

WHO IS A “TRUE DANE” IN MODERN DENMARK? THE DANISH LANGUAGE WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF “DANISHNESS (DANSKHED)”¹

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Abstract. This article is dedicated to the role of the Danish Language in the Kingdom of Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, in the light of the changes in Denmark’s ethnic composition throughout the past 200 years. Initially, this issue was raised in the 19th century, after Denmark suffered a number of tragic events: the defeat in the Napoleonic and the Second Schleswig Wars, and the dissolution of the Denmark–Norway Union. The loss of the territories led to the development of cultural, educational, and patriotic programmes in Denmark, in order to overcome the profound national crisis. The core question was: “Who can be considered a Dane?” Up to 1814, 25% of the population in the Denmark–Norway Union was German. After Norway separated, the percentage of Germans in Denmark rose to 40%. Then, Danish national self-identification was based on the formula: “Everyone who is not German is Danish,” and knowledge of the Danish language became the key factor. The Danish teacher and pastor N. F. S. Grundtvig developed the concept of Danish nationality – “Danishness” (*Danskhed*). According to this concept, national unity was built upon the native language, common national culture, and common national history. This concept is still widely acclaimed in modern Denmark. Various political parties constantly raise the question during fierce debates in parliament, in the media, and on social networks of “Who is a Dane in Denmark today?” The problem of knowledge of Danish language is the most important for Danish society, since the number of people who migrate to Denmark and bring with them their “alien” culture and values is constantly increasing. This article is based solely on Danish informational sources: official websites, encyclopaedias, media, discussion boards, and social networks.

Keywords: Danish language, national self-identification, migrant integration, Danishness, *Danskhed* concept, Danish core values, Danish democracy, common prosperity society, national culture

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The present article addresses the question of the role and place of language in the structure of national self-awareness and interethnic and intercultural contradictions in Danish society. The issue is constantly featured in the Danish media, on television and radio, and is of increasing interest in academic circles. With each passing year, the national language in Denmark is increasingly seen as a key factor in the concept of the national self-awareness of the Danish people during current cultural transformations, because language is a means of ensuring the preservation and consolidation of the internal unity of society, as well as a means of transmitting national culture, history, and traditions, while at the same time allowing people who do not have Danish ethnic or cultural roots to enter it.

The language factor has acquired particular importance and a new meaning in light of the ethnic, religious, and socio-cultural shifts that are taking place in Danish society, which has inevitably led to an understanding, or even a rethinking, of the role of national language, since the clashes and conflicts that have emerged in society between representatives of various ethnic groups in the formerly monocultural Denmark in recent decades are based on ethnocultural contradictions.

The dithering of the Danish political elites, who still cannot come to an agreement and make a joint decision on the language issue – a matter that is closely linked to ethnocultural contradictions in society – is of great concern to the country's citizens and has prompted academics from leading Danish universities to study the fate of the national language more closely in both its synchronic and diachronic aspects.

The purpose of the present paper is to examine the place and role of the Danish language in the concept of the national self-identification of the Danish people, on the one hand, and the role of the Danish language in the formation of a sense of national belonging to Danish society in people with a different ethnocultural identity, on the other. The article is based exclusively on materials from Danish-language sources and information resources published on the internet over the past eight to ten years. Specifically, we are talking information and analytical portals, electronic academic libraries, official websites, Danish encyclopaedias, leading media outlets, discussion platforms, and social media. Quotations and terminology are given in the English translation, unless they are of particular interest and/or importance, in which case they are given in parallel in the original Danish.

In Danish society, the discussion about who has the right to consider themselves Danish, what *Danish-ness* entails, and what traditional Danish values this concept includes is conducted on three levels: the political level; the scientific and public level; and the social and everyday level.

The political level is represented by the leaders of the country's most influential political parties, members of the Folketing (the Danish Parliament), and current Danish politicians. In this article, we use texts of speeches made by these politicians available on the websites <https://www.bt.dk> and <https://www.msn.com/da-dk/nyheder>, as

well as the private commercial publication <https://denkorteavis.dk>, the specialized political publication <https://www.altinget.dk>, which serves as the mouthpiece of the Danish parliament, the website of the Danish television and radio holding <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder>, the websites of Danish news channels <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik> and <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/>, and official information from the website of the Danish royal house <https://www.kongehuset.dk>.

At the scientific level, the discussion of the history of the formation and development of the sense of national identity among the Danish people does not let up on such platforms as Denmark's leading academic electronic portal <https://videnskab.dk>, the scientific and discussion (religious/Christian) portal <https://www.religion.dk>, and the electronic scientific and educational library <https://faktalink.dk>. These include the works of prominent Danish academics from the country's leading universities, and political and public figures: Niels Finn Christiansen (Danish historian, Doctor of Science, Copenhagen University professor); Rasmus Glenthøj (Ph.D. in History, Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Southern Denmark); Uffe Østergaard (Ph.D. in History, Professor at Aarhus University and Copenhagen Business School); Bertel Haarder (lawyer, writer, and member of the Folketing for the Venstre political party, who has held various government posts over the years, including Minister for Culture and Ecclesiastical Affairs and Minister of Education, twice served as President of the Nordic Council, representing Norway in the European Parliament); and the priest Sven Thorgaard.

Journalists occasionally conduct surveys of school students or passers-by on the streets (people of different ages), asking them the same question: "What does it mean to be Danish? Schoolchildren in grades 8–10 were asked to give presentations in class answering this question. The results of these surveys were typically posted in the public domain or on open forums and various discussion platforms on the internet. We are talking here about *Danish-ness* at the public, social, and everyday levels. A forum was also launched for the Danish ethnic minority in the territory of Southern Schleswig (<https://sydslesvig.wordpress.com/>). We also review data from these sources in this article. What we thus present here is the views and opinions of people from all three levels of society who are involved in the debate on the nature of Danish national identity.

The Roots of the Issue

People have always been interested in the origin of languages and their role and significance in the life of society. The issue of the importance of national (state) languages acquires particular importance during national crises, wars, and social upheavals of various kinds. The significance of the native language as a factor that is capable of uniting people first appeared in Europe in the first half of the 19th century, after the grave consequences of the bloody Napoleonic Wars started to make themselves known. The spiritual crisis, the worsening economic situation, the change of state borders within Europe, and the need to boost the sense of national self-awareness among

the people and unite people who speak the same language, gave the national language an ideological, and in some states in certain historical eras, a political status. This is the kind of atmosphere that creates grounds for spiritual quests, which leads to the emergence of new linguistic and philosophical traditions in philology and the philosophy of language.

