments inappropriate in a written comment from the Commission.¹⁷ Additionally, the Executive Vice-President for the Commission and Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager (Danish, Renew Europe) has on more than one occasion stated she sees the statements concerning the MFF and the future perspectives for EU as presented by Frederiksen as harmful¹⁸, unconstructive and unrealistic.¹⁹ Moreover a German-Danish Member of the European Parliament (MEP) expressed his discontentment with Frederiksen's approach²⁰, while the

¹⁴ Folketinget, "Folketingets åbning 2019", *Folketinget – Nyheder*, September 26, 2019

<https://www.ft.dk/da/aktuelt/nyheder/2019/09/folketingets-aabning>

¹⁵ European Council – Council of the European Union. "Multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027: negotiations," Multiannual financial framework: shaping EU expenditure, edited February 21, 2020

<https://europa.eu/!qk64Gm>

¹⁶ Marchen Neel Gjertsen and Michael Hjøllund, "EU-samarbejdet er frakoblet den verden, vi er en del af", *Jyllands-Posten*, October 16, 2019

<https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/Indland/ECE11685135/eusamarbejdet-er-fracoblet-den-verden-vi-er-en-del-af/>

¹⁷ Martin Kaae, "Mette Frederiksens brug af tal og gak-udtalelser møder kritik", *Jyllands-Posten*, October 31, 2019

<https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/ECE11725592/mette-frederiksens-brug-af-tal-og-gakudtalelser-moeder-kritik/>

¹⁸ Thomas Lauritzen and Emma Qvirin Holst, "Vestager om Danmarks nye EU-kurs: 'Det er virkelig, virkelig ærgerligt'", *Altinget*, November 26, 2019

<https://www.alinget.dk/eu/artikel/vestager-om-danmarks-nye-eu-kurs-det-er-virkelig-virkelig-aergerligt>

¹⁹ Per Bang-Thomsen, "Vestager om større EU-budget: I kan selv regne ud, at jeg ikke er enig med Danmarks statsminister," *DR*, November 5, 2019

<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/udland/vestager-om-stoerre-eu-budget-i-kan-selv-regne-ud-jeg-ikke-er-enig-med-danmarks>

²⁰ Rasmus Andresen, "Tysk MEP: 'Stop Mette Frederiksens snæversynede og skadelige EU-politik'", *Altinget*, February 21, 2020

<https://www.alinget.dk/eu/artikel/tysk-parlamentsmedlem-der-er-brug-for-en-pro-europaeisk-dansk-regering>

European-Parliament has declared that it will not accept the Danish negotiation position on the MFF.²¹ Ditto, on the national scene has the Interview caused MP's²², political commentators²³ and opinion leaders²⁴ to comment publicly on the statements expressed in the Interview by Frederiksen.

I have selected and translated statements to represent the Interview in the thesis, albeit the Interview in its full content has been present during the conduction of the expert interviews. These highlights merely serve to offer a contextualisation for the reader. Besides the highlighted statements, Frederiksen presents four key priorities on her Danish EU-policy in the Interview. While I have chosen the statements, the priorities are presented as the four key priorities in the Interview. The four key priorities are similar to the five priorities outlined in the EU-priorities presented by the Social Democrats as will be described in [section 2.2](#). I will present the statements and priorities as they chronologically appear in the Interview.

The full interview can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Key statements²⁵

- 'You will not hear me give quixotic speeches, praising the free movement. Because I can see that it has major consequences in the real world'
- 'There is a tendency in the European community to discuss things, which are disconnected from the world we live in'²⁶
- 'We will be fighting for a Danish discount. It will be a key issue and I do not buy the Commission's approach. They are simply saying that if we wish to do more for the climate

²¹ Ritzau, "EU-Parlamentet kritiserer Danmark: Snak indhold – ikke procenter", *Kristeligt-Dagblad*, February 12, 2020 <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/udland/eu-parlamentet-kritiserer-danmark-snak-indhold-ikke-procenter>

²² Thue Ahrenkilde Holm, "Et interview med statsministeren har forøret Jens Rohde: 'Hvad er det for en verden, du er en del af, Mette Frederiksen?'," *Berlingske*, October 17, 2019

<https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/et-interview-med-statsministeren-har-fortoernet-jens-rohde-hvad-er-det-for>; Martin Kaae, "Mette Frederiksens brug af tal og gak-udtalelser møder kritik," *Jyllands-Posten*, October 31, 2019 <https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/ECE11725592/mette-frederiksens-brug-af-tal-og-gakudtalelser-moeder-kritik/>

²³ Jakob Nielsen, "Mette Frederiksen er historiens mest EU-skeptiske statsminister," *Altinget*, January 29, 2020 <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/mette-frederiksen-er-den-mest-eu-skeptiske-statsminister-danmark-har-haft>

²⁴ Noa Redington, "Mette Frederiksen kan ikke blive ved med at skjule sig bag sin nølende og slet skjulte EU-skepsis," *Politiken*, January 26, 2020

<https://politiken.dk/debat/klummer/art7619559/Mette-Frederiksen-kan-ikke-blive-ved-med-at-skutte-sig-bag-sin-n%C3%B8lende-og-slet-skjulte-EU-skepsis>

²⁵ Marchen Neel Gjertsen and Michael Hjöllund, "EU-samarbejdet er frakoblet den verden, vi er en del af," *Jyllands-Posten*, October 16, 2019

<https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/Indland/ECE11685135/eusamarbejdet-er-fracoblet-den-verden-vi-er-en-del-af/>

²⁶ It must be noticed that Mette Frederiksen does not refer to the former title of the European Union: the European Community, but rather the concept of community.

and migration policy, we must enlarge the budget. I simply don't buy it. Especially since we parallelly see them suggest to expand the administrative expenses with – and now hold on to something – with close to five billion ... (...) euros! (...) That is completely wack'

- 'To me it is by principle that the EU should be about the people and not about the institutions and politicians'
- 'Therefore, this [the statements] is an expression of a Danish break off with the policy of being as close to the EU-core as possible. It is a discussion without meaning', she says and thereby turns away from what in years has been the headline of Danish EU-policy. And does so, by calling it purely semantics

Key priorities²⁷

- '[Migration] should be one of the top priorities and I will personally make sure to use a lot of muscle in the fight for a new asylum system'
- 'Climate is the other key task. We (Denmark, red.) are pioneers – both globally and European. However, we should preferably have the new Danish mindset incorporated in the European. We are fighting for a shared EU to be climate-neutral by 2050, as well as we are fighting for the ambitions to be higher already by 2030'
- 'We need to cement a fundamental protection of the labours, to make sure they are not undermined by the idea of the free movement. The concept as a whole is a challenge to our ability to construct a good labour market. Therefore, we need a social protocol – however, I have no expectations that I will meet support for a change in the treaty. But we need to empower labour rights'
- Fourthly, there is the fight against tax fraud. Here, [Frederiksen] wants a shared minimum for taxation of corporations and a taxation of the tech-giants. About the latter, she announce herself as 'ready to do it either alone or through a smaller European group', if there will not be a common agreement next year (2020, ed.)

1.4 Previous Research

Tribalism as a term can refer to a various number of perceptions and interpretations. In my study, I will refer to the term as it is presented by the Wind in her book *The Tribalization of Europe: A Defence of Our Liberal Values*. Wind presents the term as a combination of nationalism, identity politics and polarisation, which can evidently lead to fragmentation. The amount of existing

²⁷ Ibid.

literature on these terms is extensive and includes as many relevant aspects. However, I will try to narrow the presentation down and merely focus on the previous research, which I have found relevant in the context of exactly my study. I will in this section touch upon literature dealing with polarisation, identity politics, nationalism and tribalism in an attempt to present my study in a relevant research context.

In *Theories of Nationalism* Umut Özkırımlı presents different theories of nationalism and their different nature, as well as he offers a theoretical cataloging of various types of nationalism. However, the book circulates around one question: how a nation and nationhood is being built. How the ‘other’ is being distinguished from the ‘us’. The cataloging distinction between the various tendencies within nationalistic theories and their common emphasis on the definition of an ‘us’ in order to exclude and introduce distance to the ‘other’, offers an important background for the development of Wind’s characterization of tribalism. Özkırımlı has also commented on the Danish turn towards nationalism in *The Guardian*.²⁸

When discussing tribalism as a term it must be mentioned within which perspective the term is used, as the term inhabits various perceptions of what it may indicate. The way I intend to use the term is founded on the description presented by Wind, who is a political scientist; therefore her description is with an approach coming from the perspective of political science. However, tribalism can also be studied as an anthropological approach, as Lawrence Rosen, who is a Princeton anthropologist, presents it. Although the two perspectives differ on some points, I have found it relevant to be familiar with Rosen’s perspectives as a part of my study, as it offers nuances to the term as it is presented by Wind. Furthermore, Rosen has publicly critiqued the perspectives from political science. I will briefly present key points from Rosen’s article *A Liberal Defence of Tribalism - There’s nothing wrong with political tribes that can’t be fixed by what’s right with them*. Rosen argues that it is damaging to conclude tribalistic tendencies as something primitive or of evil. He claims that these conclusions are merely “fatalistic”, since they suggest, “that tribalism marks a reversion to some natural and ancestral mode of thinking and, thus, even if tribes can be temporarily transcended, their pull remains inexorable”. Rosen rejects the allegation of tribalism being the problem; instead he suggests that tribalism should be seen as a part of the solution to the political problems of our era. However, Rosen does not seek to dismiss the detected issues inhabited in the political theoretical description of tribalism. He claims that we should be careful to set up

²⁸ Umut Özkırımlı, “Don’t learn the wrong lessons from Denmark on nationalism”, *The Guardian*, September 4, 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/04/denmark-nationalism-far-right>

rigid perceptions of the human nature as instinctively hostile towards outsiders, as he argues that “[a]ctual tribes know that social isolation or claims of moral superiority limit their flexibility”, hence to defence borders is not a “natural default position”. Rosen offers several solutions in order to remedy the diagnosed malady. Thus, he suggests structural initiatives in order “to force greater consideration of opponents’ views”. I will not describe these suggestions, as they are not relevant for the thesis.

Where Wind’s outlay of the term tribalism enjoys a mere descriptive nature, albeit her expressed opinion is normative, Rosen offers a normative solution to the described diagnosis, though he does not wish to accept the premise of the diagnosis.

In this thesis I intend to examine whether my sources observe tribalism in the narrative presented by Frederiksen in the Interview. Although, I will lean upon the tribalistic term as outlaid by Wind, the description introduced by Rosen offers a nuance, as well as the nuances of Fukuyama and Özkırımlı offers a depth to the term, which will be valuable in the thematic understanding of the term.

The character of identity politics, polarization and tribalisation has been studied in various case studies, which offer examinations on specific countries such as Great Britain, the USA, Hungary and Poland. Thus, Péter Kerekó and Attila Juhász *Beyond Populism: Political Tribalism in Poland and Hungary* is focused on Hungary and Poland – as revealed in the title. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt’s *How Democracies Die: What history reveals about our future* mainly studies the historical past of the development of previous anti-democratic regimes with the purpose of offering an analysis on the recent development in the USA with the election of Trump. Bobby Duffy, Kirstie Hewlett, Julian McCrae and John Hall are devoted to examine the nuances of the polarisation in connection to Brexit in Great Britain with their *Divided Britain? Polarisation and fragmentation trends in the UK*. And in Lilliana Mason’s *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*, the focus is on the recent bi-partisan political development in the USA and how this has caused a polarising development. However, none of them share the same small-state concepts or social-democratic history as it goes for the Scandinavian countries.

In summary, the existing literature addresses the relevance of the studying identity politics, polarisation and tribalism, as they indicate a shift in the political realm. However, the connection of the political structural development and the effects of political narratives with tribalistic tendencies in a context of European Integration theories have yet to be examined, especially the development within a Scandinavian context. Therefore, I have chosen to examine this in particular in order to

offer new knowledge and understanding of tribalism and the effects of political narratives in a small European state.

In the following section I will present the relevant information in order to introduce the context in which this thesis exists.

2.0 Background

In order to understand the context in which Frederiksen's narrative exists and what can be said about the future integration perspectives, I will here briefly present information on the historical context, the historical relationship between Denmark and the EU, as well as Frederiksen and the SDP and their relation to the EU.

2.1 The Context

In the summer, 2019, Denmark elected a new government; a social-democratic one-party government.²⁹ Parallely, the people of the EU had elected a new European Parliament³⁰; and a new European Commission were appointed.³¹ In October 2019, the newly elected Danish PM, gave an interview,³² where she for the first time publicly revealed her opinions on EU-matters as PM, hence as the official, political representative for Denmark. The Interview was published in JP, coinciding with the first meeting in the European Council where the long-term budget of the entire EU was to be negotiated. Therefore this Interview was additionally were Frederiksen for the first time as the PM revealed her opinion on the MFF 2021-2027. The negotiations on the MFF normally take months, if not years, since the budget is where the political line and strategy for the EU is prioritised. The political priorities reveal the course of the EU for the years to come. Therefore, the priorities portrayed in the MFF are a signal to the rest of the world on the role, which the EU will

²⁹ Kristine Korsgaard, "Mette Frederiksen bliver statsminister for en ren S-regering: Svære kampe venter", *Altinget*, June 26, 2019

<https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/mette-frederiksen-bliver-statsminister-for-en-ren-s-regering>

³⁰ Daniel Dunford, Paul Kirby, Paul Sargeant, Clara Guibourg, Ed Lowther, John Walton & Irene de la Torre Arenas, "European Election 2019: Results in maps and charts", *BBC*, May 27, 2019

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48417191>

³¹ The European Council, "The European Council appoints new Commission", *The European Council*, November 28, 2019

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/da/press/press-releases/2019/11/28/the-european-council-appoints-new-commission/>

³² Marchen Neel Gjertsen and Michael Hjöllund, "EU-samarbejdet er frakoblet den verden, vi er en del af", *Jyllands-Posten*, October 16, 2019

<https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indblik/Indland/ECE11685135/eusamarbejdet-er-fracoblet-den-verden-vi-er-en-del-af/>

seize on the international scene. The negotiations between the member states are generating a battlefield where differences in perceptions and wishes for the process of European Integration are to be revealed.

Heads of states have to juggle between internal interests and the interests of the EU, a matter that demands the ability to combine the logics from polities existing on multiple levels while pleasing in regard to the political landscapes at home. It is not always an equal apportionment, sometimes the Union suffers in favour for national interests and sometimes the opposite applies. Before state leaders and national representatives are travelling to Brussels they have negotiated their national line internally in the national parliaments. In Denmark, this process takes place in the European Affairs Committee in the Danish Parliament, as the key role of this committee is to scrutinize the EU policy of the Danish government. The government must obtain a negotiating mandate from the committee before significant meetings in the Council. A Danish minister can only negotiate matters of “major significance”³³ in the Council based on a mandate obtained in this Committee. The members in the Committee represent the seats of the elected parties in the Danish Parliament.³⁴ The PM does not need to obtain a mandate in the European Affairs Committee before negotiating in the European Council, but since the role of the European Council is merely to guide the Council before the negotiation process,³⁵ the position of the PM will often be somewhat aligned with the mandates obtained by the ministers in the Committee.

In the following sections, I will present relevant information about the political party, which the PM, Frederiksen, represents: The SDP. Followed by their priorities on EU-policy as they have been presented in an opinion piece as well as it is listed on the party’s webpage. Hereafter, I will briefly portray Frederiksen as the Danish PM in the context of this thesis. Finally, I will place my research in a historical context before the next chapter will proceed with a presentation of the theoretical framework.

