
British and Danish European Policies in the 1990s: A Discourse Approach

HENRIK LARSEN
University of Copenhagen

The aim of this article is to compare the respective domestic backgrounds for British and Danish policies towards Europe and to examine how these have shaped the European policies of the two countries in the 1990s. The article aims to cast light on the role of states' understanding of European integration through empirical application of a theoretical approach, discourse analysis. The main argument is that the patterns of understanding of 'Europe' show important linguistic similarities in that the base of the dominant discourse is instrumental and the primary political conflict is between sub-discourses of this instrumental discourse. In the 1990s, the difference between the two countries is in relation to which salient social and political actors adhere to what sub-discourses on Europe. The article argues that the differences between the two countries' European policy lines are shaped by the different understandings of the state/nation. The different understandings of the state/nation have influenced the content and procedures of policy. British policy in general, and in the 1990s in particular, has been dominated by a neoliberal understanding of the state, and Danish policy by more welfare thinking.

1. Introduction

Since joining the European Community in 1973, Britain and Denmark have often been presented by commentators and researchers as an odd couple in EC/EU politics (Sevaldsen, 1997: 177). In both countries, the EC/EU has been a subject of vehement political debate from a very early stage, the institutional dynamics from 1984 have been controversial, and their policy responses have often lain outside the European mainstream. This is closely linked to fundamental understandings in the two countries. The aim of this

article is to compare the respective domestic backgrounds for British and Danish policies towards Europe and to examine how this has shaped the European policies of the two countries in the 1990s. All the signs are that Denmark and the UK will continue to be among the most reluctant members, perhaps joined by one of the newcomers, Sweden. A comparison of the significance of domestic factors in their respective European policies in the 1990s is, therefore, of importance from the point of view of the general development of the EU. Moreover, the factors shaping the European policy of EU member-states have been neglected as a field of research within integration theory (Friis, 1997). The article aims to cast light on the role of states' understanding of European integration through empirical application of a theoretical approach, discourse analysis.

The main argument is that the patterns of understanding of 'Europe' show important linguistic similarities in that the base of the dominant discourse is instrumental and the primary political conflict is between sub-discourses of this instrumental discourse. The focus in this article on the structural patterns in the language provides a different approach from studies which, for example, categorize the stances found in national political parties according to ideal-typical polity ideas (see Jachtensfuchs et al., 1998) or — as is more common in the literature on the EU — dichotomies such as pro- versus anti-Europeans. The apparent binary opposites in the two countries (pro- and anti-Europeans), it is argued, are based on common ground which frames the policy process. In the 1990s, the difference between the two countries is in relation to which salient social and political actors adhere to what sub-discourses on Europe. The article argues that the differences between the two countries' European policy lines are shaped by the different understandings of the state/nation. The different conceptions of the role of 'parliamentary sovereignty' and the 'people' in the political process, and the basic connotations of the states in the two countries, have constituted the framework for differences in policy. The different understandings of the state/nation have influenced the *content of policy* where British policy in general, and in the 1990s in particular, has been dominated by a neoliberal understanding of the state, and Danish policy by more welfare thinking. The different understandings of the state/nation also affect the *procedural aspects* of their European policies. In Denmark, the population has been involved in the decision-making process through referendums. This has been important for Danish policy owing to a divergence between the understanding of the majority of the political parties and the understanding of the population over the premises of cooperation in Europe. In the UK, the population has played a more indirect role due to the role of the 'sovereign parliament', and the central political divisions have been between and within the political parties. These differences of proce-

ture in the UK and Denmark have also influenced the content of policies — a Danish political elite which became increasingly ‘pro-European’ in the 1990s can be seen as the background for the more accommodating Danish policy towards Europe in the 1990s (in spite of a sceptical public opinion which influenced limited aspects of policy), whereas the splits within the British political elite in most periods of the 1990s were arguably conducive to a more intransigent British line.

The article does not present a detailed analysis of particular issues in the European policies of the two countries, but analyses the broad lines in their European policies in the 1990s and their discursive background. Neither does the article go into detail about the development of the European context.¹ I will begin by outlining the theoretical framework, discourse analysis. I will then present a brief comparison of the Danish and British domestic environments in relation to the EU. In the third part, I will identify and analyse the dominant political discourses on Europe and on the nation-state, and the development of these discourses in the 1990s. Finally, I will attempt to show how the discourses identified have framed and shaped EU policies during the past decade.

2. The Theoretical Framework: Discourse and Foreign Policy

The article addresses the question of the nature of the broad domestic constraints in terms of meaning structures within which the European policies of the two countries have taken place in the 1990s. Drawing on social constructivist premises, the framework of meaning within which foreign policy takes place is seen as the basis of the way in which interests and goals for policies are constructed (see, for example, Weldes, 1996). The framework of meaning can be examined in different ways depending on ontological and epistemological assumptions. This article will look at the meaning dimension in terms of discourse, based on the assumption that language constitutes meaning.

I understand the concept of discourse along the lines of Foucault (1989) as a limited range of possible statements promoting a limited range of meanings.² Discourses dictate what it is possible to say and not possible to say. Discourses therefore provide the basis on which policy preferences, interests and goals are constructed. It works both as a constraint and as a creative force in shaping policies. Drawing on the early Foucault (1989), discourse is not seen as an entity derived from social power but as itself constitutive of impersonal social power. It is embedded in a societal context, but also contributes to shaping this context through its autonomous, productive existence. Even if there are aspects of a particular discourse which can be seen as a reflection of other aspects of social life, the assumption is

that political discourse mediates and interprets the world in a way that cannot be said to be a pure reflection of, or reduced to, other social or material structures (Larsen, 1997: 23). Political discourse is seen as an intersubjective phenomenon. It is adhered to, reproduced and changed by social and political actors (governments, political parties, the media, etc.). Analysis of discourse takes into account the dynamics of the language rather than studying views as mental states in individuals, as is the case in cognitivist research or other approaches which see language as a transparent conveyor belt for meaning. In a concrete analysis identifying discourses, it is, of course, necessary to attempt to distinguish between expressions of discourse, on the one hand, and purely rhetorical/tactical uses of language directed at short-term political goals, on the other hand. To distinguish between the two, attention must be paid to the context of the source material (for discussion of other methodological issues, see Larsen, 1997: 28–33). While it is possible to draw this distinction, it is important to take into account that, even in their rhetorical/tactical use of language, actors are still subject to the constraints of discourse.

It is argued that discourses or discursive formations circulate around certain societal themes (Foucault, 1989; 194; Larsen, 1997: 15; Wæver, 1998; Wæver et al. (forthcoming); cf. Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 113). An analysis of the discourse on key societal themes is the way to establish the discursive framework of meaning in a particular society or in a particular social context. In principle, any concept could be the pivot of discourses within particular fields of social practice. The argument here is that central concepts in the discourse in the two countries are the concepts of Europe and of the nation-state. The concept of Europe has been on the agenda since the debate about Europeanization in the 1980s (Wæver, 1989) and clearly is relevant when studying policies towards Europe. The concepts of nation/state are relevant because they describe who we think ‘we’ are (Wæver, 1998: 113). For reasons of space, the focus in this article is on the importance of the discourses on ‘Europe’. The two concepts are, however, found to be linked interdiscursively. Particular discourses on the nation-state are drawn on in relation to particular discourses on Europe and can be seen as mutually supportive.

Political discourse can be seen as a domestic structural factor constraining foreign policy. However, support for particular policies or stances cannot necessarily be deduced directly from the political discourse (or other structural factors) since the level of abstraction is high. But an analysis of political discourse can provide insights into the limits of, and constraints on, policies (for extended presentations of this approach see Holm et al. 1989; Larsen, 1997; Wæver, 1998; Wæver et al., forthcoming). The distinction between policy and discourse applied here is an analytical distinction and not

an ontological distinction (Hansen, 1998: 87). A particular discourse, or constellation of discourses, makes a certain range of policies possible and makes others less likely, and can thus be seen as a structural frame for foreign policy. It is this discursive framework for British and Danish European policies which will be analysed here. Within this approach, 'national interests' are seen as discursive constructions within this framework of meaning (Weldes, 1996). This contrasts with approaches which see policies as expressions of objective and fixed national interests which the governments defend.