The great German thinker, philosopher, and theoretical linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt made a huge contribution to the study of the role of the national language at various stages of the development of society and the connection between language and people from the point of view of the linguo-philosophical approach to language. He set out his theories on linguistics in two main works: in his famous article “On the Comparative Study of Languages in Relation to Various Epochs of Their Development” and in the study *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*. In the article, Humboldt asserts that “language is, as it were, an external manifestation of the spirit of nations: the language of a nation is its spirit, and the spirit of a nation is its language, and it is difficult to imagine anything more identical.” At the same time, he does not make a distinction between nation and people. Nevertheless, in this unity, the spirit of the people is still primary, because “only the spiritual strength of the people is the most vital and independent principle, and language depends on it.” But the spirit of the people is hidden. The only way to reveal it is through external manifestations, above all, through language, since “among all the manifestations through which the spirit and character of the people are known, only language is capable of expressing the most unique and subtle features of the people’s spirit and character, penetrating their innermost secrets”².

Here, Humboldt describes what language is and points to its collective nature. Language is what enables continuity and connection between generations in society. In other words, language is understood as an exclusively social phenomenon: “Language is not an arbitrary creation of an individual, but always belongs to an entire people; later generations receive it from past generations”³.

The Humboldtian tradition in German linguistics was continued by Heymann Steinthal, whose works reflect the desire to follow Humboldt’s teachings on the philosophy of language yet were influenced significantly by the rapid development of the field of psychology. In his works, Steinthal laid the foundations of the psychological dimension of linguistics – psychological grammar. Like Humboldt, Steinthal believed that “any specific language, or separate language, is the totality of the linguistic material of a specific people” (Zvegintsev 1964: 127), thereby confirming Humboldt’s idea regarding the connection between the culture of a people and the language that people speaks, since language is created by society. Studying the type of language will allow you understand the type of culture of the people who speak it, its spirit.

² Alpatov V. M. *Istoriia lingvisticheskikh ucheniy. Vilgelm fon Gumboldt* [History Of Linguistic Studies. Wilhelm von Humboldt]. URL: <http://project.phil.spbu.ru/lib/data/ru/alpatov/humboldt.html> (accessed: 01.02.2023)

³ Ibid.

In his *Grammatik, Logik, Psychologie: Ihre Prinzipien und ihre Verhältniss zu einander* (*Grammar, Logic and Psychology: Their Principles and Relationships*), Steinthal concludes that “all individuals of a single people bear the imprint of this special nature of the people.” The psychology of the individual is then placed in the centre of attention, which allows us to understand the psychology of the collective spirit – the community, the collective, the nation. “The unity of individuals in a people is reflected in their common language; nowhere is the definitive individuality of the spirit of a people expressed so clearly as it is in the specific form of language; its principle, which gives it its specific form, is the most authentic spirit of the people; the joint actions of the individual and his people are based primarily on the language in and with which he thinks and which nevertheless belongs to his people. The history of language and the historical development of the spirit of the people, the formation of new peoples and new languages interact very closely” (Zvegintsev 1964: 133, 135).

In Russia, the ideas and teachings of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Heymann Steinthal were further developed by the psycholinguist, Slavic philologist, and Professor in the Department of Russian Literature at the Imperial University of Kharkiv Alexander Potebnja. The range of his scientific interests was extremely broad and varied. He examined the issue of the connection between language and the spirit of the people from an entirely different perspective.

In his work *Language and Nationality*, Potebnja goes into great detail on the issue of bilingualism. “A person who speaks two languages, moving from one language to another, at the same time changes the nature and direction of the flow of his thoughts, and in such a way that the strengthening of his will changes the track of his thoughts only, and its influence on the further flow is rather insignificant. This strengthening can be compared to what a switchman does when he switches a train to another track. This was recognized to one degree or another in Lomonosov’s work on grammar. And, conversely, if two or more languages are quite familiar to the speaker, then the change in content causes the thought to involuntarily turn first to one, then to another language” (Potebnja 1926: 181).

These thoughts are important not only for people who take it upon themselves to study a foreign language, but, to a greater extent, for those who move abroad and are put in a position where they need to master a foreign tongue, accept it, and adapt to living with it in an alien, unfamiliar culture. Even so, Potebnja believes that an entire lifetime is not enough for the foreign language to achieve equal status to their native language: “the use of one or another language steers thoughts in a particular direction, or, conversely, as if in anticipation of the direction that his thoughts will take in the next moment, the person uses one of the languages that are available to him. Two types of mental activity go in the same direction, intertwining with each other, but maintaining their separateness, throughout his entire life, until his final days,” since “different languages in one and the same person are connected with different areas and methods of thought, but these different spheres and methods are also delimited physically in one and the same person” (Potebnja 1926: 183–184).

What is more, according to Potebnja, even children find it difficult to integrate into a foreign language environment, because “knowledge of two languages at an early age is not mastery of two systems of representation and communication of the same circle of thoughts, rather it bifurcates this circle, makes it more difficult from the onset to develop a rounded worldview, and interferes with scientific abstraction. If the language of education is different from the language of the family, it is to be expected that school and home life will not be at harmony with each other, and will instead clash and struggle” (Potebnja 1926: 184).

The founder of the Moscow linguistic school, Filipp Fortunatov, continued the traditions of the Neogrammarians, while at the same time developing the doctrine of the social nature of language. In his *Comparative Linguistics*, which examines the tasks of linguistics and the discipline’s connection with other sciences, Fortunatov stressed the social essence of language and its connection with society and the history of society. All changes that take place in society are reflected in language. Fortunatov asserts that “language has a history, but it has this history in society – that is, as the language of members of a social union... Thus, the study of the history of human language becomes an integral part of the science of the nature and life of social unions... parts of the history of the social unions in which these languages existed are extracted from historical facts. On the other hand, the facts of the history of social unions provide valuable indications for the history of languages” (Zvegintsev 1964: 242).

The American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf continued ideas first expressed by Edward Sapir about the close relationship that exists between language and people to develop his theory of “linguistic relativity” (also known as the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis). Whorf outlined his views in the works “Languages and Logic,” “The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language,” and many others. In short, Whorf’s theory states that people who speak different languages perceive the world differently, create different pictures of the world, and are thus bearers of different cultures and social behaviours, since language determined the process of cognition, thinking, and logic. And it is here where the points of view of Alexander Potebnja and Benjamin Lee Whorf converge somewhat.

Let us conclude our analysis of scientific approaches to the study of the place of language in the life of the individual, people, and society, with a quote from the final pages of the famous Danish linguist and founder of glossematics Louis Hjelmslev’s book *Omkring sprogteoriens grundlæggelse*, known in English as *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*: “Linguistic theory, guided by an inner necessity, comes to recognize not only the linguistic system [...] but also man and human society standing behind the language, and all the world’s human knowledge obtained through language” (Zvegintsev 1996: 30).

