

The background features a dark grey color with several vertical bars of varying heights and widths in a lighter grey shade at the top. A thick, curved light grey line sweeps across the bottom half of the page.

# Danish Foreign Policy Review 2023

DIIS · DANISH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# Danish Foreign Policy Review 2023



DIIS · DANISH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

© Copenhagen 2023

DIIS · Danish Institute for International Studies

Gl. Kalkbrænderi Vej 51A, DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark

Tel: +45 32 69 87 87

E-mail: [diis@diis.dk](mailto:diis@diis.dk)

Web: [www.diis.dk](http://www.diis.dk)

Editors: Henrik Halkier ([director@diis.dk](mailto:director@diis.dk)) and Hans Mouritzen ([hmo@diis.dk](mailto:hmo@diis.dk))

*Editorial advisory board*

Hans Branner, retired

Eric Einhorn, University of Massachusetts

Dan Hamilton, Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

Christine Ingebritsen, University of Washington, Seattle

Tonny Brems Knudsen, University of Aarhus

Henrik Larsen, University of Copenhagen

Ove Kai Pedersen, Copenhagen Business School

Sten Rynning, University of Southern Denmark

Helle Rytkønen, Danish Institute for Study Abroad

Ben Tonra, University College Dublin

Mikael Wigell, Finnish Institute of International Affairs

Graphic design: Mark Gry Christiansen

Printed in Denmark by Tarm Bogtryk A/S

All DIIS publications are printed on Ecolabel and FSC certified paper

ISBN (print): 978-87-7236-114-7

ISBN (pdf): 978-87-7236-115-4

ISSN (print): 2596-7983

ISSN (pdf): 2596-6995

DIIS publications can be downloaded free of charge or ordered from [www.diis.dk](http://www.diis.dk)

# Contents

Preface	5
Chapter 1 Abstracts in English and Danish	7
Chapter 2 Ministerial articles	13
The international situation and Danish foreign policy 2022 <i>Minister of Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen</i>	14
The international situation and Danish security and defence policy 2022 <i>Acting Minister of Defence Troels Lund Poulsen</i>	35
Chapter 3 Scholarly articles	51
The 'hard middle ground': Denmark's positioning regarding the EU sanctions against Russia <i>Kim B. Olsen</i>	52
'They must be escorted back nicely'. Disclaimed responsibility and renewed plans for externalising asylum in Denmark and the United Kingdom <i>Martin Lemberg-Pedersen</i>	83
Scandinavia's choices of partner countries in Africa. Is the poverty criterion still dominant? <i>Anne Mette Kjær, Jan Pettersson and Elling Tjønneland</i>	116
Chapter 4 Selected bibliography	147



# Preface

*Danish Foreign Policy Review* addresses Danish foreign policy globally, regionally and domestically. In addition to the articles by Minister of Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen, and Acting Minister of Defence Troels Lund Poulsen, the 2023 *Review* includes externally peer-reviewed scholarly articles, whose authors represent only their own fields of expertise (for details of each author, see the respective articles). Abstracts of these articles in English and Danish can be found at the front of this volume.

Denmark has positioned itself as a mediating advocate for strict EU sanctions against Russia in connection with the Russo-Ukrainian war. According to the analysis by Kim B. Olsen, this position has actually been a 'hard middle ground', since it has meant that some specifically Danish interests have not been exempted from sanctions. Also, Copenhagen has wished the Faroe Islands – a self-governing non-EU member of the Danish Kingdom – to join the sanctions.

With the United Kingdom as a background, Martin Lemberg-Pedersen investigates Danish ambitions to externalise asylum permits to non-European territory (such as, for instance, Rwanda). After tracing the historical precursors of these ambitions, the article critically evaluates their arguments, including legitimacy, responsibility for asylum systems, cost-efficiency, and humanitarian agency.

The Scandinavian countries' selection of partner countries in Africa has been analysed by Anne Mette Kjær, Jan Petterson and Elling Tjønneland. A poverty focus has traditionally been a common criterion for the Scandinavians' selection process. This is still the case. However, a unique feature of the Danish profile is a specific focus on countries that may be a source of migration to Europe (around the Sahel and the Horn). Thus, only in the Danish case is aliens policy integrated into aid policy.

Finally, we present a selected bibliography of scholarly books, articles and book chapters about Danish foreign policy published in English, German or French in 2022. The present volume has been edited by Acting Director Henrik Halkier and Dr.scient.pol. Hans Mouritzen, assisted by Selma Janum Jørgensen and Nils Holm Peschcke-Køedt. Jessica Lerche has copy-edited the volume.

The Editors  
DIIS, Copenhagen  
May 2023

# Chapter 1

## Abstracts in English and Danish

This chapter includes abstracts of the scholarly articles in English and Danish



# The 'hard middle ground': Denmark's positioning regarding the EU sanctions against Russia

*Kim B. Olsen*

Sanctions were key in the EU response to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the sanctions negotiations among EU Member States, Denmark emerged as a mediating advocate for strict measures, situating itself between the assertive hardliners and the sanctions sceptics. This article investigates two cases demonstrating how this apparently convenient position also proved a 'hard middle ground'. First, it limited Denmark's options for shaping EU sanctions according to its specific national interests. While more prudent EU countries fought to exempt key areas of national interest, such as energy sources, from import restrictions, Denmark – the EU's largest importer of woody biomass – did not. Second, it bolstered Copenhagen's political commitment to advancing adherence to the Western sanctions policy across the Danish Kingdom – including in the self-governing, non-EU member the Faroe Islands. Unlike during the EU Russia sanctions of 2014, the Danish Government publicly stressed its expectation that the Faroese Government would comply with the EU sanctions.

*Sanktioner var en central bestanddel af EU's svar på Ruslands krigsførelse i Ukraine i 2022. I sanktionsforhandlinger mellem EU's medlemsstater fremstod Danmark som en "medierende fortaler" for stramme sanktioner og placerede sig dermed mellem EU's skrappeste "hardlinere" på den ene side og sanktions-skeptikerne på den anden. Denne artikel undersøger to cases, der illustrerer, hvordan denne tilsyneladende bekvemme position også viste sig at være en "hård mellemvej". For det første begrænsede positionen Danmarks muligheder for at varetage egne særinteresser. Mens mere forsigtige EU-lande kæmpede for at undtage områder af national særinteresse, som f.eks. at friholde visse energiressourcer fra importrestriktioner, valgte Danmark – EU's største importør af træmasse – at se bort fra lignende muligheder. For det andet forstærkede positionen Københavns politiske forpligtigelse til at håndhæve den vestlige sanktionspolitik over hele Rigsfællesskabet – herunder i det selvstyrende Færøerne udenfor EU. I modsætning til situationen omkring EU's Rusland-sanktioner fra 2014 valgte den danske regering at offentliggøre sin forventning til den færøske regering.*

# 'They must be escorted back nicely'. Disclaimed responsibility and renewed plans for externalising asylum in Denmark and the United Kingdom

*Martin Lemberg-Pedersen*

This article concerns recent developments in Denmark and the United Kingdom to externalise asylum and refugee residence permits to non-European territory. After defining 'externalisation', it traces the evolution of this policy drive since the 1980s, linking it to the Australian 'Pacific Solution' and the American Guantanamo project. It then examines the political-bureaucratic processes and their media coverage in Denmark of 2014 on, including around the introduction of Law 226 in 2021, and up to early 2023. Moving on, it engages with some implications for priorities in the foreign policy arena, and identifies several strands of argument concerning legitimacy, responsibility for asylum systems, cost-efficiency, and humanitarian agency, which have accompanied discussions in Denmark. These arguments are discussed in light of developments in the United Kingdom and criticism from, e.g., the EU Commission, the African Union and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. By tracing the renewed efforts to externalise asylum through the prism of Danish foreign policy and examining incoherence and contradictions in the arguments for the policy, the article offers new findings on a highly topical development in European politics.

*Denne artikel omhandler den nyere udvikling i Danmark og Storbritannien vedrørende eksternalisering af asyl- og flygtningeopholdstilladelser til ikke-europæisk territorium. Efter at have defineret "eksternalisering" beskriver den først udviklingen af disse politiske idéer siden 1980'erne og trækker tråde til den australske "Pacific Solution" og den amerikanske Guantanamo-politik. Artiklen behandler derefter politisk-bureaukratiske processer i Danmark og mediedækningen af disse mellem 2014 og 2023, herunder processer vedrørende lov 226 i 2021. Det analyseres, hvordan disse processer har en række implikationer for danske regeringers prioriteringer på den udenrigspolitiske arena. Herefter gennemgår artiklen præmisser bag en række udbredte politiske argumenter for dansk*

*eksternalisering: legitimitet, ansvar for asylsystemer, omkostninger og effektivitet samt humanitære aspekter. De diskuteres i lyset af udviklingen i Storbritannien samt kritik fra bl.a. EU-Kommissionen, Den Afrikanske Union og FN's Højkommissær for Flygtninge. Ved at spore de fornyede bestræbelser på at eksternalisere asyl gennem dansk udenrigspolitik og undersøge argumenterne herfor bringer denne artikel ny viden om en højaktuel udvikling i europæisk politik.*

# Scandinavia's choices of partner countries in Africa. Is the poverty criterion still dominant?

Anne Mette Kjær, Jan Pettersson, and Elling Tjønneland

This article characterises and compares the choices of partner countries in Africa of Denmark, Norway and Sweden over time, with a view to identifying the motivations behind these decisions. We find that the three donor countries have made very different choices during the last decades regarding number and composition of bilateral partners in Africa. While Sweden has maintained quite a long list of diverse partners (presently 15), Norway and Denmark have somewhat fewer (now 11 and 7, respectively). The geographical focus also differs, with Denmark concentrating on fragile countries around the Sahel and the Horn, while Sweden and Norway are present in all parts of Africa. The motivations behind these choices vary. Sweden has had more of a poverty and human rights focus, Norway a poverty and global public goods focus, and Denmark a poverty and migration focus. These findings point to the importance of addressing the dilemmas and trade-offs of balancing stability versus fragility, as well as of balancing multilateral and bilateral aid allocations.

*Denne artikel karakteriserer og sammenligner Danmarks, Norges og Sveriges valg af partnerlande i Afrika over tid med henblik på at identificere, hvad der motiverer disse valg. Vi finder, at de tre donorlande har truffet meget forskellige valg de seneste årtier vedrørende antallet og sammensætningen af bilaterale udviklingssamarbejder. Sverige har fastholdt en meget lang liste af forskellige partnerlande (nu 15), Norge har noget færre (nu 11), mens Danmark har besluttet at fokusere på nogle få (nu 7). Det geografiske fokus er også forskelligt. Danmark koncentrerer sig om skrøbelige lande i Sahel og Afrikas Horn, mens Sverige og Norge er tilstede i alle dele af Afrika. Motivationerne bag disse valg er for især Sveriges vedkommende fattigdom, demokrati og menneskerettigheder. Norges fattigdomsfokus er koblet til "globale kollektive goder", mens Danmarks fattigdomsfokus i stigende grad er blevet bundet op på et ønske om at begrænse migration. Disse tendenser og forskelle peger på vigtigheden af en styrket diskussion af dilemmaer og trade-offs i udviklingssamarbejdet, fx. mellem skrøbeligheds- og stabilitetshensyn i landevalget eller mellem multi- og bilaterale allokeringer.*



# Chapter 2

## Ministerial articles

# The international situation and Danish foreign policy 2022

*Minister of Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen*

## Introduction

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 brought with it a new reality. The invasion was first and foremost a human tragedy for the Ukrainian people. In a wider context it was also an attack on European security. The war will impact the European security architecture and our societies for many years to come. The war and its consequences have resulted in a new geopolitical reality.

The 'Zeitenwende', as the German Chancellor framed the paradigm shift on the European continent, was not just a turning point for Germany. It was a turning point for Denmark and Europe as well.

There is no doubt that Russia's brutal invasion of a sovereign country, ultimately bringing war back to the European continent, is the pivotal moment that made the year 2022 a historic one. There is a 'before' and an 'after' 24 February 2022.

It was a year where strong alliances and partnerships were cemented. The EU and NATO responded robustly to Russia's aggression with resolve and unity. We displayed our strong solidarity with the Ukrainian people and provided substantial political, military, humanitarian and civilian support for Ukraine's fight for freedom and security.

In Denmark, we decided to strengthen the Danish Defence and the Danish people voted to abolish the Danish opt-out of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

The close links between security policy and other policy areas such as economy, trade and energy have become painfully clear throughout the past year. The vulnerabilities in the EU due to our dependency on a few countries,

including Russia, for oil and gas, have been exposed. But at the same time the war has also heightened awareness of the importance of the green transition. Since the COVID-19 pandemic strategic dependencies have been a concern and now the conclusion is quite clear: we have been too naive when it comes to depending on one or a few countries for supplies of critical goods and raw materials.

The devastating consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine are far-reaching and have been felt well beyond Ukraine and Europe – not least in many countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. It has shown us that our own perception of Europe's role and importance in the world often stands in contrast to that of other countries. It has revealed a crisis of confidence between Europe and the many countries in Africa and elsewhere who feel left behind by Europe in the wake of the pandemic, the mounting debt crisis and rising energy and food prices. One important lesson of the war in Ukraine is that we must work even more closely together to address global problems that affect us all. We have to be better at engaging in equal partnerships of mutual benefit.

Although the war in Ukraine has taken up a lot of our focus, many other things of importance happened in 2022. At the beginning of the year, Denmark had to withdraw our troops from Mali – and throughout the year developments in the Sahel spiralled downwards. The United States held mid-term elections and, in China, President Xi Jinping secured a third term as leader of the Chinese Communist Party.

Back here in Denmark, I took up the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs at the very end of the year 2022. Throughout this chapter, I will reflect on the many different events that have impacted and shaped the world and Danish foreign policy over the past year.

## War in Europe

24 February 2022 is one of those rare and truly historic dates that mark the definitive end of one epoch and the beginning of another. With its aggression, Russia has torn up the European security architecture and brought us back to some of the darkest chapters in European history.



Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has brought war to the European continent of a magnitude not seen since World War II. The war has resulted in massive civilian suffering and loss of life, the destruction of countless Ukrainian cities, towns and villages as well as a myriad of Russian atrocities such as the heartbreaking massacres in Bucha and Irpin, forced deportations, including of children, and indiscriminate bombings of residential areas, roads, hospitals and schools.

Moreover, Russia showed its complete disdain for international law by attempting to annex four Ukrainian regions in addition to the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. When Russia saw major setbacks on the battlefield, due to the brave Ukrainian resistance, Moscow undertook its first military mobilisation since World War II, sending thousands of its own, untrained citizens to their deaths in pursuit of an imperial mirage.

Europe and our global partners, including the US, have not stood silently by as Russia sought to conquer Ukraine and overturn the rules-based international order. As Ukrainians rallied around their president and heroically defended their country, we followed suit and took action. More than 40 countries came together in the Ramstein Format to coordinate an ever-growing volume of military assistance to Ukraine. At the donor conference in Copenhagen in August 2022, Denmark, together with allied nations, became one of the first countries to plan for longer-term military assistance to Ukraine.

In a speech to the Danish Parliament in March 2022, President Zelensky requested that Denmark assume a special responsibility for the city of Mykolaiv, which we did. Denmark has continuously delivered on our pledges of support for Ukraine. We are not only a top contributor in terms of military aid, but also of civilian and humanitarian assistance. Denmark delivered much needed support through two acute packages that have helped Ukrainians through the winter. This assistance was a continuation of our ongoing humanitarian efforts since the first bullet was fired. We have supported our partners with humanitarian de-mining, protection of women and children, providing shelter, and distributing food supplies close to the front lines. Still, the war rages on and an enormous reconstruction effort awaits. Denmark stands and will stand with Ukraine for as long as necessary on all fronts.

Although Ukraine has liberated some of the illegally occupied areas, Russia retains control of vast parts of Ukraine. We must continue supporting Ukraine to enable them to withstand Russian aggression and liberate the occupied territories so that Russia's invasion will one day end on terms defined by Ukraine.

Other responsibilities consist of ensuring that Russians who have committed international crimes in Ukraine are held accountable. Those are essential tasks that will occupy us for decades.

Bringing an end to Russia's war will define the international order in the coming decades. Denmark will continue to do its utmost to uphold and promote the rules-based order safe for all states and under which nations are allowed to determine their own future, free from outside interference or threats of violence. At this immediate moment, that means supporting Ukraine – militarily, financially and with civilian support. In the long run, we must also consider how to re-establish a European security architecture and build structures to monitor and control the risks of future aggression in order to ensure the security of Ukraine and our other Eastern partners.

## A strong and united response

Just as Russia gravely miscalculated Ukraine's will and ability to resist Russian aggression on the battlefield, Russia equally misjudged the West's unity and willingness to respond to war on the European continent. Emergency meetings in the EU and in NATO on 24 and 25 February 2022 were the first steps in a swift, robust and enduring international response. In the days following the invasion the EU – in close coordination with the US and the UK – adopted sweeping sanctions of historical dimensions.

The condemnation of Russia's war was not limited to the West; on 2 March, 141 countries passed a UN resolution demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops. Putin undoubtedly expected European as well as broader international attention to the war to fade along with increasing inflation and energy prices. Instead, transatlantic unity has remained as strong as ever.

Throughout 2022, along with our Allies and partners, Denmark remained strongly committed to supporting Ukraine's self-defence against Russia's war of aggression. As the year proceeded, donations of increasingly advanced military capabilities and equipment have enabled the Ukrainian Armed Forces to not only withstand the Russian aggression, but also reclaim parts of its territory. This, in turn, enables Ukraine to establish the best possible position on the ground ahead of potential peace negotiations – should Ukraine choose to pursue such.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was also a pivotal moment for Danish security and defence policy. The Danish Parliament reacted quickly and decisively by adopting a decision to provide land, sea and air capabilities to NATO mere hours after the invasion. Denmark showed its commitment to European security by providing a substantial contribution to NATO's deterrence and defence of the Baltics with more than a thousand troops in Estonia and Latvia as well as sending F-16 fighter jets on air policing missions over the Baltics and Poland throughout most of 2022.