³³ The Danish Parliament. ”The European Affairs Committee,” *Folketinget*, accessed April 3, 2020 <https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/en/committees/committees/euu>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Jeffrey Lewis, ”Chapter 10: The European Council and the Council of the European Union”, in *European Union Politics, fifth edition* (New York, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2016), 139

2.2 The Social Democratic Party

In 1871 Louis Pio, Harald Brix and Paul Geleff established the SDP as a unit of the First International with the intention of fighting for the workers' rights.³⁶ Thus, the ideological foundation lies in Marxists theories, however, a reformist approach was adopted with time.³⁷ The party has through the years emphasised the importance of a strong state and welfare system, and since the 1990s an internal discussion over immigration policies became more evident.³⁸ The Danish journalist Jens Ringberg describes³⁹ the presence of a certain self-perception within the party as they see themselves as the ones, who formed the Danish welfare-system, they have been "acting responsibly in hard times" and they have been holding the governmental power through decades.

Since 2015 Frederiksen has been the leader of the party. In June 2017, she launched the SDP's new vision for the EU in the Danish newspaper Politiken⁴⁰ as well as on the party's webpage.⁴¹ It bears the title *Europe for the people*. The political document was published at a time, when the Social Democrats were in opposition to the then government, hence they were not in the government and the political document must therefore be understood as an expression for the SDP's vision and not as an expression for the opinion of the Danish government. This is the core essence of where the political document and the Interview from October 2019 diverge, and also why this document can only serve as supporting information in this context. However, it indicates that the Interview cannot be seen as an expression for Frederiksen's point of view alone. Coexisting the political document *Europe for the people* and the Interview indicates that the message and narrative must be seen as an expression for the official opinion of the SDP, since the two publications largely share contentual similarities.

³⁶ Lars Bille & Mogens Rüdiger, "Socialdemokratiet", *Danmarkshistorien*, Aarhus Universitet on *danmarkshistorien.dk*, edited April 13, 2018

<https://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/socialdemokraterne/>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Jens Ringberg, "Historien om Socialdemokratiet: Det største parti, der mistede førsteretten til magten", *DR*, accessed August 4, 2020

<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/webfeature/socialdemokratiet>

⁴⁰ Mette Frederiksen, "Her er Mette Frederiksens nye vision for EU," *Politiken*, June 16, 2017

<https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art5997193/Her-er-Mette-Frederiksens-nye-vision-for-EU>

⁴¹ Socialdemokratiet, "Europa for folket", *Socialdemokratiet*, June 16, 2017

<https://www.socialdemokratiet.dk/da/nyhedsarkiv/2017/5/europa-for-folket/>

In the political document *Europe for the people*, an intergovernmentalistic⁴² (see section 3.3.1) approach can be observed, as it becomes clear that “the SDP [wishes] to unite strong, European nation states with a strong EU”⁴³ and understands “the nation states as the backbone of the community”. The EU must be understood as a “political tool to solve concrete cases”, and of concrete cases the ones of security and protection of external borders are especially highlighted in the vision. Cases as climate change and human rights are briefly mentioned. The vision is structured around five priorities similar to the key priorities mentioned in the Interview. For details, see reference.

2.3 Mette Frederiksen

Since 2015, Frederiksen has enjoyed the role as leader of the SDP.⁴⁴ She took over after the former PM and leader of the SDP Helle Thorning-Schmidt who had lost the parliamentary power after the election in 2015. With a Degree from College of Europe in Bruges, a former seat in the European Parliament⁴⁵ and a British husband, Helle Thorning-Schmidt was often portrayed as being elitist and too international.⁴⁶ Contrary, Frederiksen was in her younger years known as and portrayed as an uncompromising rebel and an idealistic left-winged social democrat.⁴⁷ Since June 27, 2019, Frederiksen has been PM for Denmark, in a one-party government.⁴⁸ In connection with the election in 2019, Frederiksen emphasised it as essential to fight criminality in order to guard trust, solidarity and fellowship as fundamental cornerstones in Danish culture.⁴⁹ In her first speech as PM⁵⁰ (the

⁴² Michelle Cini, “Intergovernmentalism,” in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 66-67

⁴³ Mette Frederiksen, “Her er Mette Frederiksens nye vision for EU,” *Politiken*, June 16, 2017

<https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art5997193/Her-er-Mette-Frederiksens-nye-vision-for-EU>

⁴⁴ Unknown, “Danmarks statsminister Mette Frederiksen,” Statsministeriet, accessed May 15, 2020

http://www.stm.dk/p_10575.html

⁴⁵ Unknown, “Helle Thorning-Schmidt,” *Folketinget – the Danish Parliament*, Last updated April 4, 2016

<https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/members/helle-thorning-schmidt>

⁴⁶ Ritzau, “Portræt: Den utraditionelle socialdemokrat trækker sig,” *Finans, politik*, Published June 19, 2015

<https://finans.dk/live/politik/ECE7807707/Portr%C3%A6t-Den-utraditionelle-socialdemokrat-tr%C3%A6kker-sig/?ctxref=ext>

⁴⁷ Kirstine Korsgaard, “Fra rebel til Danmarks næste statsminister? Her er milepælene i Mette Frederiksens politiske forvandling,” *Altinget*, June 10, 2019

<https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/fra-rebel-til-danmarks-naeste-statsminister-her-er-milepaelene-i-mette-frederiksens-politiske-forvandling>

⁴⁸ Unknown, “Mette Frederiksen – Statsminister og formand for Socialdemokratiet,” Socialdemokratiet, accessed May 15, 2020

<https://www.socialdemokratiet.dk/da/politikere/folketingsmedlem/mette-frederiksen/>

⁴⁹ Unknown, “Mette Frederiksen,” *Altinget – kandidattest*, accessed May 15, 2020

<https://www.alinget.dk/kandidater/ft15/Mette-Frederiksen>

⁵⁰ Unknown, “Statsministerens åbningstale ved Folketingets åbning den 1. oktober 2019 – Det talte ord gælder,” *Statsministeriet*, accessed May 15, 2020

http://www.stm.dk/p_14864.html

equivalent to a state of the union speech in Denmark), Frederiksen repeated her emphasis on the urgency to protect the culturally embedded Danish values: “We must protect what makes Denmark Denmark. Trust. Fellowship. Solidarity.”⁵¹

Frederiksen has been declared the most EU-sceptical PM in history.⁵² Noa Redington, former adviser to Helle Thorning-Schmidt in her time as PM, called it damaging in an article from January 26, 2020,⁵³ when Frederiksen is neglecting the importance of a stable EU. He claims that it is outmost essential that the PM does not neglect the importance of the European community in a time of post-Brexit. While Redington adds that her “short-sighted domestic regards”⁵⁴ should no longer be accepted, Peter Nedergaard opposes. Nedergaard, a political-science professor from the University of Copenhagen, on the other hand argues that Frederiksen is merely using the EU as it was intended – a political battlefield.⁵⁵

2.4 Historical context

To understand the potential future relation between Denmark and the EU today it is important to have an understanding of this somewhat peculiar role of a small state in the European community. The Danish relation to the EU contains a tremendous amount of complexities and information worthy of investigation. However, I will only present the information relevant for the context of this thesis.

The question on transfer of sovereignty has played an essential role in the Danish understanding of, and attitude towards the EU. To understand the relation between Denmark and the EU, we must understand the concept of sovereignty. The actual transfer of sovereignty as a judicial term means that sovereignty can only be transferred in accordance with the interpretation of sovereignty as it is expressed in paragraph 20 in the Danish Constitution.⁵⁶ According to subsection 1 in the paragraph, when it is first decided to transfer sovereignty to an international authority, this transfer of

⁵¹ Ibid.

Original: Vi må styrke det, som gør Danmark til Danmark. Tilliden. Sammenholdet. Solidariteten.

⁵² Jakob Nielsen, “Mette Frederiksen er historiens mest EU-skeptiske statsminister,” *Altinget*, January 29, 2020

<https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/mette-frederiksen-er-den-mest-eu-skeptiske-statsminister-danmark-har-haft>

⁵³ Noa Redington, “Mette Frederiksen kan ikke blive ved med at skjule sig bag sin nølende og slet skjulte EU-skepsis,” *Politiken*, January 26, 2020

<https://politiken.dk/debat/klummer/art7619559/Mette-Frederiksen-kan-ikke-blive-ved-med-at-skutte-sig-bag-sin-n%C3%B8lende-og-slet-skjulte-EU-skepsis>

⁵⁴ Ibid. Original: kortsigtede indenrigspolitiske hensyn

⁵⁵ Peter Nedergaard, “Derfor er Mette Frederiksen slet ikke EU-kritisk”, *Kristeligt-Dagblad*, February 5, 2020

<https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/derfor-er-mette-frederiksen-slet-ikke-eu-kritisk>

⁵⁶ The Constitutional Act of Denmark, Chapter III, Paragraph 20 (LOV nr 169 af 05/06/1953)

sovereignty cannot be reversed without a fully exit of the membership in the given organisation, here i.e. the EU. Furthermore, EU law overrules national law.

“Hvad udad tabes, skal indad vindes”⁵⁷ is an old saying embedded in the Danish historical memory.⁵⁸ The saying is known by most Danes and refers to the historical consciousness⁵⁹ build after the Battle at Dybbøl Mølle in 1864. After the battle Denmark, as a consequence of the loss, lost Schleswig and Holstein to Germany, which corresponded to about one third of Denmark’s total area at the time. Throughout time the saying has referred to a collective narrative⁶⁰ of the importance of securing Danish sovereignty by “clinging to the Danish identity”.⁶¹ Additionally, euroscepticism has flourished in Denmark since the mid 1980s⁶² with a strong emphasis on national identity and sovereignty.⁶³ Distinctive for the Danish Euroscepticism is that it has traditionally had its foundation in the political left wing: Red Green Alliance, Socialist People’s Party and the two movements: the June Movement and the People’s Movement against the EU. Albeit, in 1995, the Danish People’s Party (DPP) was established with a “defensive nationalist Euroscepticism” and a strong attitude towards foreigners and international organisations as key priorities. According to Kelstrup, Denmark has since the admission been positive but still kept a somewhat reluctant and reserved attitude towards further European Integration. As can be understood in the rejection of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which led to the four Danish reservations⁶⁴ enshrined in the Edinburgh Agreement.⁶⁵ After two unsuccessful referendums between 1992 and 2000 the more EU-optimistic attitude in Danish politics was downscaled. When Venstre – the Liberal Party (a historically EU-positive party⁶⁶) won the governmental power along with the Conservative People’s Party in 2001, they enjoyed the governmental power by support of the Eurosceptic DPP. Internally in Venstre –

⁵⁷ What is lost outwards, must be won inwards

⁵⁸ Andrea Bisgaard Hansen, “Hvad udad tabes, skal indad vindes,” in *Kristeligt Dagblad*, November 24, 2004 <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/historie/hvad-udad-tabes-skal-indad-vindes>

⁵⁹ For further information see Tomas Sniegón, *Vanished History. The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture*, (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014) 1

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4

⁶¹ Andrea Bisgaard Hansen, “Hvad udad tabes, skal indad vindes,” in *Kristeligt Dagblad*, November 24, 2004 <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/historie/hvad-udad-tabes-skal-indad-vindes>

⁶² Kelstrup, Morten. “Chapter 2: Denmark’s relation to the European Union – A history of dualism and pragmatism.” In *Denmark and the European Union*, ed. by Lee Miles and Anders Wivel (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2014), 15-16.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23-25

⁶⁴ EU-Oplysningen. “The Danish opt-outs from EU cooperation,” Folketinget – EU Information Centre, edited January 15, 2020.

<https://www.eu.dk/da/english/the-danish-opt-outs-from-eu-cooperation>

⁶⁵ Kelstrup, Morten. “Chapter 2: Denmark’s relation to the European Union – A history of dualism and pragmatism.” In *Denmark and the European Union*, ed. by Lee Miles and Anders Wivel (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2014), 15-16.

⁶⁶ Venstre, “Europapolitik - mærkesager”, *Venstre - Frihed og fællesskab*, accessed July 30, 2020

<https://www.venstre.dk/politik/venstre-mener/eu>

the Liberal Party the general perception of the reservations was of them being merely a temporary solution. However, Kelstrup argues that the fact that the government held the power on the support of the DPP had its consequences, as the reservations were never up for debate during this governmental construction.⁶⁷ This political construction held the governmental power for ten years.

In April 2019 an analysis made by the European-Parliament claimed that with 76 per cent, the Danish attitude towards the EU was the most positive ever to be detected, since the entry in the European Community in 1973.⁶⁸ However, the question of sovereignty still remains as one of great importance for the Danes. Thus, according to an analysis conducted by the Think Tank EUROPE, 52 per cent answered that they feel anger or concern in questions of transfer of sovereignty.⁶⁹ Additionally, after a history of reluctance towards to the EU,⁷⁰ the Danish voters' turn out in the election for the European-Parliament in 2019 where the highest ever in history.⁷¹ Additionally, the Eurosceptic parties had lost support, as the DPP was reduced from 26.6 per cent to 10.7 per cent of the votes and the People's Movement Against the EU went from enjoying 8.1 per cent to lose its seat with a result on 3.7 per cent of the votes.⁷² The other aforementioned sceptic parties have either been dismantled or turned towards a EU-positive attitude.

Concluding, it can be extracted that the majority of Danes might no longer perceive the EU with scepticism as a shift is indicated in the voter's turn out, although the reluctance might maintain its presence.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the theoretical framework on which I will build my research.

⁶⁷ Kelstrup, Morten. "Chapter 2: Denmark's relation to the European Union – A history of dualism and pragmatism." In *Denmark and the European Union*, ed. by Lee Miles and Anders Wivel (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2014), 15-16.

⁶⁸ Malte Kjems, "Dansk opbakning til EU inde i historisk højkonjunktur", *Notat – Think Tank EUROPE*, April 25, 2020 <http://thinkeuropa.dk/vaerdier/dansk-opbakning-til-eu-inde-i-historisk-hoejkonjunktur>

⁶⁹ Karsten Tingleff Vestergaard, "Vi er tilfredse med EU men bekymrede for at afgive suverænitet" *Notat – Think Tank EUROPE*, March 27 2019 <http://thinkeuropa.dk/vaerdier/vi-er-tilfredse-med-eu-men-bekymrede-miste-suveranitet>

⁷⁰ Kelstrup, Morten. "Chapter 2: Denmark's relation to the European Union – A history of dualism and pragmatism." In *Denmark and the European Union*, ed. by Lee Miles and Anders Wivel (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2014), 15-16.

⁷¹ European Parliament. "Valgdeltagelse efter år – Danmark – endelige resultater," European Parliament in cooperation with Kantar, edited September 25, 2019

<https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/da/nationale-resultater/danmark/0028.png>

⁷² Andreas Arp. "Stemmerne er talt op: sådan endte EP-valget 2019," *Altinget*, 27.05.2019 <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/direkte-foelg-det-danske-resultat-af-ep-valget-2019>

3.0 Theory

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be presented. The focus will be on Marlene Wind's description of tribalism and Hannah Arendt's thoughts on truths in the realm of politics. Finally, I will introduce the concept of European Integration theory and intergovernmentalism.