Thus, over the past 200 years, the world’s most prominent linguists have been unanimous in their opinion that language plays an enormous and unconditional role in society. The national language is a key factor in the concept of national self-awareness, because language is a means of ensuring the preservation and consolidation of

the internal unity of society, as well as a means of transmitting national culture, history, and traditions. At the same time, people who speak different languages are bearers of different cultures and different social behaviours, which can lead to intercultural contradictions and clashes. Language and nationality are closely related and influence the culture and national identity of people.

The conclusions made by Alexander Potebnja are especially relevant today, when European countries are accepting hordes of refugees and migrants who do not speak European languages, and who do not have the same roots, or indeed a common history or culture with Europe. Can modern history disprove claims made by a linguist over a century ago?

What Are Danish Values?

The question of what it means to be Danish cropped up again and again in Danish society starting in the 1990s, when the issue was widely discussed in the media – both in newspapers and on the radio and TV. From then it evolved into a topic of serious discussion and heated debate, both within parties themselves and in the Danish Parliament, and broad sections of the population were involved in the conversation. Equally heated debates unfolded on social media. One thread that was common to all of them was that a Dane is someone who shares the same democratic Danish values as everyone else in the country. However, there is a lack of consensus as to what the most important values are (and the list is huge), ones that society can agree on as being mandatory for every Dane to possess. Is it really the case that, for almost two hundred years, only those who were born in Denmark, speak Danish, and espouse Danish culture can consider themselves true Danes? This question is being asked with increasing frequency at all levels of Danish society.

The Altinget podcast gives experts a platform for holding open discussions and expressing their own personal opinions on key political issues, and it periodically conducts public opinion surveys. One such survey, conducted online, revealed that, in addition to the values that have long been accepted by society as traditionally, indisputably, and truly Danish – *Dannebrog* (the name of the national flag of Denmark, the white cross on a red background), *nationalsang* (the national anthem), *dansk* (the Danish language), *tryghed* (confidence in the future), *solidaritet* (the interconnectedness of generations), *folkeskole* (the system of people's universities), *Jul* (Christmas and associated traditions), *kongehuset* (the royal house), *demokrati* (democracy), *Grundlov* (the constitution), *køkken* (Danish cuisine), *fagforeninger* (trade union), and so on – most respondents identified such phenomena of Danish life as *tillid* (mutual trust among citizens), *frihed* (freedom), *foreninger* (various associations based on individual interests), *ligestilling* (gender equality), and *velfærd* (the wellbeing of every citizen). These values are unconditional, “non-negotiable; they should be clearly formulated when

raising children, in the education system, in awareness-raising activities, in integrating newcomers, etc.” (“... er værdier, vi ikke kan gå på kompromis med. De skal være mere tydelige i opdragelsen, skolen, folkeoplysningen, integrationen osv”⁴).

It is clear from these responses that the sense of national identity in Denmark is based on a range of both concreted and rather abstract concepts and subjective ideas whose boundaries are not always obvious.

For Danish children who were born in the country and received their education entirely in Denmark – from pre-school to primary school, secondary school or *gymnasium*), the question of self-identification is not really an issue. From early childhood, they are introduced to the above-noted system of Danish values in school – in classes called *danskfaget*, where children are taught everything related to Danish national origins, culture, traditions, government structure, etc. – instilling in them a sense of national self-awareness and raising them as citizens of the country and subjects of the Danish crown.

However, for immigrants and refugees, the question of Danish national values is practically unresolvable, because at home, in the family, they continue to speak their native language and are only forced to use Danish when they step outside the house. In other words, they combine two languages and cultures, in the way described by Alexander Potebnja in his works. Interestingly, the arrival of an increasing number of people with a foreign culture has forced the Danes to seriously reconsider what is important to them in the list of things that distinguish them, the “Danish people,” from other peoples of the world.

There is a word in the Danish language that is used to define and describe the set of personal qualities and properties that characterize a true Dane and give a person the right to consider themselves as such – *danskhed*, which literally translates as “Danishness.” However, this concept is too broad, practically limitless; some of its components are constant, others may appear or disappear at certain points in time, and the significance of some may be assessed differently by politicians and various representatives of Danish society, which is why the issue is a topic of constant debate in the media.

The essence of “Danishness” can essentially be boiled down to several main areas that assume the presence of the following qualities: a sense of national self-identification as a Dane; an understanding of what fundamental Danish values are: respect for Danish democracy and the welfare state; knowledge of Danish national culture, history, etc., and, of course, most importantly, proficiency in the Danish language, the language in which all of the above is carried out.

⁴ Haarder B. 2018. Danskhed blomstrer under pres. 02.05.2018. URL: <https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/bertel-haarder-danskhed-blomstrer-under-pres/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

Where Do Real Danes Live?

One of the reasons why the issue of who can be considered a true Dane has become so important society is because the ethnic, cultural, and religious composition of Danish society is changing. It is generally accepted, as Danish sources typically state, that until the mid-1960s, Denmark was a country with an ethnically homogenous population, professing the same historical, cultural, and religious values. However, this is not entirely the case and applies only to the territory of Denmark itself, and not the entire Danish Realm (*Rigsfællesskabet*). Previously, the population of Greenland and the Faroe Islands were not taken into consideration when answering this question.

The first person to bring up the Realm of the three territories was the famous Danish jurist, Dr. Frederik Harhoff, in 1993. Since then, the term has been used widely to define the legal status in relations between Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands, but is not legally enshrined in any of the documents, although it has become the official name of the state. Harhoff rejected the concept of the unity of the three territories (*rigsenheden*) that had been used until then, claiming that it did not reflect the true situation in the relationship between the peoples and territories that are part of the Kingdom, since it indicates the presence of common basic principles underlying their national identity – principles that, in his opinion, these peoples do not possess. Harhoff believes that the name of the state should reflect its essence, namely, that it is a commonwealth of three parts, each of which has its own specific features: its own language, natural and climatic conditions, way of life, and national identity – *“Betegnelsen rigsenheden indeholder imidlertid ikke nogen realistisk karakteristik afforholdet mellem Rigets dele, for denne betegnelse peger på en grundlæggende fælles identitet, der efter min mening er en illusion. Ud fra en mere objektiv betragtning bør man slet og ret betegne Riget som dét, det er; nemlig et fællesskab mellem tre rigsdele, der er grundlæggende forskellige for så vidt angår sprog, kultur, klima, livsmønstre og identitet.”*⁵.

