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## **Critical Junctures and Social Identity Theory**

*Explaining the Gap between Danish Mass and Elite Attitudes to Europeanization*

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*Publication date:*  
2003

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Flockhart, T. (2003). *Critical Junctures and Social Identity Theory: Explaining the Gap between Danish Mass and Elite Attitudes to Europeanization*. Department of History, International and Social Studies, Aalborg University.

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European Studies

Series of Occasional Papers, no. 37/2003

European Research Unit, Aalborg University

**Critical Junctures and Social Identity Theory:**

**Explaining the Gap between Danish Mass and Elite  
Attitudes to Europeanization**

**Trine Flockhart**

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ISSN 0906-0308

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**European Studies** is published by the European Research Unit in collaboration with the Institute for History, International and Social Studies at Aalborg University, Denmark.

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# **Critical Junctures and Social Identity Theory: Explaining the Gap between Danish Mass and Elite Attitudes to Europeanization**

by Trine Flockhart

## **Abstract:**

The article explains the gap, which exists in the Danish discourse on Europe between mass and elite. By conceptualizing the Danish population as arranged around a nexus between people/nation and elite/state it is possible to conceive of two differently constructed 'social groups'. Through the combined use of a social constructivist perspective on ideational change through critical junctures and use of social learning and self-and other categorization processes, the article develops a framework for analysis of identity construction. The article concludes that the gap exists because each 'social group' has experienced very different processes of ideational change and socialization and has therefore developed very different conceptions of interests and political preferences.

## **Introduction**

Robert Putnam quite rightly introduced the concept of two levels of negotiating in international relations in his seminal work from 1988 (Putnam, 1988), which clearly seemed to suggest that the mass domestic public often have different views on what constitute national interest in international negotiations from the views held by those from the political elite who are involved in the negotiations. Within the area of European integration, it is a widely accepted fact that the political elite<sup>1</sup> in most cases is far more open to the idea of European integration than their domestic publics tend to be. Yet it is rare that the mass/elite gap, is fully explained, perhaps because in most instances the mass does not vote on the basis of foreign policy issues hence leaving the political elite enough room for manoeuvre for their views to prevail in

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term political elite in a slightly revised version according to G. Almond's (1950) definition which distinguishes four types of foreign policy elites: political & (military), administrative & bureaucratic, interest and communication elites. However, as the subject matter is highly relevant to security issues, I have adapted Almond's definition to also include the military elite.

international negotiations without significant risk of punishment through the ballot box. However, Denmark is a special case as the use of referenda in relation to major EU questions has become institutionalized in Danish politics, creating a situation where the electorate is routinely asked to debate and sanction the outcome of international negotiations following EU decisions that involve relinquishing sovereignty. It is the frequent use of referenda, and their close and shifting results that most clearly show the significance of the masses for the integration process, and which has forced the elite to pay close attention to what constitute acceptable parameters for the integration discourse (Hedetoft, 2000: 285, Hansen, 2002: 50).

The claim put forward here is that the mass/elite gap in the case of Danish attitudes to the EU can be conceptualized as a difference in perception of what constitutes the EU, and its purpose. Following the end of the Cold War the Danish elite was quick to follow the developing European security/foreign policy discourse, which saw the European project towards political union as a project for peace and stability, and the CFSP as a means of dealing with a new security agenda, in particular German reunification and a renewed relationship with Central and Eastern Europe. The Danish mass on the other hand did not undertake a re-definition of the European project, but continued to view the EU in purely pragmatic terms, and primarily as an economic actor. The difference between Danish domestic mass attitudes towards European integration and Danish political elite attitudes towards Europe is clearly evident in a number of opinion polls, commentaries and studies published over the years, as well of course in the six referenda. The Danes are generally speaking proud of their Danishness and happy with their political and administrative institutions, whilst at the same time displaying a high degree of chauvinism and suspicion of other systems, including the EU (Damkjær, 2001). The popular satisfaction with things as they are stands in stark contrast with the fact that nearly all Danish parliamentary political parties are in favour of more integration than their electorates are willing to accept<sup>2</sup>. However, it would be a mistake to assume the simple relationship that the ‘masses’ are against

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<sup>2</sup> For example only the rightwing populist Danish People’s Party and the leftwing ‘Unity-list’, and the very small Christian Democratic Party (currently not represented in Parliament), wholeheartedly support keeping the Danish so called ‘opt-outs’ negotiated at the Edinburgh summit in December 1992. The ‘opt-outs’ refer to Denmark’s non-participation in union citizenship, the third phase of the EMU including the non-adoption of the Euro, common justice and police affairs, and a possible common defence policy. Even the original main architect of the opt-outs, the (leadership) of the Socialist People’s Party, have softened considerably on the non-negotiability of the opt-out issue.

integration and the 'elite' is in favour, although there clearly is a general tendency suggesting that the political elite generally tends to advocate further integration more than the masses do, whilst the masses generally are more likely than their elite counterparts to be either sceptical or directly opposed to further integration, and to conceptualize the EU in mainly economic terms. Similarly, it would be a mistake to interpret the gap, as the Danish elite having become enthusiastic Europeans. Although the elite seem to have accepted that the EU is a political project with security implications, support is still based on pragmatic considerations rather than ideological ones.