3.1 Tribalism

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, tribalism is a term used to describe the very intense feeling of loyalty towards a specific tribe, group i.e., in example political, social, football groups etc.⁷³

When I refer to the term tribalism, I will refer to the term as it is portrayed by Wind in *The Tribalization of Europe: A Defence of Our Liberal Values*: built on identity politics defined by Francis Fukuyama and balkanisation⁷⁴ and alike ethnocentrism as defined by William Graham Sumner.⁷⁵ However, I will not use the term balkanisation in my description of tribalism, as I find the term inappropriate and not descriptive. Instead I will refer to fragmentation or polarisation, where Wind refers to balkanisation, as I believe that this is the essence of her message.

In the following I will describe tribalism as Wind portrays it, before I elaborate how I will use this term and why, I have specifically chosen to use tribalism as it is portrayed by Wind.

According to Wind's presentation, tribalism deals with the sense of belonging to a certain tribe. She refers to the description of belonging and identity politics as it is presented by Fukuyama, therefore, I will here briefly present his presentation of this. In the book *Identity* and in the article *Against Identity Politics: The New Tribalism and the Crisis of Democracy*, Fukuyama describes the sense of belonging as an emphasis on what he refers to as "The third part of the soul"⁷⁶ – "one that coexisted with a 'desiring part' and a 'calculating part',"⁷⁷ which is, according to Fukuyama, what Plato describes as *thymos* in his work *Republic*. Fukuyama describes the notations of "'megalothymia': as a desire to be recognized as superior" and "'isothymia' - people wanting to be seen as just as good as everyone else", hence, Fukuyama claims that the demand for recognition of identity is essential

⁷³ Unknown, "Tribalism", *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* © Cambridge University Press, accessed August 17, 2020

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tribalism>

⁷⁴ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 1, 7

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 6: "et verdenssyn, hvor ens egen gruppe er centrum for alting, og alle andre (...) bliver mål og defineret i forhold til det."

⁷⁶ Francis Fukuyama, "The third part of the soul" in *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition* (Great Britain: Profile Books, 2018) 12-24

⁷⁷ Francis Fukuyama, "Against Identity Politics: The New Tribalism and the Crisis of Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October Issue, August 14, 2018

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/americas/2018-08-14/against-identity-politics-tribalism-francis-fukuyama>

and that this is what modern politics makes use of when constructing a political narrative, which creates a sense of belonging to a certain tribe, and in some cases indicates that this specific tribe is superior. This is identity politics according to Fukuyama. With these arguments Wind connects Fukuyama's connotation of the third part of the soul to tribalism. Because of the desire to have one's identity recognised, it becomes evident to protect the identity of the tribe, thus the identity of the inhabitants of the tribe, and in tribalism this is often seen as opposed to international communities such as the UN, NATO, WTO and the EU, which is why the protection of the tribe can as a result lead to the dismissal or even withdrawal from international structures and conventions⁷⁸ - and ultimately a fragmentation of the international community as we know it today. Wind elaborates, and claims that tribalism as presented as a need for belonging, ethnocentrism⁷⁹ and a calculated protection of the tribe ultimately leads to a fragmentation and polarisation.⁸⁰

Wind seeks to discuss the development of the above-mentioned tribalistic tendencies and in what way they can be observed in the European member states, as well as how this development consequently can influence the EU. As opposed to Fukuyama as well as Özkırıklı, Wind is specifically seeking to formulate a theoretical framework in order to examine the political tendencies within the context of the EU. Hence, her specifications of tribalism are suited to examine EU member states specifically. Wind describes various specifications or characteristics in order to structure her analysis and arguments, when analysing the existence of tribalism in the cases portrayed in her book. I have enlisted the characteristics⁸¹ here under:

- Democratic legitimacy can only be obtained through referendums and elections
- Strong institutions are a threat to democracy if not lead by democratically elected representatives
- Cancellation of liberal, democratic values and institutions are legitimate if the majority voted for it
- Defining an 'us' in order to exclude the other
- Withdrawal from international structures and conventions
- Activist and continuously exclusionary

⁷⁸ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 6

⁷⁹ "et verdenssyn, hvor ens egen gruppe er centrum for alting, og alle andre (...) bliver mål og defineret i forhold til det." Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 6

⁸⁰ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 1, 7

⁸¹ Ibid., 1-10

This exact focus on the development in a European context as well as the combination of theoretical tendencies and the specific characteristics is what makes Wind's presentation of tribalism relevant for my study, thus this is what I will base my theoretical framework on in my analysis.

3.2 Truths and Politics

Seen from the viewpoint of politics, truth has a despotic character. It is therefore hated by tyrants, who rightly fear the competition of a coercive force they cannot monopolize, and it enjoys a rather precarious status in the eyes of governments that rest on consent and abhor coercion. Facts are beyond agreement and consent, and all talk about them – all exchanges of opinion based on correct information – will contribute nothing to their establishment.

- Hannah Arendt⁸²

Hannah Arendt has throughout time dedicated much time to existentialism and phenomenology. Hereunder, she has been occupied with ideas on – amongst other – truth, authority and evil. In her work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she serves to describe the development of totalitarian regimes through a search to understand human nature. Therefore, the thoughts of Arendt are relevant in a search to understand the nature of political development through the nature of a given political actor. Hence, I will use Arendt to offer a nuance to my analysis; a nuance, which offers an emphasis on the humanistic aspect of how the development of the narrative in question can be understood. In relation to this thesis, I have chosen to focus on Arendt's text on *Truth and Politics*, which was originally published in *The New Yorker* in 1967.

According to Arendt, we must investigate the role inhabited by truth in the realm of politics in order to understand the motives behind the presentation of the given truth in the examined context.⁸³

Arendt defines truth as "what we cannot change" and argues that we must distinguish between what she defines as factual truth and rational truth. Factual truth does without conclusive reasoning merely serve to inform opinions. They are extracted from records of events and/or acts derived from the ever-changing scene of human affairs. Factual truth is more vulnerable towards misuse/manipulation in politics to support a given political opinion. On the other hand we have rational truth, which is solitary thoughts originated in e.g. mathematics and philosophy. They are

⁸² Ibid., 8

⁸³ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 1-19
Original: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1967/02/25/truth-and-politics>

unpolitical by nature and serve to enlighten human understanding. However, rational truths are likely to be shown impotent, “suffer defeat” in the quest of prevailing the opinion of the many. As opponent to these definitions of truth Arendt defines the lie or falsehood as what is neither supported by factual or rational truths. However, they will “always occur in a context” of facts. Furthermore, Arendt introduces the Hegelian phrase, this reference I have understood as a reference to the concept of Hegelian dialectic. This concept can be understood as dealing with the concept of a dialectic method, where a stable argument through a process of self-sublation is changed into the opposite, before the two are united in a synthesis. Thus, she refers to the Hegelian phrase as a tool of the liar, who enjoys the freedom to make the ‘facts’ “fit profit and pleasure”. Additionally, the political lies of modern times are often so big and structural that they would require a total rearrangement of the context or system. The last valuable definition in this context, Arendt defines as opinion – which is subjective and “truly discursive thinking”. Opinion will often enjoy the protection of a constitution, hence a lie or falsehood can be argued to have the nature of opinion and thereby achieve constitutional protection, e.g. enjoying the protection under the concept of freedom of speech. By oppositionists factual truth can be designated as opinion in order to make the truth open for discussion and perception.

In Arendt’s opinion it is merely on the lowest levels of human affairs we will see the factual truth collide with the political.

In the end Arendt concludes, that these definitions must be respected, if we are to protect the integrity of the political realm as “where we are free to act and change”. In this manner, Arendt’s terms can serve to investigate the ontology of truth in the realm of politics.

I do not seek to conclude on what is normatively good or bad, but to examine how we can understand the subject in question. For this reason, Arendt’s thoughts on the nature of truth in the realm of politics and her insistence on the need to understand the nature or origins of political actions will enable a humanistic understanding of the research object. Thus, the perspectives offered by Arendt will help me in the development of the analysis and discussion, albeit they will not assist me in answering whether tribalism can be detected. However, more importantly, they will assist me in developing the epistemological process of studying the humanistic perception of the term tribalism and the underlying motivations, as well as helping me offer a more nuanced portrayal of Frederiksen and the Interview in a historical and humanistic context.

3.3 European Integration

Theories surrounding the EU are often characterised by their search to understand and explain the integration process and EU governance.⁸⁴ I will hereunder briefly present one of the three grand theories within European Integration theories. Though all three theories can be explained in order to offer a complete perspective, I have chosen to merely emphasise intergovernmentalism, since I have found this theory to be the most fitting approach within the theories in order to understand the future perspectives of the Danish process of European integration in the context of this thesis.

3.3.1 Intergovernmentalism

Within the theoretical framework of intergovernmentalism (IG) several approaches exist. In my understanding of the theory, I am emphasising three approaches; classical IG as it is defined by Stanley Hoffmann; the domestic politics approach and liberal IG as defined by Andrew Moravcsik. Hence, I will be referring to the term IG and intergovernmentalists with an understanding of these three approaches being the essence.

IG is defined by being state-centric. The theory has its foundation in the realist understanding of the world, meaning intergovernmentalists share a strong connection to the concept of the sovereign states as key actors. They believe that the European community is a product of a common cost-benefit understanding of the most efficient way for the nation states to seek influence and to protect national interests.⁸⁵ Intergovernmentalists would disagree with the neo-functionalistic perception⁸⁶ of European integration being released by an inevitable spillover-effect. They would rather argue that the integration process is a deliberate decision of choosing European cooperation as a way to strengthen the nation states.⁸⁷ Consequently, intergovernmentalists see the European Council and the Council of Ministers as the chief EU-institutions, whereas the others are perceived as merely serving the member states. As for Hoffmann's perception of IG, the theory was born out of a need to reject neo-functionalist theory; hence, "claiming that, in concentrating on the *process* of European integration, neo-functionalists had forgotten the *context* within which it was taking

⁸⁴ Ben Rosamund, "Theorizing the European Union after Integration Theory," in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 80

⁸⁵ Michelle Cini, "Intergovernmentalism," in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 66-67

⁸⁶ Neo-functionalists believe in further European integration as a natural consequence of the European cooperation, but without an ideological dream of a united Europe or common identity as the driver. To see more: Carsten Strøby Jensen, "Neo-functionalism," in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 53-64

⁸⁷ Michelle Cini, "Intergovernmentalism," in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68-71

place”. The domestic politics approach specifically emphasises the cultural differences expressed by the member states and thereby the consequential affect of domestic politics and decision-making are imposing on the European integration process - or as expressed in a Latin fallacy: *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*⁸⁸, a causality i.e.. Liberal IG, which integrates neoliberal and realist elements, seeks to connect domestic policies and European integration even further as well as the act of bargaining is further articulated. The neoliberal element is especially underlined in Moravcsik’s perception of European integration as the process, where economic and/or commercial interests converge.⁸⁹ Moravcsik's explanation of the integration process is encapsulated as where “patterns of commercial advantage, the relative bargaining power of important governments, and the incentives to enhance the credibility of inter-state commitment”⁹⁰ meet. As portrayed in the liberal approach, IG furthermore refers to a theoretical understanding of a type of decision-making within international organisations, where the power of bargaining plays an essential role.

In summary, the intergovernmentalists do not believe the integration process should result in a more intertwined integration between the nation states, but merely sees the development as a continuous repetition of procedures in the framework of a corporation between nation states. Put simply, IG is a conjunction of the two grand theories within International Relations: liberalism and realism.

In this thesis I study the existence of tribalism within the context of the EU. Furthermore, I seek to study how this tendency can be understood in the context of European Integration theories. Future development of tribalistic tendencies within the EU have certain limitations if the member state in question does not wish to withdraw from the EU. In this light I have found the presentation of the intergovernmentalistic theory relevant, as it offers the most nation-centred perspective of the three grand integration theories. For this reason I have found that IG can help nuance the nature of tribalism within a context of European Integration. Although, intergovernmentalists understand international cooperation as a prerequisite and necessity for security and development of the state, which stands in opposition to the tribalistic theory as it is presented by Wind. Additionally, I believe it is relevant to examine whether these two theories exists in combination in order to discuss how this combination might influence the future developments. Furthermore, it can help to indicate

⁸⁸ After this, therefore, because of this.

⁸⁹ Michelle Cini, “Intergovernmentalism,” in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 73-74

⁹⁰ Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, (London: UCL Press, 1998) quoted in Michelle Cini, “Intergovernmentalism,” in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 66; 73-74

how the narrative presented by Frederiksen can be understood in the context of European Integration, and thereby how the future relationship between Denmark and the EU under Frederiksen might evolve.

4.0 Methodology and Sources

I will present a theoretical discussion with the purpose of clarifying the research tradition in which this thesis exists. This will be followed by arguments on my choice placing the thesis within the contextualisation of the postmodern conceptualisation of epistemology. The data of this thesis has been conducted as expert interviews following the methodological approach to qualitative interview as it is expressed by Steiner Kvale in *InterView: An Introduction to the qualitative research interview*. However, the thesis exists within an interpretative paradigm, as the analysis deals with the interpretation of Frederiksen's narrative, as the experts perceive it. Hence, the methodological approach follows the conceptualisation of expert interviews in the perspective of social constructivism as it is elaborated by Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz in *The Theory-Generating Expert Interview: Epistemological Interest, Forms of Knowledge, Interaction*.

Five days before the deadline of the thesis, I received an answer from the EU-spokesperson from the SDP. However, he did not agree to participate in an interview, instead he answered my questions through mail. This means that the dominant methodology, which will be presented in this section does not apply as such to the interaction I had with this specific source. I will present my concerns and thoughts in relation to this in [section 4.4](#) dealing with limitations.

Firstly, I will present the methodological framework and the sources of the thesis before lastly, the limitations will be displayed.

4.1 Methodological Framework

The methodological approach in this thesis has been structured around the epistemological perspective. Epistemology is the theory occupied with perception⁹¹; as it offers a perspective to define how one should understand the world, as opposed to the ontological perspective, which has its emphasis on being and how the world is. Inhabited in the epistemological perspective is an understanding that there are no universal truths, since everything is merely perception and

⁹¹ Steiner Kvale, *InterView: En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview* (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 27

interpretation. Through applying the epistemological perspective, I am aware that this thesis will seek to display one out of potentially many aspects of the subject, as my choice of theory and collected data in combination does not evidently lead to only one conclusion, rather this thesis will be just one of many potential conclusions impacted by my choices.

In my methodological approach I have leaned upon Steiner Kvale as well as Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz. Kvale highlights the hermeneutic method⁹² in the work of conducting qualitative interviews. According to him this method offers recognition of epistemology, as the hermeneutic method within humanities deals with comprehension or understanding. The hermeneutic method is occupied with the meaning of something. Therefore, in these delicate research situations the method can serve as a reminder for me as interviewer and the herein embedded participation in the creation of the texts (here i.e. expert interviews). In the process of securing an open and genuine approach, not too defined by normative wishes or understandings of me in the role as the researcher, the method of the hermeneutic circle proves itself most essential as a method and will help me to obtain useful knowledge.

4.1.1 Research design

The research goal of this thesis is to examine the interpretation of the narrative presented by Frederiksen in the Interview from October 2019, as it is expressed by five experts in five expert interviews. In order to implement this examination, I have applied a thematic analysis with my thematic framework in mind. This means that before building my questionnaires, I thoroughly examined the research object as it appears in [section 1.4](#) and built a theoretical framework as it appears in [chapter 3](#) in order to use this as the scaffold for my questions. The questionnaires can all be found in [Appendix 2](#). I constructed three questionnaires. One for the interviews conducted with the MP's and one for the interview conducted with the professor, I made this choice in order to shape the questionnaire according to the two types of experts. Lastly, I constructed one specifically to the MP from the SDP. This questionnaire does not completely follow the same logic as the two others, as it was elaborated earlier in this chapter. The questionnaires were built following the same logic: having three tracks; one for setting the scene and building the framework; one for specific questions relating to tribalism and finally one for guiding or supportive questions in case my interviewee veered off track. Since the qualitative research interview aims to be an interpersonal

⁹² Steiner Kvale, *InterView: En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview* (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 57-60

conversation,⁹³ I made a semi-structured research design, i.e. as open as possible and as loose as possible in order to secure trust and conformity to frame the interview as a conversation, i.e. conversational techniques.