In addition to immediate efforts to enhance our collective deterrence and defence posture, the war in Ukraine also proved a catalyst for moving into a new era of Danish security and defence policy. At the beginning of March 2022, five parties from across the political spectrum agreed upon the National Compromise on Security Policy – a significant moment in the history of Danish security policy. For the first time there was a concrete timetable for reaching the goal of 2% of BNP spending on defence and security. A broad coalition of parties agreed this goal should be reached and sustained by 2033 – a goal further advanced to 2030 by the end of the year. The agreement served to revitalise Danish security policy, defence and diplomacy. The year saw a marked increase in defence spending not just in Denmark but across Europe, most notably through the 'Zeitenwende' in Germany and in Poland.

The political agreement paved the way for the decision to abolish the Danish opt-out of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. At the 1 June referendum a resounding 66.9% of Danish voters decided to abolish the opt-out, which was a clear message from the Danish people of our shared responsibility for European security. Denmark formally abolished the opt-out the following month, and in October, Denmark provided its first ever contribution to an EU military operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The year also proved a turning point for Nordic security. Finland and Sweden reversed generations of political tradition and handed in their applications for NATO membership. In solidarity with our Nordic neighbours, Denmark, Norway and Iceland announced a security assurance to Finland and Sweden should they be attacked prior to attaining full NATO membership, and Denmark was among the very first countries to ratify their applications. At the NATO summit in Madrid, all 30 Allies accepted their applications, thus paving the way for their membership of the Alliance to the benefit of NATO and the security of all Allies.

Throughout 2022 the EU proved to be a cornerstone of the international response to Russia's aggression. Ten EU sanctions packages have severely hampered Russia's ability to produce at scale the weapons needed for its illegal war in Ukraine. Additionally, the EU has coordinated and facilitated considerable amounts of military support for Ukraine, including lethal and non-lethal military equipment to Ukraine through the European Peace Facility. Likewise, the EU broke new ground in its military assistance mission in support of Ukraine, aiming towards training up to 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers on European soil in 2023. Finally, the political and diplomatic weight of the EU has proven invaluable in addressing the global consequences of Russia's war.

In addition to the wide-reaching sanctions packages, the EU and Western companies have rolled back activities or exited Russia in great numbers, restricting economic activity, capital flows and critical technologies. The Danish private sector has taken a global leadership position in divesting from and exiting Russia, whilst firmly supporting Ukrainian rebuilding efforts.

\*\*\*

NATO and the transatlantic bond remain the cornerstone of European and Danish security. February the 24th proved that the Alliance is fit for purpose. Quickly after the invasion Allies activated NATO's defence plans and deployed thousands of extra troops from both sides of the Atlantic. Over 40,000 troops came under direct NATO command, including Danish contributions.

At the NATO summit in Madrid a new Strategic Concept was adopted, providing the political blueprint for the Alliance for years to come. Not surprisingly, Russia is described as the most significant and direct threat to the Alliance. As such, it was decided to enhance NATO's deterrence and defence posture,

strengthening defences particularly in the eastern part of the Alliance, and increasing the number of forces on high-readiness to over 300,000 troops.

NATO also committed to increasing its support for Ukraine and other partners exposed to malign Russian influence. At the same time Allies proved that they are conscious of other pressing global challenges, including the continued threat from terrorism and the long-term challenges China poses to our interests, security and values. The summit was also the first time partners from Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Japan participated in a NATO summit, illustrating the Alliance's global perspective.

As we reached the end of 2022, despite Putin's escalation and Western concerns over a harsh winter, the transatlantic bond was stronger than ever. It has been strengthened by our common resolve against the challenges that threaten our shared values, and bolstered by the fact that Europe has stepped up and assumed a greater role and responsibility in defending its immediate neighbourhood. The past year has shown what can be achieved when the full extent of the transatlantic relationship is activated and when the EU and NATO employ their complementary strengths in tandem.

\*\*\*

Closer to home it is also worth mentioning that the governments of Greenland and the Faroe Islands also strongly condemned the Russian aggression against Ukraine and have implemented sanctions – thus signalling a unified position against Russia across the Kingdom of Denmark.

And as a testament to the close cooperation within the Kingdom, the Danish-Faroese-Greenlandic 'Contact Committee' held its first annual meeting in June 2022 at the highest political level. The purpose of the committee is to enable a broader and even more structured coordination on foreign, defence and security policy matters of specific relevance to the Faroe Islands and Greenland. This includes the establishment of infrastructure for safe communication in order to secure the increasing exchange of information between the three countries.

## A more resilient Europe – focusing on our strategic dependencies

The year 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of Denmark's decision to join the European Union (then EEC). It is also, incidentally, a year that has shown more than ever just how important our EU membership is – to our security and stability as well as our welfare and prosperity.

European resolve and unity became clear, allowing significant decisions to be made quickly and decisively, such as sanctions and limiting our dependency on Russian energy. Recent years have, indeed, shown just how much the EU can deliver in times of crisis. It is not always pretty, but once the heavy machinery of the EU gets moving, things really start to happen. That was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic; it has been the case with the energy crisis; and it remains the case with the EU's support to Ukraine. Without the EU, as individual Member States, we would not have managed these crises as well as we did.

Looking ahead, a continued strong and united EU, able to deliver in times of crisis, will remain paramount, not least as the challenges facing us are unlikely to subside in the short term.

We need to adapt to a new reality where multiple crises are a clear indication of the definitive return of geopolitics. This has made a lasting impact on EU policies across the board. Security policy is now also directly linked to sector policies and vice-versa. For example, we are now focusing on applying our trade and industrial policies to serve overarching security interests, such as reducing our strategic dependencies, securing and diversifying European supply chains, and safeguarding Europe's leading role in the green transition and the development of the green technologies of tomorrow.

Therefore, we have placed the issue of reducing critical dependencies high on the political agenda. A key element in reducing the EU's vulnerabilities, and thus also those of Denmark, is to ensure diversification of supply chains through trade agreements and cooperation with like-minded countries and reliable global partners.

Indeed, given the geopolitical challenges facing us, we have an important task to ensure our long-term security of supply as well as our continued global competitiveness. The concept of open strategic autonomy has come to the forefront of our work. Across the EU institutions and Member States, we have – particularly over the past year – become increasingly aware of the need for a more robust and strategic approach to ensure our resilience, while of course also maintaining the commitment to openness and the rules-based international system.

Trade policy plays an important role in this geopolitical world. Diversification is a key part of the solution to reduce our dependencies and strengthen our security of supply. Therefore, we need to continuously pursue trade agreements and economic partnerships with reliable global partners. At the same time, we need to be able to apply autonomous EU measures when warranted and in accordance with WTO rules, to safeguard the Internal Market against economic coercion and unfair trade practices.

\*\*\*

The war in Ukraine has exposed just how vulnerable our dependence on Russian energy has left Denmark and Europe, and as a result, energy security has become an important dimension of our foreign and security policy. It is a high priority for Denmark and the EU to reduce dependence on Russian energy sources and to achieve this, the EU has diversified imports of fossil energy sources, increased investment in renewable energy and taken steps to reduce energy consumption. Finally, the EU ensured that the gas stocks in the Member States were filled up to the winter of 2022/23.

How the supply of energy could potentially be used as a geopolitical weapon was laid bare by the sabotage attack against the North Stream gas pipelines in September. Consequently, the EU and NATO took a number of measures to strengthen the protection of critical infrastructure, not least undersea. NATO has established a coordination unit in this regard, and the EU has adopted a Council recommendation, which among other things calls on Member States to carry out stress tests of critical energy infrastructure before the end of 2023.

Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine has not only been fought on the battlefield, but also in a hybrid format. Russia continues to spread disinformation and execute

cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, thus threatening civilian welfare, the global economy and international security, and undermining the democratic conversation. It is crucial that we continue to work closely together to enhance resilience and strengthen our ability to detect, prevent and respond to hybrid attacks.

\*\*\*

Along with the recognition that we need to adapt our sector policies to make the EU more competitive and resilient, there has been an increasing realisation of just how important the respect for our common European values is. Putin's Russia illustrates the alternative to the free and prosperous European countries that are founded on respect for democracy and the rule of law.

Although all Member States of the EU have committed to respect and uphold these values, we have witnessed a worrying degree of backsliding over the years in certain Member States.

However, the EU has managed to develop new, and hopefully more effective, instruments to address rule of law challenges within the EU Member States. These new instruments supplement existing ones, such as the Article 7 procedures against Hungary and Poland, in addition to legal cases before the Court of Justice of the European Union and the horizontal Rule of Law dialogue.

For example, 2022 saw the first application of the conditionality mechanism. This led to the adoption in the Council in December 2022 of measures against Hungary, suspending 55% of budgetary commitments of three operational programmes within the cohesion policy amounting to €6.3 billion. Hungary has committed to enacting a number of remedial measures agreed with the Commission, which could lead to the amendment or lifting of the measures, provided that they are implemented properly.

Additionally, Poland's and Hungary's recovery plans under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, approved in 2022, incorporated a number of rule of law-related milestones. This means that any disbursement of funds under the Recovery and Resilience Facility are conditioned by the Commission deeming the rule of law milestones met. For Hungary, the agreed measures under the



conditionality mechanism, in addition to other rule of law milestones, were also included as milestones in the Hungarian recovery and resilience plan. This direct connection between respect for the rule of law and significant disbursements may prove to enable real progress on the rule of law agenda in both countries.

## Our immediate neighbourhood

EU enlargement has long constituted an important tool for promoting unity, stability and security in Europe. With Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and the return of war to the European continent, we need to acknowledge that the enlargement process also has a substantial geopolitical dimension. In June 2022 the European Council took the historical decision to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and a European perspective to Georgia. The future of all three countries lies within the EU. Now more than ever, there is a need for strengthening relations and bringing our neighbours closer to us. However, much work remains to be done. We must offer our assistance to ensure that all three countries succeed in undertaking the necessary reforms, especially on fundamental values such as democracy and rule of law. This is the best way to ensure sustainable progress.

The year 2022 was also the year Denmark opened a new embassy in Tbilisi, taking Danish-Georgian relations to a new level. The embassy opened at a crucial time where the government and the increasingly pro-European population seemed to be pulling the country in opposite directions. When Georgia received a European perspective, it was a historic opportunity for the country to free itself from Russian and oligarchic influence. Georgia struggles to overcome political polarisation and introduce the necessary reforms on democratic institutions, free media and the judicial system. Looking ahead, our support to make Georgia more independent of Russia's influence has never been more important.

Russia's war also casts its shadow over Moldova. While Russian missiles were breaching Moldovan air space on their way to Ukraine, Moldova showed its solidarity with Ukraine by welcoming refugees, more than half a million since the war began. On top of this, Moldova has been battling inflation, an energy crisis and Russian disinformation trying to leverage its hold on Transnistria

in order to destabilise the government in Chişinău. Despite all this, Moldova's government kept the country stable and showed its commitment to deliver on the Commission's recommendations. Moldova has introduced some of the necessary reforms for a more democratic and European future, but there is still a long and difficult way to go.

The Western Balkans have once again become a geopolitical hotspot. The already fragile stability in the region is further impacted by the spillover effects from the war in Ukraine, and the region continues to be fraught with internal tensions. At the same time, Russia, but also China and other countries, seek to increase their influence in the region. Russia furthermore is flooding the region with disinformation, fanning the flames of the past and increasing the tensions already present. Russia has close ties with Serbia and is openly supportive of the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Milorad Dodik, who during 2022 continued to challenge the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The situation has demanded firm commitment from the EU. The EU has delivered on this through an extra effort to bring Kosovo and Serbia successfully back to the negotiating table within the framework of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, and by granting candidate status to Bosnia-Herzegovina, which has long suffered from internal divisions. The candidate status shows the Bosnians that their future lies within the EU. It also serves as a friendly nudge, encouraging the Bosnian politicians to deliver much-needed reforms. The EU is by far the largest investor in the Western Balkans and remains a force for stability in the region.

\*\*\*

Russia's war against Ukraine caused the largest forced displacement of people since World War II. The EU is hosting some five million people fleeing Ukraine, which continues to ask huge efforts from communities across the EU. We have a special responsibility to help people fleeing from a war in our close neighbourhood. Therefore, Denmark has fully engaged in helping displaced persons seeking safety and shelter from the war in Ukraine and welcomed around 37,000 in 2022.

In addition to the influx from Ukraine, the EU saw a significant rise in irregular arrivals on routes across the Mediterranean and through the Western Balkans.

Some Member States faced levels of arrivals and asylum applications equivalent to those seen during the migration crisis of 2015 and 2016. Secondary movements from one EU Member State to another have also increased significantly during 2022 and constitute a major challenge in some Member States.

Due to the current situation, irregular migration has once again become one of the most pressing issues in the EU during 2022. Denmark is actively contributing to finding common solutions and has called for a reform of the European Asylum system in order to remove incentives for irregular migrants to embark on dangerous journeys towards Europe. As long as our system attracts people without need of protection, irregular migration towards Europe will continue.

## Snapshots from around the world

As war returned to Europe in 2022 much of our focus over the past year has been inward looking. But we of course cannot forget that major events around the world also took place in 2022. Let me highlight a few:

In 2022 the political, security and humanitarian situation further deteriorated in the Sahel region. Humanitarian needs soared and thousands were forced to leave their homes. Climate change and prolonged droughts put the civilian population under severe strain. Simultaneously, democratic backsliding, growing Russian influence and anti-Western sentiments in the Sahel region made Western cooperation, particularly with Mali and Burkina Faso, gradually more challenging throughout the year.

As the Malian military government took a geopolitical turn towards Russia and intensified its collaboration with the Wagner Group, the relationship between Mali and its Western partners tensed. The year of 2022 began with the rapid withdrawal of the Danish military contribution to the European-led Takuba Task Force. After more than a decade of European military presence in Mali, both Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba withdrew due to difficulties in the cooperation with Mali. Several large Western contributors announced their departure from the UN mission, MINUSMA.

In neighbouring Burkina Faso, the security situation also deteriorated in 2022 and the political development was marked by two military coups. The political developments in Mali and Burkina Faso led Denmark to suspend parts of its development cooperation with both countries. Niger is now the only democracy in central Sahel and has openly welcomed Western support. However, Niger also remains fragile. The EU and Denmark have turned towards Niger as a key partner in countering the growing instability in the region. In December 2022, EU Member States agreed to establish a new EU military partnership mission in Niger.

During 2022, the spillover of terrorism, violent extremism and instability from the central Sahel countries to the neighbouring West African coastal states intensified. Supporting the coastal states in countering the spread of instability became an area of increased attention for Western partners, including the EU and Denmark.

\*\*\*

In the Middle East and North Africa, countries have been impacted by Russia's war in Ukraine in different ways. Europe's need to diversify its energy sourcing away from Russia has benefited net exporters of energy in the region. Meanwhile, countries which before the war depended on food and energy imports, in particular from Russia and Ukraine, suffered due to increasing prices, disruption of supply lines and rising food insecurity. It contributed to worsening the already serious political, humanitarian, economic and security crises in fragile countries such as Syria, Libya, Yemen and Lebanon.

In Iran, the death of Mahsa Amini in September after being detained by the so-called 'morality police' led to protests across the country where the people of Iran, led by women and youth, took to the streets in defence of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. They were met with violent repression by the Iranian authorities including mass arrests and executions. Meanwhile, Iran and Russia intensified their military cooperation, and Russia used drones manufactured in Iran to cause death and destruction in Ukraine. The EU has responded decisively to Iran's actions, including by imposing targeted sanctions.

2022 was one of the most violent and deadly years in the West Bank in recent times. In December Benjamin Netanyahu formed a government with the participation of religious Zionist parties, which signalled an intent to expand illegal settlements.

For a region often associated with strife and instability, 2022 also showed opportunities. Israel and Lebanon, who are technically at war, agreed on a historic maritime border deal. The region was also active in the global climate negotiations, with Egypt hosting COP27 in 2022 and passing the torch to the United Arab Emirates, which will host in 2023.

\*\*\*

The American midterm elections took place on 8 November 2022. While the Democratic Party kept a narrow majority in the Senate, the Republicans gained a significantly smaller majority than expected in the House of Representatives. The new balance in Congress will further challenge cooperation within Congress as well as between Congress and the White House, but it does not change the current administration's foreign and security policy goals. The United States continues to be Denmark's closest ally and biggest export market.

\*\*\*

With a historically narrow victory, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) from the Brazilian Workers' Party won the October 2022 presidential election over the incumbent right-wing populist president Jair Bolsonaro. On 8 January 2023, following the inauguration of Lula on 1 January, thousands of Bolsonaro supporters stormed central government institutions protesting the election result. The riot was considered an attack on democratic values and was quickly stopped by Brazilian authorities and widely condemned within Brazil as well as internationally. But it was also a tragic reminder of the fragility of democracy.

\*\*\*

In China, President Xi Jinping's third term as general secretary of the Communist Party of China was confirmed at the party congress held in October. With no clear successor and a more uniformly composed top leadership echelon, Xi is set to lead the country for the foreseeable future. Throughout most of the year

China held on to its zero-COVID policy. It came as a surprise to many when China, at the end of the year, overturned this policy and reopened.

The visit by (now former) US Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, to Taiwan in August sparked an unprecedented Chinese response, including live fire military exercises around Taiwan. The events and diplomatic fallout revealed the potential for dangerous deterioration of cross-strait relations. Maintaining the status quo and avoiding escalation, the threat of use of force or the use of force, will be fundamental to regional and geopolitical stability in the coming years.

Also in August, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report concluding that serious human rights violations have been committed against Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang that may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity. The five Nordic countries joined a proposal for a special debate at the UN Human Rights Council on the situation in Xinjiang, which was voted down by a narrow margin.