What is suggested in this article is that the specific Danish elite/mass gap can be explained by utilising social constructivist theories of ideational change together with Social Identity Theories (SIT) borrowed from social psychology. Such an explanation is based on a conceptualization of the mass and elite as two distinct social groups, which have been differently constructed, and which are undergoing different self-and other categorization processes, leading to very different conceptions of interests and political preferences. Understanding this division between mass and elite as distinct social groups necessitates a closer look at the Danish discourse on Europe, and the changes that occurred in the discourse following the renewed integration process after 1986, and particularly in connection with the two referenda surrounding the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the June 1992 referendum and the May 1993 referendum also known as the 'National Compromise' following the Edinburgh Summit. The article will therefore proceed by outlining the Danish discourse on Europe, followed by a description of how and under what circumstances social constructivism and theories of social identity perceive identity shifts or change of deeply held beliefs such as views on integration to take place, a process which is referred to as 'Europeanization'<sup>3</sup>. The theoretical insight will then be applied in order

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<sup>3</sup> The concept 'Europeanization' can as signified by the large body of literature on the subject, be conceptualized in several different ways. For example either as the emergence and development of distinct structures of governance on the domestic level of member states to cope with political problem solving that formalize interactions among the actors, and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules (Caporaso et. al. 2001, 1- 3). Alternatively, 'Europeanization' can be understood as the development of new norms regarding citizenship and membership at the European level, resulting in new understandings of interests and identities among domestic agents (Checkel 2001b, 180). I use both with an added third and more general conceptualization of Europeanization as an increasing awareness of the EU as part of normal national policy-making and acceptance of this process.

to explain the widening gap between the mass and elite on how to conceptualize the EU. The article will claim that the two social groups (elite and mass) are constructed in different ways, which means that they have different self-and other categorization links, leading to different socialization input both in terms of substantial content and socialization methods, giving rise to very different evaluations of the same processed ideational material. The article ends by suggesting that the developed framework has general applicability for comparative study on the Europeanization processes of different countries, either in the EU or as members in waiting.

### **‘Talking Europe’ in Denmark**

Danes have actually only really been talking about Europe for the past 15 years or so. In fact prior to the SEA, Denmark did not really have a discourse on ‘Europe’, indicating a low salience of European matters. Europe was referred to as ‘the market’, seen in for example the fact that the parliamentary committee which monitors EU matters and gives the government a parliamentary mandate for negotiations was known as the ‘market committee’ until it changed its name in 1993 to the more appropriate ‘European Affairs Committee’. This reflects that the then European Community was seen and understood almost solely in economic terms, more specifically as a question of ‘pork prices’ (Worre, 1995). Danish foreign policy was conceived of almost purely in terms of Germany, which continued to be constructed as a problem (Lammers, 2000: 261) expressed in the 1960s when the then Foreign Minister Per Hækkerup is reported to have said that ‘Danish foreign policy has three main problems: ‘Germany, Germany and again Germany’’ (Lammers, 2000: 261). The other part of Danish foreign policy was directed towards ‘Norden’ and was conceived of in much more positive terms, where the ‘Nordic Peoples’ were perceived to be in an organic relationship to each other as well as to their nation states (Hansen, 2002: 68). This is an outlook which has deep historical roots going back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Denmark was still a multinational construction, and where a Nordic (Danish-Norwegian) identity began to emerge in opposition to an emerging German (Schleswig-Holstein) identity. Denmark and Norway belonged to the ‘glorious Norden’, whilst Germany was perceived as belonging to an inferior Europe (Hansen, 2002: 55). With the war against Prussia in 1864, and the subsequent loss of territory, Germany was reconstructed into a threat. Hence Denmark has never had a specific ‘Europe policy’, but has always had a specific ‘Germany policy’.