The methodology behind the research design will be elaborated in the following sections.

4.2 Conducting interviews

The sources of this thesis are defined as interviews. Interviews are defined as an interaction between two subjects, who exchange perceptions and interpretations of the world as they see it. The research design of this thesis will be built on different interviews. In order to follow the hermeneutic circle and the specific emphasis on expert interviews, the methodological structure of this thesis is built on the qualitative interview technique presented by Steiner Kvale as well as Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz's approach to expert interviews.

I have collected five qualitative expert interviews. They serve as “a conversation of the human world, where the oral discourse is transferred into texts, which can be interpreted”.⁹⁴ Four of the interviews have been translated into texts, as the fifth was received as a text. The sources consist of four MP's from the Danish Parliament, who are also the EU-spokesperson of their given party, accompanied by one expert interview of a professor, who is specialised in EU-matters and tribalism. The sources will be presented in a following section.

4.2.1 Expert Interviews

The explained methodology of Bogner and Menz in *The Theory-Generating Expert Interview: Epistemological Interest, Forms of Knowledge, Interaction* is founded on the social-constructivist perspective as it deals with the theories of epistemology, hence interpretation, as they emphasise that the collected data from an interview must be understood as “social reality as a construction created by acts of interpretation”.⁹⁵ Since, I am dealing with the interpretation of meaning, I followed the approach of the hermeneutic circle. Thus, my conduction of the interviews of my sources was built on the approach presented by Steiner Kvale in *InterView: An Introduction to the qualitative research interview*. However, according to Bogner and Menz, the expert interview is a

⁹³ Ibid., 45-47

⁹⁴ Steiner Kvale, *InterView: En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview* (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 56-57

⁹⁵ Alexander Bogner & Wolfgang Menz, “The Theory-Generating Expert Interview: Epistemological Interest, Forms of Knowledge, Interaction,” *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig & Wolfgang Menz, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 45

methodological hybrid⁹⁶ between qualitative and quantitative methods, since it is often carried out as semi-structured and as an actively guided conduction, while at the same time lacking standardisation, thereby quantification. The essence of the methodology presented by Bogner and Menz is a claim that expert interviews diverge, as the result is defined by the interaction between the researcher and expert and their ability of “(re)construction of interpretative knowledge”.⁹⁷ They argue that pluralist methodology must be adopted, as well as the idea “that we can produce data in laboratory-like conditions” must be rejected. Furthermore, they emphasize the choices made by the researcher in the selection of experts and the expert’s perception of the interviewer, for which they display six kinds of ascription.⁹⁸ I will only be occupied with the first: Interviewer as co-expert. Thus, the definition and role of the expert and the researcher become essential in the methodology presented by Bogner and Menz. Consequently, the responsibility of the researcher in the choice of experts is essential, as they underline that the “strict focus on the societal parameters of expertise means there is a danger that a concept of the expert with elitist implications will be uncritically accepted”.⁹⁹ Since my data is developed as an interaction between me, as the researcher, and the experts, my choice of experts and their perception of me does naturally have an impact on the collected data, thereby the possible analysis and in the end the conclusion, as Bogner and Menz “treats the production of data as a social process”; hence, the collected data is dependent on the interviewer and interviewee. This method is supported by Kvale’s description of the interpersonal situation, where the interviewer as a subjective person is the method.¹⁰⁰ This methodology supports my epistemological framework, as it becomes evident that I, as the researcher, have influenced the conduction of the expert interviews. Therefore, I will elaborate my choices in the following.

4.3 Sources

In this section I will present a more elaborative presentation of my sources than what has been displayed in the previous sections.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 44

⁹⁷ Ibid., 73

⁹⁸ For information on all six, see *Table 2.1 Typology of interaction situations and interview strategies* in Alexander Bogner & Wolfgang Menz, “The Theory-Generating Expert Interview: Epistemological Interest, Forms of Knowledge, Interaction,” *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig & Wolfgang Menz, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 68

⁹⁹ Ibid., 50

¹⁰⁰ Steiner Kvale, *InterView: En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview* (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 46

My previous employment as it is described in the introduction of this thesis, enabled me to approach my sources with expert knowledge regarding the MFF negotiations and EU relations from a Danish perspective. This was something I was aware of in my choice of research subject, perspective and sources. Before approaching my experts, I conducted thorough research on experts dealing with the context of the research perspective of my thesis, as Bogner and Menz advise. Through my research on my research object and readings of various theories, the theories dealing with tribalism became more evident to me and as I decided to emphasise this specific theory in my thesis, the choice of approaching Wind seemed natural, as she is the author of the book, which I build my theoretical framework on. Furthermore, Wind has for years been occupied with EU relations as a Danish professor at the University of Copenhagen¹⁰¹ and she has publicly declared her concerns regarding the narrative of Frederiksen.¹⁰² Therefore, Wind could not only be considered an expert in the theoretical framework, but she became relevant in the particular case of my research object. For this reason, I chose to approach Wind specifically, because she is an expert in the specific thematic framework of my thesis, thus, I was specifically interested in adding the perspectives of Wind's interpretation of the research subject due to her research and work on tribalism within the EU.¹⁰³

My choice of approaching the MP's was present at an early stage in my research process. My reasoning was that the MP's could offer unique insights and ideational perspectives as they, themselves are politicians and therefore are aware of narrative building, but most interestingly, they will have a normative perception of how they believe the narrative of PM *should* be impacted by their ideological beliefs. Due to the MP's seats in the European Affairs Committee, they will have access to the information presented respectively by: the European Commission, the Danish ministries and often also shared information from the party's representatives in the European Parliament. They will therefore have a unique ability to understand the narrative presented by Frederiksen in an exceptional perspective. There are ten Danish parties in the Danish Parliament. However only nine MP's in the Danish Parliament hold a seat in the European Affairs Committee in Parliament as well as being appointed as EU-spokesperson for a party. I contacted all nine and four

¹⁰¹ Unknown, "Marlene Wind," *Institut for Statskundskab*, accessed May 14, 2020
[https://polsci.ku.dk/ansatte/vip/?pure=da%2Fpersons%2Fmarlene-wind\(e44339ae-1f51-4f8f-af2d-0a189785c9b5\).html](https://polsci.ku.dk/ansatte/vip/?pure=da%2Fpersons%2Fmarlene-wind(e44339ae-1f51-4f8f-af2d-0a189785c9b5).html)

¹⁰² Troels Heeger, "Marlene Wind: Mette Frederiksens EU-kurs er en »farlig strategi«", *Berlingske*, February 9, 2020
<https://www.berlingske.dk/debatinterview/marlene-wind-mette-frederiksens-eu-kurs-er-en-farlig-strategi>

¹⁰³ Unknown, "Marlene Wind," *Institut for Statskundskab*, accessed May 14, 2020
[https://polsci.ku.dk/ansatte/vip/?pure=da%2Fpersons%2Fmarlene-wind\(e44339ae-1f51-4f8f-af2d-0a189785c9b5\).html](https://polsci.ku.dk/ansatte/vip/?pure=da%2Fpersons%2Fmarlene-wind(e44339ae-1f51-4f8f-af2d-0a189785c9b5).html)

of them accepted my invitation for interview. I chose to approach the MP's because of their expertise in their own interpretation of the narrative presented by Frederiksen in the Interview. I also valued it as relevant to ask, whether they detect this narrative in other aspects of their work. Furthermore, the answers from the Social Democratic EU-spokesperson will nuance my analysis and offer a perspective from the inside of the SDP. This will help me understand whether the narrative presented in the Interview is exceptional or signifies a definite path, and whether it can be understood as the party's opinion or Frederiksen's opinion.

For the sake of good order, I would like to mention that I have consent from all sources to use their quotes in the analysis. However, the interviews will not be published along with the thesis, but can be forwarded by request and after agreement with the given sources. Therefore, the relevant quotes will be inserted in original form as footnotes in the analysis.

4.3.1 Marlene Wind, PhD, EURECO Professor, Director of (Centre for European Politics (CEP), Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen

Wind has been published on EU-matters since 1992 and has been conducting research since the early 1990s.¹⁰⁴ Wind becomes relevant for my thesis in her function as expert on the specific issue, which my thesis seeks to investigate, especially since she is the author of *The Tribalisation of Europe: A Defence of Our Liberal Values*. Wind does not necessarily claim to be EU-positive per se, but, more accurately, a strong defender of the liberal, democratic values on which the EU was traditionally founded.¹⁰⁵ My choice of approaching Wind as a source is based on her yearlong occupation with EU relations in a Danish context. Moreover, I was specifically interested in adding the perspectives of Wind's interpretation of the research subject due to her research and work on tribalism within the EU.¹⁰⁶

4.3.2 Jan E. Jørgensen, MP, EU-spokesperson, Venstre

Jan E. Jørgensen is a Member of Parliament elected for Venstre – The Liberal Party. Since 2016 he has been the party's EU-spokesperson and enjoyed a seat in the Parliament's European Affairs

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Troels Heeger, "Mette Frederiksen's EU-kurs er en 'farlig strategi'", *Berlingske*, February 9, 2020 <https://www.berlingske.dk/debatinterview/marlene-wind-mette-frederiksen-eu-kurs-er-en-farlig-strategi>

¹⁰⁶ Unknown, "Marlene Wind," *Institut for Statskundskab*, accessed May 14, 2020 [https://polsci.ku.dk/ansatte/vip/?pure=da%2Fpersons%2Fmarlene-wind\(e44339ae-1f51-4f8f-af2d-0a189785c9b5\).html](https://polsci.ku.dk/ansatte/vip/?pure=da%2Fpersons%2Fmarlene-wind(e44339ae-1f51-4f8f-af2d-0a189785c9b5).html)

Committee. Before Jørgensen was elected as a MP in 2011, he was occupied as a lawyer.¹⁰⁷ Venstre was the lead governmental party in the period of 2015-2019, prior to the Parliamentary election in June 2019. Venstre is the largest opposition party.

4.3.3 Katarina Ammitzbøll, MP, EU-spokesperson, The Conservative People's Party

Katarina Ammitzbøll has been a Member of Parliament elected for The Conservative People's Party since June 2019, where she was also appointed as the party's EU-spokesperson and enjoys a seat in the Parliament's European Affairs Committee. Before her election as MP, Ammitzbøll has for years been occupied with foreign relations, development and risk management. She has been employed in various positions in the UN since 1997.¹⁰⁸

4.3.4 Rasmus Nordqvist, MP, EU-spokesperson, The Alternative

Rasmus Nordqvist is a Member of Parliament elected for The Alternative party. Since 2015 he has been the party's EU-spokesperson and enjoys a seat on the Parliament's European Affairs Committee. Before his election in 2015, Nordqvist was engaged as a fashion designer.¹⁰⁹ In 2013 he was one of the co-founders of The Alternative, as well as later playing an essential part in the establishment of the transeuropean movement European Spring.¹¹⁰ Nordqvist was the party's lead candidate for the European Parliamentary election in May 2019.

During the process of this thesis Nordqvist changed his political membership and has since May 13, 2020 been a member of The Socialist People's Party. As a consequence, he lost the function as EU-spokesperson, but still enjoys the seat on the European Affairs Committee. For this thesis he is representing his previous function for The Alternative.

4.3.5 Jens Joel, MP, EU-spokesperson, The Social Democratic Party

Jens Joel is a Member of Parliament elected for the SDP.¹¹¹ Since September 2011, Joel has enjoyed a seat in Danish Parliament, where he also started as the party's EU-spokesperson retaining this role until 2013. Joel regained the role in late June 2020. For this reason Joel was not approached in the

¹⁰⁷ Biografiredaktionen, "Jan E. Jørgensen", *Folketinget – medlemmer*, updated February 10, 2020
<https://www.ft.dk/medlemmer/mf/j/jan-e-joergensen>

¹⁰⁸ Biografiredaktionen, "Katarina Ammitzbøll", *Folketinget – medlemmer*, updated February 10, 2020
<https://www.ft.dk/medlemmer/mf/k/katarina-ammitzboell>

¹⁰⁹ Biografiredaktionen, "Rasmus Nordqvist", *Folketinget – medlemmer*, updated May 13, 2020
<https://www.ft.dk/medlemmer/mf/r/rasmus-nordqvist>

¹¹⁰ Alternativet, "European Spring: Den første fælleseuropæiske opstillingsliste nogensinde", *Alternativet – nyheder*, accessed August 12, 2020

<https://alternativet.dk/nyheder/europa-parlamentsvalg-2019/European-Spring>

¹¹¹ Biografiredaktionen, "Jens Joel", *Folketinget – medlemmer*, updated February 10, 2020
<https://www.ft.dk/medlemmer/mf/j/jens-joel>

first round in May 2020, where I conducted the other expert interviews. His colleague was. In the years between 2006 and 2011 Joel was employed as Head of Secretariat and political advisor for the SDP's political delegation in the European Parliament.¹¹²

Joel did not have the time to participate in an interview, but agreed to answer my questions via email. This could potentially mean that Joel's answers have been produced with assistance from an advisor.

In my questions to Joel I additionally asked whether the PM, from his point of view, could be understood to express the opinion of the SDP and the Danish government. He answered, "The PM expresses the opinion of the SDP. Neither more, nor less"¹¹³ and, he added that this should also be understood as the opinion of the Danish government.

4.4 Limitations

Following the postmodern understanding of knowledge as "interrelational and structural, intertwined in a web of network"¹¹⁴, knowledge does not inhabit a person, but exists between the subject and the world, hence the relationship is of a definitive character. In the context of this specific thesis, it becomes necessary to elaborate that I as a researcher wish to examine a subject, which I have, as presented in the introduction, previously worked professionally with. Therefore I might inhabit a normative opinion of the research subject; why, it becomes crucial to be aware of myself as a researcher and a normative subject in order to secure an epistemological approach. Albeit, in order to secure the highest validity of the produced knowledge I, as a researcher, have a wish to examine the chosen object "right from the outside, on the other side of discourse"¹¹⁵ as Foucault puts it, in order to examine the object freely and without institutionalised discourses. My employment position as the former adviser of Nordqvist on EU matters, allowed me a unique relation between the analytical and empirical object, which in addition has had an inevitable effect

¹¹² Simon Holst Jensen, "Rokade: Jens Joel genindtager Socialdemokratiets EU-ordførerskab", *Altinget*, June 26, 2020 <https://www.alinget.dk/eu/artikel/rokade-jens-joel-genindtager-socialdemokratiets-eu-ordfoererskab>

¹¹³ Jens Joel, e-mail to author, September 2, 2020

Statsministeren udtrykker Socialdemokratiets holdning. Hverken mere eller mindre. (...) Q: Vil du sige, det regeringens holdning eller er det partiets holdning? A: De to er sammenfaldende.