One advantage of the discourse approach is that it sheds light on the way in which views may be shared across parties, social institutions or even society, rather than being a function of group membership. It is a way of studying similarities and differences between the ways in which Europe is conceptualized nationally across party political boundaries or other spheres of social life. In Britain and Denmark (and in most countries) there is a complex pattern of views or discourses relating to concepts such as Europe and nation-state. To identify these is important in order to make sense of the discursive battles taking place.³ However, there are also significant similarities between the discourses; they may be tied together by a more general discursive framework. In this case, it is argued, it is one that considers EU/Europe in instrumental terms. An understanding of this general discursive framework and the struggles within it is central for making sense of the general policy line on Europe.

3. British and Danish Discourses on Europe

Since the founding of the EEC, EC/EU policy has not been an object of consensus in either country. In both countries, there have been divisions within the political elite and in the population. The cleavages on the question of the EC cut across parties. The general tendency, however, has been that the right wing was in favour of the EC and the left wing was critical — in contrast to the pattern in the other EC countries. In Denmark, strong anti-EC popular movements have continually obtained up to 25% of the vote at the elections to the European Parliament. Opinion polls, such as *Eurobarometer*, have consistently shown the British public and the Danish public to be the most sceptical towards membership among the populations in the Community and the most opposed to extension of powers to the European Parliament. The British and the Danes have also been the least likely to state that they had a European identity rather than British or Danish identity (Sevaldsen, 1997: 178; cf. Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996: 182). In both countries, there were de facto referendums on membership (DK: 1972, UK: 1975) in which one-third of the voters voted no. Partly due to

the referendums which led to an upsurge in interest in the Community, the Danish population has been actively engaged in questions relating to the development of the EC. Public knowledge of the EC/EU has been found to be among the highest in the Community, and for the Danish referendum in 1972, the turn-out was 90% and has been high in subsequent referendums.

The dominant discourse on Europe in both countries has been an instrumental discourse which presented the question of the EC in terms of the concrete interests it could fulfil (Larsen, 1997; Østergård, 1993: 168). Europe was presented in non-mythical terms — the development of ‘Europe’ was not seen as something natural and organic, and certainly not something the two countries were naturally part of. The development of Europe was primarily legitimized by its utility for the states. There was an absence of any emotional pull from Europe, as the following statement by Margaret Thatcher illustrates — ‘We were elected with a clear commitment to the EC and to fight tenaciously for British interests within it’ (Margaret Thatcher, 14 October 1983, cited in Larsen, 1997: 55). Arguments based on British interests were also drawn on by Tony Blair in the late 1990s, for example in relation to the issue of British participation in the EMU — ‘Britain will take the decision in its own time and in our own national interest . . . and be free to join . . ., if the economic benefits are clear’ (29 September 1998). It was not a mythological, political vision for a greater European project — ‘The Community is not an end in itself. Nor is it an institutional device to be constantly modified according to the dictates of some abstract intellectual concept’ (Margaret Thatcher, 20 September 1988, cited in Larsen, 1997: 56). The prominent Danish Social Democrat Iver Nørgård said on 19 December 1985 about the Single European Act that, ‘In the best of cases it is superfluous. But unfortunately, it can also be understood so that we commit ourselves to working towards the EC-Union’ (cited in Petersen and Thune, 1986: 333, translation by the author). Only few in the two countries argued for ‘Europe’ in cultural terms (predominantly within parties such as the Liberals and later the Liberal Democrats in the UK, and the Centre Democrats and parts of Venstre in Denmark). The power of the dominant discourse was so strong that even those who argued relatively strongly on cultural grounds for the EC, used instrumental terms. The main question in political debate was not whether one ought to be a member of the EC for cultural reasons but whether the alleged concrete, instrumental advantages would significantly affect national sovereignty (Branner, 1992: 317; Larsen, 1997: 58). The basis for cooperation were the states (Hansen, forthcoming: 133, 141, 157; Larsen, 1997: Ch.2). Fundamentally, there were two discourses on Europe — a dominant discourse arguing on the basis of instrumental concerns, and a much weaker one

arguing on the basis of considerations about cultural and political affinities (Larsen, 1997: 58–59; cf. Branner, 1992: 318; cf. Hansen forthcoming: 113–56).

Within the dominant instrumental discourse, one could distinguish between two sub-discourses in both countries in relation to the EC/EU Europe. I label them (1) the interstate cooperation sub-discourse (ICD) and (2) the essential cooperation sub-discourse (ECD) (for Britain see Larsen, 1997: 62–64, for Denmark see Larsen, 2000, forthcoming).⁴ The *interstate cooperation* discourse argued that Europe represented, and should by nature represent, strict interstate cooperation. The relationship to Europe was clearly external ('we'/'they'). National sovereignty versus Europe is presented as a zero-sum game. The Eurosceptic Bill Cash, for example, stated after the Single European Act in 1986 that 'Nothing in this act . . . should derogate from the sovereignty of parliament in the UK' (cited in Larsen, 1997: 63). Holger K. Nielsen from the Socialist People's Party said in the Folketing on (14 April 1983 that, 'It is our wish that it is made clear that the right of veto is an absolutely necessary part of the preconditions for Danish EC Membership' (Petersen and Thune, 1984: 323, translation by the author).

The *essential cooperation discourse* claimed that European cooperation was essential for the country and that it was worth paying a price for a fruitful relationship. The language signalled partnership and cooperation. A close and cooperative relationship with Europe was necessary in order to further national interests. The Danish Foreign minister Uffe Ellemann Jensen stated on 9 December 1986 that, 'It is cooperation about economic affairs which has such a great importance for the development of the whole of society, it is cooperation between a group of countries who have the will, together with the economic and the political weight, to mark the development of the whole of Europe decisively' (cited in Petersen and Thune, 1987: 364, translation by the author). Possible losses of sovereignty in some areas might not be significant compared with the gains. But sovereignty continued to be an important concern — 'In Europe our self-interest has persuaded us to accept a fusion of sovereignty' (Michael Heseltine in 1989 quoted in Larsen, 1997: 64). Importantly, this discourse still argued in terms of instrumental interests rather than mythical, cultural affinities — 'The Community will always be an alliance of self-interest, although leaders who ignore the element of idealism do so at their peril' (Michael Heseltine in 1989, cited in Larsen, 1997: 64). When it was argued that European cooperation was essential, the primary arguments until the 1990s were more often economic although the political also played a role. The dominant discourse within the government was usually the essential cooperation discourse.

Judging from opinion polls on support for membership, it seems likely that the interstate cooperation discourse had a strong grip on the population, since, until the late 1980s in both countries, between one-third and one-half of the population was against membership. From the late 1980s onwards, membership was increasingly accepted as a given in both countries (Nielsen, 1993: 18; Larsen, 1997: 65), which might be taken as an indication that the essential cooperation view had gained ground. Qualitative studies designed to identify discourses on Europe which the populations draw on have to my knowledge not been carried out.⁵ However, opinion polls are not an unimportant source of evaluating the nature of political constraints, as it is these that the politicians, to a large extent, must use in order to take stock of the views of the population (Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996: 178).