China's re-engagement with the world after COVID is important – some of our biggest global challenges can only be solved together with China, not least the climate crisis. But we need to strike the right balance. Recent developments have taught us the importance of diversification of supply chains and not becoming too dependent on any one country. The President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, summed it up very fittingly at Davos in January, when she emphasised that we should seek to de-risk rather than decouple from China.

Denmark will seek to develop the bilateral relation where possible and compatible with Danish interests and values, including through a more focused and green bilateral work programme.

At the same time, we must continue to be mindful of the challenges that arise from China as an increasingly active regional and global actor. Therefore, Denmark will continue to work within the EU, with close allies, but also with new partners to seize the opportunities as well as address the challenges arising from China.

\*\*\*

And finally, but not least, a milestone was reached when the agreement on the sovereignty of Tartupaluk (Hans Island) and the maritime boundaries between Greenland and Canada was concluded on 14 June 2022.

After decades of negotiations an agreement was reached, which hopefully will serve as inspiration for others on peaceful settlement of boundary disputes. It shows us that diplomacy and dialogue based on the international legal order continues to yield solid results.

With the agreement, the island of Tartupaluk is divided between Greenland and Canada. As a result, the Kingdom of Denmark now has a land boundary with Canada. In addition, the longest maritime border in the world totalling 3,962 km is now delimited. The division of the nearly 79,000 km<sup>2</sup> seabed overlap in the Labrador Sea is settled.

During the negotiations great importance was attached to gaining knowledge of the concerns of those who would be affected the most by the agreement. Therefore, a joint Danish-Greenlandic delegation met several times with local citizens in the Qaanaaq area. The meetings provided insights into the local views. The consultations revealed great interest in a strengthened cooperation with Canada, which as a result was incorporated into the agreement.

The joint efforts and close cooperation between Greenland and Denmark throughout the process were key to the successful conclusion of this historic agreement.

The agreement constitutes the first concrete implementation of its kind of the Ilulissat 2008 Declaration. It supports longstanding efforts to maintain the objective of the Arctic as a low-tension area. An objective both more difficult and more important than ever before.

## Multilateralism – more important than ever

On the multilateral scene, 2022 was a year of conflicting trends. In the United Nations General Assembly an overwhelming majority of member states stood together in condemning the Russian aggression – isolating Russia with only a handful of supporters. In so doing, the global community confirmed its support for upholding the UN Charter, which Russia has so blatantly violated. Yet, global responses to Russia's war in Ukraine also revealed a growing disconnect within the same global community.

Even as the impact of the war in Ukraine was felt across the globe, many countries geographically remote from the actual fighting took a different perspective than we did, seeing the war as a European conflict that they feared would distract the international community from addressing other major priorities, crises and conflicts. Many also saw a certain degree of double standards in the Western response to the war in Ukraine and remained hesitant or opposed to isolating Russia internationally.

While transatlantic and European unity and solidarity consolidated in the shadow of the Russian aggression, the war in Ukraine also made it clear that we can no longer take it for granted that when the US and the EU take a concerted lead, the rest of the world will automatically follow.

The main challenge of today and for years to come is to find ways of rethinking, renewing and possibly resetting our relations with the wider global community. We need them, just as much as they need us. We cannot sustain the rules-based international order nor address the global crises of our time – from climate change, pollution and loss of biodiversity to the growing cost-of-living crisis related to skyrocketing prices of food, energy and finance – alone. We need strong global partnerships that cut across and include all major regions in the world to do that.

The UN is pivotal to achieving this. As the only institution that brings together representatives from the entire world, it is the key arena for global problem-solving as well as geopolitical rivalry. For a small country such as Denmark, the UN provides a unique platform for taking on global responsibilities.



A good example was the Danish-German initiative, in the margin of the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in October, to establish the Group of Friends of 12 climate-ambitious EU countries that want the EU to strengthen its climate diplomatic role towards partner countries. Denmark also played a significant role in the UN climate negotiations which delivered tangible results with the adoption of the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan despite the global disconnect. Through active climate diplomacy in the UN Denmark served as a front-runner on raising global ambitions for emission reductions, as well as a bridge-builder to the countries and regions by pressing for ambitious global efforts on climate-induced loss and damage and increased climate financing, especially for climate change adaptation.

In the area of peacebuilding, Denmark will use its membership of the UN Peacebuilding Commission for the period 2023-2024 as a platform to enhance its dialogue with partners from across the globe on agendas of the utmost importance, such as climate, peace and security.

Another case in point is, of course, the Danish candidature for a seat on the UN Security Council for the period of 2025-2026, which was officially launched in September 2022. Hosted by Her Royal Highness, Crown Princess Mary, the launch brought together representatives from across the globe. As such, it illustrated – in a festive manner – how multilateral institutions also serve as a venue for bilateral diplomacy, an integral and instrumental part of building cross-regional partnerships.

Denmark's candidature for a seat at the Security Council is a longstanding national priority. Shifting governments have worked behind the scenes to promote it since 2009. Following the war in Ukraine, the candidature – and our potential membership – has become even more important. While the Security Council is in many ways a flawed institution in need of fundamental reform, it remains crucial to the maintenance of international peace and security and to crisis management across the globe, including not least in Africa and the Middle East. We cannot allow Russia to block the Security Council and the vital system of international rules, norms and principles it serves to uphold.

If elected to the Security Council, Denmark will do our part to ensure that the Council is functional and able to fulfil its mandate to secure international peace

and security. This includes working to find ways of making the Council more effective, representative and legitimate. And it includes pushing for an updated approach to peace and security that takes into account today's most imminent threats to international peace and security, e.g. climate change. The world has long moved beyond 1945 and so, too, must the UN Security Council. This is crucial, not least for the Council's legitimacy and support, in a reality where multilateralism is under strong pressure.

During 2022 Denmark served as co-facilitator for the ongoing negotiations of Security Council reform; a job that is widely regarded as one of the most difficult positions in the UN intergovernmental system. Together with Qatar, the other co-facilitator, Denmark did not succeed in bringing about the global consensus that is needed to reform the Council. The same will be true if we become a member of the Security Council: we will not be able to secure the fundamental reforms that are so badly needed. But we can push for minor changes that may help improve the daily workings of the Council. For instance, by making processes more inclusive and decisions more reflective of local situations on the ground.

## Conclusion

It seems a bit odd to reflect and recount the past year in foreign policy when I only assumed office as Foreign Minister at the very end of the year. Therefore, I would like to extend a personal thank you to my predecessor, Jeppe Kofod, who helped navigate Denmark through the main part of a challenging and historic year. That said, let me end this chapter with a few personal reflections.

There is no doubt that 2022 was a historic year. A year that in many ways can be compared with the seismic geopolitical shifts that occurred in 1989 or on 11 September 2001.

I grew up in the shadows of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War. I remember when the wall came down. My wife and I drove to Berlin. We had to be part of that historic moment. I remember the joy. The optimism. A belief that the world was forever changed for the better – and that the future would be one of more prosperity. More freedom.

Fast forward to 2022 – and I must admit that I was wrong. Geopolitics has returned. War in Europe has returned. And 2022 seems to be a year of almost permanent crisis: inflation, rising food and energy prices, increased displacement – not to mention the climate crisis.

But I will nonetheless end this chapter on a somewhat positive note. Despite a year of crisis, I remain an optimist. Both because of the tremendous and robust steps we have made in support of Ukraine – and the unity we have shown in the EU and NATO. But also because I believe we have learnt some valuable lessons over the past year – on critical dependencies, value chains, and the need for a new approach to globalisation.

We must use these lessons and experiences to formulate a new approach to foreign policy. Therefore, the government will be launching a new Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy later this year. A strategy that will guide Denmark's foreign and security policy in a world that has fundamentally changed since 24 February 2022.

# The international situation and Danish security and defence policy 2022

*Acting Minister of Defence Troels Lund Poulsen*

## Introduction

The year 2022 will go down as a consequential one in modern European history and the date 24 February 2022 will from now on be synonymous with Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine. When Putin ordered his forces to invade a peaceful neighbouring country, it did not just mark the beginning of massive suffering for the Ukrainian people; it was an attack on the existing European and global security order.

Since the end of the Cold War European nations have tried to resolve their differences in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law – with the Balkan Wars of the 1990s as the most notable exception. Cooperation on everything from trade to arms control was a dominating feature of the European and global order. Institutions were built and expanded to facilitate dialogue and cooperation with the former members of the Warsaw Pact many of whom are now members of NATO and the EU. Europe appeared at peace. These longstanding trends were first challenged when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and the change became even more evident when Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine in an attempt to move borders by force. Many of us thought that such wars of conquest belonged in the history books. Sadly, we were proven wrong.

During the first year of Russia's brutal war against Ukraine we have witnessed the remarkable and unparalleled bravery and ingenuity of the Ukrainian people and military. Western allies, including Denmark, have provided unprecedented and continuous support for the Ukrainian fight for freedom and Ukraine has been successful in transforming this support into impressive military resistance and progress.

Hence, Russian attempts to capture Kyiv and achieve regime change were unsuccessful. So too were Russian attempts to divide NATO and the EU. The United States has reaffirmed its commitment to European security and strengthened the transatlantic alliance. Western countries continue to stand united despite Russian efforts to divide us. Institutions such as NATO and the EU appear stronger and more important than ever, and European nations have increased their defence spending substantially. Major European countries such as Poland and Germany have assumed leading roles in Europe's military transformation.

On the global stage, most international issues are increasingly marked by the intensifying great power competition that will shape global cooperation on everything from climate change to arms control in the years to come. China's increasingly assertive behaviour is a challenge we will need to address in order to ensure an international climate of cooperation on issues of mutual benefit and interest.

This development is also apparent in the Arctic region where the ambition of low tension is increasingly under pressure and Russia is also building up its military presence. It is crucial that in the coming years we take steps to deepen cooperation between Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland within the security and defence area.

2022 will also be remembered as the year that the challenge of hybrid attacks became even more tangible in Denmark when the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea were subjected to sabotage. We must increase our focus on such challenges in the future.

In Denmark, the Russian invasion of Ukraine led to the 'National Compromise': a framework agreement reached among a large majority in parliament that was signed just weeks after the invasion. In the short term, DKK 7 billion were allocated to deal with the immediate consequences of the war, including providing support for Ukraine and increasing our military readiness. In the longer term, Denmark will reach the NATO target of 2% of GDP on defence by 2030. In 2023 a new 10-year defence agreement will be negotiated. The Danish EU defence opt-out was abolished following a referendum in which a large majority of the population was in favour of Danish participation in the EU's

security and defence policy. Negotiations for a bilateral defence cooperation agreement with the US were initiated. These agreements are clear illustrations of Denmark's enduring commitment to NATO, the EU and our allies.

## Russia's invasion of Ukraine

When Russia invaded Ukraine, the aim was not 'merely' to conquer Ukraine and make it a vassal state under Russian control. With the invasion, Russia has attempted to upset the entire European security order. As such, the brave people of Ukraine are not just fighting for their country and for their right to self-determination; Ukraine is fighting for democratic values. If Ukraine falls, there is no telling where Russia will continue in its efforts to reintegrate former Soviet states into Russia. Ukraine is fighting for the inviolability of all European states.

For Ukraine to succeed in repelling the Russian invasion, we need to continue the strong support for Ukraine in the EU, in NATO and in all relevant international forums. This means continuing the flow of weapons, ammunition and the training of Ukrainian soldiers and scaling it up further, if necessary, in order for Ukraine to negotiate a peace on its own terms.

It is paramount that we stay united within the EU and NATO and keep the support flowing to Ukraine. If we stop, we will show Putin that he got it right when he believed that the West would not be able to stay united in opposing Russia. He thought that we would lose interest in Ukraine's fight and that the support for Ukraine would dry up.

Should this happen, Ukraine will not get any peace and Moldova or Georgia could rightly fear becoming the next victims of Russia's expansionism. Therefore, we must commit to long-term and persistent support for Ukraine and, if necessary, raise the level of support even further in order for Russia to acknowledge that Europe will not tolerate the invasion of other European countries.

I have no doubt that the support for Ukraine will continue and that the unity within the EU and NATO will continue to be our best and most valuable asset.

## **Danish support for Ukraine is a major priority**

Support for Ukraine has been the highest priority for the Danish Government in 2022, and it will continue to be among the top priorities for Denmark in 2023 and the years to come. That is why the Danish Parliament has decided to create a fund for support to Ukraine in the coming years.

In 2022 the Danish support for Ukraine evolved along with the war. In the beginning, we provided Stinger missiles and anti-armour weapons but since then the Danish support has steadily increased and consists of a broad range of armaments, delivered when we became aware of Ukrainian needs that we could help meet.

Denmark is, relative to our size, one of the largest contributors of support to Ukraine. The support has ranged from armoured personnel carriers, to surveillance drones, de-mining equipment, CBRN equipment, software for cyber defence, a civilian field hospital and various winter equipment.

In August Denmark co-hosted a conference on long-term support for Ukraine. The conference was held in Copenhagen with Ukraine and the United Kingdom as co-hosts. At the conference the British-led International Fund (IFU) for Ukraine was presented along with de-mining initiatives, projects for armament production and the British training mission Operation INTERFLEX. Following the conference, Denmark co-financed the production of Slovakian Zuzana 2 howitzers with Norway and Germany – one of the projects presented at the conference in Copenhagen – as well as contributing to the IFU. Another major donation was 19 brand-new CESAR artillery systems that were donated even before they reached Danish soil.

With contributions from collaborating nations, the Danish Defence has produced land-based anti-ship Harpoon missile systems for Ukraine, for the defence of its Black Sea shores. This shows our adaptability and our eagerness to help Ukraine in their fight for freedom. The production of land-based Harpoon systems was one of the first times Denmark cooperated with other nations in order to assure weapons for Ukraine.

Building on Danish experience of training Ukrainian soldiers before the invasion, Denmark also provided several training courses for Ukrainian soldiers in 2022,

contributing among other things to Operation INTERFLEX, which provides basic training for newly recruited Ukrainian soldiers.

Denmark has been a major supporter of Ukraine in 2023 and it is clear that continued support to Ukraine will have to involve increased bilateral cooperation and coordination and projects driven by the EU and NATO in order to secure Ukraine the necessary military support.

## **NATO deterrence and defence and support for Eastern European allies**

The war in Ukraine has led to an enhanced focus on NATO's collective defence. This is a clear message to Russia that NATO will protect and defend every inch of Allied territory. Many Eastern European Allies are rightly concerned about Russian capabilities and intentions in light of Russia's war in Ukraine and Russia's history of military and political provocations, including dangerous rhetoric.

Following the invasion NATO has stepped up with more than 40,000 troops under NATO command, and hundreds of ships and planes. NATO has doubled the number of multinational battlegroups in the eastern part of the Alliance from four to eight by adding troops from Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Troop presence in Poland and the Baltic States has also been enhanced in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

At the NATO summit in Madrid a new Strategic Concept was adopted and it was decided to accelerate efforts to draw up and implement new plans for collective defence that include adjustments of NATO's command structure and the implementation of new regional plans. NATO will also work to implement the new NATO Force Model (NFM) that was approved at the Madrid summit. NFM will enable the Alliance to react faster in a crisis by increasing readiness requirements for a substantial part of NATO forces. Denmark will contribute to an enhanced NATO posture with a special focus on the Baltic Sea region.

In Madrid, NATO also announced plans to bolster its cyber defence. Russia's use of destructive cyberattacks against Ukraine before and during the invasion, with significant spillover effects into countries in the EU and NATO, underlines



that cyberattacks are an active part of modern warfare and calls for a strong cyber defence.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Danish Government decided to make an extraordinary contribution to NATO's deterrence and defence posture in the Baltic States. Denmark had more than 1,000 troops deployed in the Baltic States, primarily in Latvia and Estonia. This extraordinary contribution in the Baltic Sea Region remains a clear testament to Denmark's dedication to the security of our allies, especially the Baltic States.

As clearly reflected in the government platform, Denmark has a special responsibility for the security of the Baltic Sea Region, and we intend to honour this responsibility – both in the short and in the long term.

## Transatlantic relations and relations to the United States

The war in Ukraine has brought the United States and European allies even closer together and improved the foundations for the future of NATO and European security. This was illustrated by the deployment of the US rocket artillery system HIMARS to Bornholm in May 2022, which was part of an exercise that demonstrated American involvement in the security of Europe.

On 10 February the Danish Government announced that negotiations would be initiated for a bilateral Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) between Denmark and the US. Once negotiations are finalised, this significant enhancement of our partnership can open up new avenues of defined cooperation and improve the access of US troops to military facilities in Denmark.

Entering into a DCA with the US underlines that Denmark is an ally committed not only to Danish, but also to European and transatlantic security. We all need to carry a bigger burden for our collective security, and Denmark intends to do its part.

## The Nordic and Baltic Sea region

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has had a significant impact on developments in the Nordic and Baltic Sea region. The region has seen growing tension between Russia and NATO in recent years. These tensions have been fuelled by a substantial Russian military build-up and continued provocations, including violations of airspace and maritime territory.

One of the most important decisions in Nordic security policy in decades was made in May 2022 when Finland and Sweden formally submitted their applications to join NATO. This significant change of policy from two countries that had long maintained their principle of not joining military alliances was a direct consequence of Putin's war against Ukraine and the uncertainty that followed. Finland joined NATO in April, and Sweden is expected to become a full member in 2023. We are all looking forward to welcoming both of our Nordic friends and neighbours into NATO. NATO's Nordic expansion is of course not just a matter of uniting the Nordic countries in the Alliance; Sweden and Finland's membership will have a profound impact on the security dynamics in the Baltic Sea region.

The expansion of NATO and the removal of the Danish EU opt-out on defence and security will provide us with new opportunities to strengthen our cooperation in a region that is vital to Danish security interests. The Baltic Sea region is Denmark's immediate neighbourhood and we have a special responsibility and a strong national interest in contributing to the security of the region.