According to both Ulf Hedetoft (2000) and Lene Hansen (2002), whom have both developed similar frameworks for understanding the Danish discourse on Europe and how it changed following the increased level of integration at the end of the 1980s, the Danish discourse on Europe must be seen in terms of the relationship between *state*, *nation* and *people*. They both stress the importance of the conception of the nation and its relationship to the state and the importance of ‘the people’ (*Folket*) as the protector of the nation. The relationship between ‘the people’ and the nation is always conceived of in positive terms and ‘politics that are based on ‘the people’ implies that the state is the nation’s state, that the state is legitimate and the nation is secured (Hansen, 2002: 61). The adjective *folkeligt* (popular or appealing to the ‘people’) carries much more positive associations than simply the English language term ‘popular’. Hence as pointed out by several authors (Hansen, 2002, Hedetoft, 2000, Østergaard, 2000), the Danish language is awash with references to ‘the people’ in such terms as *folke-kirke* (Danish state church), *folke-skole* (the Danish state school), *folke-retten* (international law), *folketinget* (parliament) and many more. In contrast, the relationship between ‘the people’ and the state is ambiguous, and the relationship between ‘the people’ and the elite is problematic. Generally speaking both a nexus and a division can be said to exist between the state/elite and the nation/people. In this relationship, ‘the people’ has a superior position to the elite, which generally speaking has negative connotations attached to it clearly glimpsed when elites and their views are sneeringly referred to as ‘upper-Denmark’. As a result, politics where the elite is seen as the basis for politics are seen as strengthening the state vis-à-vis the nation and ‘the people’, and is regarded with deep suspicion and as being *ufolkelig* (not of the people).

According to Lene Hansen, Denmark is characterized by a very tight coupling between the state and the nation with a particular combination of a ‘French’ state-nation conception, and a German construction of the nation as being a ‘kulturnation’. The core of the nation *is* ‘the people’ and the identity of the people *is* the identity of the nation. As long as nation and state are united around a common conception of the national interest, and the national identity (such as welfare state, participatory democracy, anti-power moral foreign policy) is not threatened, the tight coupling between state and nation can be maintained. In fact the norm is that this close

relationship is maintained as the gap between mass and elite in most instances is quite narrow (Denmark after all is a very *folkelig* nation), which is manifest in the Danish form of democracy (*folke-demokrati*) as well as a peculiar culture of minimalist equality (Hedetoft, 2000: 283) known as the ‘law of Jante’<sup>4</sup>. Indeed such a tight coupling of state and nation was in place in the limited discourse on Europe until the revival of the integration process at the end of the 1980s culminating in the 1992 referendum on Maastricht.

The interesting point is that whilst Danish membership of the EEC/EC was seen in terms of economic pragmatism, Denmark had essentially only one discourse on Europe, which was centred around the question of whether EEC/EC membership was in the national interest. Clearly, there were differences of opinion expressed in a no-side and a yes-side divide, but the mass/elite divide was not as clearly evident as it is today, and more importantly the two sides both conceived of the EEC/EC as an economic enterprise, which clearly had benefits, but which also was likely to have costs. As a result the discourse up until the revival of the integration project as also a political/security enterprise, could be couched in terms of interests rather than about identity or culture. In this ‘interest’ dominated debate the yes-side could emphasize the economic benefits accrued from membership, whilst the no-side could emphasize the costs, which were seen as being effects that would compromise Denmark’s competing interests such as its Nordic relationship, its moral stance in terms of anti-power politics, and internally its welfare state, specific labour market relations, and well functioning democracy (Hansen, 2002: 61, Østergaard, 2000).

However, once the integration process speeded up following the SEA and leading up to the signing of the TEU, it was no longer possible to limit the debate to economic issues and varying interests. Clearly the EU and the project following on from the Maastricht Treaty were about more than merely ‘pork prices’. The nature and the substance of the debate surrounding the Maastricht Treaty could not be contained under the heading of interests. Rather what was at issue was the role of the nation-state in the new European political landscape, which it was argued called into

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<sup>4</sup> The ‘law of Jante’ informs us that a position of authority does not make the person ‘worth’ more than an individual in a position without authority. As suggested by Ulf Hedetoft (2000) ‘the law of Jante’ can be seen when Danes consistently choose to address political figureheads as if they were their next-door neighbour, or when people of authority regularly cast themselves as just ordinary people.

question the future of national and cultural identity. It was no longer possible to argue that key aspects of Danish state identity such as the welfare state, the (people's) democracy and the anti-power politics, as well as relations with the other Nordic countries could be maintained, since the integration process was going to impinge on all these issue areas. Also it would no longer be certain that the specific moral form of foreign policy could be maintained as EU foreign policy was presumed to follow the interests of the dominant member states, hence leading to another for Danes negatively loaded issue 'big power politics'. According to Ulf Hedetoft, the result was that two separate and opposing Danish discourses on Europe developed. One exposing a *pragmatic* Danishness, emanated from the state/elite linkage and focused on interests conceived of mainly as *influence*. The other exposing a *symbolic* Danishness, emanated from the nation/people linkage and focused on identity conceived of mainly as *sovereignty* (Hedetoft, 2000). The problem was that through the emergence of these two separate discourses on Europe, the prospect of the nation and the state being decoupled from one another emerged. Given the predominance of 'the people' and the nation, the result of the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty cannot therefore come as a surprise, as 'the people' is always likely to weigh heavier than the elite. In fact the no side had consciously constructed itself as separate from 'upper-Denmark' by having mobilised in movements rather than parties, and by making the claims that 'upper-Denmark' was out of touch with what 'the people' wanted. Similarly, the subsequent Edinburgh Agreement, in Danish significantly referred to as the 'National Compromise', had been constructed in order to bring back the close connection between state/elite and nation/people by concentrating mainly on issues of *symbolics* rather than issues of *pragmatism*. In that sense the Edinburgh agreement was extremely important in Denmark for national reconciliation between nation, state and people.