Thus, in the mid-20th century, the territory of the Kingdom of Denmark consisted of Denmark itself, including South Jutland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. Greenland, the indigenous population of which is the Eskimos, or Inuit, as they call themselves, ceased being a colony in 1953, becoming a part of the Kingdom of Denmark with representation in the country’s parliament, its own flag, and its own national language (based on the Inuit languages). In 1978, disagreements between Denmark and Greenland led to the desire to strengthen internal self-government in Greenland, which became an autonomous region within Denmark, and, in 1985, left the EU following a referendum.

⁵ Samson J. 2019. Rigsfællesskabet. Rigsfællesskabet og dets lande. URL: <https://faktalink.dk/titelliste/rigsfaellesskabet/> (accessed: 25.12.2022)

The Faroe Islands signed the Home Rule Act of 1948 as an autonomous entity, meaning that it kept its national flag and Faroese continued to be the national language. Taking advantage of its autonomous status, the Faroe Islands, unlike Denmark, refused to join the European Union in 1973. Its attempts to gain independence in the early 2000s did nothing to change the overall situation.

In 1864, Denmark cede Southern Jutland to Prussia following the Second Schleswig War. The situation in the now German territory remained extremely difficult until 1920, when a referendum saw one third of the land returned to the Kingdom of Denmark. This was the culmination of a long struggle on the part of the Danes to preserve their “Danishness” in the territory controlled by the Germans⁶.

The reunification of part of Southern Jutland with Denmark meant the return of the Danish language, the Danish education system, the Danish state church, national customs and national cuisine.

In 2020, the people of Southern Jutland, home to a small German diaspora, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the return of *Genforeningen* to Denmark, although the COVID-19 pandemic caused the celebrations, as well as the visit of Queen Margrethe II and Crown Prince Frederik and his wife to Frederikshøj, to be put off until 2021¹⁷. A Danish-speaking minority lives on the other side of the border, in Northern Germany, or Southern Schleswig, as the Danes call it, where the issue of national self-identity of the Danes crops up quite often – both on social media and within the *Dansk Samling* association. This is especially true of the status of the Danish language, the work of Danish schools, etc. And while the question of “Danishness” is a non-issue in the Faroe Islands and Greenland, it is the topic of never-ending debate on both sides of its southern border⁸.

How to Become a Dane

At the same time, the process of resettling migrants and refugees to Denmark, mainly from the Middle East, is gaining momentum every year. According to Statistics Denmark, a Danish governmental organization under the Ministry for Economic and Interior Affairs, approximately 10% of the Danish population was made up of immigrants in 2010. As of January 1, 2016, the figure was 9.5% plus 2.9% who were descendants of immigrants, and in 2018 it was 13.3%. The number is expected to reach 20% by 2060. Some politicians see this development as a catastrophe for the Danish state⁹.

⁶ Østergaard U. 2016. Derfor kan globalisering ikke fjerne nationalitetsfølelse. 02.10.2016. URL: <https://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/nation/> (accessed: 25.11.2022)

⁷ Hendes Majestæt Dronningens tale i anledning af 100-året for Genforeningen den 13. juni 2021 ved Frederikshøj. 13.06.2021. URL: <https://www.kongehuset.dk/nyheder/hm-dronningens-tale-i-anledning-af-100-aaret-for-genforeningen/> (accessed: 25.12.2022)

⁸ Sydslesvig – et mindretal med udfordringer. Rundt om det danske mindretal i Sydslesvig. Det skal ikke være en gavebod. 17.12.2017. URL: <https://sydslesvig.wordpress.com/2007/12/17/det-skal-ikke-vaere-v%C3%A6re-en-gavebod/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

However, the ever-growing number of refugees and immigrants from non-European countries, the influx of people who know nothing about the culture, history, religion, and values of the country, do not speak Danish, and sometimes can barely read and write in their own language, has led the Danish state to a dead end. The previously held belief that immigrants from the East would bring fresh blood to the people and improve their genetics, and that Danish society would, in turn, quickly assimilate all newcomers, turning them into Danes themselves, living from childhood according to the traditions established by the state Lutheran Church, the foundations of Puritanism, and the Law of Jante, quickly dissipated. The latter, the Law of Jante – a set of ten moral, ethical, and behavioural prescriptions modelled on the ten commandments of the Bible that essentially boil down to the main thesis of “*Du skal ikke tro, at du er noget*” (“You’re not to think you are anything special) – is particularly difficult to grasp, and is often simply unacceptable for people of another culture.

As it would later turn out, not all immigrants and refugees were interested in becoming like the local Danish population. Rather, they were fleeing from the poverty, misery, and social instability of their homeland to a rich and socially oriented country – a *velfærdsstaten* (“welfare state”) that guarantees its citizens, who pay high taxes throughout their lives, various social benefits and democratic freedoms enshrined in the country’s constitution.

With each passing year, the situation with migrants continued to worsen. This led to the creation of the Ministry of Immigration and Integration (*Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet*) in June 2015. Before that, everyone entering and leaving the Kingdom of Denmark was dealt with to varying degrees by numerous bodies: the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Gender Equality, Ministry of Children’s Affairs, and others. The website of the Ministry of Immigration and Integration lists the requirements for becoming a Danish citizen, which essentially consist of six points: points 1–4, which define the legal and financial requirements for acquiring citizenship; point 5, which concerns the Danish language; and point 6, which concerns the culture, traditions, and history of the country and are closely connected with the language, that is, with point 5¹⁰:

- 1) A personally signed declaration of allegiance and loyalty to Denmark and to Danish society, as well as a promise to comply with Danish law and legal principles.
- 2) A permanent residence permit and continuous residence in the country for 8.5–9 years, depending on the status of the applicant.

⁹ Holst H. K. 2017. Så mange er der med indvandrerbaggrund i 2060: ‘Rystende, at det går så stærkt med befolkningsudviklingen’. 02.05.2017. URL: <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/saa-mange-er-der-med-indvandrerbaggrund-i-2060-rystende-at-det-gaar-saa-staerkt/> (accessed: 25.11.2022)

¹⁰ For at få dansk statsborgerskab skal du opfylde en række betingelser, fx vedrørende selvforsørgelse, beskedigtelse, ophold i Danmark, danskuddskaber og viden om Danmark. 22.04.2018. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet. URL: <https://uim.dk/arbejdsomraader/statsborgerskab/udenlandske-statsborgere/betingelser/> (accessed: 03.11.2022)

- 3) Absence of criminal or other types of legal liability.
- 4) Absence of tax arrears and debt to any government structures, and proof of income that would allow complete self-sufficiency.
- 5) Certificate of successful completion of Danish citizenship test level 3 or higher (in some cases, test level 2 is accepted).
- 6) Knowledge of Danish history, culture, society, and so on¹¹.