¹¹⁴ Steiner Kvale, *InterView: En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview* (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 54

¹¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 215

on the inter-relational development of knowledge in the situation of the interviews.¹¹⁶ Thus my position, with achieved knowledge, has enabled the possibility of a more elaborate answer from the interviewees. This is since, “a qualitative research interview will instead seek to take advantage of the different abilities of the interviewer, thus, the ability to emphasise and forward the various nuances and depths of the theme in question”.¹¹⁷ However, I discovered that my subjective role as the interviewer had a greater impact in the interaction with the MP’s than I had expected. This learning is something I wish I had foreseen, since it would have enabled me to dig even deeper than what I had planned at my research design.

Given the aspect of the interpersonal emphasis in the postmodern understanding of the interview-situation, it is highly possible that the interviewees’ willingness to participate in my research is connected to their interpretation of Nordqvist as a political colleague. Consequently, as a person, I did not have the possibility to engage in the interview situation from a clean sheet. In my contact with Joel, I used another procedure, as I made contact with him almost three months after I had interviewed the other experts. However, this enabled me to ask someone from the SDP about specific tendencies in the already conducted interviews. I ended up with a response rate of 44.44 per cent in my interaction with the MP’s in.

My greatest issue with the collected data is the obvious concern that the majority of the interviewees have a pro-EU viewpoint. That said, the politicians represent different parties with three different ideological foundations, thus three different conceptualisations of their normative pro-EU understanding, though they will still share the perception of the EU being something positive. Wind is not fixed on this matter, as is described in [section 4.3.1](#). Furthermore, Joel represents the governmental party, thus the same party as Frederiksen. Thus, the key findings will suffer from the fact that the majority share the normative understanding of the EU as a positive concept. This will inevitably affect the findings, and thereby the analysis and conclusion, which I am able to present in this thesis. In this perspective the answer I received from Joel plays an essential role, even though it naturally has embedded complications as the answers were conducted close to three months after the other expert interviews; Joel had only recently been appointed as EU-spokesperson and lastly, the fact that the answers were written and potentially with assistance from a political advisor. Joel originally only said he would answer one question by mail. This had

¹¹⁶ Steiner Kvale, *InterView: En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview* (Denmark: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1997), 55

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45

an impact on the questions I formulated, as I wanted him to answer as many as possible. Furthermore, I did not have the possibility to ask any follow-up questions, and I am not guaranteed that the answers are genuinely an expression of Joel's opinion and not the official opinion of the party. In some cases my questions have not been answered and in other cases he presents statements as facts but without presenting the facts, and in these cases I would have preferred to have the possibility to ask follow-up questions or to ask him to elaborate, since this would have enabled more precise and nuanced material.

Had I tried to collect data by interviewing other known EU-sceptics the analysis would still have suffered, as I intended the emphasis on the experienced understanding obtained in the function as a EU-spokesperson and a Committee seat, upholding the information and obligations that follows with this office. Representatives without this position would therefore inevitably not have the same information as the EU-spokespersons from the Danish Parliament, which would cause the questions to vary and thereby make a competent and credible analysis difficult, since the data would not have been collected on a level playing field.

For these reasons it must be mentioned that the data is not sufficient to draw fundamental conclusions on tendencies; therefore I will not claim that my data is a representative sample from which to draw fundamental conclusions. The findings can merely display a tendency as it is experienced by the present sources and their answers, which are naturally influenced and potentially limited by my questions.

5.0 Findings and Analysis

The chapter will be structured in line with the theoretical framework in order to examine the presence of perceived tribalist indications as well as intergovernmentalistic tendencies. Therefore, I will analyse the existence of an interpreted definition of a tribe. I will analyse how the experts interpreted Frederiksen's perception of the EU-institutions. Hereafter, I will analyse how the experts believe the relation between the Danish population and the EU is expressed in the Interview. Lastly, I will analyse how the experts interpreted the future perspectives after reading the Interview. The theoretical perspective offered by Arendt in [section 3.2](#) will, as described, serve merely as an elaborative component in the argumentation of the presence of tribalistic tendencies. In the end a sub-conclusion will seek to extract the essential findings.

5.1 Defining the Tribe

*When identity is used today to actively exclude those, who belong from those, who does not, it works as what, I will here define as 'fabricated tribalism', where cynical political leaders exploits a sense of belonging to mobilise offensively against clearly defined enemies.*¹¹⁸

- Marlene Wind, The Tribalisation of Europe

I will in this section examine the presence of the characteristics of a need to define an *us* in order to exclude the *other*¹¹⁹ supported by an activist and continuously exclusionary rhetoric or behaviour.

In the Interview Frederiksen uses the term “quixotic speeches”, which can be understood as a reference to the previous governmental parties (Venstre, the Conservative People’s Party, Liberal Alliance), plus the embedded others defending the free movement. The term serves to indicate that these ‘others’ does not understand the people, nor are they a part of what she in the same sentence defines as “the real world”. Thereby it is indicated that Frederiksen is a part of “the real world”, thus she understands ‘the people’, as she emphasise with stating that “I can see (...)”. The use of the labels “quixotic speeches” and “real world” can be seen to imply that the speech of the ‘others’ are falsehoods or lies. This way the interpretation of the free movement can be seen as turned into a matter of what Arendt defines as falsehood versus truth, and not a matter of opinion open for discussion.¹²⁰ As a part of defining the tribe, the definition of the ‘other’ becomes significant.

In various statements Mette Frederiksen refers to a ‘we’ in opposition to the EU. I asked Joel, who ‘we’ are in these statements. He did not answer this question. But used the term ‘we’ himself in the majority of his answers.

When I asked the experts what they believed to be the motive behind the narrative, Wind, Nordqvist, Jørgensen and Ammitzbøll mentioned that they perceived the narrative as a strategy to claim the voters, who have historically supported the DPP. Joel on the other hand argued that the motive behind the statement was to send a clear signal about prioritising the budget. Hereunder I have listed some of the key statements from the experts in this regard.

[H]er project has been all along to claim the voters from the DPP. And how do you do that?

Well, of course you start by claiming some of their positions. Alas, she has fully done so on

¹¹⁸ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 34

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 6

¹²⁰ Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 10

the national conservative part. Additionally, she still keeps this classical social democratic and workers part; henceforth she has been able to formulate what she has entitled The New Social Democracy. Embedded is a harsh, harsh critique of the EU.¹²¹

- Rasmus Nordqvist

Frederiksen, she strives after the national political agenda all the way because she wishes to win the next election. And foreign politics normally does not mean much when you're standing in the ballot box.¹²²

– Katarina Ammitzbøll

I think Frederiksen is EU-sceptic. I believe she is. And then I also think she is very conscious of from where she must gain voters. They are obviously working to pull voters from the DPP – and with great success.¹²³

- Jan E. Jørgensen

It is specifically this [DPP's] voter segment she is pursuing. So this is her strength – this is her own analysis – that she must succeed in appealing to this target group – the DPP's segment. [She must do so] with anti-European, anti-elitist and a hard line on immigration policy: advocate for border control, communicate to people the same way Pia Kjærsgaard does.¹²⁴

- Marlene Wind

¹²¹ Rasmus Nordqvist, interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

[H]endes projekt har jo været, at hun skulle ind og tage stemmerne fra Dansk Folkeparti. Hvordan gør du det? Jamen det gør du selvfølgelig ved at begynde at gå ind og overtage positioner. Og det har hun jo gjort på hele den nationalkonservative del. Og så har hun så stadig en sådan klassisk socialdemokratisme og arbejder-delen med sig og dermed kan hun så formulere det der, som hun kalder det nye Socialdemokrati. Og der ligger jo en stor, stor kritik af EU hele vejen igennem.

¹²² Katarina Ammitzbøll, interview by author, phone, May 19, 2020

Det først er, Mette Frederiksen, hun går efter den nationalpolitiske agenda hele tiden, fordi hun vil genvinde næste valg. Og udenrigspolitik fylder normalt ikke ret meget, når man står ved stemmeurnen. Det andet er, at jeg tror ikke, hun har den store viden om det. Det tror jeg ikke, hun har.

¹²³ Jan E. Jørgensen, interview by author, phone, May 21, 2020

Jeg tror, Mette Frederiksen er EU-skeptisk. Det tror jeg, hun er. Og så tror jeg også, hun er meget bevidst om, hvor hun skal trække stemmer. De er jo i fuld gang med at trække stemmer fra Dansk Folkeparti og med stor succes.

¹²⁴ Marlene Wind, interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

Det er jo i den grad dét vælgersegment, hun går efter. Så hendes styrke – det er hendes egen analyse – det er, at hvis hun kan appellere til den vælgergruppe – DF-vælgergruppen – med anti-europæisk og med anti-elitær og hård udlændinge politik, går ind for grænsekontrol, taler til folk på sådan lidt den samme måde, som Pia Kjærsgaard, ikke.

These four experts interpret the narrative as having an embedded strategy addressed towards a discursive need for belonging, ethnocentrism¹²⁵ and a calculated protection of the tribe - as it is described by the applied tribalistic theory in [section 3.1](#). Joel's perception of the motive stands in opposition to the perception of the four others, as he identifies the motive behind the narrative to be

[A] wish to say clearly 'stop', when we [The SDP] believe that there is a need to do so. The tough priorities there must be made in the EU are obviously difficult (...) The EU-budget consists of staggering billions. Therefore it was important for the PM to send a clear signal that we must dare to discuss and prioritise in the EU – just as we do in Denmark.¹²⁶

Joel's argument of the need to send a clear signal does not indicate much else than fact that the SDP did not agree with the proposal as it was outlaid by the Commission at the time. The tribalistic tendencies are nevertheless emphasised by Wind, who describes the narrative as:

[M]eticulously orchestrated in a screenplay. And so it is somewhat reminiscent of what I write in my book.¹²⁷ Namely, this strategic tribalisation. This strategic way, like many of the leaders that we see in this time, uses this sense of powerlessness and plays quite consciously and almost deliberately creates these contradictions.¹²⁸

- Marlene Wind

In the Interview, Frederiksen presents her narrative as an opinion, to which the reader can either agree or disagree. Consequently, she is continuously exclusionary as this is presented as a choice between *us* or the defined *other*. As an example she states, "[t]o me it is by principle that the EU should be about the people and not about the institutions and politicians".¹²⁹ This statement must be contextualised, since it is introduced after the statement "completely wack". Therefore, this

¹²⁵ "et verdenssyn, hvor ens egen gruppe er centrum for alting, og alle andre (...) bliver mål og defineret i forhold til det." Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 6

¹²⁶ Jens Joel, E-mail to author, September 2, 2020

Bag udsagnet ligger et ønske om at sige klart fra, når vi mener, der er behov for det. De hårde prioriteringer, der skal foretages i EU kan åbenlyst være vanskelige (...) EU-budgettet består af et svimlende milliardbeløb. Og derfor var det vigtigt for statsministeren at sende et klart signal om, at vi skal turde diskutere og prioritere – ligesom vi gør i det i Danmark

¹²⁷ The Tribalization of Europe

¹²⁸ Marlene Wind, interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

det er minutiøst orkestreret i en drejebog. Og derfor minder det jo også lidt om det, jeg skriver i min bog [Tribaliseringen af Europa]. Nemlig den her strategiske tribalisering. Den her strategiske måde, som mange af de ledere, som vi ser i denne her tid, bruger denne her følelse af afmagt og spiller helt bevidst på og skaber nærmest bevidst de her modsætningsforhold.

¹²⁹ Appendix 1, 4

statement can be seen as in opponent to the Commission. Thus, Frederiksen underlines her definition of an *us* in contrast to the *other*, but also indicates that the Commission as a strong institution is a threat democracy. Additionally, she strongly emphasises this as a matter of the elite versus the people. The tribalistic characteristic dealing with strong institutions will be elaborated in the following section.

5.2 Strong Institutions and Democracy

*I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them.*¹³⁰

– Hannah Arendt, *Truth and Politics*

In this section I will examine Frederiksen's perception of strong institutions and democracy, accompanied by how the experts interpreted her views. This will be done according to the characteristics describing strong institutions as a threat to democracy if not lead by democratically elected representatives¹³¹ and that democratic legitimacy can only be obtained through referendums and elections.¹³² Embedded in the narrative of rejecting strong institutions within the tribalist theory, as presented in this thesis, lies an understanding that only an elected representative can truly represent the will of the people. In this context Arendt's definition of political representation offers a deeper understanding to the tendency. To examine this matter, I have asked the experts how they perceive Frederiksen's and The SDP's view on the EU-institutions.

Joel answered that:

The EU-system sometimes has a completely different perception of what is important or relevant than the one of the European populations who they are supposed to represent. As an example, when European integration or discharging of differences between the countries are set as the goal of European cooperation; when the EU-system makes EU into an ideological project. This is not in line with the every day life of the vast majority of Europeans. The majority of the people in Europe feel Danish, German or Swedish before they feel European. We [The SDP] would like to cooperate, but it is only a goal where it creates added value. This should be reflected

¹³⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 9

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal: 2020), 10

and respected in the efforts in the EU-system.¹³³

- Jens Joel

With this statement, Joel argues that the vast majority of the Europeans are not interested in an ideological project and neither see themselves as European before their nationality. Joel emphasise that he agrees with Frederiksen in her statement of the EU-institutions being disconnected from the European population, albeit, he does not explicitly present this as his opinion. However, he highlights that he has the perception that the role of the EU-institutions is to represent the European population. This can be seen in opposition to the other four sources' interpretation of how Frederiksen perceives the EU-institutions. Especially Nordqvist and Wind emphasise that they interpret Frederiksen as presenting herself as the representative and defender of the people and that she does so in opposition to the EU institutions.

Nordqvist highlights that:

[S]he thinks [the EU institutions] are nonsense. Because we've got everything under control in the member states. (...) The European-Parliament is somewhere she is inclined to pay respect, since it is elected. But the Commission she thinks it's nonsense (...). She is national oriented first and foremost. That is why, to her, the [European] Council is something, where she can show up to meetings and decide things and then go home and implement by herself. But under no circumstances should there be anywhere else where anyone else can decide.¹³⁴

- Rasmus Nordqvist

Wind supports this argument. But furthermore adds that she observes something more structural in the Danish relation to the EU. This structural observation in combination with the rhetoric of Frederiksen makes Wind draw similarities to one of the key cases from her book: Hungary:

¹³³ Jens Joel, e-mail to author, September 2, 2020

At EU-systemet til tider har en helt anden opfattelse af hvad der er vigtigt eller relevant end de europæiske befolkninger, som de burde repræsentere. Bl.a. når europæisk integration eller opløsningen af forskelle mellem landene bliver sat som målet med europæisk samarbejde. Når EU-systemet gør EU til et ideologisk projekt. Det stemmer ikke overens med langt de fleste europæeres hverdag. De fleste mennesker i Europa føler sig først som danskere, tyskere eller svenskere før de er europæere. Vi vil gerne samarbejde, men det er jo kun et mål, der hvor det skaber merværdi. Det bør EU-systemets indsats reflektere og respektere.

¹³⁴ Rasmus Nordqvist, interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

[H]un synes, det er noget pjat. Fordi, det har vi jo styr på ude i medlemslandene. (...) Jeg tror, Europa-Parlamentet, det har hun lidt mere respekt for, fordi det er folkevalgt. Men Kommissionen, hun synes, det er noget pjat. (...) Hun er national først og fremmest. Derfor betyder Rådet [Det Europæiske Råd] noget for hende, hvor hun kan sidde til møder og bestemme ting og tage hjem og implementere dem selv. Men der skal jo ikke sidde nogen, nogen andre steder og bestemme.