So far the national compromise seems to have done the trick, but the spit between state and nation – elite and mass is always close by, which has imbued the Danish EU discourse with specific restrictions on how far the elite can go. There has been a change in the discourse from the middle of the 1990s, where politicians have suggested that perhaps the national compromise was not 'set in stone', and national politicians are increasingly and publicly questioning the wisdom of the opt-outs. With the move of responsibilities from NATO to the EU in the operation in Macedonia, it

became clear that the exemption from the common defence would mean that Denmark would not be able to participate in peacekeeping missions, seen as precisely the kind of foreign policy/defence role which fits in well with the cherished anti-power politics and moral foreign policies. Indeed this realization has led to the leadership of the Socialist People's Party (SF), the main architect behind the 'national compromise', to soften their view on the defence exemption. However, the negative result of the September 2000 referendum on the Euro, and the Swedish 'no' to the Euro in September 2003, seems to have put the issue to rest for the time being – at least until the next referendum on the European Constitution.

### **Critical junctures and norm change**

History seems to suggest that international norms tend to be very stable structures acting as restraints on actors' behaviour. Although gradual change certainly is not uncommon, there is a tendency for dramatic shifts rather than gentle ones. For example the ideational shift from colonialism to anti-colonialism, from slavery to anti-slavery, and from communism to capitalism represent a pattern for norm change in international relations. Although the norm shift in Denmark in relation to the elite's attitude towards European integration is not in the category of switching social and economic system, the shift nevertheless represents an important ideational change with far reaching consequences. Hence for analytical purposes it is claimed that the elite's ideational shift represented a norm change. The question that is begged is what caused such a norm shift, and why has it so far not been possible to induce a similar norm shift at the people/nation level? The claim made here is that norm shift only takes place if there is very persuasive reasons to do so, as norm change is costly and involves a significant amount of learning during a period of cognitive inconsistency while agents get to know and understand their new cognitive environment.

Part of the answer may be found in Martin Marcussen's (2000) ideational life-cycle, which states that firmly institutionalised ideas may change as a result of a 'commonly destabilizing shock', giving rise to an ideational vacuum, where previously held stable ideas no longer provide a base for problem solving and policy-making. Within the field of IR such shocks are often referred to as '*critical junctures*', and are commonly seen as the catalyst for political change. During the period of ideational vacuum it is likely that several competing idea sets will be promoted through a number of different

diffusion mechanisms. These mechanisms can be summarized as coercive, mimetic and normative (DiMaggio & Powell 1991, 69 – 76), where the coercive mechanism involves a degree of political pressure and influence and is most likely to take place in relationships of an unequal nature involving a degree of dependency. The mimetic transfer mechanism on the other hand involves imitation by the actor in ideational vacuum of another successful actor's norm set. The final diffusion mechanism referred to by DiMaggio and Powell is the normative transfer mechanism, which is associated with professionalization of an occupation or a network, which will define the conditions and methods of their work, establishing a cognitive base and legitimization for their occupational autonomy (DiMaggio & Powell 1991, 71). As suggested by Marcussen, such professionalization generally happens when actors within a certain sector share common notions of validity (Marcussen 2000, 20). It is worth noting that the three diffusion mechanisms are by no means mutually exclusive. On the contrary if more diffusion mechanisms can be utilized simultaneously on the same idea set, the process is likely to be stronger.

Following the diffusion of a 'winning' idea-set, a period of institutionalization begins, where the newly accepted ideas are translated into action in the form of new rules, procedures or policies, and the new set of ideas needs to be internalized to a degree so that they are not the cause of controversy and questioning at each stage of the political process. For the most part, and certainly in a democratic system, institutionalization, acceptance and internalization of the new idea set will be a pre-requisite for the proper political functioning of the policies flowing from the new norm set. For that reason a further stage of diffusion is likely to take place by promoting the ideas into the society at large (Flockhart, 2004). This is largely a process of socialization and social learning similar to the processes which take place at the elite level, which involves the reconstituting of actor identities and changing attitudes about cause and effect within a given subject area. It is this socialization process which so far has only been of limited success in the case of convincing the Danish people about the necessity of European integration and as being more than simply a question of 'pork prices'. However, in order to understand why socialization resulted in an, albeit pragmatic, ideational shift by the Danish elite, but not by the Danish People, it is necessary to investigate what the motivation behind the ideational shift might have been. For this

purpose Social Identity Theory (SIT) appears to offer a plausible explanation for idea change and non-change.