However, satisfying all six requirements does not turn a refugee into a Dane overnight. There is still a certain waiting period. And the opinions of representatives of different parties differ on this matter. In her capacity as Minister for Immigration and Integration, member of the Folketing and Venstre Party representative Inger Støjberg proposed establishing a waiting period of two years after passing the Danish Citizenship Test for the state to decide on whether to grant the applicant citizenship¹².

In 2018, Støjberg submitted a bill to the Folketing on tightening the country's immigration policy. Her tough stance on the issue elicited a passionate response in society, which eventually led to her impeachment for unlawful misconduct and maladministration of office, and she was subsequently removed from her post. These days, Inger Støjberg serves as the leader of the Denmark Democrats party founded in June 2022.

Meanwhile, the leader of the Danish Social Liberal Party, Morten Østergaard, has proposed making the waiting period one year maximum, and the Social Democrats' birthright citizenship spokesperson, Astrid Krag, has also called for tightening the rules for obtaining Danish citizenship¹³.

But will waiting one or two years really make an immigrant a true Dane? The fact is that characteristics such as place of birth, Danish citizenship, allegiance to the Danish state church, as well as issues of native language, mastery of a Danish dialect, the daily and cultural traditions the person follows, the extent to which he or she feels that they are an integral part of a single Danish society, and others, are increasingly the focus of public discussions and debates about what it means to be Danish. And this despite the fact that, as the figures show, less than half of those who apply for citizenship actually pass the Danish language exam and the citizenship test¹⁴.

History of the Emergence of a Sense of National Identity in Denmark

The question of what it means to be a Dane actually has a rather long history, going back more than two hundred years, and is connected not only with the growing interest in Europe towards the end of the 18th century among the romantic poets in

¹¹ Larsen Blem J., Glud P. 2018. Nu tager det næsten to år at få ja eller nej til statsborgerskab. 16.05.2018. *DR.DK*. URL: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/nu-tager-det-naesten-aar-faa-ja-eller-nej-til-statsborgerskab/> (accessed: 03.11.2022)

¹² For at få dansk statsborgerskab skal du opfylde en række betingelser, fx vedrørende selvforsørgelse, beskftigelse, ophold i Danmark, danskkundskaber og viden om Danmark. 22.04.2018. Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Mikkelsen Hansen V. 2017. Hver anden er dumpet til den seneste indfødsretsprøve. 28.06.2017. *DR.DK*. URL: <https://www.dr.dk/ligetil/hver-anden-er-dumpet-til-den-seneste-indfoedsretsproeve/> (accessed: 28.10.2022)

folk art, traditions, and everyday life, which were being threatened by the emergence of big cities, but also, and above all, with the need to confront the external enemy in numerous wars, and everything that was truly and authentically “Danish” – the language in particular – provided a foundation for the Danes to unite in the fight against foreigners.

The 19th-century Danish pastor, philosopher, teacher, and poet Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig effectively laid the foundation for the idea of forming a national consciousness among the Danes. As a brilliant educator, public figure, and Lutheran Bishop, Grundtvig founded the system of *folkeskoler* (“folk high schools”), which would combine the education of the illiterate population with Christian religious life; and as a philosopher, thinker, and author of works on Scandinavian mythology who was greatly interested in everything related to Danish origins, folk art, and traditions, he concluded that the unity of a person with the people is achieved, first of all, through the native language on the basis of a common history and culture. His understanding of the connection between the individual and society was expressed in the slogan “Find dig i fællesskabet!” (“Be at one with the people!”). Today, the understanding of this unity has been expanded significantly to include the state, nation, society, church, and many more things that the Danes call their traditional values.

Grundtvig was also the first to formulate the idea of equality and social justice, which he believed Danish society should strive for in its development. His idea of the Danish people building a state where “there are almost no rich people, and even fewer poor people” (“når få har for meget og færre for lidt”) is believed to have become the leitmotif of Danish democracy and continues to be so to this day (Rosenkjaer 1978). Many of Grundtvig’s theses are still relevant today and form the basis of the set of explicit and implicit rules that the Danes themselves use to define their national identity – the vary “Danishness” that is laid down in school and around which heated political debates unfold.

The Danish historian, Doctor of Science, University of Copenhagen professor, and left-wing thinker Niels Finn Christiansen believes that the emergence of a sense of national self-identification among Danish people began to take shape in the first half of the 19th century and experienced several ups and downs, starting with Denmark’s resounding defeat in the Napoleonic Wars and the loss of Norway to Sweden, and ending in the 1890s, when, under the pressure of the higher level of social development in Prussia and the more developed German culture, the idea of Danish national self-awareness was exhausted and reduced to a cult of simple village values, Danish folk traditions, Danish cuisine, and mastery of the Danish language – the national language common to all, rather than its dialects. Christiansen links the process of the growth and decline of the sense of self-identification among the Danes with the Schleswig

Wars: growing during the First Schleswig War (also known as the Three Years' War in 1848–1850, and declining rapidly after the emphatic defeat in the Second Schleswig War of 1864¹⁵.

Rasmus Glenthøj, Ph.D. (History) and Associate Professor of History at the University of Southern Denmark, also links the development of a sense of national self-identification among the Danish people with the run of humiliating military defeats the country experienced between 1814 and 1865 (1814 and 1865 were the years of the worst military defeats). It was during this period that serious reasons arose for stepping up the fight to preserve the national spirit.

Before this period of military setbacks, the Kingdom of Denmark was a major power which by the 18th century had united a number of colonies far beyond Scandinavia: the West Indies, Tranquebar, the Gold Coast, and so on, as well as Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, and the German-speaking duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg. Every respectable citizen living in these territories was considered a subject of the Danish crown, regardless of the language they spoke, and only a few of them actually knew Danish. One in five subjects of the Danish crown spoke German only, the capital itself was practically and German-speaking city, and 25% of the population living in the country prior to 1814 was German.

Norwegians who lived in the Kingdom of Denmark were considered Danish speakers, since the languages are closely related. When Denmark lost sovereignty over Norway, this disrupted the linguistic balance in the country. Without the Norwegians, the proportion of Germans living in Denmark was now 40%. From this point on, the Danes had a complicated relationship with the Germans and everything German in the struggle for “Danishness.” Now, “the Danish population’s sense of national identity was based on negation: anyone who was not German was a Dane”¹⁶.

Rasmus Glenthøj also believes that it was in the 19th century that the understanding that it was the Danish language that truly reflected the soul of the Danish people arose, meaning that knowledge of Danish became a determining factor in the national self-identification of the Danes, thus giving rise to a new criterion of “Danishness”: “If a person did not speak Danish, he could no longer be a real Dane, even if he had Danish citizenship” (*“Hvis en person ikke kunne tale dansk, så var han ikke længere en rigtig dansker, selvom han havde statsborgerskab i Danmark”*)¹⁷.