The discursive background for British and Danish European policy can be seen as the presence and struggle between these two sub-discourses, both, however, based on an instrumental approach to Europe. More culturally and organically based approaches to Europe can be identified in both countries but they have not been central in shaping the debate or the general policy line. However, there were also important differences between the dominant instrumental discourses on Europe in Denmark and the UK. In contrast to the traditional political language in the UK whereby the UK was not presented as part of Europe, Denmark was always considered as part of Europe in Danish political language. Moreover, the historical connotations of Europe in the UK have contained an element of hostility or threat (Larsen, 1997: 52), whereas the most common Danish attitude has rather been indifference (Hedetoft, 1995: 254). The argument here, however, is that the differences in the way 'Europe' was constructed as an instrument were differences of degree rather than kind; the basic instrumental discourse on Europe was shared.

Although this general discursive pattern could be found in the two countries, there were also important differences as far as the political element within the essential cooperation sub-discourse was concerned. Britain is a major power traditionally concerned with its role and rank in the world. It was part of the essential cooperation discourse that Britain must play a leading role in Europe — it should not be marginalized in the EC. In the Danish case, the conception of being a smaller power traditionally meant that the aim was not to play a leading role in Europe. From the perspective of the essential cooperation discourse, a central role in the EC gave important influence. But a central role in the EC was, arguably, not seen as necessary in order to maintain the Danish self-conception in foreign affairs. Danish foreign policy was traditionally based on participation in the four pillars, whereby the pillars (NATO, UN, Nordic cooperation and the EC)

had equal weight (Hækkerup, 1965). The EC was just one of these pillars.

The dominant instrumental discourses on Europe in Denmark and the UK are closely linked to basic discursive understandings of the state and the nation. Traditionally, the predominant understandings in the two countries have considered there to be only one real political centre, the capital; the two countries are unitary states. Politics is seen as an activity that essentially takes place in and around the capital. A supplementary political centre in Europe, therefore, appears as a challenge to their fundamental state structure as it has traditionally been conceived (Knudsen, 1992: 293; Larsen, 1997: 50). Moreover, in both countries it has traditionally been held that the national political models were unique and better than the ones in the rest of Europe (Larsen, 1997: 38, 51; Lawler, 1997: 576). These understandings are co-articulated with the dominant instrumental discourses of Europe in the two countries.

There are, however, also two significant differences between the understandings in the two countries with respect to the state and the nation. First, one difference relates to the political connotations of the state. The understandings of the Danish state are strongly interwoven discursively with the 'welfare state' so that the inherent features of the Danish state are understood partly in terms of its welfare state features. This has made the state potentially sensitive to the EC/EU moving into a larger number of areas (Hansen, forthcoming: 109–10). The attitude towards enhancing free trade has generally been positive. The right-wing coalition government in the 1980s, for example, strongly supported the internal market introduced in the SEA. But it also wanted guarantees for protection of workers' safety.⁶ Within the dominant British discourse, there is infrequent use of the term 'state', let alone 'British state' (Dyson, 1980: 36). This can be linked to a strong English individualist tradition of which the non-interventionist state is the mirror image (Crick, 1991: 94) and to the dominant Whig view of the British state as inherently non-interventionist (Wallace, 1986: 383). By analogy, Britain has traditionally seen Europe as part of a free-market project, rather than a greater political project. While this also, to a large extent, holds for Denmark, there are nevertheless important differences of emphasis. Welfare state features are inherent in the connotations of the Danish state whereas this is not to the same extent the case in Britain. These differences have become particularly marked in the 1980s and 1990s where the British Conservative governments have clearly drawn on neoliberal, non-interventionist understandings. The switch to a Labour government in 1997 has not fundamentally changed the British political language; the Labour

government draws on the same discourse with respect to the role of the state in the economy as its predecessor.⁷ The spread of neoliberal currents of political thought from the early 1980s was part of a broader trend which also affected Denmark. However, in Denmark the role of the welfare state was never seriously challenged. In the 1990s, welfare state discourses are much more firmly rooted in Denmark than in the UK which have constituted different frameworks of meaning for their European policies.

Second, 'parliamentary sovereignty' is a pivot or nodal point in the British discourse on the state/nation, and central in relation to Europe. Within the dominant Whig interpretation of British history, 'parliamentary sovereignty' is linked to defiance of the European continent (Wallace, 1986: 382–3). It is parliament which is seen as sovereign, not the people,⁸ the folk, the republic or the nation, as it came to be seen in most continental countries after the monarchies lost their powers (Clark, 1991: 56–60, 71). The self-referential power of parliament, together with the executive it produces, is seen as absolute and beyond outside control (Larsen, 1997: 40).⁹ The sovereign parliament, together with the monarchy, are seen as the central elements of the unity of the UK, not primarily the common characteristics of the 'people' or some understanding of British nation (Larsen, 1997: 37). In Denmark the equivalent element of unity has been the 'rule of the people' (*folkestyre*) — the Danish parliament is, significantly, called the 'Folketing' (Knudsen, 1992: 279) and the government has been labelled a 'negotiating executive' (Rhodes, 1998).¹⁰ The core of the nation is 'the people' (Hansen, forthcoming: 112). The dominant Danish discourse links the state and the nation strongly together politically so that the state is seen as acting on behalf of the nation. At the same time the nation is also attributed strong cultural and ethnic features (Hansen, forthcoming) which go together with a high degree of overlap between state, nation and society (Østergård, 1993:176). The concerns in relation to European integration are challenges to this organic discursive synthesis between people and state. Perceptions of challenges to the identity of the nation, 'Danishness', and the state institutions through which it is expressed and protected, can be identified also among people who are positive towards the EU and adhere to the ECD (Essential Cooperation Discourse) — but the argument from this perspective was that the synthesis is better protected through cooperation in the EU. In Britain, the equivalent concern in relation to Europe are challenges to 'sovereignty of parliament' where adherents to the ECD argue that parliamentary sovereignty is better protected through a 'pooling' or 'fusion of sovereignty' in the EU (see for example Heseltine quoted in Larsen, 1997: 64).

The differences between Denmark and the UK on this point also have implications for European policy decision-making in the two countries. In

Denmark referendums in relation to Europe are seen as integral parts of '*folkestyret*'. The by now five referendums since 1972 have contributed independently to making the population an important player in relation to major changes in Denmark's relationship to the EU. There is a strong political convention to the effect that major changes in Denmark's formal relationship to the EU should be decided by referendum (Petersen, 1996: 188) whether this is necessary for constitutional reasons or not.¹¹ Linked to the central role of 'sovereignty of parliament' in the British democracy has been a general lack of political support for referendums (Marshall, 1997: 307). Following from that, in the UK, in contrast to Denmark, the population has not contributed so directly to European policy decisions (in spite of a referendum in 1975¹²). This leads to a more general point in relation to the role of public opinion in the analysis of foreign policy. In foreign policy analysis, the role of the public as a universal category is a common object of study. However, the role of public opinion or the population is, arguably, not a universal phenomenon. Whether and how it affects foreign policy depends on the way its role is constructed in discourses on the state and the nation (cf. Foyle, 1997).

Thus, the basic discursive state-nation patterns have been presented. However, it is important to stress that discursive patterns are dynamic — permanently reproduced and renegotiated. In the British case, the pivotal role of sovereignty of parliament has been challenged in the 1990s by the political movements in the Celtic fringe and, indeed, by the Labour government's constitutional programme which has led to devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Conversely, in the Danish case there have been voices raised against the central role of the people in relation to constitutional EU decisions (see, for example, Knudsen, 1997). However, the basic discursive patterns outlined earlier remain dominant.

Both states were therefore understood as unitary closed 'shells' which were articulated together with an instrumental concept of Europe. But while the challenge from European integration in the British case is primarily the threat to sovereignty of parliament, the challenge in the Danish case is to the synthesis between the state and the people. Moreover, in the Danish case, the Danish state is closely linked to the welfare state whereas in the British case the state is, particularly in the 1990s, seen as non-interventionist by nature.