The Nordic defence cooperation (NORDEF) has also changed significantly over the past year. With Finland and Sweden in NATO, all of the Nordic countries will be committed to assist each other under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. As future allies in NATO, we will be able to engage in deeper defence cooperation. This will strengthen NATO's northern flank and the security of the Alliance as a whole. We are currently adapting and updating the NORDEF vision and purpose to meet this new strategic reality. Our ambition is to create a framework for Nordic defence cooperation that makes use of all the opportunities for deepened and enhanced defence cooperation that arise as all the Nordic countries become NATO allies.

## Opting into the European Defence Cooperation

With an overwhelming majority of 66.9% in the 1 June referendum, the Danish population decided in 2022 to end the Danish opt-out from European cooperation on security and defence. The referendum marked a significant change in Denmark's EU defence policy and brought with it new possibilities for Denmark to contribute to our common security in Europe.

Europe has to shoulder a greater burden for its own security. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, this became more evident than ever. We must signal unity and strength in Europe. This is also expected from NATO and our transatlantic partners. A stronger European pillar strengthens NATO.

The removal of the opt-out means that Denmark can now contribute to the EU's military missions and operations. This puts us in a better position to support the security and stability of Europe and the European neighbourhood. Our first military contribution to an EU operation was to Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina from October to December 2022. We will be redeploying the contribution in the second half of 2023. Denmark also contributes to the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine, and we are looking into further relevant national contributions.

The current security situation means that most European countries will be investing more in security and defence. The European Union is rapidly developing areas such as defence industrial development, capability, and material cooperation. Denmark will continue to engage actively in the European defence industrial initiatives, including the European Defence Fund where Danish companies and research institutions have displayed great potential for contributing to innovative solutions already.

With the removal of the opt-out we can engage even further. Denmark now has the opportunity to join the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PESCO) and is working towards joining in the first half of 2023.

Denmark joined the European Defence Agency (EDA) in March 2023, which has resulted in new opportunities to engage in capability coordination and

cooperation in the EU. Danish companies and research institutions can now engage in the development projects and capability technology groups, as well as the EDA's Hub for Defence Innovation. It is essential to consider synergies between the defence sector and related civil sectors to facilitate innovation. This is key when addressing the threats of the future.

The security landscape in Europe is increasingly shaped and driven by hybrid threats. Within the hybrid sphere, in the coming years the EU will have an increasingly important role in countering hybrid and cyber threats aimed at our critical functions. Denmark will actively contribute to bolstering EU's cyber defence.

## The Arctic

Changes in the security environment also affect the Arctic region, including the Faroe Islands and Greenland. The year-long mutual ambition among the Arctic Five to keep the Arctic a low-tension region is under increasing pressure from a gradual military build-up and great power competition. Foreign states and criminal hackers continue to pose a persistent cyberthreat to Greenland, and in 2022 we have seen several cyberattacks that affected critical functions in Greenland.

The main task for the Danish Defence is to enforce the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Denmark and to defend Danish interests. These tasks become increasingly challenging to fulfil in the reality of a new security situation. The Arctic and North Atlantic is a vast region, which requires investments in strengthened surveillance and further Arctic capabilities as well as close cooperation and support on cybersecurity. In the past year, Denmark has continued to implement the initiatives decided in the Agreement on Arctic Capabilities. For example, the project regarding the re-establishment of a fixed air defence radar on the Faroe Islands is in progress. In addition, to strengthen operational cooperation, Denmark has expanded the corps of liaison officers to include Norway and soon also Canada. The responsibility cannot be covered by one state alone and the Kingdom of Denmark will have to prioritise engagement in relevant alliances and partnerships. The aim will continuously be to maintain the Arctic as a safe and low-tension region.

With the support of the Kingdom of Denmark, NATO has also increased its attention on the Arctic in light of security developments. The accession of Finland to NATO, and Sweden's expected accession later in 2023, enhance the need to rethink the role of NATO in the High North. In addition, the impact of economic sanctions and the gradual winding down of conventional Russian armed forces increase Russian dependency on China both politically and economically. Hence, Russia is also likely to offer China increased access to the Arctic. It is worth noting that Greenland and the Faroe Islands have joined the EU sanctions against Russia and thereby sent a clear message that the Kingdom of Denmark stands united against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Solutions must be found through cooperation within the Kingdom, and the Danish Government will continue our close dialogue with the Faroe Islands and Greenland. In the negotiations of the upcoming Defence Agreement, the governments of the Faroe Islands and Greenland are invited to participate closely and hence contribute to the strategic development of the military capabilities in the Arctic and the North Atlantic. To manage the challenges to a secure and low-tension region, the next Defence Agreement expands on the strategic direction given by the Agreement on Arctic Capabilities.

## Hybrid threats, cyberattacks and resilience

Recent years have shown us that hybrid campaigns are becoming an integral part of modern warfare. In recent years we have seen numerous examples of hybrid campaigns targeting European states through influence campaigns, sabotage of critical infrastructure, cyberattacks etc.

The explosions at Nord Stream 1 and 2, as well as a series of cyberattacks against critical sectors have been important reminders to all of us that hybrid campaigns constitute a very real and immediate threat.

Indeed, the explosions illustrated the need to focus on the threats to our critical infrastructure. It is clear that vital functions of our society rely on infrastructure, which must be resilient to disruption either by natural causes or through malicious activity. It is essential to enhance the ability to respond and repair our critical infrastructure to minimise any downtime of vital services in order to maintain a safe and functioning society in times of both peace and crisis.

In order to enhance our resilience we must emphasise an approach where all of society shoulders the responsibility and we strengthen the protection of our critical infrastructure across all domains. Furthermore, much of our critical infrastructure is digital, virtual and/or cross-boundary. In NATO, resilience is a national responsibility. However, interconnectivity also makes it a collective commitment which is shared with Allies and partners in NATO and the EU.

As a highly digitalised nation, Denmark is particularly vulnerable to cyber-attacks. The cyberthreat against Denmark remains serious and persistent. The threat from cyber espionage and cybercrime is very high and requires a strong focus on threat actors and detection. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has only amplified the threat. Since 24 February 2022, the Centre for Cybersecurity has raised the threat level for cyber activism to 'high' and activist DDoS attacks against critical sectors in Denmark have unfortunately become a new normal.

The threat level means we have to continue to boost our resilience and our ability to respond in the Kingdom of Denmark as a whole. A number of government initiatives have been launched the past couple of years, including an agreement on strengthening the Danish cyber defence, and the Danish National Strategy for Cyber and Information Security 2022-24. We will continue to strengthen cooperation and coordination between Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands to ensure the safety and security of our citizens.

The aforementioned events indeed underline the importance of having a strong security awareness in regard to hybrid campaigns. We will learn from these events in order for us to be more resilient towards hybrid campaigns in the near future.

## Technological competition and the defence industry

Technology and information superiority is a determining factor for great power competition, leading international organisations such as NATO and the EU to enhance focus on development and adoption of emerging and disruptive technologies. The accelerated competition in the technological realm presents us with a more dangerous and unpredictable world, creating new operational needs and expectations regarding the technological level of Danish defence.

The global technology competition is driven by a race for superiority in areas like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), quantum-enabled technologies and autonomous weapons systems. These emerging and disruptive technologies are expected to continuously improve precision targeting, enhance decision-making and increase mission speed, intensity and operational effect. This not only affects how our military forces operate on the battlefield, but also influences civil industry as a primary technology supplier and innovator.

Fundamentally, this will change the way our society functions. Continuous technological development and increased digitisation highlight society's vulnerability to cyberattacks. The increasing fusion of the digital and physical worlds will likely worsen and expand the consequences of successful cyberattacks launched by states and criminals. In addition, advances in AI and quantum computing will challenge existing data encryption. Quantum computers will be incredibly effective at hacking into encrypted data – rendering sensitive data and critical infrastructures, as well as Internet of Things and 5G networks, vulnerable to attack.

This development is accelerated by the rapid advance of cooperation unfolding between the private sector and defence organisations in all military areas. In essence, most of the technologies in question are dual-use, i.e. have both military and civilian applications. Thus, securing access to civil technologies and integrating them into the military realm, as well as ensuring sufficient support for continuous civil development, is a chief concern for state actors.

To address current and future security challenges, it is vital to strengthen cooperation with key stakeholders from academia and industry, entrepreneurs and capital providers and establish the necessary structures to enable joint technological innovation and development. In short, we must create viable conditions for an innovation ecosystem, including adequate political and legal framework conditions for the defence and dual-use industry and its collaboration with research and innovation. It is the stated ambition of the government to contribute to just that by ensuring a technological and digital boost of the Danish Armed Forces to enable Denmark to contribute to strengthening NATO's technological edge.

Current national efforts are taking place through Denmark's engagement in NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) that will help foster development and protection of dual-use technological solutions across the Alliance. In the EU, several activities and initiatives have been put in place in order to increase support for research, technology development and innovation in the defence sector. In light of the abolishment of the Danish opt-out, we now have the possibility to fully engage in, and contribute to, fostering a technologically and industrially capable Europe.

## International operations and the fight against terrorism

In May 2022 the Danish force commander of NATO Mission Iraq (NMI), Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard, handed over command of NMI to the new Italian commander in Baghdad. The handover ceremony took place after eighteen months of Danish leadership of the mission. NMI is a non-combat, advisory and capacity-building mission that assists Iraq in building sustainable and effective security institutions so that the Iraqis are able to fight terrorism themselves and prevent the return of ISIL. The Danish leadership of NMI was a concrete and visible example of Denmark's contribution to the international efforts to fight terrorism in 2022. With the continued threat of terrorism against Europe, Denmark and our partners remain committed in our fight. ISIL continues to pose a serious threat to the West and Western interests. The terrorist organisation has expanded its presence to other parts of the world



outside Iraq and Syria, including Afghanistan and countries on the African continent, and this is why Denmark continues to be part of the global coalition to defeat ISIL.

Denmark has participated in several international military efforts that aim to fight terrorism and contribute to stabilisation efforts in Mali and the Sahel region. As an example, Denmark planned to deploy new military contributions to the European special operations force, Task Force Takuba, in Mali in 2022. The Danish contributions to Task Force Takuba were aimed at supporting the Malian defence and security forces in their fight against terrorist groups in the Liptako-Gourma region, which includes parts of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The Danish contingent was deployed to Mali in January 2022, but had to be withdrawn shortly afterwards due to new signals from the Malian transitional government. These new signals meant that France and other European countries also had to withdraw their forces from Mali shortly after the Danish withdrawal.

In close cooperation with our allies and coalition partners, Danish efforts in 2022 were directed towards providing relevant and in-demand contributions to international efforts in conflict-affected areas. These efforts include the Danish contributions to the NMI, to the NATO mission in Kosovo, the UN missions in Mali and the Middle East and efforts to promote maritime security as part of the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH).

Furthermore, the counterpiracy operation in the Gulf of Guinea continued in 2022. The Danish military forces' contribution to the operation consists of a frigate with associated Seahawk helicopter and Danish cyber capability. The cyber capability can operate independently or in support of the maritime operations in the area.

## Conclusion: where are we and where are we going?

Russia must not be allowed to win the war in Ukraine. A Russian victory would not only be disastrous for the people of Ukraine, it would also be a devastating blow to the rules-based international order. It could encourage Russia to seek military solutions to achieve other political or security objectives and it could encourage other autocratic regimes to do the same.

The way we handle the remainder of this war – and its aftermath – will inevitably shape the European and global order that will follow. This is another reason why we must continue our support for Ukraine – and for other vulnerable democratic nations in Europe. We must continue to show unity and strength.

Danish security and defence policy must change to adapt to the new realities heralded by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This is also true in the Arctic region. The Kingdom of Denmark must stand united against the pressure from the hybrid tactics and disinformation campaigns launched by autocratic states that seek to divide us. Increasing cooperation and coordination between Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands will be an important priority for me.

Another important priority for 2023 will be the negotiation of a new 10-year Defence Agreement. A starting point will be the commitment to permanently increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2030. We will now have to negotiate an agreement that allows us to better contribute to NATO's collective deterrence and defence while at the same time creating a military that can carry out its national obligations, including in the Arctic. Our armed forces must be equipped and educated for the future and must be able to act in a security environment in which hybrid and cyberattacks are enduring threats. Maintaining our technological edge and ensuring resilience will be a priority.

These are indeed challenging times for us all. History will judge us based on how we rise to meet them.



# Chapter 3

## Scholarly articles

# The ‘hard middle ground’: Denmark’s positioning regarding the EU sanctions against Russia

*Kim B. Olsen*<sup>1</sup>

## Barely united in diversity: the EU’s (almost) joint sanctions response to Russia’s military aggression

Russia’s unlawful invasion of Ukraine of February 2022 put decision-makers of the European Union (EU) to a test: how to respond to large-scale military aggression in the EU’s immediate geographical neighbourhood without escalating an already fragile security situation into an even greater confrontation – all the while supporting Ukraine to defend its territorial integrity? Reflecting its role as a global economic giant with limited military capabilities, the EU reverted to a key tool of its common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and targeted Russia with a vast array of financial and economic sanctions. In close coordination with G7 partners the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Japan, as well as with like-minded Korea, Switzerland, Australia and others, the totality of the international sanctions regimes launched against Russia came to be the most substantial ever launched against a major international economy in modern history.

Already, in the precursor to Russia’s military aggression, Western decision-makers had articulated their will to use sanctions as a means of deterrence. European Commission President von der Leyen warned Moscow about ‘a robust and comprehensive package of financial and economic sanctions’.<sup>2</sup> US President Biden announced a plan for the ‘most severe sanctions that have ever been imposed’.<sup>3</sup> Similar threats, although using less bold rhetoric, were also heard from Germany’s Chancellor Scholz (‘If there was a military aggression against Ukraine, this will entail ... severe sanctions’),<sup>4</sup> and France’s

President Macron ('It is up to us to reaffirm [the value of European principles] and effectively sanction their breach').<sup>5</sup> Denmark likewise joined the choir of those sending strong signals to Moscow. Both before and after the launch of Russia's military invasion, Prime Minister Frederiksen repeatedly made clear that Denmark supported 'the hardest sanctions measures possible'.<sup>6</sup>

As a CFSP instrument, from February 2022 onwards the EU's multiple sanctions packages had to be adopted by unanimous consent among all Member States. While Member States succeeded in ultimately finding consensus on a total of ten packages in the first 12 months after the Russian invasion, they also advanced significantly different policy approaches and objectives during and between sanctions negotiations (Olsen 2022b). This disunity not only reflected differing political approaches on how to respond to the critical geopolitical situation, but also the fact that any use of coercive economic measures might result in negative spillover effects on the sender itself – and that these negative economic effects would hit the EU Member States with different degrees of weight (Redeker 2022).

This chapter unpacks the reasons for and effects of Denmark's staunch negotiation position to support 'the hardest sanctions measures possible'. It specifically asks what consequences the Danish position had for Copenhagen's ability to navigate instances where EU sanctions measures directly impacted unique Danish national interests.

To do so, the chapter first explains how EU sanctions, or 'restrictive measures', constitute an instrument that straddles two policy areas: the EU's common foreign and security policy and its internal market. The chapter reviews insights, drawn from the literature, into how EU Member States place themselves in sanctions negotiations within the CFSP framework, to point out how political path dependencies often impact Member States beyond pure economic reasoning. It then discusses Denmark's overall sanctions policy stance compared to those of other EU Member States and points to the 'path dependency' of four historical and contemporary factors. These impacted how Denmark placed itself between groups of 'assertive hardliners' on one side and 'sanctions sceptics' on the other. This led Denmark into a 'hard middle ground' where Danish negotiators would often take a less nuanced and more principled approach than its peers from most other Member States that made up the large group of 'mediating advocates'.

The chapter then analyses two brief case studies to show how this position on the 'hard middle ground' influenced, in both negative and positive ways, Danish decision-makers' space for handling other policy areas covering unique Danish national interests that were affected by the EU sanctions policy. First, the EU's decision of April 2022 to prohibit the import of Russian wood and wooden products including wooden biomass, an energy source that is more critical for Denmark's overall energy consumption than for any other EU Member State. Denmark's non-opposition to the prohibition of wood imports stands in stark contrast to the lengthy discussions about the sanctioning of other energy sources such as natural gas, oil and coal, which were either not prohibited or only after a long phasing-in period. Second, the political commitment to advocate an adherence to the Western coalition's sanctions policy within all parts of the Danish Kingdom – including in the non-EU, self-governing Faroe Islands. In contrast to the EU's Russia sanctions of 2014, where the Faroe Islands resisted adopting the EU sanctions in its national legislation and the Danish Government only put limited public pressure on the Faroese Government to revise this decision, in 2022 Copenhagen's strong political signalling to Tórshavn left much less room for political disagreement.

The chapter concludes that Denmark's sanctions position on the 'hard middle ground' thereby had wider spillover effects on other Danish national interests. On the one hand, the Danish position helped to underscore Copenhagen's wish to adhere to a value-based and principled approach to a critical security issue, which was not only backed by its transatlantic ally, the US, but also had broad support in the EU. Furthermore, this position minimised the Danish Government's room for manoeuvre in terms of politically accepting a possible sanctions non-alignment by the Faroe Islands, putting a stronger political pressure on inner-Kingdom relations than had earlier been the case in sanctions matters. On the other hand, the staunch position incentivised Danish sanctions negotiators to refrain from promoting national caveats and interests in the same way as some other EU Member States did, leading, for example, to a sacrifice of certain economic interests with regard to energy commodities. This complex picture therefore also serves as a more general illustration of the challenges governments face when using economic instruments to address geopolitical conflicts. Caught between governments' logics of security policy objectives and economic profit-seeking, such geoeconomic responses become a delicate balancing act between state interventions and market dynamics in a highly globalised and interdependent international economy.

## EU restrictive measures: a CFSP instrument embedded in internal market logics

The EU's use of economic and financial sanctions – or 'restrictive measures' as they are called within the CFSP framework – spans more than 40 distinct sanctions regimes. Besides the sanctioning of more than 30 third-party states, the EU also takes so-called 'horizontal' measures against human rights violations, terrorism, the proliferation of chemical weapons, and cyber-attacks.<sup>7</sup> Each EU sanctions regime further constitutes a unique mix of individual measures (including visa bans and asset freezes), dual-use and arms embargoes, and sectoral measures (including trade and financial restrictions).