- [O]ne should of course not compare Denmark and Hungary 1:1. (...) In Denmark, the courts are also reluctant; do not overrule the Parliament if they have done something. (...) So there are many common features in the rhetorical positioning, that is, the way that it creates fear; the discourse on foreigners – they are very similar to each other. (...) and the tendency of demonising the elite and the EU.¹³⁵
- Marlene Wind

Studying the narrative in the Interview, Frederiksen emphasises that the EU is “disconnected from the world we live in”, thereby it must be understood that they are disconnected; people associated to or advocating for the European community, the EU, cannot be trusted. In this statement, Frederiksen underlines that the strong EU-institutions are “disconnected from the world we live in”; hence, the “European community” is a threat to democracy. In opposition to this, she introduces herself as a representative for “the world we live in”; she is democratically elected and will fight against this “disconnected” “European community”, as opponent to ‘us’, i.e. by describing the European community as someone or something disconnected from the people, she can be understood to enable herself and the SDP to take the role of the representative of the people. Additionally, she discards everything that the “European community” “discuss[es]” as something that cannot be trusted. By doing so, “we” can trust that she will be sure to tell ‘us’ the truth and that she will fight for ‘us’. The perspective presented by Joel can to some extent be understood as supporting this argument. As he claims, “the EU-system sometimes has a completely different perception of what is important or relevant, than the one of the European populations”, this is followed by his perceptions of what the EU-system finds important, which he states is not in line with the vast majority of the Europeans. If this is understood as having the embedded understanding that the SDP stands in opposition to the “EU-system”, his arguments can be understood as supporting the interpretation that the SDP represents the people and what they perceive as important.

¹³⁵ Marlene Wind, interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

[M]an skal selvfølgelig ikke sammenligne Danmark og Ungarn 1:1. (...) I Danmark er domstolene også tilbageholdende; går ikke ind og overruler parlamentet, hvis de har lavet et eller andet. (...) Så der er mange fællestræk på den måde, at den retoriske positioning, altså den måde, som skaber frygt; taler om de fremmede på – det minder meget om hinanden. (...) og det her med at dæmonisere eliten og EU

5.3 Protecting the Tribe

We will be fighting for a Danish discount. It will be a key issue and I do not buy the Commission's approach. They are simply saying that if we wish to do more for the climate and migration policy, we must enlarge the budget. I simply don't buy it. Especially since we parallelly see them suggest to expand the administrative expenses with – and now hold on to something – with close to five billion ... (...) euros! (...) That is completely wack!¹³⁶
- Mette Frederiksen

The statement where Frederiksen mentions the expanding of the budget on administrative expenses as something highly unreasonable; what she refers to as “completely wack”, has been the center of much attention. Thus, Nordqvist, Wind, Jørgensen and Ammitzbøll mentioned this impartially, whereas, I asked Joel specifically about this statement.

Frederiksen declares that she “does not buy” what the Commission is communicating. Joel supported by repeating the statement in his answers. Since, it is unlikely that the majority of the readers of the Interview in JP are highly familiar with the details of this budgetary post, they are left to decide whether Frederiksen or the European Commission can be valued as the trustworthy communicator. The allegation of the five billion euros is here contextualised by other references to the budgetary proposal from the Commission: “to do more for the climate and migration policy, we must enlarge the budget”. In this way, it can be argued that Frederiksen uses these facts to fit profit and pleasure, as characterised by Arendt.¹³⁷ Furthermore, Frederiksen adds the fight for a Danish discount and introduces this as a key issue. Consequently, this statement can leave the receivers to decide whether Frederiksen or the European Commission can be valued as trustworthy. For this reason, this statement must be contextualised with the rest of the statements presented by Frederiksen and the reader's beholden knowledge and opinion on the matter. Hence, this statement can be seen as polarising, since the reader is forced to choose between agreeing with the statement of the Commission being “completely wack” or to disagree – all potentially without having the necessary facts. From four of the experts this statement received a harsh critique:

¹³⁶ Appendix 1, 4

¹³⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 13

I actually think it is quite irresponsible that she as a PM takes part in planting such EU-scepticism in the population. That we should be ourselves closest. I do believe it is problematic.¹³⁸

– Katarina Ammitzbøll

[I]t is a strange detail to cling onto – the administrative expenses. When you are breaking down the numbers, there is nothing [spectacular] to find. There is elsewhere. But they (The SDP) choose the issues which can have a populist break through.¹³⁹

– Rasmus Nordqvist

So, factually it is wrong. But rhetorically, to use the word ‘wack’, that is a harsh word to use for a PM. After all, this is not Donald Trump, it is the PM of Denmark, who is using this term speaking about a club of which we are a member. I think that was brutal.¹⁴⁰

– Jan E. Jørgensen

Like Jørgensen, Wind also referred to the statement as being of *Trumpistic*¹⁴¹ character. On a more general note, Wind contextualised this Interview as being in opposition to the former PM from the SDP, Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Wind presents her interpretation of Frederiksen as: “‘This is Denmark first and all this ‘Europe’, it is highfalutin’ – as she has also called it – ‘this federalist nonsense. Forget it!’ It is very, very rough. It really is”.¹⁴² On the other side, Joel found the statement liberating.¹⁴³ He elaborated: “because it is wack, when the Commission in its proposal

¹³⁸ Katarina Ammitzbøll, interview by author, phone, May 19, 2020

Jeg synes faktisk, det er lidt uansvarligt som statsminister, at hun er med til at så sådan en EU-skepsis ned igennem befolkningen. At vi skal være os selv nærmest. Jeg synes, det er problematisk.

¹³⁹ Rasmus Nordqvist, interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

[D]et er den her populistisk retorik med at omtale det der monster af EU; omtale gak-gak, altså bruge den slags udtryk, som du normalt ikke gør i en seriøst politisk diskussion – og slet ikke omkring et budget, der strækker sig over syv år! Der går man jo – normalt vil man tro – ned og analyserer det ordentligt. Og så er det jo et underligt sted at gribe fat i forhold til administrationsomkostninger. Når man bryder tallene ned, så er der jo ikke noget at komme efter. Det er der andre steder i budgettet. Men man vælger ligesom de der ting, der rent populistisk kan slå igennem.

¹⁴⁰ Jan E. Jørgensen, interview by author, phone, May 21, 2020

Altså, faktisk var det jo forkert. Men retorisk, altså at tale om ‘gak’, det er et voldsomt ord at bruge for en statsminister. Det er jo ikke Donald Trump, det er Danmarks statsminister, der udtaler sig på den måde om en klub, vi selv er medlem af. Det synes jeg, var voldsomt.

¹⁴¹ Marlene Wind, interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

¹⁴² Ibid.

‘Det her er Danmark først og hele det der Europa, som er højtravende’ - som hun også har kaldt det – ‘det der føderalistiske vås. Glem det.’ Det er meget, meget groft, det er det altså.

¹⁴³ Jens Joel, e-mail to author, September 2, 2020

suggested enormous raises in the EU-budget, and especially on the administrative expenses”.¹⁴⁴ Joel explained his argument with the following:

To us [The SDP] the EU does not get stronger the more tax-money we take from the European countries and transfer to the common [budget]. There must be room to discuss whether we use the money correctly – also in the EU. It is easy to simply say that we need to spend more money in the EU. But if we said that here at home, we would also demand from each other that we were to discuss what can be lowered and what can be done more efficiently.¹⁴⁵

- Jens Joel

Nordqvist interpreted the narrative as a plan of presenting Frederiksen as the strong leader, that Denmark is strong and that she can be trusted as the protector of Denmark.¹⁴⁶ This way, Frederiksen can be understood to propose herself as the protector of the tribe. Joel supports the perception with the expressed need to send a clear signal, when he is asked directly about what he believes to be the motive behind the narrative, as he says that, “behind the statement was a wish to say clearly ‘stop’, when we [The SDP] believe that there is a need to do so. (...) Therefore it was important for the PM to send a clear signal (...)”.¹⁴⁷

In the following section, the future perspectives will be analysed through the perceptions of the experts.

5.4 Future Perspectives

*It is the Europe of nations; it is intergovernmental cooperation more than it is a community.*¹⁴⁸

– Rasmus Nordqvist

In this section I will analyse what can be extracted about the future perspectives of the Danish relationship to the EU from the interviews of the experts as well as from the research object.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

For det er et gak, når Kommissionen i sit forslag til budgettet lagde op til enorme stigninger i EU-budgettet og i særdeleshed på administrationsudgifterne.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

For os er EU ikke stærkere, jo flere skatte kroner vi henter fra de europæiske lande til den fælles kasse. Der skal være plads til at diskutere om vi bruger pengene rigtigt også i EU. Det er nemt nok at sige, vi skal bruge flere penge i EU, men hvis vi sagde det herhjemme ville vi jo også kræve af hinanden, at man tog en diskussion af hvad der kan skrues ned eller gøres mere effektivt.

¹⁴⁶ Rasmus Nordqvist, interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

¹⁴⁷ Jens Joel, e-mail to author, September 2, 2020

Bag udsagnet ligger et ønske om at sige klart fra, når vi mener, der er behov for det. (...) derfor var det vigtigt for statsministeren at sende et klart signal (...)

¹⁴⁸ Rasmus Nordqvist, interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

Towards the end in the interview, Frederiksen introduces a statement that can be interpreted as her own conclusion on her statements, as she expresses:

'Therefore, this [the Interview] is an expression of a Danish break off with the policy of being as close to the EU-core as possible. It is a discussion without meaning', [Frederiksen] says and thereby turns away from what in years has been the headline of Danish EU-policy. And does so, by calling it purely semantics.¹⁴⁹

- Appendix 1

In this statement, Frederiksen introduces a determined present when she concludes what consequences her statements will have for the future. In the quote, it can be understood that she refers to the relationship between Denmark and the EU as something of the past. Her discursive description of this relationship of the past is that "it is a discussion without meaning". Here, she introduces the future Danish EU-policy as something, which will be a new strategy. As showcased in the earlier sections of this chapter, the four experts, except Joel, have interpreted this Interview as an expression for Frederiksen turning more nationalistic as a part of a strategy to gain voters from the DPP. Joel on the other hand does not see the narrative as a break-off and does not see the statements as an expression for scepticism. Rather the opposite. He argues that:

With the statements, the PM has made it clear that Denmark is actively and politically taking action in Brussels and contributes to the EU-community with money, progressive ideas and by being a reliable partner. Critique has been perceived as scepticism towards the EU. But to be critical is not to step outside the collaboration – it is to step actively into it.¹⁵⁰

This is in direct opposition to the interpretation Jørgensen and Ammitzbøll have of the narrative, as they believe the narrative might have a damaging effect on the support to the EU amongst the Danish population. They both refer to the Brexit referendum as something they are concerned will be repeated in Denmark as a consequence of the rhetoric presented by Frederiksen.¹⁵¹ Jørgensen deliberately emphasises that he is of the impression that her narrative is dangerous and that he hopes

¹⁴⁹ Appendix 1, 5

¹⁵⁰ Jens Joel, E-mail to author, September 2, 2020

Med udtalelserne har statsministeren gjort det tydeligt, at Danmark går aktivt og politisk til værks i Bruxelles. Og bidrager til EU-fællesskabet med penge, progressive ideer og ved at være en pålidelig samarbejdspartner. Kritik er blevet opfattet som skepsis over for EU. Men at forholde sig kritisk er ikke at stille sig uden for samarbejdet – det er at gå aktivt ind i det.

¹⁵¹ Jan E. Jørgensen, Interview by author, phone, May 21, 2020

Katarina Ammitzbøll, Interview by author, phone, May 19, 2020

she will be punished by history and the zeitgeist.¹⁵² Furthermore Ammitzbøll is worried that the Interview will have caused damage on the negotiation climate:

If it is given that Denmark will be sceptical of everything and all things, and definitely does not show any special willingness to cooperate. (...) This is not really something that makes us a preferred partner.¹⁵³

– Katarina Ammitzbøll

This argument is in direct contrast to Joel's arguments of the opposite. Nordqvist does on the other hand believe that Frederiksen will be forced to reposition herself, especially as a consequence of the latest COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵⁴ Wind is more inclined to believe that albeit a concession regarding the negotiations of the MFF might be necessary, the narrative and rhetoric will stay:

She is so strongly rooted in this narrative of Denmark and the Danes: that we are better than others that; we have something unique and that is our own doing.¹⁵⁵

– Marlene Wind

In the fifth priority enlisted by the SDP in the vision *Europe for the People*, it is highlighted that it is essential to strengthen the power of national parliaments and to empower them.¹⁵⁶ This statement indicates a clear intergovernmentalistic vision and supports Nordqvist's analysis: "It is the Europe of nations; it is intergovernmental cooperation more than it is a community"¹⁵⁷. Joel supports Nordqvist's interpretation:

The goal of the cooperation is not a borderless Europe, or closer European integration in all areas. The right balance must be found and this balance was not present in the

¹⁵² Jan E. Jørgensen, Interview by author, phone, May 21, 2020

¹⁵³ Katarina Ammitzbøll, Interview by author, phone, May 19, 2020

Hvis man på forhånd ved, at Danmark sikkert vil stille sig skeptisk overfor alt og alle mulige ting. Og i hvert fald ikke udviser en særlig samarbejdsvillighed. (...) Men det er jo ikke noget, der gør os til en foretrukken samarbejdspartner.

¹⁵⁴ Rasmus Nordqvist, interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

¹⁵⁵ Marlene Wind, Interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

Hun [står] så stærkt forankret på det her med Danmark og danskerne og vi er bedre end andre og vi har noget unikt og det har vi skabt selv

¹⁵⁶ Mette Frederiksen, "Her er Mette Frederiksen's nye vision for EU," *Politiken*, June 16, 2017

<https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art5997193/Her-er-Mette-Frederiksen-s-nye-vision-for-EU>

¹⁵⁷ Rasmus Nordqvist, Interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

proposal from the Commission.¹⁵⁸

- Jens Joel

Whether the future relationship between Denmark and the EU will be defined by the intergovernmentalistic approach or by tribalism is uncertain. Whereas IG is more a descriptive theory defining the structural relations, the tribalistic definition of a fragmentation is more normative. Again, Joel underlines a clear intergovernmentalistic perception in his further elaboration on the goal of the EU:

To us [The SDP] it is clear that the nation states are the foundation of the cooperation. EU should first and foremost benefit the citizens and those nation states, which have joined forces to solve problems that we cannot each solve on our own. (...) We [The SDP] will insist that we may well be closely and actively engaged in a committed European cooperation, while we all along, naturally, discuss and defend the national interests that we have along side the community.¹⁵⁹

- Jens Joel

Wind on the other hand argues for indications of a tribalistic tendency, as she is of the belief that the future will be defined by the alliances in which Denmark will engage after Brexit. Although, The Frugal Four¹⁶⁰ has been an alliance during the negotiations on the MFF¹⁶¹, Wind highlights the normative questions:

Concerning all the normative questions we are indeed quite close to Orban and the Poles. I mean, in reality it turns into this EU-scepticism: we do not want further integration, we do not want more competences transferred to Brussels etc. On this

¹⁵⁸ Jens Joel, E-mail to author, September 2, 2020

Målet med samarbejdet er ikke et grænseløst Europa eller tættere europæisk integration på alle områder. Der skal findes den rette balance og den balance ramte kommissionen ikke med sit udspil.