From around 1983/4, due to the new institutional dynamism in the EC led by the Franco–German axis which culminated in the TEU (Maastricht Treaty), the problem for both countries was that they were under pressure to follow an EC development which went against the fundamental features of their basic instrumental discourse on Europe. In contrast to France and Germany, Europe was not predominantly seen in Britain or in Denmark as a

natural, organic political actor which was to be developed. And yet the development of Europe as a political actor was on the EC's agenda from 1984.

4. 1990s: The Post-Cold War Period

From the late 1980s the essential cooperation discourse increasingly gained ground within the political elite in *Denmark*. Most of the political elite now spoke about European cooperation as necessary for both economic *and* political reasons. Where 'Union' had previously been a term that was avoided, it was now seen as acceptable language within the essential cooperation discourse in relation to the TEU¹³ (for the Social Democrats, see Haahr, forthcoming: 13–14). Increasingly, the EC/EU pillar was given more weight as functions that had previously been ascribed to the other pillars in Danish foreign policy were now also partly ascribed to the EC/EU. By the early 1990s, it had become the most important of the four pillars in the dominant Danish foreign policy understanding (Heurlin, 1996: 182; Petersen, 1996: 205). The question is whether the Danish change was so important that it can be characterized as a change in kind rather than degree (Hedetoft, 1995: 243), in other words whether there was a change *of* discourse rather than just a change *within* discourse. Terms like 'the project of peace' used by the Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen from the mid-1990s did point to a more value-based and mythological view of the EU. The argument here, however, is that the way of arguing was still based on instrumental concerns. It was still the essential cooperation discourse. There was, however, a significant substantive change within the essential cooperation discourse in the 1990s. Political and security elements were introduced in this discourse in the arguments about why cooperation in 'Europe' was seen as essential in both countries, although most strongly in Denmark.

In the early 1990s, the essential cooperation discourse, including political and security elements, was adhered to by the Danish mainstream political parties. Even parties who adhered to a more pro-European discourse mostly argued in terms of this discourse (see Branner, 1992: 318).¹⁴ Very importantly, the essential cooperation sub-discourse gained a stronger position within the Social Democrats, which from around 1986 became more positive towards the EC (Haahr, 1992). The essential cooperation discourse was increasingly used by what one might call the Danish intellectual elite, a group which had, since 1972, been sceptical towards membership and adhered, broadly speaking, to the interstate cooperation discourse (Hedetoft, 1997: 23). In addition, important parts of the workers' unions now adhered to the essential cooperation discourse (the employers had traditionally been pro-EC). Only the parties on the extremes of the

political wings adhered to the interstate cooperation discourse — the Progress Party, a populist right-wing, anti-tax party, and parts of the SF. Previously, scepticism towards the EU was mainly a centre-left phenomenon. Very importantly, no parties were against the EC; membership had become a matter of national consensus (Nielsen, 1993: 19; Worre, 1995: 248). Only the Movement against the EU was (as you would expect!) against EU membership.

At the same time, however, opinion polls indicated that a substantial majority of the Danish population was negatively disposed towards further European integration (Nielsen, 1993: 20, 29). In polls, the population was for cooperation in a whole range of concrete areas, but, as a point of principle, it was against closer EC integration (Nielsen, 1993: 26, 29). This was, arguably, an expression of adherence to the interstate cooperation discourse. The gap between the understandings of the population and the political elite seemed to widen.

The position of the essential cooperation discourse was also strengthened in *Britain* in the early 1990s. As in Denmark, the essential cooperation discourse now also drew on political and security arguments for why ‘Europe’ was essential, although this aspect was stronger in the Danish case. Within the British Conservative Party, the essential cooperation discourse was strengthened with the coming to power of John Major. The toppling of Thatcher can be seen partly as a result of the conflict within the Conservative Party between the essential cooperation discourse and the interstate cooperation discourse whereby the choice of John Major signified a temporary victory for the essential cooperation discourse. Labour also increasingly adhered to the essential cooperation discourse, a development that had been taking place since 1986/87 (Haahr, 1992; Larsen, 1997). Major’s aim of ‘bringing Britain to the heart of Europe’ was a policy statement within the terms of the essential cooperation discourse. The essential cooperation discourse formed the background for Major’s new policies — the new and more active line in Europe after the interstate cooperation discourse’s dominance in the late 1980s. And this was also the background for the government’s approach to the 1990–1 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). From the late 1980s the essential cooperation discourse increasingly gained ground in Labour and, when Labour took over government in 1997, it was the dominant discourse within the party.¹⁵

5. British and Danish EU Policies in the 1990s

I will now look at the policies of the two countries towards the EU in the 1990s. The aim is to show how the discourses identified, and the relations of strength between them, have framed and shaped policies. The struggle

between the two sub-discourses, based on an instrumental discourse on Europe, constrained and shaped policy in the two countries in the 1990s. The difference between the two countries has been in relation to who adheres to which of these two sub-discourses, not in relation to the framework of meaning on 'Europe' itself. Apart from certain differences in the connotations of 'Europe' and differences concerning the political element in the essential cooperation sub-discourse, the basic discursive structures on Europe are shared. The more significant difference at the level of meaning is the discourse on the state/nation, in particular the role of the people vs parliamentary sovereignty, and whether the state is seen as inherently liberal or rather as a welfare state. These differences, and the ways they are articulated with the discourse on Europe, come to the fore in relation to the European policies of the two countries in the 1990s. This is the subject of the rest of the article.

*Denmark*¹⁶

The spread and dominance of the essential cooperation discourse in the elite with its emphasis on political and security aspects shaped the general policy line of the government towards the EU in the 1990s. Contrary to what one might expect, this was also the case after the 'No' to the TEU in 1992 and the Danish exemptions at the Edinburgh Summit in 1992 (see below).

The *Memorandum* of 1990 constituted the government's negotiation platform for the governmental conferences in 1990–91. Backed by the six mainstream political parties in the Folketing (Social Democrats, Centre Democrats, Radical Liberals, Christian People's Party, Conservatives and Liberals), the *Memorandum* was clearly based on the essential cooperation discourse, as illustrated in the following extract:

. . . the main task must be to adapt and strengthen the Community in such a way that it is enabled to play a central role. . . . The Community must be strengthened, so that it becomes the foundation for the political and economic unity of all of Europe. . . . The Community [is] due to its structure and construction the best instrument to include the other European countries in broad and binding cooperation. . . . The main task of the coming IGCs must be to strengthen European cooperation broadly speaking, while maintaining the role of the Community as an anchoring point. (The Danish government's *Memorandum*, 4 October 1990, translation by the author)

In Putnam's (1988) terms, this expressed a larger parliamentary win-set than ever for a Danish government in a general European negotiation (Petersen, 1995: 202–3, 1996: 195). The *Memorandum* was positive towards the EMU and a strengthening of the EPC on the basis of consensus (but excluding a common defence and defence policy cooperation). New areas of

cooperation such as environmental and social questions with increasing use of majority decisions were suggested. Some degree of strengthening of the EP was also accepted (Petersen, 1996: 194–5). But the general policy approach still furthered intergovernmentally-based integration.

Due to the role of the ‘people’ in the discourse on the state/nation on which the referendum provision in the constitution was based, it was seen as a convention that the ‘people’ should be consulted in relation to major EU constitutional issues. However, despite the general agreement to hold a referendum on the Treaty (Petersen, 1993: 90), the possible presence of a different understanding in the population did not seem to have been a prominent concern during the 1990–1 IGC negotiations. The political parties may have taken the big changes in the population’s views on EC membership to mean that it would follow the politicians’ more pro-European lead in the referendum (Nielsen, 1993: 20); in other words that the population basically also adhered to the essential cooperation discourse or would be persuaded by arguments along these lines.