What is more, Glenthøj’s analysis of the reasons that prompted the Danish people to think about their national self-identification brings him to the conclusion that the collapse of the Danish–Norwegian Union after 434 years was a key turning point.

¹⁵ Danmark – historie (Danskhed). *Danmarks Nationalleksikon*. URL: [https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/Danmark_-_historie_\(Danskhed\)/](https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/Danmark_-_historie_(Danskhed)/) (accessed: 21.10.2022)

¹⁶ Glenthøj R. 2009. Danskhed er en moderne opfindelse. Ud med tysk. 06.03.2009. *Videnskab.dk*. URL: <https://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/danskhed-er-en-moderne-opfindelse/> (accessed: 03.11.2022)

¹⁷ Ibid.

The question of the national unity of the Danes came to the forefront during that period and soon acquired a political dimension. Glenthøj believed that the series of tragic events that befell Denmark in the 19th century forced society to think for the first time about the qualities that define the national identity of Danish people. For the first time, society was in agreement that only someone who, first, speaks Danish, second, was born in Denmark, and third, shares Danish cultural values, has the right to call themselves Danish. From that moment on, history, language, and the people were put at the forefront, and the peasant population, as the original national part of the population, was considered the core of the nation. It was at this time, according to Glenthøj, that the concept of “Danishness” was born and the endless discussions and disputes between supporters of various political parties and movements about which characteristics it should include (discussions and disputes that continue to this day) began¹⁸.

The humiliating defeat in the Second Schleswig War in 1864 brought the very existence of the Danish state into jeopardy, and morale and the sense of national unity were at an all-time low. A new national idea was needed to lead Danish society out of this profound national crisis of confidence. The rapid development of the cooperative movement gave a strong impetus to economic growth and the restoration of a sense of self-respect and national identity among the people. The slogans of those years – “Everything small is good” (“*Småt er godt*”) and “What is lost outside is found inside” (“*Hvad udad tabes skal indad vindes*”), which became entrenched in the language and entered into popular usage in the 1870s – can still be seen today in such areas of modern life as the restaurant industry, housing construction, publishing, the entertainment industry, among others. The Danes strive to rethink and use these expressions without breaking the historical connection between times.

The Sense of National Identity and Unity Today

In 2014, Marie Krarup, a member Folketing for the Danish People’s Party, proposed a simple test to determine whether a person belongs to the Danish people. There were only two criteria to the test: an objective criterion (possession of Danish citizenship); and a subjective criterion (self-identification as a Dane). The latter, according to Krarup, is based on Grundtvig’s famous poem *Folkeligheden* (“National-ness”), written in 1848, a year before Denmark adopted its first constitution, which is commonly considered democratic. “*Til ét Folk de alle høre, som sig regne selv dertil, har for Modersmålet Øre, har for Fædrelandet Ild,*” that is, a Dane is someone who considers himself to be a member of the Danish people, speaks Danish, and loves his homeland¹⁹. It turns out that after almost 170 years, the basic criteria of “Danishness” have remained practically unchanged!

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Krarup M. 2014. Her er en let og enkel prøve, der viser hvad danskhed er. 04.03.2014. *DenKorteAvis*. URL: <https://denkorteavis.dk/2014/her-er-proven-pa-om-man-er-dansk/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

And, conversely, if a person does not wish to be part of the whole and instead wants to be different from other Danes, for example, lives in a disgusting ghetto, does not speak Danish and makes no attempt to learn it, and has no interest in marrying a Dane, then how can they feel connected to the Danish people? How can they accept the Danes, their history and their language? The future survival of a people depends on how united it is today. In Marie Krarup's thinking, if we imagine "that a different national flag appeared instead of the God-given Danish flag, the Danish language was replaced by English, and governance of Denmark was handed over to the EU or the Germans, then Danish society would be completely different. Would it still be Danish? [...] Without its national flag, the *Dannebrog*, without Danish lands, and without the Danish language, Denmark would simply disappear" ("*... flaget Dannebrog. Det fortælles, at det var en gave fra Gud. Hvis vi f.eks. fik et nyt flag eller erstattede dansk sprog med engelsk og lod EU eller tyskerne bestemme i Danmark, - så ville det danske fællesskab være anderledes. Ville det så være dansk? Uden Dannebrog, det danske territorium og det danske sprog vil jeg mene, at Danmark er forsvundet*")²⁰.

According to Krarup, the Danish people will live as long as they "tell the story of Denmark, raise the *Dannebrog*, speak Danish, and the country's territory remains sovereign [...], because history never abandons a people that does not want it to" ("*Men så længe vi bliver ved med at fortælle Danmarks-historie og bruge Dannebrog og det danske sprog og har suveræniteten over vores territorium, så er Danmark og det danske folk der, ... men aldrig kan et folk forgå, som ikke vil det selv*")²¹.

In 2016, the Social Democrat Mette Gjerskov highlighted very different values for determining who has the right to consider themselves Danish. In her opinion, any attempts to identify criteria of "Danishness" that are out of touch with reality only cause pain and cause mistrust and sorrow among the people. Society should be built on unifying, rather than dividing, the people. For her part, Gjerskov suggests focusing on just two principles that are considered indisputable achievements of Danish democracy: *ligestilling* (gender equality); and "*ægte dansk børneopdragelse sker uden vold*" ("raising children in the truly Danish manner without the use of physical punishment and violence against the child"). The Danish People's Party does not support the second principle, and this became a point of contention among the country's political parties, with Gjerskov harshly and categorically concluding: members of the Danish People's Party are themselves not worthy of being Danes. The right to decide what constitutes "Danishness" should be left to ordinary Danes, because the people can be trusted in this matter²².

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gjerskov M. 2016. Hold nu kaje med alt det ævl om danskhed. 29.09.2016. *Nyheder*. URL: (<https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2016-09-29-hold-nu-kaje-med-alt-det-aevl-om-danskhed/>) (accessed: 21.10.2022)

By 2017, some areas of Denmark had a non-European immigrant majority in relation to ethnic Danes. Concern about the situation, where people of different faiths do not profess Christianity and know nothing about the role that religion has always played in the life of Danish society, was voiced in the Danish parliament by a representative of the Danish People's Party, and approved by a margin of one vote by the Folketing. The Danish People's Party foreign affairs spokesman Martin Henriksen expressed concern that traditional Danish values – primarily Christian traditions and Danish culture, which he believes should prevail in the country – are at risk of being lost in such a demographic situation. This did not go unnoticed in the Danish parliament, where it was assessed very differently by representatives of the political elite and caused heated debates²³.