### **Social identity theory and ideational change**

A persuasive way of explaining actors' openness or resistance to socialization efforts can be found within theories taken from social psychology, particularly theories concerned with social group formation and evaluation (Turner, 1987: 1). A 'social group' can be defined as 'one that is psychologically significant for the members, to which they relate themselves subjectively for social comparison and the acquisition of norms and values' (Turner, 1987: 1). Membership of a social group entails a shared identity, where individuals have a collective awareness of themselves as a group with a distinct social identity, where value and emotional significance is attached to group membership, and crucially where the social group is continuously evaluated and compared with other social groups within a similar realm (Tajfel, 1978: 63).

Membership of the nation seems to be emotionally significant to most people, who clearly have a shared national identity and awareness of themselves as a group, and who continuously evaluate themselves vis-à-vis other similar 'social groups' (nations), where the specific Danish characteristics nearly always are evaluated more positively than the characteristics of the group with which comparison is made. In that sense it seems unproblematic to conceptualize the nation or 'the people' as a social group. In the case of the elite, the issue is not as clear, as it seems that the Danish elite, overall, does not conceive of itself as a distinct social group, probably because Denmark is such an anti-elitist society, where people who objectively do belong to the elite, nevertheless are likely to cast themselves as quite ordinary people. It is therefore not possible to conceptualize the *overall* Danish elite as a social group, since membership appears unlikely to be emotionally significant to individual members. However, as suggested by the study on the Danish elite by Christensen, Møller & Togeby (2001), the Danish elite can be conceptualized as a number of different but overlapping social groups whose professions happen to be located at the elite level, and which broadly speaking corresponds with the adapted version of political elite as conceptualized by Gabriel Almond (1950). There are clear lines of communication, movement and overlap between the four sectors of the elite with professional affiliation in areas of relevance to Europeanization, and there seems to be a shared

understanding of themselves as a group. On that basis it is also possible to conceptualize a specific part of the elite as a ‘Europe-elite’, whose professional affiliations make them members of a distinct ‘social group’, which is engaged in extensive contact and networking with other similar social groups within the European realm<sup>5</sup>.

There are very strong indicators suggesting that the members of a social group are motivated to positively distinguish their own group above all other groups. As pointed out by Mark Harvey, Social Identity Theory assumes that individuals like to compare themselves with others who are similar within a relevant dimension (Harvey, 2000). Individuals categorize themselves as members of distinct social groups, and in so doing they also categorize those that are members of other groups. This categorization process leads to a hierarchical system of different social groups where the group with the most positive value attached can be regarded as the dominant ‘in-group’, and the others as varying degrees of ‘out-groups’. Membership of a positively distinct social group is important for the individual because it provides higher self-esteem, and is therefore a motivating factor for wanting either membership of a group that already has a positive value attached to it, or to change ones own social group so that its positive evaluation increases.

Social Identity Theory can thus be used to throw light on the question of ‘where interests and preferences come from’. What SIT seems to suggest is that even in circumstances where an action seems to involve a high degree of material cost the action may nevertheless be perfectly rational for providing the actor with the desired high level of self esteem likely result from belonging to a more highly valued social group. Hence SIT is useful for explaining *why* individuals are willing to undergo the process of norm change, but perhaps less so in explaining *how* new norms are learnt. As the different methods of learning new norms may also contribute to explaining the gap between Danish mass and elite opinions vis-à-vis Europeanization, we now need to turn to the issue of socialization and social learning.

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<sup>5</sup> It must be emphasized that the ‘Europe-elite’ as conceptualized here only involves a small number of people, who in electoral terms are rather unimportant, but who have a high degree of influence.

### **Socialization and norm change**

At present the literature on social learning and socialization operates with two different strategies, one that is referred to as ‘social influence’, which elicits pro-norm behaviour through the distribution of social rewards and punishments such as material rewards to psychological well-being through praise, to withdrawal of material benefits and public shaming. In contrast the method referred to as ‘persuasion’ encourages norm consistent behaviour through a process of interaction that involves changing attitudes without use of either material or mental coercion or material or social rewards (Johnston, 2001: 499). Persuasion is however only likely to be an effective tool for socialization if a number of conditions are fulfilled. These include that the persuadee must be motivated to listen to and participate in principled argument and debate in the first place, the persuadee has few prior ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent with the persuader’s message, the process takes place in a private setting among individuals who share common professional (and social) backgrounds and meet repeatedly, and that the persuasion is through serious argument rather than lecturing or demanding (Checkel, 1999: 545 – 60, Checkel, 2001a: 553).