The subject of the debate in relation to the referendum on 2 June 1992, which resulted in a ‘no’ vote, was whether the Maastricht Treaty implied a supranational development of the Community (Worre, 1995: 251). General political aspects of the Community did not play a great role in the arguments. It can be argued that the part of the population which voted ‘yes’ came closer to adherence to the essential cooperation discourse. The arguments mentioned for the ‘no’ were closer to the interstate cooperation discourse. If we look at the population’s stated reasons for voting in 1992 and 1993 (described in Nielsen, 1993) we get the following general picture — for the yes voters, it was a question of the necessity of cooperation and the fear of standing alone. For the no’s the issue was the fear of loss of independence and opposition to decisions being moved to Brussels. It was not so much a question of concrete concerns or fears (Nielsen, 1993: 73). A significant split between the discourse of a significant part of the population and the political discourse of the political elite thus became clear from the referendum.

The Edinburgh decision whereby Denmark was allowed four exemptions to the TEU was, to a large extent, based on accommodating the Socialist People’s Party. Accommodating this party was seen as necessary by the government in order to convince the voters in a second referendum to vote in support of the treaty. In a broader sense, the four exemptions were interpreted in the Danish debate as symbolic guarantees of continued control of Danish sovereignty (Hedetoft, 1997: 27–8; see Nielsen, 1993: 50), drawing on the interstate cooperation discourse. The basis for the negotiation about Denmark’s future relationship in the EC was based on the document *Denmark in Europe*. The document contained elements of both

the interstate cooperation discourse and the essential cooperation discourse and thus reflected the role of both sub-discourses in defining Denmark's future relationship with the EU.

The Danish 'no' to the EC-Union on 2 June 1992 was an expression of the fact that a majority of the Danes do not want the united states of Europe. However, it was not a 'no' to EC membership or European cooperation . . . Europe needs committed cooperation. The EC is the natural framework for this cooperation. . . . Denmark shall not be isolated but play an active role in the future development of Europe. A national compromise constitutes, at the same time, the point of departure for a new discussion within the population about a more European policy directed towards the future. . . . Denmark must therefore in relation to the aim of a union . . . make clear that cooperation within the EC consists of states . . . who have freely decided to exercise certain of their competences in common. . . . [This] has as its obvious base that Denmark is an independent state. (*Denmark in Europe* (1993), translation by the author)

The negotiations in the EC after the 'No' referendum in 1992 led to four Danish opt-outs in Danish policy in the future EU. With respect to the four opt-outs, Danish policy became very low key and cautious and the government's interpretation of what Denmark could do in these areas became very narrow. The parties on the political extremes, SF and the Progress Party, were strong defenders of the exemptions and guarded closely the government's compliance with them in line with the symbolic role the exemptions had acquired within the interstate cooperation discourse.

After 1992, the government became very cautious as far as the effects of policy on the debate in the population was concerned, adapting to the presence of the interstate cooperation discourse. This caution prevailed after 1992–3, but the essential cooperation discourse remained dominant in shaping the general policy line. The government took for granted that another referendum over the next IGC would become necessary — that the general policy line which was based on the essential cooperation discourse could be challenged by referendums, as it was in 1992 and 1993 and would be in 1998. This meant that the parties adhering to the essential cooperation discourse, including the government, had to consider the way policies were perceived by the population in future referendums.

The assumption that the population might be adhering to another discourse which may have effects in a future referendum could be seen as a behavioural constraint on the government rather than being constitutive¹⁷ — it did not affect basic understandings in the essential cooperation discourse but restricted the government's actions. Following the referendums in 1992 and 1993, a cautious and low-key position on the EMU, defence and defence policy and supranational cooperation within the field of

justice and home affairs was taken. But the government and the other mainstream parties maintained their basic understanding of European cooperation — they still adhered to the essential cooperation discourse. The Foreign Secretary Niels Helveg Petersen stated, for example, in a speech at Chatham House on 3 November 1993, that:

The theory of ‘peace through integration’ has proved its validity in practice. . . . Where sovereignty is being emptied of substance, there is only one way we can influence our own destinies: by exercising our sovereignties jointly. That is what the European Union is about. (cited in Petersen and Thune, 1994: 432)

The policy line after 1992 was therefore also based on the understanding of the EU as having a significant political role including in the field of security.¹⁸ This was most clearly expressed in the strong support for EU enlargement, in the early 1990s with the Nordic countries and Austria, later with the CEECs (Central and Eastern European Countries), and the Baltic States in particular. Denmark was the strongest proponent of a broad enlargement in the 1990s. Denmark also supported a strong external EU role through a strengthening of the efficiency of the CFSP (common Foreign and Security Policy) (Larsen, 2000, forthcoming). From 1995, it supported the inclusion of elements of the Petersberg tasks in the EU (*The Open Europe*, 1995). The Danish government also conducted an active policy in the EU on issues such as openness, employment, consumer protection, work environment standards and the environment. Many of these policy issues could be seen as emanating from the welfare state focus in the Danish discourse on the state.

The Danish negotiation mandate for the 1996 IGC, *Open Europe*, was clearly also based on the essential cooperation discourse, although it contained elements of the interstate cooperation discourse in relation to the exemptions. It included the following:

The forthcoming IGC must help to ensure peace, stability and welfare in the Europe of the future. The IGC must, above all, lay the foundations for the enlargement of the EU to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. . . . The EU must be maintained and developed as the framework for effective European cooperation. . . . The Edinburgh Agreement cannot be amended without Denmark’s consent and will therefore be maintained as long as Denmark wishes to retain that position. (Basis for Negotiations — Open Europe: The 1996 Intergovernmental Conference SN522/95(REFLEX 23), 1996)

The strong position of the essential cooperation discourse underpinned the government’s emphasis on the preparation of the enlargement as the most important aim of the IGC for the parties behind the mandate, clearly an

offensive political aim. It was open towards adjustments of voting procedures, etc. at the 1996–7 IGC to ensure effectiveness after enlargement. Also, a number of Danish key issues were promoted — openness, transparency, proximity, employment, consumer protection and environmental protection many of which were Danish welfare state values. The government's promotion of these clearly also had a tactical purpose — they were positive points which did not touch on the exemptions or relate directly to further integrationist endeavours. They were also presented as features which brought the EU more in line with Danish or Nordic values.¹⁹ In line with the essential cooperation discourse, the EU was viewed as a forum in which such aims could and should be discussed. At the same time, the government stressed that the four exemptions would remain in place. This reflected what the government saw as the strong position of the interstate cooperation discourse in the population. At the same time, members of the government made statements suggesting that the four exemptions were against Danish interests. The Prime Minister said that they existed 'at the expense of Danish influence' (opening statement to the Danish Parliament 1 October 1996, in Heurlin and Mouritzen, 1997: 140–1). This was clearly the view of all the mainstream parties in line with the essential cooperation discourse.

The background for the broad agreement on this policy was concern for the result of the expected referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty due to the referendum procedures. The strategy of the government and parties supporting the negotiation mandate was to proceed with care with respect to the four opt-outs, concerned about triggering feelings of suspicion and distrust in the population which might impede the ratification of the new treaty.

After the 'Yes' vote in the May 1998 referendum, the government has increasingly taken the line that the four exemptions were limited in time. The behavioural constraint has weakened. The government has indicated that a referendum on participation in the EMU would be on the agenda within two or three years, and that a more active role on defence issues was being taken. Drawing on the essential cooperation discourse, the exemptions are increasingly presented by the government as contrary to Danish influence. After the referendum, the government has thus paid less attention to the presumed strong position of the interstate cooperation discourse in the population. However, the result of the referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty in May 1998 (55% yes, 45% no) was an indication that there was still a sizeable proportion of the population which judged the European developments in different terms from the government. The discursive divide is arguably still a divide between the political elite and important parts of the population which is likely to constitute a behavioural constraint on the

government as long as there are prospects of new referendums. The legitimate role of referendums in Danish European policy is currently the subject of debate in Denmark.²⁰ However, the understanding of the role of the ‘people’ seems to constitute a given in understandings of how to decide on major issues in Danish European policy. Moreover, Danish EU policy continues to be shaped by the basic instrumental discourse on Europe which still makes the states the main units, although the understandings of the legitimate functions of the EU have widened significantly. There is not seen to be a natural need for fundamental changes in the institutional structures of the Union, even after enlargement.