As part of the CFSP toolbox, restrictive measures must be unanimously adopted by the 27 EU Member States. Unlike other CFSP instruments, restrictive measures that include financial or economic prohibitions will often have a direct impact on the functioning of the EU's internal market, meaning that their adoption requires specific forms of legal acts (Olsen 2022a). The EU's legal basis for applying restrictive measures is therefore authorised in two key treaty articles. First, Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union, which allows the EU Council to decide unanimously on the adoption of sanctions against a non-EU state, non-state entity, or individual; and second, Article 215 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, which allows the Council to adopt a subsequent regulation (via qualified majority voting) to implement economic and financial aspects of a proposed sanctions regime. Just like any other EU regulation, sanctions-specific regulations apply automatically and uniformly to all Member States as soon as they enter into force and are hence not specifically transposed into national law by Member States.<sup>8</sup>

Since the early 2010s restrictive measures have been among the most widely used CFSP instruments (Ålander, Bendiek and Bochtler, 2020). Because they generally need additional EU legal acts in the form of regulations or implementing regulations to come into action, the decision-making procedure is also different to that of other CFSP measures. The political mandate for the EU to consider sanctions is often derived from deliberations between heads of state and government in the European Council. They are then formally prepared by the Commission and/or the High Representative of the European



Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), who also heads the European External Actions Service (EEAS), and thereafter negotiated at various levels in the Council of Ministers to resolve the details (Szép 2020). However, because sanctions, unlike other CFSP instruments, are underpinned legal acts impacting on the functioning of the EU's internal market, the final substantial preparatory negotiations do not take place among ambassadors in the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC) formation but among the more generally-oriented Permanent Representatives convening in the COREPER II format. Before the proposed sanctions decisions and regulations reach this stage, they will usually have been subject to negotiations in the Council's geographical working groups and among legal experts in the so-called RELEX group to sort out the technical details.

## Sanctions as a contested, yet path dependent, field of EU foreign and security policy

In spring 2022, however, EU policymaking was everything but usual. In the sanctions field, two abnormal characteristics came to dominate the CFSP negotiations, particularly with regard to the first five EU sanctions packages adopted in the critical months of February to April 2022. First, most sanctions packages were negotiated and subsequently adopted in record time. Second, and relating hereto, usual EU negotiation procedures were bypassed to increase efficiency. Expert deliberations in various geographical and technical working groups were largely circumvented, meaning that sanctions proposals were delivered directly from the Commission or the EEAS to COREPER II ambassadors, who would then prepare them for final adoption at ministerial level (Olsen 2022b). As will be analysed in greater detail in the next section, this unique negotiating environment impacted directly on the causes and consequences of Denmark's specific position regarding the EU's Russia sanctions of 2022.

Before turning to this analysis of where Denmark positioned itself in the EU negotiations on the Russia sanctions, a brief overview of previous scholarly work explains how EU sanctions negotiations, on the one hand, can be a critical point of controversy between Member States defending their specific national

interests while, on the other hand, can also prove to be a platform to signal the ability of Member States to act collectively as a unitary foreign and security policy actor that is capable of demonstrating regional, and maybe even global, leadership in the sanctions field (Cardwell and Moret 2023). It is this balancing act between safeguarding specific national interests and ensuring the room for consensus among the EU's Member States that also came to be a defining contextual circumstance for Denmark's sanctions positioning of 2022.

Representing a collaboration of 27 sovereign EU Member States in the sensitive fields of foreign, security, and defence policies, the CFSP framework has traditionally been subject to intra-EU disagreement. Scholars have even argued that the CFSP might be subject to greater forms of contestation and politicisation than other EU policy fields, namely because issues relating to the EU's external relations are debated both on the EU level and the national level (Biedenkopf et al. 2021). This is not least true in the sanctions field, where decisions to launch financial and economic restrictive measures against an adversary might come with both political and economic costs for EU businesses and citizens. Furthermore, previous sanctions cases have shown that once an EU sanctions regime is established, it normally stays in place for years, if not decades (Giumelli et al. 2021). In terms of defining causes for support or scepticism for sanctions at the Member State level, scholars have found that factors relating to domestic political debates (Härtel 2019) have a stronger explanatory impact on a Member States' position than do their national economic interests relating to the potential sanctions target (Silva and Selden 2020; Crombois 2020).

Already in the aftermath of the first EU sanctions measures against Russia in 2014, observers were impressed by how Member States managed to forge and uphold the necessary unanimity to launch sanctions against a key EU trading partner and its largest neighbouring geostrategic contender (Portela et al. 2021; Sjursen and Rosén 2017). Given the close political, societal and/or economic ties of some EU Member States to Russia, scholars had pointed to the risk that certain Member States could act as 'veto players' by breaking the EU sanctions unanimity over time (Orenstein and Kelemen 2017). But the consensus was upheld, at least in terms of Member State voting behaviour in the Council.

However, beneath the joint agreement to continuously prolong the sanctions regimes against Russia, a principled political conflict remained in place, meaning that the level of support from various EU Member States for the sanctioning of Russia varied greatly. In 2014 and onwards, the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and Poland emerged as the staunchest sanctions supporters, while Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia and Slovenia were among the most sanctions-sceptical Member States (Moret et al. 2017; Shagina 2017). Studies have shown how these original political cleavages between various EU Member States – and hence their individual positioning vis-à-vis the sanctions question – further consolidated over time. This ultimately led to a dynamic in which ‘the politicisation [between Member States] had less to do with the situation on the ground and with internal factors, developing instead an autonomous nature of its own and becoming entrenched’ (Karlovic et al. 2021, p. 358). In other words, the experiences from the EU’s previous sanctioning of Russia demonstrate how the initial positions of Member States regarding any sanctions regime in question can not only lead to possible contestations in the EU Council, but can also result in a certain ‘path dependency’ that impacts Member States’ more general policy positions independent of the question of how best to respond to Russia’s geopolitical moves as well as the question of possible national economic interests related to a specific sanctions measure (Giusti 2015). In other words, previous policy positions and priorities can constrain future policy choices (Kay 2005). As will be discussed below, such path dependencies not only informed Denmark’s position on the EU’s 2022 Russia sanctions, but also had spillover effects on the Danish Government’s room for manoeuvre in its ‘two-level’ sanctions negotiations with other EU Member States at one level, and with domestic or inner-Realm stakeholders, at the other (Portela et al. 2021).

## Denmark’s position on EU negotiations on the Russia sanctions: a ‘mediating advocate’

Looking at the CFSP negotiations on the EU restrictive measures targeting Russia from early 2022, an intra-EU negotiation environment both similar to and different from that of 2014 emerged. Although the 27 members found a quick policy consensus in terms of responding to Russia’s behaviour with large-scale sanctions measures, EU Member States did not fully agree on the

scope and objectives of this joint sanctions policy. At one extreme a group of 'assertive hardliners' – led by the Baltic states and Poland – had argued already, even before the commencement of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for the necessity for the EU and its like-minded partners to agree on the deepest and widest sanctions measures imaginable. In this view, mainly expressed in closed corridors, the EU should impose wide individual and sectoral measures against a broad range of Russian individuals, institutions, and economic sectors. The EU should give little consideration to possible ramifications for civilian Russians outside the Kremlin's inner circle because it was the broader Russian society, not just Putin and his closest supporters, that stood behind the Russian aggression (Olsen 2022b).

At the other end, a range of 'sanctions sceptics' – primarily represented by Hungary, but at times also including Cyprus, Greece, and Malta – while never formally blocking adoption processes in the EU Council did express various degrees and forms of concern about an overly aggressive EU sanctions policy. Hungary consistently emerged as the most vocal sanctions sceptic, not least through vivid rhetoric from its political leaders including Prime Minister Orbán. Making an initial evaluation in summer 2022 after the EU's six initial sanctions packages were directed at Russia, Orbán said, 'initially, I thought we had only shot ourselves in the foot, but now it is clear that the European economy has shot itself in the lungs, and it is gasping for air'.<sup>9</sup> Observers have noted how such political forms of hesitation might also have had an impact on the thoroughness with which sanctions policies were being implemented. This includes questions around the effectiveness of certain countries' efforts to freeze the assets of listed Russian individuals and entities,<sup>10</sup> as well as the political influence of, for example, some country-specific maritime shipping sectors arguing against EU efforts to limit the trade of key Russian energy commodities such as oil and coal.<sup>11</sup>

A great majority of EU Member States – including Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden among others – adopted the role of 'mediating advocates'. Generally supportive of a comprehensive EU sanctions policy against both Russia and Belarus, these Member States worked in different ways to ensure that the two 'extreme' positions in the EU spectrum could meet in consecutive agreements on the various sanctions packages. At the same time, many in this group also brought their own concerns regarding certain sanctions provisions

to the negotiating table. This included Germany's initial hesitation about a comprehensive de-SWIFT of Russian banks and a too rapid prohibition of Russian energy imports,<sup>12</sup> France's push for the EU to continue its import of Russian raw uranium to be used in civilian nuclear power generation,<sup>13</sup> Italy and Belgium's concern about an import ban on Russian steel<sup>14</sup> as well as Belgium's opposition to including prohibitions against the lucrative diamond trade.<sup>15</sup>

All the while placing themselves in this large group of 'mediating advocates', Danish representatives took a more principled negotiating approach than other Member States in this same group. The mandate for taking a tough stance was directly derived from the government's political guidance for Denmark to 'support the strongest measures possible'. This line had already been set out before the Russian attack, as the Danish Government had signalled an early commitment to follow through and support any large-scale Western sanctions response to Russian aggression. At what would come to be the last formal meeting of EU foreign ministers before 24 February 2022, Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Kofod had used hard-nosed language to underscore Denmark's backing for a significant sanctions response, announcing the 'the most devastating sanctions ever seen'.<sup>16</sup> This line furthermore received broad support from political parties across the Danish parliamentary spectrum, including from the chairman of the major liberal opposition party, calling for 'the absolutely hardest economic sanctions against Putin's horrendous actions'.<sup>17</sup>

To understand this staunch Danish support for a strong EU sanctions response to Russia's aggression, and hence the path dependency of Danish policy choices in the spring of 2022, at least four interconnected historical and contemporary factors arguably played a role.

First was Denmark's close relationship with the Russia-sceptic Baltic states, whose post-Cold War membership aspirations to both EU and NATO had been steadfastly supported by successive Danish governments (Riddervold and Sjørnsen 2006). Just as was the case with its Nordic neighbours Norway and Sweden, Denmark's post-Cold War relations with Russia had fluctuated between solid and strained (Mouritzen 2019; Rasmussen 2008). But Copenhagen's often pragmatic relationship with Moscow never reached the same level of comprehensiveness as, for example, that between Berlin and Moscow. This more adamant stance against Russia's behaviour in Eastern Europe had already been reflected during the EU negotiations on the Russia

sanctions of 2014, where Denmark's position had been more steadfast than that of Germany, while being less aggressive than those of Sweden and Poland (Mouritzen 2019; Shagina 2017).

Second was Denmark's 'super Atlanticism' and its strong commitment to support US leadership in security and defence matters, an approach shared with the other, smaller Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as well as with medium-sized Poland (Mouritzen 2007; Wivel and Crandall 2019). The mixture of a strong public posture from both the Biden administration and members of Congress combined with targeted outreach by US government sanctions experts to their counterparts in Denmark (and other EU Member States), made it clear to Danish policymakers at an early stage that a strong sanctions reaction against a possible Russian aggression was key to the US policy stance. Danish support to steadfast EU sanctions would therefore also be in line with Denmark's transatlantic interests. In this context, the use of the EU's sanctions instrument stood out as the strongest geoeconomic alternative to a military response to Russia's aggression into a sovereign European state.

Third, a strong sanctions posture resonated well with the 'value-based' foreign and security policy that was formulated by the one-party, social-democratic government (2019-2022). In its foreign and security policy strategy, published in January 2022 just weeks before the Russian invasion, the Danish Government highlighted that 'it is with our values as a guide that we can best advance Denmark's interests and safeguard Denmark's safety, prosperity, and social cohesion' (Regeringen 2022). During the official presentation of the strategy, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kofod underlined that 'we must go out, also in leading roles, to protect our own freedom and security', highlighting this stance as the opposite of 'showing understanding of autocratic forms of government like, for example, Putin's Russia'.<sup>18</sup> The strong-handed sanctions response hence lends itself as a case in point of how the social democratic government wanted to underpin the defence of values with tangible actions.

Finally, Denmark's structural economic exposure vis-à-vis Russia (and Ukraine) before 2022 was relatively limited. In 2021 Russia accounted for just 1% of Danish exports and 1.3% of Danish imports. In terms of goods, exports mainly concentrated on the sectors of machinery, industrial components and medical-pharmaceutical products, whereas imports were predominantly oil products, iron and steel. Most service trading was located in the maritime

shipping sector. Even if Danish business associations soon warned that the Russian war and reactions thereto could cost Danish businesses between DKK 13 and DKK 66 billion by the end of 2023, these projected costs were not seen as critical enough by Danish decision-makers to raise concerns in relation to the use of comprehensive sanctions.<sup>19</sup> Denmark's limited economic dependency on Russia was, however, less clear in the energy sector. Having traditionally been a net exporter of natural gas, Denmark's dependency on Russian gas was unusually high at the time of Russia's military offensive into Ukraine, although lower than the average in all EU Member States. In early 2022, due to maintenance work on the Danish North Sea gas condensate field Tyra, 75% of Denmark's gas consumption was covered through natural gas imports from Germany, whose main provider at that time was Russia.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, however, Denmark structurally ranks as one of the EU Member States with the lowest natural gas import dependency.<sup>21</sup>

## Facing the 'hard middle ground': challenges to Denmark's sanctions position

Based on the Danish Government's clear political mandate, Danish diplomats and civil servants would come to represent a mostly unwavering position when negotiating sanctions measures with their EU counterparts. At the same time, the Danish approach would often be less adamant than that of the most assertive sanctions hardliners found in the Baltic states and Poland. A key reason for this relates to the central caveat that was consistently highlighted in the Danish Government's directive, i.e. to support the 'strongest sanctions possible'. Danish negotiators and officials at all levels would understand it as their mandate to both support tough sanctions measures, all the while actively seeking avenues for unanimity among all EU Member States. As discussed below, this search for an intra-EU consensus also came to imply a Danish hesitation to put extensive focus on national economic interests that could potentially be negatively impacted by the broad sanctions measures.

At the same time, the Danish representatives did not see it as a prioritised objective to 'flag' specific Danish national concerns when reviewing proposed sanctions measures in informal deliberations with other Member States or the Commission as well as in formal negotiations in Council. Denmark – together

with Finland and Sweden – here took an explicitly prudent approach to flagging such concerns, not least to avoid incentivising other Member States to also stall possible advances in sanctions negotiations through the pinpointing of specific national concerns.

But what policy consequences did this position entail? Primarily based on interviews conducted in Copenhagen, Brussels, and Tórshavn with policy-makers, diplomats, business representatives, sanctions practitioners and academic experts, in the aftermath of the Russian invasion into Ukraine, the following case studies exemplify how the Danish Government's staunch positioning in the EU negotiations turned out to be a 'hard middle ground' that at times had direct effects on key policy areas of specific Danish interest. First, the protection of Danish energy interests in the field of wooden biomass, and second, the handling of intra-Realm relationships with the (non-EU member) Faroe Islands.

### **A sole defender of biomass? The lack of pursuit of Danish national energy interests**

By February 2023, EU Member States had adopted a total of ten so-called 'sanctions packages' to 'weaken Russia's economic base, depriving it of critical technologies and markets and significantly curtailing its ability to wage war'.<sup>22</sup> The fifth of these packages, adopted by the EU Council on 8 April 2022, included bans on Russian freight operators on EU roads and vessels in EU ports, export bans on critical technology and jet fuel to Russia as well as import bans on a wide range of goods.

In its press release announcing the new import prohibitions, the Commission tellingly separated a wider group of basic commodities to be banned with immediate effect (i.e. cement, rubber, wood, and various luxury goods) from more granular import regulations regarding energy commodities such as coal, the import prohibition of which would not take effect until August 2022.<sup>23</sup> The separate notion of energy commodities and the phasing-in period of five months before the coal ban would be enforced was a reflection of a complicated political and economic debate that had absorbed EU institutions and Member States ever since the first sanctions negotiations: how to tackle the EU's energy dependency on Russia? However, Russian coal, being a fungible and globally accessible energy product, was in fact the least of the EU's problems.



Policymakers faced greater difficulty in finding ways to minimise dependency on Russian oil and natural gas, much of which was transported to the EU via westbound oil and gas pipelines from Russia. The political concern was clear: if EU sanctions and Russian countermeasures would lead to a 'cold winter' in the EU, this could not only lead to societal and economic hardship across Member States but potentially also develop into outright domestic protest movements against the EU sanctions policy. Consequently, it was clear to EU policymakers that even if Russia's greatest income source from the EU was generated through the substantial export of fossil energy commodities, the practical and political options for an immediate halt of these long-established trading structures were deemed unviable.

However, below the headlines about a ban on Russian coal, it was less publicly acknowledged how the EU's fifth sanctions package had also immediately banned the import of another energy commodity: woody biomass. As part of the general prohibition on importing wood from Russia (code 44 under the EU's Combined Nomenclature [CN] system), the package also included a ban on importing so-called fuel woods (CN number 4401) and hence the commodity wood pellets, a solid biofuel made from compressed wood fibre such as sawdust from timber production.<sup>24</sup> The amended regulation would still allow for existing contracts to be honoured until July 2022, but hereafter all imports of Russian wood and wood products were to be halted.