In 2017, the political spokesperson of the Red–Green Alliance (Unity List) Pernille Skipper claimed that this position hinders the integration of immigrants into Danish society and has a destructive effect of the unity of the people in the country. Moreover, no one dares tell them how to behave and what they need to do to earn the right to call themselves Danes. While Skipper's area of expertise is legal matters, her accusation against the decision taken sounds more like a kitchen-sink, purely emotional one: "Martin Henriksen has given himself a patent for defining what it means to be Danish. And, by the way, it is he and the majority in the Folketing who decide what this means. But this is some kind of nonsense. A Dane is someone who feels that they are Danish" ("*... det er Martin Henriksen, der tager patent på, hvad det vil sige at være dansk... Og så er det i øvrigt ham og et flertal i Folketinget, der bestemmer det. Det er noget vrøvl. Man er dansk, hvis man føler sig dansk*")²⁴.

Another member of the Folketing, the Liberal Alliance's immigration spokesperson Laura Lindahl, was similarly scathing in her criticism of Henriksen's stance, calling it unacceptable for a Dane. The Social Democrats, who typically support the position of the Danish People's Party on migration policy, distanced themselves from their like-minded colleagues on this occasion, citing the fact that it is impossible to reduce the idea of true belonging to the Danish people based solely on religious preferences. And the Venstre Party spokesman, Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, who has been the party's leader since 2019, resorted to Grundtvig's famous words (which we have already quoted) "*Til et Folk de alle hore...*" to sum up the discussion that had unfolded. The most important factor to take in consideration if you want to consider yourself a Dane, he said, is knowledge of the Danish language and not just a feeling that you a Dane, but a readiness to defend traditional Danish values²⁵.

²³ DF: Indvandrere skal fejre kristne højtider for at blive danske. Kristendommen spiller så central en rolle i Danmark, at det er nødvendigt, at alle har kendskab til den, mener Dansk Folkeparti Martin Henriksen. 16.0.2017. *Nyheder*. URL: <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2017-02-16-df-indvandrere-skal-fejre-kristne-hoejtider-for-at-blive-danske/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

²⁴ Barfoed Krabbe C. 2017. Hed debat om danskhed: Det er uforskammet. 11.02.2017. *Nyheder*. URL: <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2017-02-11-hed-debat-om-danskhed-det-er-uforskammet/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

²⁵ DF: Indvandrere skal fejre kristne højtider for at blive danske. Kristendommen spiller så central en rolle i Danmark, at det er nødvendigt, at alle har kendskab til den, mener Dansk Folkeparti Martin Henriksen.

At first glance, it may seem that national cuisine is an insignificant element of national identity. But this is not the case for the Danes. The Danish people have always been obsessed with food, and there is a list of traditional Danish dishes dedicated to specific dates and holidays, as well as rules for their presentation and how to serve them. Danish cuisine occupies a place very near the top of the list of Danish values. Meatballs, roast pork hotpot, *leverpostej* (liver pate), and beer are typical answers given by respondents in various sociological studies on what constitutes the concept of “Danishness,” and food is particularly important here. The same answers were given by children in grades six to eight²⁶, as well as by adults²⁷. The question often appears on the pages of leading newspapers and magazines, where food – specifically national dishes that are eaten every day – is placed on the same level as political and cultural values.

“If Ahmed doesn’t speak Danish, doesn’t eat meatballs, has never seen the classic Danish TV series *Matador*, but runs his own greengrocer’s shop and pays taxes in Denmark, can he in some way be considered a new Danish citizen? Can he be a real Dane if he does not speak Danish, does not share Danish cultural values, and was not born in Denmark?”²⁸.

This question has been at the core of most political debates over the past 30 years, thrusting society back to the debates that took place in the country between 1814 and 1864. This is the opinion of Rasmus Glenthøj²⁹. The times have changed, but we still do not have an answer to the main question...

The Origins and Fate of “Danishness”

Everything that the Danes typically consider their own, qualities that are inherent to the Danish people and the Danish people alone, were formed at a time when the country was experiencing powerful influence from the outside. Bertel Haarder lays out the history of the formation of Danish values – values that influenced the development of the national identity of the Danes – and why these values are what they are today.

In Haarder’s opinion, the Golden Age of Danish science and culture came during the most difficult and tragic time for the country in terms of the political and military situation – the loss of territories after 1814, which brought about a change in the ethnic composition of the Danish population, where the majority of citizens were German. Everything Danish, both the best and the worst, came to Denmark from the south. Survival meant getting rid of harmful alien phenomena and accepting and adapting the good ones, making them “Danish.” It was under this external pressure, Haarder

²⁶ Danskhed interview 8. Klasse. 09.02.2014. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTduj0EdW-8> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

²⁷ Hvad er danskhed for dig? *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPxc5aiFu1Q> (accessed: 25.11.2022)

²⁸ Glenthøj R. 2009. Danskhed er en moderne opfindelse. Ud med tysk.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

tells us, that “Danishness” flourished. The Swedes came from the south, across the ice, separating Skåne County, Blekinge, and Halland from Denmark. The Prussians too came from the south, capturing the Duchy of Schleswig. It was also from the south that epidemics of dangerous diseases and other troubles came to Denmark³⁰.

And who were the people that made this period the Golden Age of Danish science and culture? Mostly people with non-Danish surnames: the poet and playwright Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger, who wrote the lyrics to the Danish national anthem; the German–Danish pianist, composer, and music historian Friedrich Kuhlau; the Danish ballet master and choreographer August Bournonville; and the Danish philosopher, scientist, professor of natural philosophy, and physicist Heinrich Steffens. Steffens’ memoirs are an invaluable source for the history of European Romanticism, while Hans Christian Ørsted was the main driving force behind the development of theoretical physics in Denmark, and the historian and educator Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig had a similar influence on the philosophy of history.

Other phenomena that came to Denmark from the south at different times were Christianity, the Reformation, the Romantic era, vocational education, the trade union movement, social democracy, and the Christmas tree. And all these things acquired a truly Danish flavour when such people as Hans Tausen, Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, Christen Mikkelsen Kold, Georg Brandes and other progressive figures of that era adapted them to the needs of Danish society, with the Christmas tree being decorated with a garland of Danish flags, which would later become an integral part and symbol of the Danish Christmas. Every major historical event and movement that took place on European soil has left its mark on Danish culture and become part of the traditional, indisputable, long-accepted, truly Danish values that constitute the very essence of “Danishness.”

The teachings of Grundtvig, combined with the Danish folk high schools and the concept of supplementary education for adults created by the educator Christen Mikkelsen Kold, formed the basis of the Grundtvig–Kold system of public schools (folk universities), which still operate in Denmark today. The educational activities of these institutions are based on promoting Grundtvig’s works, the principles of democracy, and the idea of national unity. The main subjects taught there are the Danish language, history and religion. The activities of these open schools are aimed at strengthening the sense of unity and cohesion among the Danish people, and the main goal is to educate the population through their openness and accessibility.