In summary, Danish policy has been shaped by the strong position of the essential cooperation discourse in the political elite. However, the role of ‘the people’ in the discourse on the nation and the state has meant that the possible presence of the interstate cooperation discourse in the population limited the extent to which the essential cooperation discourse could shape Danish European policy in full. Also, Danish policy towards the EU was affected by a welfare state discourse which was projected to the European level.

The United Kingdom

In the early 1990s, the essential cooperation discourse had come to dominate the Danish political elite. Due to the role of the ‘people’ in the discourse relating to the state and the nation, the strong presence of another discourse in the population came to influence policy, although not in all respects. In Britain, the dominance of the ‘sovereignty of parliament’ discourse meant that the population was not seen as having to be consulted directly on the major constitutional development of the EU. The salient locus for discursive battles over policy therefore became the political elite, short of the periods up to the general elections, where, however, foreign affairs did not generally play an important role. Since a referendum was rejected by all governments in the 1990s, the decisive struggle very much took place within Parliament, and indeed within the Conservative government. Here the period 1990–7 was dominated by a power struggle between the two sub-discourses. The shaping of British EU policy in the 1990s was heavily dominated by this power struggle between the adherents to the essential cooperation discourse and the interstate cooperation discourse. From the general election in 1992, the interstate cooperation discourse gained a stronger position within the Conservative government which affected the European policy. When the Labour government came to power in 1997, the struggle between the two sub-discourses ceased within the

government and the essential cooperation discourse clearly shaped the policy line.

The approach of the Major government in the early 1990s was to attempt to bring Britain to the ‘heart of Europe’ in line with the essential cooperation discourse which had gained the upper hand with the toppling of Margaret Thatcher. Britain tried to revitalize its relationships with the major powers in the EC. It also attempted to present a positive agenda at the 1990–1 IGC. At the same time, the adherents to the interstate cooperation discourse within the Conservative Party remained strong. They read the European momentum leading up to Maastricht as an unambiguous threat to British sovereignty and new pressures of federalism (Pilkington, 1995: 218). Before and during the Maastricht negotiations there were pressures on the government from the adherents to the interstate cooperation discourse within the Conservative Party and the government’s room for manoeuvre in the negotiations was circumscribed (Ware, 1996: 257–8). During the negotiations there were pressures to avoid the term ‘federal’ in the treaty (George, 1993: 181–3), and there was general pressure on the government to reserve Britain’s position on the EMU (Ware, 1996: 249–50). The opposition to the social chapter was also an issue that commanded broad support within the Conservative Party together with the three-pillar structure in the treaty based on the fundamental features of the dominant instrumental and state-based British discourse on Europe.

The debate within the Conservative Party was muted due to the need to close ranks before the coming general election in May 1992. However, the election led to a small Conservative majority of 21 MPs which was to have strong effects on British European policy — the small Conservative majority made it possible for the adherents to the interstate cooperation discourse to threaten the government’s attempt to ratify the TEU, aided by Labour which wanted to exploit the split politically. An ardent debate followed when the parliamentary procedures for the legislation in relation to the Maastricht Treaty started in spring 1992. The discursive patterns on ‘Europe’ were not the only forces influencing the political actors in relation to the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, but they clearly structured the political lines of conflict. The adherents to the interstate cooperation discourse had many political orientations and came from both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. However, they all argued that TEU was a ‘treaty too far’ and that it would undermine British sovereignty and constitute a break with the assumptions of British EC membership in the interstate cooperation discourse — ‘By extending EC majority-voting, it [the Maastricht Treaty] will undermine our parliamentary and legal institutions, both far older than those in the Community’ (Lady Thatcher, speech in the Lords, 7 June 1993 cited in Baker et al., 1994: 52). The adherents to the essential cooperation

discourse, the majority in the government after the Maastricht negotiations, felt that the treaty was ‘game, set and match for Britain’ (the Prime Minister’s words after the concluding meeting) and that it was in Britain’s interests to ratify the treaty — ‘The real question is: does sovereignty depend on our capacity to make rules in this national parliament or upon our ability to maximise our influence as a nation in the world?’ (Lord Howe, speech in the Lords, 7 June 1993, cited in Baker et al., 1994: 52).

Because of the strong position of the Eurosceptics in the Conservative Party after the 1992 general election who adhered to the interstate cooperation discourse, the government increasingly had to accommodate this group, and increasingly the sceptical line against the TEU was favoured by government ministers (Baker et al., 1994: 45). The grassroots at the constituency level also increasingly shared the new anti-EU mood (Pilkington, 1995: 224–5). From this point onwards, the government’s general EU policy became more confrontational, aiming at reconciling the adherents to the essential cooperation discourse and the more powerful interstate cooperation discourse within the Conservative Party. British European policy under Major went from being based on the essential cooperation discourse after his take-over to being based on a discourse in many ways closer to interstate cooperation discourse. A central example of this restrictive European policy was, for example, the stance at the Ioannina meeting in March 1994, where Britain threatened to block the forthcoming enlargement if the adjustment of the QMV (Qualified Majority Voting) voting did not lead to the same voting power for the major states after the enlargement. Britain’s vetoing of the Franco–German proposal in June 1994 for Luc Dehaenne as president of the European Commission was another consequence of this. In relation to the BSE crisis in spring 1996 Britain for several weeks introduced a policy of ‘non-cooperation’ in the EU which sought to block EU business wherever possible in order to obtain a relaxation of the ban on British beef. Another example was the European Court’s ruling in November obliging the UK to introduce a 48-hour working week which led to the British demanding that the decision be reversed at the 1996 IGC. The clearest expression of the strong position of the interstate cooperation discourse within the Conservative Party was the uncompromising stance during the negotiations of the 1996–7 IGC. The Prime Minister John Major declared that he would veto any further extension of majority voting or any weakening of the national veto on EU matters (Book of the Year, World Affairs: EU, 1997). The Conference was seen as no more than a ‘5000-mile check’. It was argued that there was no need for major institutional changes. In the preparations of the Reflection Group’s Report (Brussels, 5 December 1995) and the negotiations during the actual IGC, the British position was extremely restrictive and Britain was

often in a minority of one. The Government's White Paper for the 1996 IGC 'A Partnership of Nations', published on 12 March 1996 was restrictive as to new integrative proposals. Only on the CFSP and animal rights were there substantial proposals. The main thrust of the argument was status quo or a withdrawal of powers from the Community, in particular from the European Court of Justice which was seen as invading Parliament's territory. The White Paper contained elements of both the interstate cooperation discourse and the essential cooperation discourse and could thus be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between factions within the Conservative Party. Drawing on the essential cooperation discourse, it read:

Successive British governments have seen the European Community . . . as a means of safeguarding stability in Europe and generating European Economic prosperity in which the UK has shared . . . the EU is more than a free trade area. Above all the EU is the basis upon which we must consolidate democracy and prosperity across the whole of Europe, healing the historic divisions which scared our continent through the Cold War and cementing peace. ('A Partnership of Nations', 1996: 3)

It also stated, drawing on the interstate cooperation discourse, that:

We are determined to safeguard the powers and responsibilities of the nation states . . . crucial that national parliament remain the central focus of democratic legitimacy (p. 4). The classic approach of many politicians on the continent to such problems [uncertainty and self-doubt in the Union, HL] has been to press for more Europe . . . The government has always resisted such an approach (p. 4) . . . Above all, we shall be guided by a cool assessment of British interests. (p. 5)

Labour's victory in the general election in May 1997 meant that a party with a big parliamentary majority which predominantly adhered to the essential cooperation discourse would conduct British European policy. The Labour government's adherence to the essential cooperation discourse was most clearly indicated by the repeated emphasis on the need to play 'a full and leading role in Europe'. The clear dominance of this discourse within the Labour government constituted a new frame for British EU policy. The new government concluded the IGC. Britain acceded to the social protocol and supported the inclusion of a chapter on the fight against unemployment. It was also flexible towards the expansion of qualified majority voting to more areas in Pillar I. At the same time, it maintained the Conservative policy line in relation to Pillars II and III based on the continued instrumental state understandings.