Across the EU, the negative impact of the import prohibition on wood pellets hit Denmark asymmetrically hard because of the Danish energy system's structural dependence on imported wood pellets. Despite its relatively small size, Denmark had for years ranked second in the EU in terms of consumption of wood pellets (only surpassed by Italy) and was by far the largest consumer of imported wood pellets in the EU (Krievine and Melece 2016).<sup>25</sup> This was not least the case because a large share of Denmark's total energy consumption had, within a decade, changed from being mainly based on oil, coal and gas to being based on renewable energy sources. According to official reports, in 2021 approximately 42% of Denmark's total adjusted gross energy consumption was based on renewables, over 60% of which was generated from biomass including firewood, biodegradable waste, wood pellets, wood chips and biofuels.<sup>26</sup> A total of 22% (2021) of Denmark's renewable energy consumption and over nine per cent of its total energy consumption was generated from imported wood pellets, used both in most power plants and

in the 3.6% (approx. 100,000 of 2.8 million) of Danish households heated with pellet stoves.<sup>27</sup> This consumption confirmed a broader trend: between 2000 and 2021, Denmark had increased its annual consumption of wood pellets by 1,196%.

Most wood pellets imported to Denmark had traditionally been traded from the Baltic states and Russia (57.5%, 2020).<sup>28</sup> The EU's import sanctions against Russian (and Belarusian) wood hence came to have both a direct and an indirect effect on Denmark's abilities to procure foreign wood pellets. Directly, because wood pellets from Russia could no longer be bought, and indirectly, because much Baltic wood pellet production had been based on the repurposing of sawdust generated from its comprehensive furniture production, which in turn had traditionally been reliant on imported timber from Russia and Belarus.

In line with other energy sources, the retail price of wood pellets available to Danish consumers rose during 2022. According to the Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities, in autumn 2022 private consumers of wood pellets experienced a cost increase of approximately 200% compared to the previous year. By early 2023, the retail price had decreased by 22%, and Danish authorities attested that no fundamental risk to the overall supply security of wood pellets could be foreseen for the remainder of the heating season.<sup>29</sup> But even though the Danish market for wood pellets had somewhat stabilised, many Danish private consumers had experienced a critical situation in the summer and autumn of 2022 when rapidly increasing prices and decreasing supply options put into question whether the up to 100,000 Danish households that were completely dependent on private purchase and use of wood pellets would have sufficient and sustainable access to this energy commodity during the heating season of 2022-2023. Not only in terms of paying higher prices for their energy usage (which was also the case for households depending on central heating, air heat pump systems, natural gas, oil, etc.), but also in terms of wood pellets being accessible for purchase at all. In other words, whether private households with no feasible diversification options to guarantee heating would be able to buy this needed, yet sanctioned, energy commodity.

The critical nature of the supply situation was further underscored by several significant mitigating measures taken by the Danish Government in summer 2022. In mid-September, the responsible minister projected a reduced accessibility of wood pellets which could 'very easily ... lead to a supply security

problem, simply because there aren't enough wood pellets on the market'.<sup>30</sup> The crisis measures included an intensified public-private crisis preparedness cooperation, an instruction for Danish representations to investigate the world market for possible wood pellet supplies for additional purchase, a government-financed subsidy for substituting wood pellet stoves with alternative systems as well as a suspension of Danish sustainability production requirements for privately imported wood pellets. Danish consumers also took their own mitigation measures with media reporting instances of panic buying and attempts to use other biodegradable fuels, such as sunflower pellets, as substitutes in their household stoves – often in cases where such substitution was neither technically feasible, legal, nor environmentally safe.<sup>31</sup>

The government mitigation measures and the outspoken concern of Danish households dependent on wood pellet heating underscored the specific Danish vulnerabilities that resulted from the EU's fifth sanctions package of April 2022. The question is: why didn't Danish negotiators exempt wood pellets from the lists of sanctioned products, a move that would have been in line with those taken by other EU Member States concerned about a halt to the import of Russian oil, coal, and gas? Two factors seem to have played a critical role. First, the two above-mentioned abnormal characteristics of the first sanctions negotiations in spring 2022, namely the intense time pressure and the circumvention of standard negotiating procedures. And second, the Danish sanctions position consistently calling for the 'hardest measures possible'.

The first factor heavily decreased the time frames for all EU Member States to conduct national due diligence and economic cost analyses for the sanctions measures proposed in Brussels. This circumstance particularly hit smaller Member State administrations with relatively limited human resources, such as Denmark. At the same time, however, it can also be assumed that conversations about import bans on large commodity categories, such as wood, had been in the making between EU negotiators for a substantial time. The specific issue had, hence, most likely been subject to informal exchanges between EU institutions and Member States before reaching the status of a formal Commission proposal.

The second factor, the spillover effects of the staunch Danish sanctions negotiation positioning, was a more specific one. Observers close to the negotiation process affirm that it was the Danish Government's overarching

aim to push for a consensus among EU Member States for the toughest possible sanctions measures, which in turn led to a position where Denmark should not be seen as breaking or blocking any proposed sanctions measures due to specific national interests. As such, the political guidance of Danish negotiators and national authorities participating in the review of tabled sanctions proposals was to ensure that EU sanctions measures would be as encompassing as possible. The raising of a possible 'red flag', i.e. a sanctions measure that would be unacceptable for Denmark as the only Member State, was thus seen as an absolute ultima ratio.

Given the specific Danish direct and indirect energy dependency on imports of Russian timber and wood pellets, no other EU Member State seemingly raised concerns about the import prohibitions on wood products in an energy-specific context. And even if a 'red flag' from Copenhagen would not necessarily have led to an omission of wood pellets from the sanctions proposal, other mitigating measures might have been found. These could have included the allowance of limited import volume quotas, such as was the case with certain forms of Russian and Belarusian potassium chloride and other mineral and chemical fertilisers critically important to the European agriculture industry,<sup>32</sup> or a phase-in period to allow for public authorities and private consumers to find alternative supply chains, such as was the case with the EU ban on Russian coal and, at a later stage, oil. Whereas Danish negotiators might have been able to make a case for exempting wood pellets in line with other key energy commodities imported from Russia, such a negotiation attempt was either not made or not made successfully. In any case, the 'hard middle ground' that characterised Denmark's negotiating position, and the path dependencies that led to this position, did anything but incentivise Danish negotiators and sanctions practitioners to explore alternative avenues in Brussels.

### **Adherence across the Kingdom? The changing sanctions commitments of the Faroe Islands between 2014 and 2022**

Another policy area of specific Danish national interest, which was arguably impacted by Denmark's sanctions position, was more indirect in nature. It related to the relationship between the EU, the state of Denmark and the Danish Realm, also including the self-governing territories of Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Although both members of the Danish Realm without being members of the EU, Greenland and the Faroe Islands hold different relationships with

the EU. Greenland, having originally joined the European Communities (EC) in 1973 as an 'equal' part of Denmark, ceased its EC membership in 1985, after having gained Home Rule 1979, henceforth taking up the status of Overseas Country and Territory (OCT) to the EC/EU. In contrast to this, the Faroe Islands, having had Home Rule since 1948, never opted for EC membership and hence remain, from the viewpoint of the EU, an actor to be perceived in line with other third states (Gad 2020). Since 1997 the trading relationship between the Faroe Islands and the EU had been governed through a free trade agreement.<sup>33</sup>

EU legal acts, therefore, do not apply automatically to the Faroe Islands, meaning that the Faroe Islands are not bound by the EU Council decisions and regulations that are the legal foundations for CFSP restrictive measures. But, as with all other partners and allies of the EU, the Faroe Islands stance on the various EU sanctions measures levied against Russia, in both 2014 and 2022, became a subject of scrutiny in both Copenhagen and Brussels. The question, however, did not only relate to principled political discussions on whether a self-governing territory and third party to the EU (the Faroe Islands) forming part of a monarchy with an EU Member State (Denmark) should enact sanctions policies similar to those of the EU. Rather, both in 2014-2016 and again in 2022-2023, it re-energised long-standing inner-Realm debates about the degree of independence with which the Faroe Islands can meaningfully act on the international stage (Bertelsen and Justinussen 2020; Jørs and Olsen 2023).

The Faroese approach to the sanctions question had been particularly sensitive since 2014, when Tórshavn decided to not adopt sanctions against Russia in line with those decided upon by the EU Member States, including Denmark. Then, the question arose at a time of an already strained EU-Faroese relationship, heavily dented due to disagreements regarding fishing quotas, which in 2013 had led the EU to impose trade and fishery restrictions on the Faroe Islands (Dali 2015; Weissenberger 2013). With a major export market being put into question, the Faroese Government made it clear that it would not risk access to yet another export market. Tórshavn quickly signalled that its decade-long cooperation with Russia, with whom it had had agreements on the trade of fishing quotas since 1977, would not be impeded (Hovgaard and Bogadóttir 2020).

The Faroese decision against sanctioning Russia allegedly also shielded Tórshavn from Moscow's countermeasures to Western sanctions policies, including a unilateral Russian decision to prohibit the import of fish and other food products from the EU and other sanctioning countries to Russia. In the following years, this not only catapulted the Faroe Islands into taking over Norway's position as the key exporter of salmon and pelagic fish to Russia (Wengle 2016), it also paved the way for the creation of a Faroese Representative Office in Moscow as well as other active policies to enhance business relations between the two countries (Kobzeva 2022). This meant that, by 2021, exports of fish to Russia accounted for around 23% of the Faroe Islands total merchandise exports.<sup>34</sup>

In spring 2022, the Faroese sanctions debate played out remarkably differently with Tórshavn. Soon after the Russian invasion Faroese decision-makers signalled a clear will to back the Western sanctions policy. On 17 May 2022, after an intense phase of legislative preparations, the Faroese parliament adopted a new sanctions law. The law not only made existing EU sanctions part of Faroese legislation, but also authorised the Faroese Minister of Foreign Affairs to enact any future sanctions provisions decided by the EU or other international bodies against Russia.

There were, however, two notable differences between the Faroese sanctions law and the sanctions measures adopted by the EU. First, after pressure from the major governing parties at the time, the sanctions law exempted the Faroe Islands fisheries agreements with other countries as well as the export of fish and food products. In practical terms, this amendment ensured that even in the case that the EU would move into sanctioning food exports to Russia, such an addition to the Faroese sanctions law would have to be explicitly mandated by parliament.<sup>35</sup> And second, the sanctions provisions would still allow Russian vessels, fishing according to the bilateral swap of fish quotas, to enter Faroese ports for custom controls, the transshipment of fish, and services, even though any port arrival of Russian vessels above a certain size had been sanctioned by the EU. A key political argument in Tórshavn was that Norway, another non-EU state, had introduced similar exceptions in their sanctions policy vis-à-vis Russia.

The Faroese decision to introduce two exemptions to the new sanctions law was first and foremost rooted in economic arguments. In August 2022 the

Faroe Islands was the only country, apart from Russia itself, fishing in the Russian part of the Barents Sea.<sup>36</sup> The Minister of Fisheries of the time, Árni Skaale, wanted to renegotiate the fisheries agreement with Russia for 2023. Other lawmakers, in contrast, argued that the time was ripe to signal a new Faroese course towards Russia by not renegotiating the fisheries agreement. Both to take a geopolitical stance but also because it was feared that a renewed agreement with Russia could lead other key export markets to cease their trade relationship with the Faroe Islands.<sup>37</sup> These countering political arguments, however, did not outweigh the main economic calculations and interest of some major private actors in the Faroese fishing industry and, at the end of November 2022, the government announced that the Faroe Islands, with broad parliamentary support, would enter new negotiations with Russia. With a looming general election campaign at the end of 2022, several opposition parties had changed their course, now arguing that it would be difficult to find tangible alternatives to a fishery agreement within a short time-span. A key concern, expressed by many political sides, related to the possible risks for a small handful of major fishing companies that had recently invested in new fishing vessels worth more than EUR160 million, particularly designed for deep-water fishing in the Barents Sea. A new bilateral fisheries agreement between the Faroe Islands and Russia for 2023 was then adopted on 26 November 2022.<sup>38</sup>

Seen from the perspective of various Danish governments, the commitment of the Faroe Islands to sanctioning Russia had, since 2014, presented a delicate topic at the geoeconomic intersection of security and trade policy – and hence an intersection of policy areas that are either in principle subject to Faroese home rule (trade policy) and are not (foreign and security policy). Bridging this gap hence became a key tenet of Danish diplomacy towards the Faroe Islands; while acknowledging Tórshavn's sovereign legal right to decide on its trade agreements and restrictions with other countries, it was also important to Copenhagen to be consistent with the objectives defined in the EU's CFSP framework.

Over the years, however, the tone with which this gap was approached had changed significantly. Back in March 2015, then social-democratic Danish Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt noted that 'it is the expectation of the EU and the [Danish] Government that third countries do not exploit the situation

by significant increasing their export to Russia of sanctioned goods'.<sup>39</sup> In early 2022, this prudent approach from Copenhagen had significantly hardened. A press conference at the Danish Prime Minister's office, on the very day of the Russian invasion into Ukraine, served as a case in point. Asked by a journalist about her views on sanctions alignments from the Faroe Islands, Prime Minister Frederiksen unmistakably underscored that 'I have an expectation ... that it is a unified West that reacts [to the Russian aggression through sanctions] and this of course also includes the Faroe Islands'.<sup>40</sup>

Instead of publicly requesting the Faroe Islands not to 'exploit' the new market opportunities that emerged in Russia as a fallout of the EU sanctions and Russian countermeasures, Copenhagen now expressed clear expectations of a full sanctions policy alignment. And while it was well-noted in Copenhagen that Tórshavn's immediate response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine was an overall backing of the West's sanctions policies, suspicion about the whole-heartedness of the Faroese position remained. This was not least the case among Danish parliamentarians from both sides of the political divide, as well as media commentators, who consistently raised criticism of Tórshavn's decision to exempt fisheries and services related thereto from their sanctions law and, subsequently, negotiated a new annual fishery agreement with Moscow. The sensitivity of the issue was further underscored by several direct public confrontations about it between Danish and Faroese politicians.

A second notable characteristic of the Faroese sanctions law was that the Faroe Islands, in early 2022, only had the right to introduce sanctions concerning policy areas under Faroese authority. These included the substantial trade sanctions against Russia, but not the important option of freezing assets of and imposing entry bans against Russian individuals listed on the EU sanctions lists. Namely, because EU sanctions are adopted via EU regulations, which take immediate effect in Member States' national legislation, and hence not via additional legal acts, sanctions relating to those policy areas not subject to Faroese self-government would only be implementable into Faroese legislation if both Denmark and the Faroe Islands created new legislative frameworks for this. In other words, the legal foundations across the Danish Realm were insufficiently prepared to ensure that the Faroe Islands (and Greenland) could legally comply with the full spectrum of EU sanctions against Russia, even if they politically wished to do so.



This critical legal hurdle was not addressed until early 2023, when the newly inaugurated Faroese Minister Høgni Hoydal went to the Faroese parliament with a proposal for a law reform, whose drafting had already been commenced by the previous government, that would make it possible to impose sanctions in fields of responsibility that are under Danish rule. Hoydal emphasised the importance of the Faroe Islands following the same sanctions as the rest of the EU.<sup>41</sup> The Danish Minister of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs Morten Bødskov, in parallel proposed a law to the Danish parliament that would make it possible for the Faroe Islands to impose sanctions in fields under Danish authority.<sup>42</sup>

The great attention to, and strong wording targeted at Tórshavn by Danish Government representatives and lawmakers, but also the importance that was placed on the legislative amendments necessary to give the Faroe Islands the legal right to implement all types of EU Russia sanctions, illustrates just how much the staunch sanctions approach spilled over into inner-Realm relations in the course of 2022. Faroese policymakers affirm that they did not feel directly pressured by Denmark to take a hard sanctions stance. But at the same time, the Copenhagen's explicit line helped to intensify public attention on the Faroe Islands to the fact that more principled geopolitical questions about the Faroese relationship with Russia could not remain unanswered.

By placing itself on the 'hard middle ground' in EU sanctions negotiations, the Danish Government therefore significantly reduced any possibility for Copenhagen to stay silent on the question of whether Tórshavn should join the international sanctions coalition. Neither a softer Danish political tone, nor a neglect of the legal void that existed in the Danish Realm with regard to the sanctions field would, in other words, have been reconcilable with the Danish Government's hard positioning in the Brussels-based negotiations. As such, the 'hard middle ground' both provided a solid political foundation and a path dependency on the basis of which the Danish Government could perform the delicate geo-economic balancing act between trade and security policy objectives.

## Conclusions: balancing national interests with staunch political commitments

The clear articulation of an easy-to-understand policy directive without caveats, exemptions, and nuances made Denmark a reliable and predictable negotiator in the often-difficult EU deliberations on the numerous sanctions packages directed at Russia during 2022. The intent from Copenhagen was clear. Any overt flagging of national concerns about possible negative consequences of a proposed sanctions measure for Danish-specific economic or political interests would have had a detrimental effect on the overall goal of responding to the Russian incursion with the hardest sanctions measures possible. As such, Denmark's positioning in the one of the most critical, time-sensitive and comprehensive negotiations phases ever experienced in the CFSP framework followed a simple doctrine: support the hardest sanctions measures that can possibly be accepted by all 27 EU Member States.

But even the most straightforward policy line can have spillover effects into other policy fields. In the case of the EU sanctions against Russia, the Danish Government's unwavering negotiation stance contracted its political room for manoeuvre at the domestic level in at least two policy fields. First, the limited prioritisation by Danish representatives to proactively raise concerns about negative sanctions effects on specific Danish interests, such as the prohibition banning timber and wood pellets from Russia. And second, the self-imposed obligation to demand from international partners and allies, including the two other members of the Danish Realm – Greenland and the Faroe Islands – that they also adhere to the sanctions policy set out by the EU and the international sanctions coalition. Consequently, placing itself on a 'hard middle ground' in EU sanctions negotiations both challenged and aided Denmark in pursuing wider policy objectives. In the first case, the rather unnuanced position made it untenable for Danish representatives to ensure a comprehensive consideration of possible, Danish-specific, negative consequences of the EU's import prohibitions, including those related to securing the relevant energy commodity of wooden biomass. In the second case, the resolute policy position helped Danish policymakers to uphold an unwavering policy line when addressing the often sensitive inner-Realm relations.