The educational basis of the open schools is built, among other things, on the fact that Grundtvig’s works on the study of personality, nationality, and society, laid the ideological foundation for the formation of the sociopolitical consciousness of the people, on the one hand, and gave a kick-start to the development of Danish industry,

³⁰ Haarder B. 2018. Danskhed blomstrer under pres. 02.05.2018. *Altinget*. URL: <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/bertel-haarder-danskhed-blomstrer-under-pres/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

on the other. Grundtvig's teachings retained their relevance until the 1970s, when his theses on nationality and unity were adopted by the growing neo-Marxist movement in its confrontation with bourgeois individualistic society. In contrast, the Danish People's Party turned to Grundtvig's writings to legitimize their hostile nationalistic views and their application in practice. And in recent years, we can see how Grundtvig's ideas are being used for completely opposite purposes, which has the effect of dividing the people³¹.

The national consciousness of the Danish people was formed, and in many ways continues to develop, under the influence of Grundtvig's ideas. Even so, the priest Sven Thorgaard, calls for caution: "We all constantly nurture in ourselves a Grundtvig-esque feeling of love for the homeland. Although Grundtvig himself saw danger in love for one's country, since it could mean indifference or even hatred towards the other" ("*Vi har alle sunget Grundtvigs fadrelandskærlighed ind i os. Men Grundtvig vidste selv, at faren ved fadrelandskærlighed er ligegyldighed eller endda had mod andre*")³².

Many Danish politicians acknowledge Grundtvig's importance in that he was the first to identify and formulate the principles of "Danishness" that unite people into a single nation, which was especially important in years of upheaval and crisis. Rasmus Glenthøj believes that the political programmes of the most influential and popular parties depend on which criteria of "Danishness" they choose as the most important. For the Danish People's Party, it is the Danish language and common history; for the Danish Social Liberal Party, it is bourgeois values³³.

As for the Danish people themselves, the discussion about Danish values and "Danishness" may go on forever and serve as the driving force behind the development of their national identity. However, the question of how to properly educate new Danes, accelerate the adaptation of immigrants (whose numbers are growing rapidly) into Danish society remains unresolved, and no political solution has been found.

For most people in Denmark, it is obvious that the Danish language plays a decisive role in the formation of a sense of national belonging to Danish society among people with a different ethnocultural identity, yet the methods currently employed to resolve the language issue are not working, and people with ethnocultural roots that are not Danish thus do not become true Danes. Perhaps only the descendants of refugees and immigrants (their children and grandchildren) will be able to become closer to real Danes. It seems that the conclusions made more than a century ago by Alexander Potebnja, and later reiterated by Benjamin Lee Whorf, are being proven correct in modern Danish society.

³¹ Find dig i fællesskabet. URL: <https://grundtvig-koldsk-skole.dk/videre-laesning/find-dig-faellesskabet/> (accessed: 21.10.2022)

³² Thorgaard S. 2015. February 6). Den nationale identitet er også en arv fra Grundtvig. 06.02.2015. *Religion.dk*. URL: <https://www.religion.dk/danskhed-og-kristendom/den-nationale-identitet-arven-fra-grundtvig/> (accessed: 03.11.2022)

³³ Glenthøj R. 2009. Danskhed er en moderne opfindelse. Ud med tysk.

In general, the state is not coping with the task at hand. The proposals that have been put forward by various political forces in the country are extremely contradictory and serve only to get the people riled up, causing another wave of angry discussions. Just look at the most recent project put forward by the Social Democrats under Mette Frederiksen, which was submitted to the European Parliament for consideration in November 2022. Under the project, which is intended to reduce the influx of immigrants and refugees into Denmark, temporary holding centres would be set up in Africa for refugees heading to Europe from certain Asian and African countries, where they can await a decision on whether they will be granted entry into the EU³⁴. Will those who are allowed to enter the country be able to become real Danes? And how long will the process of integrating them into Danish society take?

The points of view we have presented regarding who can consider themselves Danish, what constitutes real “Danishness” and what traditional values this concept includes have demonstrated a complete discrepancy between the positions put forward at all levels of society – the political level, the academic level, the public level, and the social and everyday level.

When trying to win over voters, politicians are afraid to make unpopular decisions, which leads to them making extremely contradictory statements that are full of hesitation and indecision. Sometimes their speeches are a reaction to the current mood in society and, accordingly, cause an outcry among the people.

Academics offer society an analysis of the situation based on the available facts and documents, but they do not make any decisions on a national scale, they merely try to explain and help understand the origins of contradictions and the historical experience gained by previous generations, which often draws criticism from all sides.

The people often react in an emotional, knee-jerk manner, whipping themselves into a frenzy in response to every action or statement by the authorities related to migration policy. From time to time, the people call out experts, challenging (or supporting) their positions, sometimes in rather harsh language.

People, nationality, and language are inseparable. For centuries, they have been key factors in the development of national and cultural identity, and the interaction between them is deep and complex. However, Aarhus University and Copenhagen Business School professor Uffe Østergaard (Ph.D. in History) believes that nationalism is the most powerful factor in the self-identification of a people today, as the world is becoming increasingly globalized³⁵. In these conditions, it is obvious that the value of the national language and national identity will greatly increase as the most important means of ensuring cohesion and internal unity and consolidation, because language is the custodian of the culture, traditions, and memory of the people.

³⁴ EU-formandskab holder dør på klem for omstridt dansk asylforslag. 25.11.2022. *MSN*. URL: <https://www.msn.com/da-dk/nyheder/other/eu-formandskab-holder-d%C3%B8r-p%C3%A5-klem-for-omstridt-dansk-asylforslag/ar-AA14ynvz?cvid=3fced7f-5716948baa593b9bfff62fad38/> (accessed: 25.11.2022)

³⁵ Østergaard U. 2016. Derfor kan globalisering ikke fjerne nationalitetsfølelse. 02.10.2016. *Videnskab*. URL: <https://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/nation/> (accessed: 25.11.2022)

We can thus conclude that the ethnocultural contradictions that exist within the country can be eliminated by simply strengthening the people's sense of national self-awareness, i.e. their "Danishness," and the only way to do this is on the basis of the Danish language, because speaking the same language means seeing and understanding the world in the same way, which makes those people bearers of a single culture, a single set of spiritual values, and the same norms of social behaviour. This means that the Danish state will have to create a unified concept of "Danishness" for all and find a solution to the issue not only of how to turn the ever-growing number of foreign-language refugees with non-Danish ethnocultural roots into true Danes, but also of how to maintain the commitment to Danish values, national culture, and the Danish language among ethnic Danes.

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