The Labour government attempted to contribute to setting the EU agenda and to revitalize Britain's bilateral relationships with the major EU

partners. In spite of the British opt-out from the EMU, Britain attempted to take policy stances that brought it closer to the European core. As one of its first acts, it made the Bank of England independent. It later published the detailed plans for the possible later UK accession to the EMU. During the British presidency in spring 1998, it chaired the preparations for the EMU stressing that it wanted it to succeed. The accession to the EMU was made a question of the fulfilment of five concrete economic policy criteria rather than issues of values and principles, as had been the case during the previous government. The Conservative government's *wait and see* policy had been replaced by a *prepare and wait* policy. It also took part in launching the enlargement negotiations. These clear attempts to play a leading role along the lines of the essential cooperation discourse were, however, complicated by Britain's opt-outs from the EMU. Attempts were made to compensate for this, for example, through added emphasis on European defence as in relation to the Franco-British joint declaration on European defence in December 1998, which has contributed to new dynamics in the EU in this field. As part of reactivating its major European partners, common initiatives were also taken with Germany, Spain and Sweden on taxation, employment, labour market flexibility and social integration.

The difference in style emanating from a government which strongly adhered to the essential cooperation discourse did not, however, mean that the British discourse was not still based on an instrumental discourse — Britain was still in favour of an EU along intergovernmental lines (the government's mission statement read that the aim was to 'make Britain a leading player in a Europe of independent nation states'), the language used was still a language of defending national interests, and central British policy stances were clearly maintained. The government defended the British budgetary rebate from 1984 during the budgetary negotiations in early 1999 (although in a more communautaire language than during the Thatcher years), it strongly opposed taxation at the EU level, and it was a liberal hardliner on financial and economic issues rather than being in the social democratic mainstream. On economic and financial issues, the Labour government continued its predecessor's approach to the EU based on the analogy to the view of the British state as non-interventionist. This was a feature which distinguished British understandings from those of the other EU countries in the 1990s. The Labour government also maintained a strong commitment to NATO.

The discursive battle continued within Parliament with the Conservative Party increasingly arguing along the lines of the interstate cooperation discourse as this discourse had gained ground within the party after the electoral defeat. Traditional roles had now changed with the Conservatives being the Euro-sceptical party, but because of the strong parliamentary

majority of the Labour government, dominated by the essential cooperation discourse, the central position of the essential cooperation discourse in framing and shaping British European policy was clear. There were no serious challenges from within the parliamentary system. The Liberal Democrats which argued from a mythological organic discourse on Europe supported the more communautaire policy line on Europe.

The balance of strength between discourses within the British political elite, in particular in Parliament, was crucial in determining British policy towards Europe in the 1990s. In contrast to Denmark, the public in the UK did not play a direct role, because a referendum did not take place or was not foreseen. This was based on a dominant discursive emphasis on the sovereignty of the 'Parliament' rather than the 'people'.

However, in relation to the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, pressures for a referendum emerged suggested by the sceptics towards the Treaty, but were turned down by the government (and Labour) in November 1991 (Baker et al., 1994: 40; Ware, 1996: 255–6). The sceptics did, however, continue to put forward the demands for a referendum during the passage of the Maastricht Bill. That the Labour Party and the Conservative governments turned down the idea of a referendum was undoubtedly related to fear of further divisions within the two parties as a result of a referendum debate and insecurity about the results of a referendum (apart from the more profound scepticism towards challenging the sovereignty of Parliament). However, from November 1991, the issue of a referendum on the institutional developments stayed on the agenda and was to remain there owing to the strength of the interstate cooperation discourse. The Eurosceptics of all political orientations continued to promote the idea that the population should have a say due to the character of the question at stake. The revolt within the Conservative Party, the creation of the Referendum Party and the apparently increasingly Eurosceptical attitude of the electorate²¹ led both the Labour and Conservatives at the 1997 general election to promise a referendum on the EMU in the coming parliament if a 'yes' vote was obtained in the House of Commons. However, many of the proponents of a referendum were also strong proponents of the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. They found that the European developments threatened parliamentary sovereignty, and that a referendum might stop the process or that pressure for a referendum might lead to concessions from the government. They were not — and are not — in favour of referendums on the EU out of principle but as an ad hoc measure to stop Britain's participation in the European integration process.²²

The population seem to have become a factor in the future considerations

on the EMU. This was partly triggered by the debate in relation to the Maastricht Treaty. The Labour government has attempted to shift the general debate on Europe towards the terms of the essential cooperation discourse in the run-up to the decision on participation in the EMU in 2002, without running ahead of a population which, according to polls, is sceptical towards the EMU.²³ What the political elite reads as the public understanding of the EU is, therefore, becoming a stronger factor in the UK policy towards Europe. In this sense the domestic environments for British and Danish European policy come to look more alike. What contributes to this is, of course, also Labour's constitutional agenda which draws on referendums in relation to proposals for devolution. Although the explicit aim is not to challenge parliamentary sovereignty, it is questionable whether the basic discursive structures are unaffected by several referendums in relation to the Labour government's constitutional programme, and the establishment of devolved structures. If the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty is challenged through the spread of the understanding that there might be more than one political centre in British politics, this might also affect the framework of meaning for British European policy.

In summary, British policy has been shaped by the split within the political elite in Parliament between the essential cooperation sub-discourse and the interstate cooperation sub-discourse. An intransigent and restrictive policy became a result of the need to bridge the two sub-discourses. From 1997 the essential cooperation sub-discourse was dominant in the governing party, and British European policy became more flexible and constructive. The stressing of parliamentary sovereignty meant that relations between discourses in Parliament shaped the policy line, and that the population was not involved in the same way as in Denmark. In the 1990s, the UK has to a large extent furthered a neoliberal economic agenda in the EU based on a non-interventionist understanding of the state.

6. Comparisons and Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to compare the respective domestic backgrounds for British and Danish policies towards Europe and examine how these have shaped the European policies of the two countries in the 1990s.

First I outlined the nature of British and Danish discourses on Europe. The main argument was that the patterns of understanding of 'Europe' in the two countries share important discursive features in that the base of the dominant discourse is instrumental, although there are also certain differences concerning the connotations of 'Europe'. The primary political conflict in relation to the EU in the two countries is between actors drawing

on the two sub-discourses of this instrumental discourse, essential cooperation and interstate cooperation. The apparently binary opposites in the two countries between pro- and anti-Europeans are therefore based on common ground (against a much weaker mythological, organic discourse on Europe) which frames the policy process. In the 1990s, the adherents to the essential cooperation sub-discourse in the two countries increasingly drew on political and security arguments for the essential character of cooperation in the EU, although in the Danish case this emphasis seemed to have developed earlier. In the British case, the essential cooperation discourse has also included the element that Britain had to play a central and leading role in Europe. This means that the split in the political elite in the UK between the essential cooperation sub-discourse and the interstate cooperation sub-discourse is a division between those who see the EU as an important locus for British influence, and those who believe that it is not. The division is, then, closely linked to British foreign policy identity. Denmark now conducts a more active foreign policy than during the Cold War, an active role that also extends to the EU (Larsen, 2000, forthcoming). Support for an active role for Denmark in the EU also forms part of the essential cooperation sub-discourse. The same division between the essential cooperation sub-discourse and the interstate cooperation sub-discourse can be found on the issue of the centrality of influence in the EU. At the same time the division is, arguably, not of the same character as in the UK. Since a leading role is not on the agenda in the Danish case, a position on the margins is tolerable within the essential cooperation sub-discourse, if not desirable.