The analysis of Denmark's sanctions policy stance hence reflects how governments acting in the geoeconomic sphere might need to operate and negotiate at the international, regional, and domestic – or in this case, inner-Realm – levels at the same time. Seen from Copenhagen, the sanctions policy of 2022 entailed i) nurturing allegiance to its main transatlantic ally and steadfast sanctions advocate, the United States; ii) participating in the EU negotiations with a view to ensuring the necessary unanimity around a table shared by sanctions hardliners and sanctions sceptics; and iii) to manage domestic and inner-Realm sensitivities and relations all the while advancing Denmark's overall foreign and security policy objectives.

The EU sanctions against Russia in 2022 demonstrated in all clarity how restrictive measures are located in a delicate limbo between the EU's common foreign and security policy and the legal acts that regulate the EU's internal market. When governments revert to sanctions or similar geoeconomic instruments, the distinct logics of private market actors and foreign and security policymakers congregate, which itself opens up a complex playing field between state and market powers. In the course of 2022 this meant that even the Danish Government's seemingly straightforward policy directive – to support the hardest sanctions measures possible – eventually came to entail a series of complexities to be handled at the intersection between state and market logics. It thereby displayed how states who intend to use geoeconomic instruments to respond to international conflicts need to carefully consider how this can possibly lead to various intended and unintended outcomes across the state-market realm.

## Notes

- 1 Kim B. Olsen, PhD, has been an analyst at DIIS during this work and is currently an associate fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations. The author would like to thank Petra Mathilde Jørs, research assistant at DIIS, for her invaluable support in the compilation and the analysis of data for the article as well as the reviewers for their clear and constructive remarks.
- 2 'EU has "robust" Russia sanctions ready if needed over Ukraine – von der Leyen' (4.2.2022), *Reuters*. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-has-robust-russia-sanctions-ready-if-needed-over-ukraine-von-der-leyen-2022-02-04/>
- 3 'Remarks by President Biden and Chancellor Scholz of the Federal Republic of Germany at Press Conference' (7.2.2022), White House. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/02/07/remarks-by-president-biden-and-chancellor-scholz-of-the-federal-republic-of-germany-at-press-conference/>
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 'Discours du Président de la République, devant le Parlement européen' (19.1.2022), French Presidency. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/01/19/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-devant-le-parlement-europeen>
- 6 'Statsministeren varsler flere sanktioner mod Rusland og hjælp til Ukraine' (23.3.2022), *Policy Watch*. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://policywatch.dk/nyheder/christiansborg/article13854905.ece>
- 7 'EU Sanctions Map', European Commission. Accessed 14.3.2023, <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main>
- 8 'Types of EU law', European Commission. Accessed 14.3.2023, [https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/types-eu-law\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/types-eu-law_en)
- 9 'Europe "shot itself in the lungs" with sanctions on Russia, Orban says' (15.7.2022), *Reuters*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/europe-shot-itself-in-lungs-with-sanctions-russia-orban-says-2022-07-15/>
- 10 'Russia sanctions: Malta and Greece bring up rear' (12.1.2023), *Table Media*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://table.media/europe/en/news-en/russia-sanctions-malta-and-greece-bring-up-the-rear/>
- 11 'How Greek Companies and Ghost Ships Are Helping Russia' (23.11.2022), *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/23/how-greek-companies-and-ghost-ships-are-helping-russia/>; 'Greek-Managed Vessel Shipped Coal From Russia After EU Sanctions' (15.9.2022), *Bloomberg*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-15/greek-managed-vessel-shipped-coal-from-russia-after-eu-sanctions>

- 12 'Germany Is Stalling EU Efforts to Broaden Russia's SWIFT Ban' (09.3.2022), *Bloomberg*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-09/germany-is-stalling-eu-efforts-to-broaden-russia-s-swift-ban>
- 13 'Russia's €200m nuclear exports untouched by EU sanctions' (7.10.2022), *EUobserver*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://euobserver.com/world/156226>
- 14 'The soft spot in the EU's steel sanctions' (03.10.2022), *Politico*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-steel-sanctions-soft-spot-ukraine-war-russi/>
- 15 'Eyes on Belgium as some EU states push for Russian diamond ban' (25.09.2022), *Reuters*. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eyes-belgium-some-eu-states-push-russian-diamond-ban-2022-09-25/>
- 16 'Arrival and doorstep DK'. Jeppe Kofod, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, at the Foreign Affairs Council (21.2.2022), EU Council. Accessed 4.11.2022, <https://newsroom.consilium.europa.eu/events/20220221-foreign-affairs-council-february-2022/133587-arrival-and-doorstep-dk-kofod-20220221>
- 17 'Partier bredt i Folketinget kræver hårdere sanktioner mod Putin: Bløde sanktioner er et enormt svigt' (25.2.2022), *Berlingske*. Accessed 10.2.2023. <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/partier-bredt-i-folketinget-kræver-haardere-sanktioner-mod-putin-bloede-0>
- 18 'Pressemøde mandag den 31. januar 2022' (31.1.2022), Statsministeriet. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://www.stm.dk/presse/pressemoedearkiv/pressemoede-mandag-den-31-januar-2022/>
- 19 'Økonomisk Redegørelse: Trods nye udfordringer er dansk økonomi bundsolid' (12.5.2022), Finansministeriet. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://fm.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2022/maj/oekonomisk-redegoerelse-trods-nye-udfordringer-er-dansk-oekonomi-bundsolid/>
- 20 'Danmark er historisk afhængig af russisk gas' (27.4.2022) *Energiwatch*. Accessed 10.2.2023, [https://energiwatch.dk/Energinyt/Olie\\_\\_\\_Gas/article12080763.ece](https://energiwatch.dk/Energinyt/Olie___Gas/article12080763.ece); 'Danmark har planer klar til at sikre gas til borgere og virksomheder' (30.5.2022), Energistyrelsen. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://ens.dk/presse/danmark-har-planer-klar-til-sikre-gas-til-borgere-og-virksomheder>; 'Så afhængige er Danmark og Europa af russisk gas' (7.3.2022), *Mandag Morgen*. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://www.mm.dk/artikel/saa-afhaengige-er-danmark-og-europa-af-russisk-gas>
- 21 'EU natural gas import dependency down to 83% in 2021' (19.4.2022), Eurostat. Accessed 10.2.2023, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220419-1>
- 22 'EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine (since 2014)', Council of the European Union. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/#individual>
- 23 'Ukraine: EU agrees fifth package of restrictive measures against Russia' (8.4.2022), European Commission. Accessed 21.2.2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_2332](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_2332)

- 24 See Art. 3i and annex XXI, 'Council Regulation 2022/576 of 8 April 2022 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine', (8.4.2022), Official Journal of the European Union. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022R0576>
- 25 'European Wood Pellet Consumption', Bioenergy Europe. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://epc.bioenergyeurope.org/about-pellets/pellets-statistics/european-consumption/>; 'Global Wood Pellet Trade Reached Record-High 29 Million Tons in 2021' (26.4.2022), Forest2Market. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://www.forest2market.com/blog/global-wood-pellet-trade-reached-record-high-29-million-tons-in-2021>
- 26 'Energistatistik 2021' (12.2022), Energistyrelsen. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Statistik/energistatistik2021.pdf>; 'Energistatistikken for de første ni måneder af 2022', Energistyrelsen. Accessed 21.2.2023, [https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Statistik/energistatistik\\_3\\_kvrt\\_2022.pdf](https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Statistik/energistatistik_3_kvrt_2022.pdf)
- 27 '21. ugentlige skriftlige orientering om energiforsyningsikkerhed' (2.9.2022), Klima-, Energi og Forsyningsministeriet. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20211/almdel/KEF/bilag/470/2617771.pdf>; 'Energistatistik 2021' (12.2022), Energistyrelsen. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Statistik/energistatistik2021.pdf>
- 28 'Det danske træpillemarked 2020' (8.11.2021), Ea Energianalyse for Energistyrelsen. Accessed 21.2.2023, [https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Statistik/det\\_danske\\_traepillemarked\\_2020\\_2021-11-08.pdf](https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Statistik/det_danske_traepillemarked_2020_2021-11-08.pdf)
- 29 '41. skriftlige orientering om energiforsyningsikkerhed' (10.3.2023), Klima-, Energi og Forsyningsministeriet. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20211/almdel/KEF/bilag/470/2617771.pdf>; '21. ugentlige skriftlige orientering om energiforsyningsikkerhed' (2.9.2022), Klima-, Energi og Forsyningsministeriet. Accessed 21.2.2023, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20211/almdel/KEF/bilag/470/2617771.pdf>
- 30 'Pressemøde onsdag den 14. september 2022' (14.9.2022), Statsministeriet. Accessed 22.2.2023, <https://www.stm.dk/presse/pressemoeedearkiv/pressemoeed-onsdag-den-14-september-2022/>
- 31 'Desperate varmekunder køber solsikkepiller i manglen på træpiller - men det kan være ulovligt' (16.9.2022), *DR Nyheder*. Accessed 22.2.2023, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/desperate-varmekunder-koerber-solsikkepiller-i-manglen-paa-traepiller-men-det-kan>
- 32 See Art. 3i, 4a-4b, 'Council Regulation 2022/576'
- 33 'EU trade relations with the Faroe Islands. Facts, figures and latest developments', European Commission. Accessed 15.3.2023, [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/faroe-islands\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/faroe-islands_en)

- 34 'Exports of goods by country of final destination (1988-2022)', Hagstova Føroya. Accessed 15.3.2023, [https://statbank.hagstova.fo/pxweb/en/H2/H2\\_UH\\_UH01/uh\\_utlond.px/](https://statbank.hagstova.fo/pxweb/en/H2/H2_UH_UH01/uh_utlond.px/)
- 35 'LM-136/2021: Uppskot til løgtingslóg um avmarkandi tiltøk í sambandi við atgerðir móti Ukraina' (6.5.2022), Løgtingið. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.logting.fo/mal/mal/?id=10068>
- 36 'Only Faroese and Russian ships fishing in Barents Sea' (4.8.2022), KVF. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://kvf.fo/node/142945>
- 37 'Javnaðarflokkurin til reiðar at slíta fiskivinnusamstarv' (24.9.2022), KVF. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://kvf.fo/netvarp/uv/2022/09/24/javnaarflokkurin-til-reiar-slita-fiskivinnusamstarv>
- 38 'Kunngerð nr. 154 frá 19. desember 2022 um veiðu eftir botnfiski og rækjum við fiskiførum undir føroyskum flaggi í russiskum sjógvi í 2023' (19.12.2022), Lógasavnið. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.logir.fo/Kunngerð/154-fra-19-12-2022-um-veidu-eftir-botnfiski-og-raekjum-vid-fiskiforum-undir-foroyskum-flaggi>
- 39 '§ 20-spørgsmål US 56 Om sikkerheds- og forsvarssituationen i lyset af situationen i Europa' (24.3.2015), Folketinget. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20141/spoergsmaal/us56/index.htm#speak43>
- 40 'Pressemøde torsdag den 24. februar 2022' (24.2.2022), Statsministeriet. Accessed 22.2.2023, <https://www.stm.dk/presse/pressemoedearkiv/pressemoede-torsdag-den-24-februar-2022/>
- 41 'Høgni Hoydal hevur verið í uttanlandsnevndini um tiltøk móti Russlandi' (20.1.2023), KVF. Accessed 15.3.2023, <https://kvf.fo/netvarp/uv/2023/01/20/hggni-hoydal-hevur-veri-uttanlandsnevndini-um-tiltk-mti-russlandi>
- 42 'L 57 Forslag til lov for Færøerne om gennemførelse af restriktive foranstaltninger over for Rusland og Belarus' (15.3.2023), Folketinget. Accessed 28.3.23, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20222/almdel/f%C3%86u/bilag/15/2655299.pdf>

## References

- Ålander, Minna, Annegret Bendiek and Paul Bochtler. (2020) 'Datenerhebung zur Gemeinsamen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik der Europäischen Union'. Arbeitspapier FG EU/Europa, 2020/Nr. 02. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik.
- Bertelsen, Rasmus Gjedssø and Jens Christian Svabo Justinussen. (2020) 'Færøernes internationale politik'. *Økonomi og Politik* 2020(4), pp. 37-48.
- Biedenkopf, Katja, Oriol Costa and Magdalena Góra. (2021) 'Introduction: shades of contestation and politicisation of CFSP'. *European Security* 30(3), pp. 325-343.
- Cardwell, Paul James and Erica Moret. (2023) 'The EU, sanctions and regional Leadership'. *European Security* 32(1), pp. 1-21.
- Crombois, Jean. (2020) 'Lilliput effect revisited: small states and EU foreign policy'. *European View* 19(1), pp. 80-87.
- Dali, Birta í. (2015) 'To Russia With Fish – En analyse af Færøernes paradiplomati over for Rusland', specialeafhandling, Institut for Statskundskab, København Universitet. Available at: <http://www.samfelagid.fo/media/1126/torussia-with-fish-en-analyse-af-faeroernes-paradiplomati-over-for-rusland2.pdf>
- Gad, Ulrik Pram. (2020) 'Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Denmark: unity or community?' In Peter Munk Christiansen, Jørgen Elklit and Peter Nedergaard (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Danish Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giumelli, Francesco, Fabian Hoffmann and Anna Książczaková. (2021) The when, what, where and why of European Union sanctions. *European Security* 30(1), pp. 1-23.
- Giusti, Serena. (2015) 'The EU's policy towards Russia: National interests and path dependency'. In Lorenzo Cladi and Andrea Locatelli (eds.) *International Relations Theory and European Security: We Thought We Knew*. London: Routledge.
- Härtel, André. (2019) 'The EU Member States and the Crisis in Ukraine: Towards an Eclectic Explanation'. *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 19(2), pp. 87-106.



- Hovgaard, Gestur and Ragnheiður Bogadóttir. (2020) 'Mellem Laks, Lus og Putin. Om erhvervsøkonomisk succes, storpolitik og bæredygtighed', *Økonomi og Politik* 2020(4), pp. 73-85.
- Jørs, Petra Mathilde and Kim B. Olsen. (2023) 'DIIS: Færøsk fiskeriaftale efterlader øriget sårbart over for Putins forgodtbefindende', Altinget. Available at: <https://www.alinget.dk/arktis/artikel/diis-faeroesk-fiskeriaftale-efterlader-oeriget-saarbar-over-for-putins-forgodtbefindende>
- Karlović, Antonio, Dario Čepo and Katja Biedenkopf. (2021) 'Politicisation of the European foreign, security, and defence cooperation: the case of the EU's Russian sanctions', *European Security* 30(3), pp. 344-366.
- Kay, Adrian. (2005) 'A critique of the use of path dependency in policy studies'. *Public Administration* 83(3), pp. 553-571.
- Kobzeva, Mariia. (2022) 'Towards customised sovereignty: West Nordic societies in the new great power rivalry'. *Polar Record* 58(e38), pp. 1-12.
- Krievina, Agnese and Ligita Melece. (2016) 'Comparison of the consumption of wood pellets between Latvia and other EU countries'. *Economic Science for Rural Development* 41, pp. 210-218.
- Moret, Erica, Thomas Biersteker, Francesco Giumelli, Clara Portela, Marusa Veber, Dawid Bastiat-Jarosz and Cristian Bobocea. (2017) 'The new deterrent? International sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine crisis: impacts, costs and further action'. Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.
- Mouritzen, Hans. (2007) 'Denmark's Super Atlanticism'. *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 5(2), pp. 155-167.
- Mouritzen, Hans. (2019) 'Fire nordiske Ruslands-relationer. På vej mod en fællesnordisk Ruslands-politik efter Krim og Trump?' *Internasjonal Politikk* 77(2), pp. 197-222.
- Olsen, Kim B. (2022a) *The Geoeconomic Diplomacy of European Sanctions: Networked Practices and Sanctions Implementation*. Leiden: Brill.
- Olsen, Kim B. (2002b) 'The Sanctioning of Warfare: Early lessons from the EU's geoeconomic response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine'. DIIS Research Report. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.

- Orenstein, Mitchell A., and R. Daniel Kelemen. (2017) 'Trojan Horses in EU Foreign Policy'. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55(1), pp. 87-102.
- Portela, Clara, Paulina Pospieszna, Joanna Skrzypczyńska and Dawid Walentek. (2021) 'Consensus against all odds: explaining the persistence of EU sanctions on Russia'. *Journal of European Integration* 43(6), pp. 683-699.
- Rasmussen, Mikkel Vedby. (2008) 'Danmark har ingen Ruslandspolitik'. *Udenrigs* (4), pp. 40-45.
- Redeker, Nils. (2022) 'Same shock, different effects: EU member states' exposure to the economic consequences of Putin's war'. Policy Brief. Berlin: Jacques Delors Centre.
- Regeringen (2022) 'Foreign and Security Policy Strategy'. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.
- Riddervold, Marianne and Sjørnsen, Helene. (2006) 'The importance of solidarity: Denmark as a promoter of enlargement'. In Helene Sjørnsen (ed.) *Questioning EU Enlargement*. London: Routledge, pp. 91-113. doi:10.4324/9780203965726.
- Shagina, Maria. (2017) 'Friend or Foe? Mapping the Positions of EU Member States on Russia Sanctions'. European Leadership Network. Available at: <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/friend-or-foe-mapping-the-positions-of-eu-member-states-on-russia-sanctions/>
- Silva, Paul M. and Zachary Selden. (2020) 'Economic interdependence and economic sanctions: a case study of European Union sanctions on Russia'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33(2), pp. 229-251.
- Sjørnsen and Rosén 2017 Sjørnsen, Helene and Guri Rosén. (2017) 'Arguing Sanctions. On the EU's Response to the Crisis in Ukraine'. *Journal for Common Market Studies* 55(1), pp. 20-36.
- Szép, Viktor. (2020). 'New intergovernmentalism meets EU sanctions policy: The European Council orchestrates the restrictive measures imposed against Russia'. *Journal of European integration* 42(6), pp. 855-871.
- Weissenberger, Jean. (2013) 'North-East Atlantic fish stock disputes: The mackerel and herring conflicts'. EPRS Briefing. Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service.