¹⁵⁹ Jens Joel, E-mail to author, September 2, 2020

For os er det klart, at nationalstaten er udgangspunktet for samarbejdet. EU skal først og fremmest gavne borgerne og de nationalstater, der er gået sammen om at løse problemer, som vi ikke hver især kan løse alene. (...) Vi vil insistere på, at vi godt kan være tæt og aktivt engageret i et forpligtende europæisk samarbejde, alt imens vi selvfølgelig også er nødt til at diskutere og forsvare de nationale interesser, som vi har ved siden af fællesskabet.

¹⁶⁰ Denmark, Sweden, Austria and the Netherlands

¹⁶¹ Daniel Boffey & Jennifer Rankin, "EU leaders seal deal on spending and €750bn Covid-19 recovery plans", *The Guardian*, July 21, 2020

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/20/macron-seeks-end-acrimony-eu-summit-enters-fourth-day?fbclid=IwAR1ttQN7h_aOdeXSG0Qz2AH0Q0yTzt7gwtKpvG_Zt0_V_uxioQbNLo_oKPo

matter [Frederiksen] is in reality a lot closer to Eastern Europe than to Western Europe.¹⁶²

Whether the narrative indicates a dismissal of the EU and a shift towards what Wind describes as fragmentation¹⁶³ in her theorization of tribalism or whether it is merely an expression for a cemented intergovernmental perception as it is described in [section 3.3.1](#) is uncertain. Some of the experts express their concern that it is not the latter, while Joel clearly underlines that it is not in the interest of the SDP to withdraw from the EU, neither does he agree that the narrative should be perceived as EU-sceptic, as he advocates that “to be critical is not to step outside the collaboration – it is to step actively into it”. Albeit, he clearly underlines that the EU-system must be understood as being disconnected from the European population.

5.5 Subconclusion

In the analysis it becomes evident that the Interview serves to offer Frederiksen as the new Danish leader with a fresh strategy for the future of the Danish-EU relationship. Joel refers to this as a need “to send a clear signal” and elaborates that he believes that “a country that is open in its criticism is more appreciated than a partner who accepts everything in Brussels, and then neglects the same agreements in its home country”.¹⁶⁴ The four remaining experts, on the other hand, perceive this strategy as a way to keep the governmental power by gaining support from the DPP’s archetype voter. They all describe Frederiksen as a rhetorically nationalistic populist. All four share the analysis of the narrative as a strategy to win a specific target group, but where Ammitzbøll and Jørgensen perceive the Interview as an expression of Frederiksen’s lack of knowledge on EU-matters, Nordqvist and Wind is more inclined to see it as an expression of an intelligent and meticulous strategic plan. Wind deliberately describes the narrative as “meticulously orchestrated as in a screenplay”. Common for all five experts is that they have perceived the Interview as an expression for a nation-centred belief, albeit the interpretation of this as something good or bad is

¹⁶² Marlene Wind, Interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

På alle de sådan normative spørgsmål der er det jo i høj grad, ligger vi jo i høj grad ret tæt på Orban og på polakkerne. Altså, der er der måske i virkeligheden, altså det bliver sådan en EU-skepsis, vi vil ikke have mere integration, vi vil ikke have flere kompetencer overført til Bruxelles og så videre. Der ligger hun [Mette Frederiksen] jo i virkeligheden meget tættere på Østeuropa end på Vesteuropa.

¹⁶³ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 1, 7

¹⁶⁴ Jens Joel, e-mail to author, September 2, 2020

Mon ikke der trods alt sættes mere pris på et land, der er åben i sin kritik, end en samarbejdspartner, der takker ja til alting i Bruxelles, men ser stort på aftalerne i sit hjemland.

not agreed upon. Joel expresses this as natural and does not understand it to be conflicting with Danish participation in the EU. Given the nuances offered from Arendt when examining Frederiksen's usage of truth versus opinion and falsehoods, it can be argued that Frederiksen introduces a narrative of the previous governments and the EU as believers in lies or falsehoods. Joel supports this, when he repeats the statement of "wack" and the perception of the Commission being "disconnected". These statements serve to build her own status as someone trustworthy in opposition to the quixotic speakers, praising of the free movement; the European community and the European Commission are not a "part of the real world". The readers are introduced to several opinions, where the reader is demanded to make a choice on whom to trust. In parallel, Frederiksen can be understood to use indicators which points towards tribalistic characters, such as introducing a strong narrative on elite versus the people, herein an embedded *us* versus the *others*, where the *others* are excluded from the tribe. This way the narrative introduced in the Interview becomes a matter of opinion, i.e. the best interests of the tribe versus the opinion of the quixotic elite. Hence, Ammitzbøll, Jørgensen and Nordqvist detected and described these indicators as well as others supporting the theoretical description of tribalism in the Interview. Wind, according to her expertise on the theory, describes the narrative as being reminiscent of strategic tribalism, as she presents it in her book. Moreover, Wind mentioned several similarities between the examples showcased in her book and the Interview. Joel, on the other hand, dismisses the perception of the narrative being EU-sceptic. In stead he advocates that the narrative is liberating and signals a more active engagement in the EU.

5.5.1 Not sceptic, actively engaged in a state-centric EU

None of the experts mentioned that they experienced anything that indicated that Frederiksen or the Social Democratic government showed indications of especially two of the characteristics enlisted by Wind in *The Tribalization of Europe: A Defence of Our Liberal Values*. None of the experts mentioned any worrying categorical indications of neither cancellation of liberal, democratic values and institutions¹⁶⁵, nor of withdrawal from international structures and conventions¹⁶⁶ as such. Joel stated the exact opposite, as he argues that this narrative is a signal of a more active and engaging participation. He underlines that to be critical is not to step out of the EU, rather the opposite, as he calls it, to "step actively into it". Ammitzbøll, on the other hand, mentioned that during the COVID-19 pandemic the committee members of the European Affairs Committee have had to "apply

¹⁶⁵ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal: 2020), 2

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6

pressure” and send a letter to the President of the Parliament referring to the Rules of Procedure in order to uphold committee meetings.¹⁶⁷ Jørgensen and Wind both mentioned that the government had offered old and ineffective respirators to Italy during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶⁸ They perceived this as the government’s expression for disrespect for the European values and community. On the contrary, Nordqvist mentioned that his interpretation of the government from his experiences in the European Affairs Committee is that the ministers value international conventions and agreements very highly, as they show no interest in wishing to withdraw from them. Rather the opposite, as Nordqvist put it.¹⁶⁹ Although, he adds that he perceives the attitude towards international agreements and conventions as intergovernmentalistic, never reminiscent of an understanding of a European or global community. However, I do not value these perceptions as strong enough to conclude that the government rejects or can be considered to withdraw from liberal democratic values and institutions or conventions. It seems as if there exists a normative disagreement on the code of conduct between the experts and their perception of the government’s behaviour.

Consequently, based on data from the expert interviews and their normative perception of the Interview, it can be concluded that the experts’ interpretation of the narrative of Frederiksen, as outlined in the Interview, shows indications that it can be understood through a thematic analysis of IG and tribalism, which additionally is perceived to indicate the future perspectives.

6.0 Discussion

This thesis has searched to conduct a thematic examination of the Interview given by the Danish PM, Frederiksen, in October 2019 through interpretation by the chosen experts. In this chapter, I will discuss the methodological approach; the theories, future perspectives and what can be learned from the findings.

Given that the context of the thesis has evolved a lot during the writing process, I will include new information and perspectives in this section. This will serve to nuance the findings and enable a discussion of their relevance. According to the epistemological perspective this discussion

¹⁶⁷ Katarina Ammitzbøll, Interview by author, phone, May 19, 2020

¹⁶⁸ Jan E. Jørgensen, Interview by author, phone, May 21, 2020

Marlene Wind, Interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

¹⁶⁹ Rasmus Nordqvist, Interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

elaborates some of the many other perspectives of the research object and perspective, which would have been and still might be of interest and relevance to the subject.

Firstly, I will introduce a discussion on the methodology. The process was initiated with a promise of the epistemological and hermeneutic method; therefore, the data has been collected and analysed accordingly. However, the theories were chosen before the data were collected. Thereby, the collection of the data has inevitably been influenced by the chosen theories. Here, the theory of tribalism especially played a key role. This was particularly present in the choice of interviewing the professor Wind. However, it must be argued whether this had been of significance if the majority of the politicians had not been representatives from EU-positive parties. Just as it must be highlighted that four of the experts indicates that they perceive the SDP as being EU-sceptic, while the representative from the party in question clearly underlines that he does not see the EU-critique as being of EU-sceptic character, but rather the opposite. Because of my own background – hence, potential bias – it was of great importance to me to stay on the path of the hermeneutic methods in order to secure a valid research study. Although, I am merely human and the collection of the interviews and the production of the analysis have inevitably been influenced by the knowledge I contain. With the use of the method offered by Bogner and Menz I searched to use this as an advantage.

Secondly, to answer my research question, I have displayed the content of the thesis in the specific order to understand the historical context and the content of the Interview. I have sought to map the normative understanding portrayed by the expert interviewees' interpretation of Frederiksen's motives exposed in her statements as well as for the Interview in itself. In my research design, it is with Arendt's description of the role played by truth in the realm of politics as an interplay between factual truth; philosophical truth and opinion in mind, as well as it is with the goal of analysing the presence of tribalism as a way to understand the future perspectives of Denmark's position in the EU.

In a postmodern understanding, several truths can exist parallel to each other. As a part of my research process towards comprehension of the political narrative of Frederiksen and what we can extract from this narrative, it can be relevant to discuss Habermas' distinction between communicative actions and strategic actions and to which extent the same can go for Arendt's description of political usage of truths.

If we are to follow the Hegelian perspective in Arendt's argumentative structure, Frederiksen can be understood to seek to use the Interview to support her image.¹⁷⁰ Frederiksen's statement of the administrative expenses serves as a good example to illustrate this, since the majority of the vividly debated administrative expenses circulates the number of already agreed arrangements on Europe-school expenses and already agreed retirement expenses to the employees in the EU-system.¹⁷¹ Supported by Arendt's description of the nature of falsehoods, it can be argued that Frederiksen presents falsehoods in the context of factuality "as it were, a hole in the fabric of factuality".¹⁷² This way she enables to build a Hegelian dialectic syntax, where she can uphold the status as the strong leader and protector of the Danish society, with a thesis of the "EU being disconnected from the world we are a part of"¹⁷³; an antithesis of the Social Democratic government as the fighter for – and protector of Danish sovereignty embedded in a Danish discount and a slim budget – before the offered synthesis of Frederiksen as the shield of the Danish population against the European elite. If this argumentation is followed and supported by the understanding of Frederiksen's motives as outlaid by the experts as portrayed in the analysis, her opinion on the administrative expenses¹⁷⁴ is deliberate and serves as a part of a premeditated narrative. However, the goal of the narrative is not agreed upon. According to Joel the goal is to send a clear signal that the EU should prioritise its expenses differently, whereas the remaining experts do not agree on the premise embedded in the exact statement of the administrative expenses, as they are not of the opinion that this post can be discussed. Because of this they claim that the communicative use of this exact post on the budget indicates that the PM builds her narrative on a factual wrong premise, Nordqvist refers to it as populist. If the PM – and Joel – had referred to another post in the budget, I am not sure that the critique would have been as harsh. The nature of the statement opens a discussion on whether the proclamation has an embedded false premise: or to follow the Habermasian understanding - a strategic usage of truth. Although it is very important to underline that this is just one way of

¹⁷⁰ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 13

¹⁷¹ Folketingets EU-Oplysning, "Meddelelse fra Kommissionen: Den Flerårige Finansielle Ramme for 2021-2027", *Folketingets EU-Oplysning*, accessed April 24, 2020

[https://www.eu.dk/samling/20181/kommissionsforslag/KOM\(2018\)0321/index.htm](https://www.eu.dk/samling/20181/kommissionsforslag/KOM(2018)0321/index.htm)

¹⁷² Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 13

¹⁷³ Appendix 1

¹⁷⁴ The majority of the vividly debated administrative expenses circulates the number of already agreed arrangements on Europe-school expenses and already agreed retirement expenses to the employees in the EU-system. For more info on the budget, see here:

[https://www.eu.dk/samling/20181/kommissionsforslag/KOM\(2018\)0321/index.htm](https://www.eu.dk/samling/20181/kommissionsforslag/KOM(2018)0321/index.htm)

understanding the narrative. I have no data supporting that the narrative is a part of a strategically orchestrated plan; I only have the interpretation from the sources. The choice of applying Arendt's thoughts is my choice and this choice naturally impacts the light in which this thesis deals with Frederiksen's narrative. However, it can never be stressed too much that this thesis only offers one way of analysing the narrative and not the factual truth behind the narrative. However, Frederiksen can, according to Arendt, perform as a politician "[who] is free to fashion [her] 'facts' to fit the profit and pleasure, or even the mere expectations, of [her] audience"¹⁷⁵ because "the chances are that [s]he will be more persuasive than the truth-teller". Additionally, as it is implied by all sources, the narrative presented by Frederiksen is deliberate. Furthermore, it can be understood that Frederiksen argues that the accuracy of her statements is supported by her role as a representative for the people, i.e. demonstrated in the statements such as "I can see that it has major consequences in the real world" and "the world we live in".¹⁷⁶ However, it must be mentioned that given Arendt's description of political representation¹⁷⁷ Frederiksen can also be understood as merely representing the people in her statements. This would support the tribalistic interpretation of the definition of *us* and the exclusion of the *others*.¹⁷⁸ This is additionally supported by all four experts, as they are all convinced that Frederiksen surely believes her own statements. If that is so it can be seen as yet another indicator worth of attention according to Arendt:

What then is the significance of these limitations, and why are we justified in calling them mitigating circumstances? Why has self-deception become an indispensable tool in the trade of image-making, and why should it be worse for the world as well as for the liar himself, if he is deceived by his own lies than if he merely deceives others? What better moral excuse could a liar offer than that his aversion to lying was so great that he had to convince himself before he could lie to others[?]¹⁷⁹

This comment from Arendt can serve to highlight that although four of the experts interpreted the narrative presented by Frederiksen as something "meticulously orchestrated in a screenplay"¹⁸⁰, we cannot dismiss the chance that the narrative represents Frederiksen's normative perception. This is

¹⁷⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 13

¹⁷⁶ Appendix 1

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-9

¹⁷⁸ Marlene Wind, *Tribaliseringen af Europa – Et forsvar for vores liberale værdier*, first edition (Gyldendal, 2020), 6

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 14

¹⁸⁰ Marlene Wind, Interview by author, Gentofte, May 21, 2020

actually supported by Joel, who repeats the statement of the administrative expenses and elaborates that the wish was to send a clear signal. And hence, it might be expression for her political thought, as she perceives it to be representative¹⁸¹, as well as Joel in his reference to the vast majority of Europeans. However, the combination of the postmodern epistemological perspective and Arendt's definitions of truths and lies comes out as a little awkward. Therefore it is essential to highlight that this is merely one possible analysis and furthermore, I would highlight that all experts present in this thesis might have their own embedded agenda to express the opinions as they do. It is not mentioned in the analysis as such, but Nordqvist and Jørgensen both notice that the political content per se does not necessarily diverge from the one of the former Venstre-led government. Hence, they remark, that the rhetoric and narrative have changed.¹⁸² This is relevant as the core of this thesis is to some extent to examine the usage of truth within the realm of politics and the underlying motives, as I described in the introduction. In this perspective it is naturally important to emphasise that the political understanding of which relationship Denmark should have with the EU is a normative question, however this thesis seeks to study the nature of this specific narrative in order to discuss the use of truth as a part of a strategic usage and to which this tendency is something correlating with tribalistic tendencies. When factual truths are turned into a matter of opinion, they are open for interpretation and can thereby be discussed and discarded. In this matter the administrative expenses are discarded as an elitist opinion without compliance for the wishes of the people, i.e. the tribe. In such matters it becomes evident that the elected politicians are the true protectors of the survival of the tribe, since in a tribalistic narrative the democracy is embedded in elections, not in strong democratic institutions. For this reason the statement of the administrative expenses becomes highly relevant in order to detect tribalistic tendencies.