Concerning the understandings of the state and the nation, there are similarities between the two states in the unitary view of the state, which means that the EU has been seen as an alternative power centre which might challenge the identity of the states. However, there are two significant differences in the way the pivotal concepts relating to the state/nation are constructed in the two countries. First, in the UK, the nodal point in the discourse is 'parliamentary sovereignty' whereas in Denmark it is 'Folkestyret' or 'the people'. Second, in the UK the state has traditionally and generally been constructed as non-interventionist compared with the Danish state which has generally been seen as naturally imbued with welfare state features. These differences have been accentuated as a result of the strength of Thatcherism in the UK from the late 1970s.

In the 1990s, the relationship between the essential cooperation sub-discourse and the interstate cooperation sub-discourse was salient in shaping the European policies of the two countries. The difference between the two countries was in relation to *which* salient social and political actors adhered to *what* sub-discourses on Europe. In Britain the political elite in Parliament, in particular the Conservative Party, was split between the two sub-

discourses. This affected the policy line in that a restrictive policy became a result of the attempt to bridge the two sub-discourses, in particular between 1992 and 1997. From 1997 the essential cooperation sub-discourse was clearly dominant in the governing Labour Party, and British European policy became active and constructive. In Denmark the political elite increasingly adhered to the essential cooperation sub-discourse, and policy was generally shaped by the assumptions of this sub-discourse. However, from the 'no' vote in 1992 onwards, the policy was also, to some extent, shaped by the possible presence of the interstate cooperation sub-discourse. In relation to the four Danish exemptions the government's interpretation became very restrictive. The same was the case in relation to institutional measures which might, at future referendums, be read by the interstate cooperation sub-discourse as going too far. Danish policy can nevertheless be seen as shaped by the dominance of the essential cooperation sub-discourse in the government and the political elite in general. A Danish political elite which became increasingly 'pro-European' in the 1990s can be seen as the background for the more accommodating Danish policy towards Europe in the 1990s (in spite of a sceptical public opinion which influenced limited aspects of policy) whereas the splits within the British political elite in most parts of the 1990s were arguably conducive to a more intransigent British line.

The article has argued that the differences between the two countries' policy line in the 1990s were linked to the different discursive understandings of the state/nation. First, the different conceptions of the role of 'parliamentary sovereignty' and the 'people' in the political process were salient in defining which discourses shaped the policy line. In the British case, the stress on parliamentary sovereignty meant that relations of power between discourses in Parliament shaped the policy line. In the Danish case, the population has been included in the decision-making process through referendums. This has been important for Danish policy owing to a divergence between the understanding of the majority of the political parties and the understanding of the population over the premises of cooperation in Europe. The political elite's reading of what might be the dominant discourses in the population constituted a behavioural constraint on the government. In the Danish case, the population has played a crucial part in the 1990s and will most likely continue to do so. This has not been the case in Britain. But in relation to the EMU, the population might become a factor in Britain due to a possible referendum or the electoral campaign in 2002. The countries are arguably moving in the same direction on this point. Second, the basic connotations of the state in the two countries have been projected on to their respective European policies. These frameworks of meaning have been the background for *substantial* differences in the

European policy line. The British governments in the 1990s have, to a large extent, furthered a neoliberal economic agenda, in the main also after the Labour government came to power in 1997. While Denmark has also promoted an economic agenda of free trade and less protectionism, it has, at the same time, furthered welfare state values such as consumer protection, a better working environment or employment (the latter was also supported by the UK in the Amsterdam Treaty after the Labour government came to power).

Notes

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1. This means that the article focuses on the actor perspective, and does not provide an account of how actors' policies affect structures which then change the context of policy (Carlsnaes, 1992, 1993) (which would be necessary for a full analysis).
2. For more on the use of discourse analysis in foreign policy analysis see Holm et al., 1989; Larsen, 1997; Wæver, 1998; Wæver et al., forthcoming. It is important to stress that definitions and usages of discourse differ considerably from one approach to the other. One central distinction is between micro and macro approaches. In traditional linguistics and social psychology, discourse is often used as a micro concept, for example, as a way of analysing the pattern of everyday conversation among individuals in different situations. At the same time, discourse is widely used in social theory analysis as a macro concept, to show how language shapes societal practices, initially associated with Foucault and Althusser. The approach taken in this article falls within the second category, since its aim is to analyse broader societal developments and concepts. This approach does not engage in detailed textual analysis.
3. For a more detailed account see for example Larsen, 1997: 206; Hansen, forthcoming.
4. Although they are *sub-discourses* derived from the dominant discourse, I will for reasons of brevity refer to them as discourses.
5. Hedetoft (1995) has analysed the populations' (in Britain, Denmark and Germany) views on i.a. Europe in an important study using qualitative and quantitative data from the early 1990s. He does not, however, focus on language and he analyses differences between countries rather than within countries. His findings seem to support the argument that the essential cooperation discourses had gained ground in both countries in the early 1990s (Hedetoft, 1995: 575–81).
6. This active line in promoting Danish values was new. Earlier the aim had been to

- protect high Danish standards by rejecting concessions on sovereignty (Branner, 1992: 323).
7. See Phillips (1998) for an analysis of Labour's language in general.
 8. The focus on 'sovereignty of parliament' is arguably linked to the presence of four nations in the UK. Use of the term nation could be a 'can of worms' which might lead to a questioning of the identity base of the state (Larsen, 1997).
 9. The self-referential English conception of sovereignty deviates from the tradition on the continent (and the Scottish tradition) where the legitimate holder of sovereignty became the republic, the people, the nation or the '*Volk*' (Larsen, 1997: 40).
 10. There has until recently not been any use of constitutional courts in any country. In Britain Parliament decides; in Denmark the people decide.
 11. Article 20 of the Constitution stipulates that a delegation of sovereignty to international bodies can only be decided by a five-sixths majority of all members of the Folketing. If the majority in the Folketing is smaller, a majority in a referendum is necessary.
 12. Which was to a large extent aimed at solving internal problems in the Labour Party rather than a broader feeling of a need to consult the population.
 13. In relation to the Single European Act it was important for the government to avoid this word being used in the Danish version of the Treaty.
 14. The Liberals and the Centre Democrats adhered to a discourse which described Europe in more organic, natural terms. Important parts of the two parties supported a European federalist development (Pedersen, 1993: 6–7).
 15. The Liberal Democrats, their predecessors the Liberals, and to some extent the SDP, have drawn on a fundamentally different discourse based on an organic, mythical conception of Europe.
 16. This section draws heavily on Petersen (1996).
 17. For this distinction see Checkel (1997).
 18. The change of government (from a Conservative–Liberal coalition to a coalition between the Social Democrats and the small centre parties) in January 1993 led to a weaker focus on the political aspects of European integration. But the essential cooperation discourse still remained the framework of meaning within which policy was formulated (for a different view, see for example Mouritzen, 1996).
 19. Since the entry of Finland and Sweden, it was regularly stressed in government speeches that the EU was becoming more 'Nordic'.
 20. See for example Knudsen (1997).
 21. *Eurobarometer* polls showed that the population was becoming more and more sceptical towards the EC/EU from around 1990–1. The proportion of the population which thought that EU membership was a bad thing increased, although more still saw it as positive (see for example *Eurobarometer* No. 45, April–May 1996: 26).
 22. This does not apply to the Liberal Democrat Party which was for referendums out of principle drawing on a discourse which did not stress the role of parliamentary sovereignty but popular sovereignty.

23. In autumn 1998, 48% of people asked were against the EMU, whereas 35% were in favour of it (*Eurobarometer*, No. 50, 1999: 63).

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