Strategies of the ‘persuasion’ type are generally believed to be more efficient if the aim is a genuine change of beliefs and attitudes, whereas ‘social influence’ can be very efficient if only a change in behaviour is required. Furthermore, and significant for the question at hand, strategies of persuasion tend to work better in small settings – i.e. not vis-à-vis a ‘people’, whereas social influence works well in large groups, but presupposes that the socializer has a degree of influence or power over those that may be given rewards or punishments.

### **Explaining the gap**

It has so far been established that ideational change usually happens as a rational reaction in response to external stimuli in the form of a destabilizing shock or critical juncture, and/or in response to changes in the value attached through the on-going self- and other categorization process between a number of social groups within a specific realm. Furthermore, as suggested by Thomas Risse (Risse-Kappen, 1994) ‘ideas do not float freely’ into agent’s heads, but have to be promoted through the three different diffusion mechanisms identified where they compete with other ideas. Finally, once adopted, ideas have to be internalized through processes of socialization

and social learning, where some methods are perceived to be more effective than others. In the case of the Danish elite/state versus the Danish people/nation, the constellation of each of the different stages of ideational change and each of the necessary conditions for ideational change have led to positive conditions for ideational change at the elite/state level, and negative conditions for ideational change at the people/nation level. The situation can be summarized in the following matrix:

Figure 1:

Processes of ideational change	Mass-level	Elite-level
External shock/Critical juncture	No shock	Shock leading to changed perceptions of foreign policy
Competing ideas	<b>National foreign policy</b> <b>OSCE/European Home</b> Increased integration	National foreign policy OSCE/European Home <b>Increased integration</b>
Diffusion mechanisms	Perceived coercive	Mimetic Perceived coercive/pressure Normative
Self- and other categorization	No change/positive identity strengthened	Distance to in-group increased → changed self-evaluation
Socialization processes	- persuasion limited - negative social influence - social influence ineffective due to reversed power relationship	- persuasion within established professional networks - perceived social influence reward & punishment

### *External shock/critical juncture*

The historic changes taking place with the end of the Cold War and the end of the division of Europe were perceived very differently at the elite and mass level. Whilst the end of the Cold War and the rapidly developing momentum towards German re-unification in public was greeted enthusiastically at the elite level, there was also a significant amount of ‘corridor rumblings’ about worries connected with German re-unification, decoupling from the United States, and prospects for instability in the newly freed socialist countries. Although the end of the Cold War did not represent a critical juncture on the scale of what was experienced in the countries facing the collapse of political structures and its basic constitutive norms set, the end of the Cold War nevertheless represented enough of a critical juncture for the elite to have to reconsider nearly all aspects of foreign policy. The end of the Cold War necessitated a reconsideration of roles and structures of the European security organizations, a reconsideration and redefinition of ‘us’ (the West) as opposed to the ‘them’ (the East) entailing a completely new self- and other categorization process. As such at the elite level, there was a critical juncture, which in foreign policy terms led to a situation very much like an ideational vacuum.

The same was not the case at the mass level. Although the historical significance of the changes was appreciated, this was mostly in emotional and positive terms. The worries about German re-unification were mainly an elite concern, and as it was not regarded as polite to speak negatively about re-unification, which after all had been a prime Western foreign policy goal throughout the Cold War period, the mass level had no reason to see the changes in anything other than a positive light. In fact, the positive nature of the changes were if anything highlighted through flippant references about ‘the West having won the Cold War’, ‘the End of History’, and the proven superiority of the capitalist/liberal democratic mode of organization. For that reason the people/nation level, did not perceive the end of the Cold War as a destabilizing shock with a resulting ideational vacuum. In other words the people/nation level had no reason to engage in norm shifts.

### *Competing ideas*

With the end of the Cold War, foreign policy circles were thrown into an ideational vacuum situation where a number of different ideas were competing, including the

idea of a 'Common European Home' which was actively promoted by Gorbachev, and the CSCE/OSCE as the main framework for European security. These ideas competed with the idea of increased European integration promoted in very enthusiastic terms by particularly the Commission President Jacques Delors, who was determined that the large-scale changes should not be allowed to stop the 1992 project towards a Single Market, and that the changes, in particular the looming German reunification, the prospect of restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe and the new relationships with Central and Eastern Europe, necessitated moves towards Political Union as well as Economic Union.