In order to understand the context of the narrative, I will in the following discuss the potential motives behind the presented narrative in relation to the expressed motive-speculation as it has been interpreted by the sources.

In the answers given by the sources it is implied that the narrative of Frederiksen is deliberate and by some it is understood to be a part of a strategy in order to maintain the governmental power. As Ammitzbøll unmistakably points out, "Frederiksen, she strives after the national political agenda all

¹⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 9

¹⁸² Rasmus Nordqvist, Interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020
Jan E. Jørgensen, Interview by author, Phone, May 21, 2020

the way, because she wishes to win the next election. And foreign politics normally does not mean much when you're standing in the ballot box"¹⁸³, if we understand this through Arendt's argument that political narratives are "made for domestic consumption, as distinguished from lies directed at a foreign adversary, can become a reality for everybody and first of all for the image-makers themselves"¹⁸⁴, it can support the argument presented by four of the experts that Frederiksen's goal is maintain the governmental power in the domestic field through a strategic, communicative distance to the EU. The strategic choice of building a tribalistic narrative in order to win the next election is supported by Sheafer, Goldstein and Shenhav as they conclude in the study on electoral behaviour and political narratives, "when voters make electoral decisions, they look beyond socio-demographic similarities and ideology; they are searching for a deeper sense of a shared political meaning, which such national stories can provide".¹⁸⁵ Hence, the tribalistic narrative can serve to create an *us* in order to exclude the *other*. Thus, the tribalistic narrative can offer a belonging and meaning of the tribe – a common identity is offered. The tribe must be protected and here the strong leader is introduced and justified. This is one way of understanding the narrative presented by Frederiksen.

As it is introduced in the section describing previous research, the presented study seeks to place itself within a realm of analysing the political development in the years after the end of the Cold War. As it is mentioned, tribalism has been studied in particular in the case of recent developments in Hungary and Poland, however the history of these countries a very different from the one of Denmark. Therefore it is important to emphasise that this study does not claim that the developments described in Poland and Hungary are the same or alike the development in Denmark as such. Denmark has been a variety of democracy since 1849 and for this reason in particular there are fundamental differences, which makes the cases incomparable. However, this study merely seeks to examine relevant tendencies, which have also been examined in these countries. With the common history in mind, this study offers a thematic framework which could be interesting to apply to similar cases such as Sweden. Throughout 2020 the national-conservative party the Swedish

¹⁸³ Katarina Ammitzbøll, Interview by author, Phone, May 19, 2020.

¹⁸⁴ Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," Originally published in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, and reprinted with minor changes in *Between Past and Future*, 1968 and *The Portable Hannah Arendt* edited by Peter Baier, 2000 and *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions* edited by Medina and Wood, 2005, 14

¹⁸⁵ Tamir Sheafer, Shaul R. Shenhav & Kenneth Goldstein, "Voting for our Story: A Narrative Model of Electoral Choice in Multiparty Systems" *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 3, (March 2011), 18 https://cses.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CSES_2010TelAviv_Sheafer.pdf

Democrats have enjoyed the largest or second largest support in exit polls.¹⁸⁶ Sweden additionally shares the same Social Democratic history as Denmark in broad terms and are furthermore also a part of the Frugal Four. If this tendency in Sweden were to be examined accordingly, it could offer a depth in order to understand the political development in the Scandinavian countries in a broader context.

6.1 Evaluation and Limitations

In this section I offer an evaluation on my thesis.

Originally I intended to examine whether we could detect two tracks (two truths): one communicational and one in the room of the negotiations. I intended to examine whether we could detect a strategic and deliberate choice of publicly talking the MFF down, while keeping a pragmatic negotiations attitude in the negotiations room as a part of an informal versus formal negotiations strategy to use the public scene to apply pressure on the EU27 to give concessions in favour of the Frugal Four¹⁸⁷. Since the Frugal Four is not big enough to represent any real threat in the formal negotiations, I thought it would be very interesting to examine the informal implementation of the public sphere as a part of the formal negotiations room, since this could indicate a significant shift in the negotiations strategies of the small states post Brexit. However, this matter would have had to benefit from greater space and more time than a thesis implies. Just the collection of data would have required the ability of more perseverance, hence more time. However, if we do notice, Nordqvist and Jørgensen do equally mention that they have observed how the Social Democratic government is maintaining the formal negotiations strategy (i.e. the content of the negotiations proposals as presented in the European Affairs Committee in the Danish Parliament) as it was laid out by the previous government. While the public communication about the negotiations has changed drastically. Something implies that the Social Democratic government has introduced two tracks (two truths): one communicational and one in the room of the negotiations; strategic, i.e. to use the differentiations of Habermas. However, as mentioned beforehand, to examine the real negotiations positioning of the current government would have caused many implications and struggles. The negotiations take place in a room behind closed doors and even though I have followed the negotiations closely in my position as assistant to Nordqvist, I

¹⁸⁶ Unknown, "Väljbarometern", *SVT Nyheter*, last updated August 26, 2020
<https://www.svt.se/special/valjarbarometern/>

¹⁸⁷ Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark have been cooperating in the negotiations in order to apply pressure on EU27 to lower the budget. They have been named the Frugal Four.

would still have suffered from not having been a part of the actual negotiations, nor being able to use these findings in my research since some of the documents are confidential. And even if I could have used the knowledge I could accumulate, I would still have suffered from not being employed in or have access to the inner circles of governmental party. And even if I were allowed behind these doors and allowed to interview the negotiators and the governmental representatives themselves, the honesty, thereby the validity of the interviews would suffer. In the end I decided to examine what we can learn from the narrative of Frederiksen in this particular interview, where she for the first time presents the EU-policy of the new government. Although I do answer my research question, the answer is biased by the collected data, since I merely received answers from EU-positive sources. Although, Wind does not necessarily claim to be EU-positive per se, but more correctly a strong defender of the liberal values on which the EU was traditionally founded.¹⁸⁸ Additionally the choice of theory has affected the conclusion on my findings. Therefore, it is important to notice that my conclusion offers an answer to my research question based on the collected data and theories. Had the sources represented the full political spectrum and the theories been different, the answer might have differed too.

During the writing process the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. This pandemic had a great impact on the every day life, the political climate and the negotiations surrounding the MFF. This is illustrated in the interviews I conducted with the experts. This additionally meant that the context of the thesis has changed greatly. However, I decided not to change this factor in my thesis, as the premise in that case would have to change accordingly. Consequently I kept the timeframe of the thesis dealing with the narrative of Frederiksen. Although the premise might have changed, Frederiksen stayed somewhat steadfast throughout the negotiations of the MFF as well as regarding the accompanied negotiations of a common recovery plan in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other countries had consequently changed their position, here amongst Germany, who left their previous role as budget hardliner. This caused the Frugal Four to stand alone.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, Frederiksen on July 10, 2020 decided to stay steadfast in the negotiations on the COVID-19 recovery plan¹⁹⁰ and the Frugal Four throughout the last hours of the negotiations kept this

¹⁸⁸ Troels Heeger, "Mette Frederiksens EU-kurs er en 'farlig strategi'", *Berlingske*, February 9, 2020

<https://www.berlingske.dk/debatinterview/marlene-wind-mette-frederiksens-eu-kurs-er-en-farlig-strategi>

¹⁸⁹ Sam Fleming, "Is the Franco-German recovery plan a game-changer?", *Financial Times*, May 19, 2020

<https://www.ft.com/content/22f0ab8b-0884-4fb0-a5be-d99193d236bf>

¹⁹⁰ AFP, "Hardliners show hints of compromise on EU recovery fund", *Asia Times Financial*, July 10, 2020

<https://www.asiatimesfinancial.com/hardliners-show-hints-of-compromise-on-eu-recovery-fund>

course.¹⁹¹ However, during the negotiations of the Recovery Fund and the MFF, I observed somewhat of a change in the coverage amongst the Danish journalists. The result of the Danish position in the negotiations did not necessarily receive a particular positive coverage. As an example, the Danish Newspaper Politiken published an article a few hours after the result of the negotiations was clear, whose angle was very critical of Frederiksen's position in the negotiations.¹⁹² This matter is something that would be very interesting to examine.

In the last week before facing my deadline of the thesis, I finally received an answer from the SDP. Throughout the process I had all along been very nervous about the obvious deficiency my thesis lacked, as I had no sources supporting the narrative of the PM, and since the narrative is my main research object, this deficiency naturally caused me to have an insufficient study. If I were to repeat this process, I would have applied much more pressure much earlier in the process.

7.0 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have searched to understand the narrative presented by Frederiksen in the Interview published in JP on October 16, 2019. I have sought to examine the narrative through a thematic analysis offered by a combination of theories presented by Marlene Wind, Hannah Arendt, Stanley Hoffmann and Andrew Moravcsik. I have conducted interviews with three members of the Danish Parliament, one professor from the University of Copenhagen and collected one written answer from a member of the Danish Parliament for the SDP in order to analyse their interpretations and through their expert knowledge obtain new knowledge and understanding.

In order to build a foundation for the conduction of the expert interviews, I regarded it necessary to examine the context in which this narrative displayed by the current Danish PM could be understood. In this quest I understood that the relation between Denmark and the EU for years has been defined by an integration dilemma and profound reluctance on the Danish side. Thus, the newfound EU-positivism amongst the Danish electorate does not necessarily represent an eagerness

¹⁹¹ Daniel Boffey & Jennifer Rankin, "EU leaders seal deal on spending and €750bn Covid-19 recovery plans", *The Guardian*, July 21, 2020

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/20/macron-seeks-end-acrimony-eu-summit-enters-fourth-day?fbclid=IwAR1ttQN7h_aOdeXSG0Qz2AH0Q0yTzt7gwtKpvG_Zt0_V_uxioQbNLo_oKPo

¹⁹² Nilas Heinskou & Elisabeth Svane, "Analyse: Mette Frederiksen fik sin rabat – men hun betalte også en pris for det", *Politiken*, July 21, 2020

<https://politiken.dk/udland/art7864084/Mette-Frederiksen-fik-sin-rabat-%E2%80%93-men-hun-betalte-ogs%C3%A5-en-pris-for-det?shareToken=zEHk1ZAARVRQ>

for further European integration and embedded release of sovereignty. However, “not necessarily” seems to be the key here, as the Danes’ wishes to the EU are based on rather complex feelings. As the study on discharging sovereignty shows, the Danes actually share a wish to cooperate more, albeit they are very attached to the concept of sovereignty.¹⁹³ Additionally, Arendt emphasise the importance of representation, and given the historic context and these studies, it cannot be dismissed that Frederiksen and the SDP actually represents the common perception among the Danish population. The Danish conceptualisation of sovereignty is definitely a matter worthy of further investigation.

The tribalistic term, as I present it in my study, indicates an embedded normative perception of tribalism being something of the malevolent. Tribalism is a political tendency, thus it must be handled accordingly, hence, it is important to emphasise that the perception revealed in the expert interviews, which discuss the consequences of this development as something good or something bad is merely normative. In order to nuance my study, I included Arendt’s concepts of truth and politics as well as presented Rosen’s discussion on tribalism.

The interpretations of the narrative, as the experts expressed them, shares a very deliberate connotation in some areas. Jørgensen, Wind, Ammitzbøll and Nordqvist seemed to be worried by the content of the narrative. And all four expressed interpretations which, through a thematic analysis, indicate similarities with the characteristics of tribalism as a concept. Between the statements of Wind and Nordqvist there was a strong agreement that the narrative was “meticulous planned” and these four experts expressed a perception of understanding the narrative as a strategy to secure the governmental power in the coming election by pursuing, what they referred to as, the target group of the DPP. Joel supported the perception of the narrative having an embedded goal. However, he claimed that this goal was to send a clear signal concerning the negotiations around the MFF. Ammitzbøll and Jørgensen described the narrative as being “irresponsible”¹⁹⁴ and “dangerous”.¹⁹⁵ Nordqvist mentioned that he hoped the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic would force Frederiksen to change position.¹⁹⁶ Wind on the other hand expresses directly that she observes similarities reminiscent to strategic tribalisation in the narrative expressed by

¹⁹³ Karsten Tingleff Vestergaard, ”Vi er tilfredse med EU men bekymrede for at afgive suverænitet” *Notat – Think Tank EUROPE*, March 27 2019

<http://thinkeuropa.dk/vaerdier/vi-er-tilfredse-med-eu-men-bekymrede-miste-suveranitet>

¹⁹⁴ Katarina Ammitzbøll, Interview by author, Phone, May 19, 2020

¹⁹⁵ Jan E. Jørgensen, Interview by author, Phone, May 21, 2020

¹⁹⁶ Rasmus Nordqvist, Interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

Frederiksen.¹⁹⁷ If we look towards the SDP's fifth vision in Europe for the People, the emphasis on empowering the national parliaments supports an intergovernmentalistic perspective¹⁹⁸, which is understood to define the integration process as a deliberate decision of choosing European cooperation as a way to strengthen the nation states.¹⁹⁹ Nordqvist supported this interpretation²⁰⁰ and it was directly emphasised by Joel, who referred to the EU as an instrument for the citizens and states to use when solving border-crossing problems, and he underlined that he is not of the perception that the EU should integrate further on all areas. In combination the answers from all five sources in the analysis indicates that given the narrative as displayed in the Interview, the future of Denmark's attitude towards the EU can be characterised by a hybrid of intergovernmentalistic state centrism and strategic tribalism, although, nothing indicates a withdrawal from the EU. However, it must be emphasised that the combination of experts and the nature of their participation has an impact on the representation in the analysis.

Thus, the thematic analysis has revealed the future perspectives of the Danish relation to the EU to be impacted by intergovernmental tendencies with tribalistic characteristics. Although it is evident to highlight that following the argument of Rosen a future defined by tribalism as it is portrayed by Wind might not be sustainable, as Rosen argues that defending national borders is not our "natural default position"²⁰¹, since "[a]ctual tribes know that social isolation or claims of moral superiority limit their flexibility". Joel supports this, as he claims that criticism does not equal scepticism, rather the opposite.

Concluding, I can finish this thesis with stating that the interpretations expressed by the experts in combination with the chosen theory revealed that there are certain signs which points towards an intergovernmentalistic future with inhabited tribalistic tendencies in the future relation between the EU and Denmark in the narrative as it is displayed by Frederiksen in the interview, published in Jyllands-Posten on October 16, 2019.

¹⁹⁷ Marlene Wind, Interview by author, Gentofte, May 20, 2020

¹⁹⁸ Mette Frederiksen, "Her er Mette Frederiksens nye vision for EU," *Politiken*, June 16, 2017
<https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art5997193/Her-er-Mette-Frederiksens-nye-vision-for-EU>

¹⁹⁹ Michelle Cini, "Intergovernmentalism," in *European Union Politics, fifth edition*, ed. Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2016), 68

²⁰⁰ Rasmus Nordqvist, Interview by author, Copenhagen, May 20, 2020

²⁰¹ Lawrence Rosen, "A Liberal Defence of Tribalism - There's nothing wrong with political tribes that can't be fixed by what's right with them", *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2018

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