As in the case of the critical juncture aspect of ideational change state/elite and people/nation perceptions of what constituted the 'winning idea set' did not coincide. The people/nation level found the idea of a 'Common European Home' persuasive, and had only positive associations with the CSCE. In contrast, Europe was still mainly conceived of in economic terms, the European project seemed irrelevant for dealing with the historic changes, as the real reasons for political integration could not be effectively explained. As a result the people/nation level continued to view the EU in economic terms and did not see the connection with stability and peace in Europe. In Denmark, the argument that European integration could be conceptualized as 'a project for peace' was not launched in the public debate until after the 'National Compromise', although it was clearly debated within elite circles before then (Flockhart 1992). Finally, the idea of an increased role for national foreign policies appeared in the debate, partly fuelled by a renewed Danish activism and independent foreign policy in the three Baltic States. The result was that elite and mass had different perceptions of what constituted the 'winning idea set'. What was regarded as positive at the people/nation level was generally rejected at the state/elite level, although it must be said that part of the leftwing of the Danish elite were positively inclined towards the OSCE/Common European Home idea, which was a view they shared with the left of the Danish mass public.

### *Diffusion Mechanisms*

According to Martin Marcussen ideas are likely to be diffused through the three different diffusion mechanisms suggested by DiMaggio and Powell (1991), where a strong diffusion process is likely to involve all three. Once again the processes of

ideational change turn out to be significantly stronger at the state/elite level than at the people/nation level. Diffusion of the idea set maintaining that increased integration was the way to deal with the new situation was attempted through an intensive public information campaign consisting of a large number of political debates and hearings, and the distribution of the complete treaty text to all households! On top of that was a weak form of coercion, where the political elite ('helped' by Jacques Delors) was predicting doom and gloom, if Denmark did not accept the Maastricht Treaty. Denmark would be left standing on the platform after the 'Euro-train' had departed with no end of negative economic consequences to follow.

In contrast at the state/elite level, diffusion was evident through all available mechanisms. Apart from the perception of coercive diffusion through the above mentioned statements and consequences of doom, there was also an element of mimetic diffusion in as much that the 'increased integration idea' was being adopted by other national elites – including the other Nordic countries whom now seemed to be disinterested in the Nordic relationship whilst eagerly pursuing a closer relationship with Europe. Therefore an opportunity to simply pick a ready-made idea set and follow the crowd seemed a sensible and cost-effective strategy. Most importantly however, normative diffusion was in evidence within a number of professional networks at the elite level, who through their professional contacts both in the Western and increasingly the Eastern half of Europe started to see increased European integration as being more than merely an economic enterprise. The idea that European integration as conceived in the TEU was really about 'a European Germany not a German Europe', and the 'return of Central and Eastern Europe' to their natural place of belonging, were ideas that started to echo outside the narrow confines of academic security circles and the security organizations themselves. The result was once again that the processes of ideational change were much stronger at the state/elite level than at the people/nation level.

#### *Self- and other categorization*

In the case of self- and other categorization, the same trend is evident. The processes towards ideational change are strong at the elite/state level, whereas the tendency at the people/nation level is a strengthening of the positive evaluation of the existing social group, in this case the nation. At the state/elite level, there is a clear perception

of a dynamic and influential inner core in countries where the integration process is welcomed and moving swiftly ahead, whereas countries such as Denmark and Britain (and Norway) are perceived as moving away from the core (Wæver,1993) here conceptualized as the dominant in-group. At the state/elite level such marginalisation was clearly resented as members of the policy-making elite no longer agreed with their political remit, which was seen as a straitjacket preventing the adoption of policies that would place Danish EU policies near the inner core<sup>6</sup>. In that sense the self-and other categorization process at the state/elite level is resulting in pressures towards either changing one's own social group to be more in line with the perceived inner core group, or for the real integration enthusiasts to simply join the inner core group.

A completely different process is observable at the people/nation level. The nation was not perceived to be threatened by the changes in the international climate, but was rather perceived as threatened by the policies/demands emanating from the European Union. The changes in the international environment did not influence the existing positive self-evaluation of the nation in a negative direction. On the contrary, many of the defining features of the Danish state and nation, were precisely seen as positive features, which the newly freed Central and East European countries declared to be their own ambitions as new states. The welfare state, the bridge building foreign policies, the labour market organizations, even the Danish cooperative movement was evaluated positively by the new democracies, hence adding to the positive self-evaluation of the Danish nation/state by the 'people'. Nothing happened that could convince the ordinary Dane, that the Danish political system and its societal structures were not 'the best in the world'. At the same time, the perceived encroachments of the European Union on the identity and culture of the Danish state/nation resulted in a self and other categorization process with what was on offer from the European Union, which generally was seen as inferior to existing Danish policies or at best to be in line with existing policy. For example, the Social Chapter could not generate adaptational pressure<sup>7</sup> (or fierce resistance as in Britain), because most of its content

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<sup>6</sup> Based on interviews (1995) with Danish members of the Central administration and staff at the Danish delegation in the EU.

<sup>7</sup> The concept of adaptational pressure is taken from Caporaso et. al. (2001), who argue that the degree of adaptational pressure generated by Europeanization depends on the 'fit' or 'misfit' between

was already part of not only Danish policy, but also part of the state/nation identity. The result therefore was that whereas the self – and other categorization processes at the state/elite level led towards ideational change as a result of changes in a negative direction of the self- and other evaluation, the tendency was the exact opposite at the people/nation level as the positive self-evaluation of the Danish nation was strengthened rather than weakened.

### *Socialization processes*

The same tendency as has been identified so far, is also evident in relation to the socialization processes, which were utilised at both the state/elite and the people/nation level. The persuasion method was used extensively at the state/elite level, but could only be utilised with limited effect at people/nation level. This was because although it is true that persuasion methods were attempted at the public level, the reach of such persuasive attempts must be regarded as limited in their scope when the object of the persuasive efforts is a whole nation. A number of public hearings were held there were a large number of public events discussing European issues with a good turnout, much to the amazement of foreign visitors. However, as suggested by the literature on social learning, persuasion is only effective in small groups of people, preferably with a common background, and preferably who hold views that are not inconsistent with the persuader's message. It seems likely therefore that the people, who sacrificed beautiful summer evenings to go to public hearings and seminars on the new European policies, were in fact the people who needed persuading the least. Hence although the effects of the persuasion efforts can only be tentatively deduced, it seems unlikely that persuasion would have played a major role at the people/nation level.

Social influence methods, on the other hand were used extensively. Under normal circumstances such use of social influence to a large grouping such as 'a nation' would seem highly appropriate. However the social influence methods most used were either on the negative end of the scale (promising doom and gloom), which is regarded as less effective than positive social influence at the mass level by promising rewards. In any case social influence strategies generally speaking assume that the

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European institutions and the domestic structures. The lower the compatibility, the higher the adaptational pressure.

power relationship between the ‘influencer’ and the ‘influenced’ is stacked to the influencer’s advantage. However, as we have seen in the Danish case, ‘the people’ is regarded as superior to the elite, which is regarded with suspicion and without either specific or moral authority over ‘the people’, who is regarded as the guardian of the nation. Added to this is that in this particular relationship it is the electorate (the people), who holds power over the political elite by being able to vote for parties on the no-side. This is a reverse of the power relationship assumed in the social influence literature. The influencer therefore did not have any enforceable means of either punishment or reward, except to promise doom and gloom if the result of the referendum was no, and benefits if the result was a yes. As a result the conditions for social influence at the mass level were rather limited.

As has been the case so far, the position was the exact opposite at the elite level. At the elite level the main instrument of socialization was the more effective persuasion through a number of professional networks either domestically or internationally within a European setting. As most socialization at the state/elite level was achieved through persuasion rather than through social influence, the change of ideas set at the elite level, appear to have been a genuine change of beliefs rather than merely rhetorical action (Schimmelfennig, 2001). This has led to the situation where members of the political elite in fact will be more pro-European in private, than they are willing to be in public, because they adhere to the limits imposed on them by the National Compromise, and what is acceptable within the discourse uniting state and nation.

## **Conclusion**

The argument of this article has been that the gap as evident in the national discourse on Europe between elite and mass in Denmark in relation to European integration and Europeanization can be explained by utilising theories of norms transfer taken from Social Constructivism and theories of Social Identity taken from social psychology. Indeed the suggested theories do seem to hold a significant explanatory value, which consistently suggest that all the identified factors contributing to processes of ideational change have been working *towards* ideational change at the state/elite level, but *against* ideational change at the people/nation level.

The state/elite level is in a much more beneficial position for socialization as the elite is subjected to all three processes of Europeanization – that is as a process which aims at changing identity through the development of new norms regarding citizenship and membership of the European Union (Checkel, 2001b), as a process involving procedures for policy-making connected with the development of distinct structures of governance within which the elite is likely to be operating (Caporaso et. al. 2001), and more generally as the acceptance of the EU as part of normal policy-making. On the contrary the process at the people/nation level goes straight to the core of the much more difficult process of changing national identity, which seems to be well protected from change through having built up the myth of the Danish nation as superior to most other alternatives on offer, and no reason so far to question that myth. That together with the less beneficial position for socialization and the fact that Europeanization processes are of limited salience to most ‘ordinary’ people, may suggest that the gap between mass and elite is perhaps bound to widen – at least in countries where there is no national reason to jettison the national identity.

The interesting future perspective here is that if that is the case then countries with a vulnerable national identity – that is one that has experienced a severe destabilizing shock, which calls into question the very existence of the norms upon which national identity is built, might well catch up by becoming far ‘better’ Europeans than the ones who have not had urgent reason to reconsider their national identity. Indeed this could constitute an interesting research program, as the framework presented here may well prove useful for comparative analysis between different Europeanization processes – both contemporary ones and historical ones.

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