Wengle, Susanne. (2016) 'The domestic effects of the Russian food embargo'. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 24(3), pp. 281-289.

Wivel, Anders and Matthew Crandall. (2019). 'Punching above their weight, but why? Explaining Denmark and Estonia in the transatlantic relationship'. *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 17(3), pp. 392-419.

# 'They must be escorted back nicely'. Disclaimed responsibility and renewed plans for externalising asylum in Denmark and the United Kingdom

*Martin Lemberg-Pedersen*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction: the Frederiksen SD government's externalisation policy

On 25 January 2023, the Social Democratic (SD) Minister of Immigration and Integration Kaare Dybvad Bek caused a media stir. Declaring that he would not be pursuing further negotiations with the Rwandan Kagame regime, he effectively paused the heavily mediatized SD plan to transfer all asylum seekers from Denmark to Rwanda.<sup>2</sup> As of spring 2023, this bilateral Danish plan remained on hold, while SD politicians argued for pursuing an EU-based externalisation policy.

Bek's announcement came shortly after the formation of a new, three-party, Government of Denmark, and an election campaign where the prospect of externalisation to Rwanda caused fierce debates across the political spectrum and within the incumbent government coalition. Parties opposed to immigration criticised the government for having failed to implement the policy, but also joined others in pointing to its lack of realism. Other parties accused the government of deflecting responsibility for the protection of asylum seeker and refugee human rights. A common focus for principled critique was the policy's hypothetical and symbolic character, and its appropriation of parliamentary and legislative resources for such signalling. The 2023 policy change was brought about by the moderates, led by former prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who had expressed scepticism about the plans.

Successive Tory governments of the United Kingdom have pursued a policy similar to the Danish Law 226 of 3 June 2021 (70 votes for, 24 against). On 14 April 2022 the Johnson government concluded a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Rwanda. But both the British and Danish policies have faced resistance, lack of clarity and absence of implementation. This was clearly evident when the UK deportation flights to Rwanda were halted in June 2022 by interim measures at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and also when, half a year later, the British High Court did not find the policy illegal, but at the same time referred all cases back to the Home Office based on flawed case processing. As such, Danish and British externalisation politics span a complicated process of diffusion between governments, bureaucratic networks, legal instances, political parties and arenas of domestic policy and bi- and multilateral diplomatic relations (cf. Tan 2022).

On 4 February 2021 the SD Frederiksen government sent out a legislative proposal for public consultation with a range of stakeholders, public agencies and civil society actors and organisations. The proposal describes shutting down the processing of asylum claims and residency permits by authorities on Danish territory in favour of 'transferring' all asylum seekers to extraterritorial facilities in one or several hypothetical countries beyond Europe.<sup>3</sup> According to the legislative proposal, people filing asylum applications in Denmark should undergo an accelerated procedure assessing their 'transferability' to extraterritorial facilities:

Through such a transfer to a third country, an asylum application originally launched in Denmark will no longer lead to a residency permit in Denmark. The model is therefore built on a presupposition that Denmark would not offer protection in cases where foreigners are granted asylum after due processing of asylum applications in the third country. The protection will, on the contrary, be granted by the third country in question. If the applicant's asylum application is refused, it will similarly be the third country in question, who will ensure the return of the person.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, even if people are granted asylum they are not allowed to enter Denmark, but must remain in the host country, which will allegedly act in accordance with certain rights standards derived from a conservative reading of obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>5</sup> The legislative proposal

suggested two alternative models, but did not choose between them: model 1, where facilities are placed under Danish responsibility, and model 2, supported by the government, where the facilities are the responsibility of the hypothetical host country. In an accompanying legal brief, lawyers from the Ministry of Immigration pointed out that the Danish pursuit of the policy risked jeopardising Danish participation in the EU’s Dublin Regulation and the rule of ‘first country of arrival’. Briefly, if Denmark were to deport all first arrivals to its territory, other Member States could question whether Denmark would remain a safe country for Dublin transfers. At the more general level, the Danish policy could also undermine the Regulation’s central premise of being grounded on shared responsibility. When media asked SD spokesperson Rasmus Stoklund about this warning from the ministry’s lawyers, he said: ‘I think we are into something where it becomes so hypothetical, that there are no good reasons to venture into guesswork. That is not the starting point for our work, and in no way do I expect that it will be its conclusion’.<sup>6</sup>

However, for all the political and media focus granted to it, the legislative proposal was criticised by civil society organisations as being unclear and hypothetical to the point that it resembles a *policy without content*, retained for its utility for signalling to domestic anti-immigration voters and also, conversely, as a strategy to dismantle concrete questions about its content being hypothetical. This lack of content is linked to the fact that no host partnership has yet been concluded, which means that a series of crucial questions remain *principally unanswerable*. These include the location of centres, human rights risks, allocation of responsibility, the involved authorities and their history, the form of collaboration, instances of oversight and monitoring mechanisms, and so on.

However, shortly after the SD legislative proposal was released in February 2021 for a period of public consultation, tweets suddenly emerged from Kigali of the Danish ministers of, respectively, immigration and development shaking hands with Rwandan authorities in celebration of two MoUs concerning asylum and development cooperation. Minister of Immigration Mathias Tesfaye returned to face parliamentary questions about the proposal a few days later. Despite the fact that the legislative proposal did not mention Rwanda, or any other country, and the fact that neither of the Danish-Rwandan MoUs mentioned any agreement about the key component of the proposal, a so-called reception centre, the timing of the ministerial Rwandan visit conveyed an impression

of an impending agreement. Certainly, this was also the conclusion drawn by many media outlets and political commentators. For a period, it appeared to resolve the body of criticism revolving around the lack of partners and concrete substance and content of the legislative proposal. However, it also brought another body of critique to the fore, namely the problems of repression and human rights violations in Paul Kagame's Rwanda.

This reveals a circular justification that characterises the policy. It is stipulated to be in accordance with international obligations and human rights standards, simply because *if* the Danish Government decides to externalise asylum processing and refugee stays *then* it will be *because* it is in compliance with these standards. This assurance, however, features alongside references by Danish and British politicians to the 2016 EU-Turkey press statement and the Australian 'Pacific Solution' of extraterritorial camps on the islands of Nauru and Manus, Papua New Guinea, as sources of inspiration. In the case of the UK, so much so that in 2023 the Sunak government chose to import Abbott's 2013 slogan 'Stop the Boats' word for word. Yet, when questioned about the lacking legal foundation of the EU-Turkey statement,<sup>7</sup> its deterrence and containment of asylum seekers (Amnesty International et al. 2021), or the Australian scandals of embezzlement, rights violations, child abuse, sexual harassment, and lack of legal clarity, the Social Democrat government's reply was to revert to the circular justification, claiming that even if inspired by these practices, a Danish variant would be in line with human rights.<sup>8</sup> Given the absence of substance and detail, Danish civil society and all major international organisations have rejected these assurances, and strongly criticised the Frederiksen government's plans.

This article is based on a qualitative methodology made up of several steps. First, policy meetings were attended alongside key government and civil servant stakeholders, including four relevant ministers, the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Immigration task force and special envoy, and the Immigration Service. This information was then triangulated by attending similar background meetings with international organisations and non-state actors, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Dignity, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The third and fourth steps of the inquiry have been desk studies; first scanning 150 Danish and international news articles concerning policies between

2016-2023 and then screening them for relevance when analysing the dominant scripts and arguments invoked by the Danish and British governments. All translations from Danish has been done by the author. Finally, the article also references key policy documents at Danish, British, EU and international level.

The article is structured as follows: The first section defines the concept of externalisation and identifies key features of importance for analysing the processes of Danish policymaking. The second section then details the evolution of externalisation ideas in Denmark from the 1980s up to today with a particular focus on the internal transformation and disciplining taking place within the Social Democratic Party. The third section explores the dynamics through which the Danish externalisation policies of the 2010s arose in the SD party structure to permeate domestic politics and reshape the foreign policy arena. The fourth section concerns the uneasy oscillations and contradictions observable in government discourses of deterrence and of humanitarianism in bi-directional externalisation policies. Finally follows the concluding section.

## Externalisation and portals of influence

Externalisation can be understood as processes whereby actors complement policies to control migration across their territorial boundaries with initiatives seeking to realise forms of control beyond that actor’s territory (Lemberg-Pedersen 2019; cf. Tan 2021; RLI Declaration 2022). In the case of sovereign states, this can be seen when aspects of border policing or asylum processing are decoupled from territorial borders. However, this does not imply the *disappearance* of territorial border controls of the externalising state. Rather, these often remain, but are complemented by further spheres of control beyond that specific territory, thus spanning several governments, organisations and non-state actors. From a transversal perspective (cf. Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias & Pickles 2015), it is more accurate to describe such initiatives as complementing and *multiplying* the instances of territorial border policing to which people are exposed. This happens when one state’s infrastructure of control extends into, or is pooled with, that of another state, or of private or other non-state actors, resulting in the creation of new nodes of control exercised over people, exterior to the territory of the original state (Moreno-Lax & Lemberg-Pedersen 2019).



The functionality, political cross-fertilisation and implications for human rights of externalisation policies have been extensively covered (e.g. Gammeltoft-Hansen 2011; Bialasiewicz 2012; Moreno-Lax 2017; Lemberg-Pedersen 2015). The political cross-fertilisation of similar ideas between geographical regions such as Australia, America and Europe has also been explored (Mussi & Tan 2017; Ghezelbash 2018; FitzGerald 2019) as have the contentious discussions of recent decades within the EU and between its Member States about externalised migrant camps (Noll 2003; Hansen 2007; Lemberg-Pedersen 2017).

It is a wide-spanning literature for several reasons. First, the term 'externalisation' is shorthand for multiple practices such as naval patrols, interception, deportation, encampment, and also asylum processing. Every migration management and border control practice has its extraterritorialised equivalent. Second, there are conceptual, political-bureaucratic, legal and historical ramifications of these practices and, third, these latter occur across different geopolitical contexts. Here, an emergent strand of literature is examining the policy from the perspective of colonial practice and parallelism, namely the complex treaties and international negotiations of the 19th century transatlantic slave trade. Here, the search and rescue by the British and American navies of 'slave trade refugees' in West African or Caribbean waters was followed by their forced transfer to dangerous conditions in the newly annexed 'abolitionist' colonies of Sierra Leona and Liberia (Lemberg-Pedersen 2019; Adderley & Fett 2022). The British response to boat migration in the Dover Strait has also been situated more broadly within the afterlife of empire (Davies et al. 2021). This literature explores the possibility that the logic of some externalisation policies still resides within an *imagination of imperially annexed spaces*, within which colonial subjects and populations could be transferred, settled and resettled. This perspective could hold some explanatory power with respect to the recurring problems facing the European governments' attempts to pursue externalisation today in a largely decolonised world (Lemberg-Pedersen et al. 2022).

Then as now, externalisation policies have been tightly linked to bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations in many other policy areas. The Danish policy is no different (see also Lemberg-Pedersen et al. 2021; Cassarino 2018). Accordingly, Balzacq (2009) has proposed to view externalisation as a continuum, where an actor may, through international negotiations, gain

‘remote control’ over the borders of another actor, leading to extraterritorial migration control. But such one-sided policy formulation is only half the story, and newer interventions have focused on eurocentrism and assumptions about the unidirectional dimensions of externalisation (c.f. Deridder et al. 2022). European governments do standardly formulate the policy in terms of pre-emptively directing border control outside their own territory, in order to highlight their own political initiative and drive. But a more accurate appraisal also includes the inverse relation: negotiations on externalisation create ‘portals’ for policy transfers, so that the transformational effects of policymaking and diffusion run in both directions.

Examples include the acquiescent EU acceptance of President Erdogan’s repression of Turkish civil society, media opposition and minorities following the EU-Turkey press statement in March 2016. Also, in return for Moroccan border control of migrants on African territory, the EU has shifted its policy towards a *de facto* acceptance of the country’s colonial annexation of Western Sahara. While Denmark and the UK have vied for Rwandan engagement, Kagame’s regime has (successfully) used these negotiations to increase agricultural aid and funds for asylum and border management systems to the country. And a further repercussion of these relations has been the complete silence of the first Frederiksen government, as well as of the Johnson, Truss and Sunak governments, on a range of domestic repression and human rights issues in Rwanda, as well as the country’s support to the M23 militia in the Eastern Congo. In this manner, externalisation relations may also pave the way for external influence over European political priorities. Next, the following section turns to a presentation of key developments in recent Danish and British policies.

## Resurging North European externalisation desires

Proposals for extraterritorial exit and containment control are not new in the Danish context but have emerged with increasing frequency during the 2010s. In Denmark, it was launched by the SD in 2016, then formulated as a 2018 election campaign proposal, before the Frederiksen government launched their legislative proposal in early February 2021.<sup>9</sup> But even earlier than this,

similar versions had been proposed in 2014 by Liberal Alliance leader, Anders Samuelsen. Illustrating the ongoing colonial political imaginary at work, Samuelsen stated that 'we will make a little piece of Denmark in Jordan, Lebanon or Israel'.<sup>10</sup> That same year, the Danish Peoples Party also suggested the immediate transfer of all asylum seekers to a camp in Kenya, paid for by Danish development aid. Only a small number of UN quota refugees would be allowed into Denmark. Thus, while the SD may have claimed ownership of the initiative in recent years, the 2010s witnessed several political parties in Denmark testing the domestic voter appeal of the logic of externalising asylum seekers. It is worth noting that these tests predated the 2015 political crisis in Europe that revolved around the reception of displaced Syrians. Moreover, these parties were nominally on the centre-right wing of the Danish political spectrum. Then, from 2016 onwards, the SD appropriated it and when in government eventually codified it into law in 2021.

The alleged innovativeness and temporality of externalisation logics can be problematised in two ways. Both hold importance when considering the foreign political dimensions of the policy. First, at the governmental level, the idea had actually surfaced already in the mid-1980s in Danish and Northern European politics. Here, bureaucratic networks and governments promoted ideas of extraterritorialised asylum processing and residency closely resembling the 2021 law. In fact, between 1986 and the mid-2000s, Danish, Dutch, British and German governments launched highly controversial and much debated proposals for extraterritorial camps in North Africa and Eastern Europe, to which European states could send asylum seekers that their governments did not want to assume responsibility for.

The European inspiration came from Australia and from the US Coast Guard policy of a naval blockade of tens of thousands of Haitians seeking protection on US territory during the early 1990s. During these years, the US disembarked more than 37,000 Haitians at the Guantanamo Bay military base where a limited 'in-country processing system' was set up. At its biggest, the camp held 12,000 displaced persons, but it came under fierce criticism from various organisations and an American court and was charged of ending up as a racialised 'prison camp' for Haitians suffering from HIV, plagued by want and desperation (cf. Paik 2013). Notably, Guantanamo is located on territory colonially annexed from Cuba during the Spanish-American War of 1898-1903.

During the ICG consultations in 1994, several European countries described the American policy as ‘potentially interesting’ (IGC 1995: 5).

During the early 1990s Western countries increasingly began to refer to these US policies as something to be emulated. Most infamously, Australian governments used their political-economic power over small island states in the Pacific Ocean to create extraterritorial facilities in places like Papua New Guinea (PNG), Nauru and Manus Island (Hyndman & Mountz 2008). At this time their locations were envisioned to be in North Africa, and faced with impending post-Soviet displacement, in Eastern Europe. The description of these facilities varied from government to government: from ‘processing centres’ by the Danes, to ‘reception centres’ by the Dutch and ‘regional protection zones’ by the British (IGC 1995: 6-9, 51-55). Meanwhile, German Minister of the Interior, Otto Schily, talked of ‘registration facilities’ in Libya (German Ministry of the Interior 2005). For analyses of these four proposals, see Schuster 2005; Hansen 2007; Lemberg-Pedersen 2015, 2017). However, due to fierce resistance at political and civil society levels, none of these efforts ever materialised in the form of concrete policy or legislation.

Today, both concrete policy substance and implementation remain to be seen, but the Frederiksen government did turn the policy into law in June 2021. By comparison, the UK-Rwanda MoU is a non-binding arrangement between the two governments under which the UK may request the Rwandan Government to receive people seeking asylum from the UK into the Rwandan asylum system. If a person is expelled from the UK to Rwanda under this arrangement, the person and their asylum claim will cease to be the responsibility of the UK and become the sole responsibility of Rwanda. After dramatic – and failed – attempts to make several deportation flights in June 2022, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) temporarily halted the UK-Rwanda MoU. In December that year, the British High Court found that the overall policy could not be categorised as illegal. However, at the same time, it also found that all individual cases processed under it were fundamentally flawed and referred them back to the Home Office. As of early summer 2023, further legal instances and appeals remained in the UK.

However, while the SD and Tory government ministers and spokespersons have made ample references to Australian and EU-Turkish policies, a remarkable

silence surrounds a more similar and recent policy that also involves Rwanda: between 2013-2017 Israel implemented externalisation deals with Rwanda and Uganda only to see them swamped in scandals and legal proceedings and they ultimately collapsed.

Under this policy Israel deported 3,959 Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers from Holot prison to Rwanda and made a similar agreement with Uganda. Israel claimed guarantees of work and protection from further deportation. However, both Rwanda and Uganda quickly rejected such obligations and abandoned the asylum seekers to irregular status, which was tantamount to violation of the non-refoulement principle (Amnesty International 2018). Ultimately many did not stay in Rwanda and Uganda and after being robbed at the airport, or pushed on to new deportation planes, departed for other African countries. Many were subjected to unsafe conditions including beatings, torture and rape on these routes, traveling onwards and disappearing and, according to the UNHCR, many ended up trying to go to Europe via irregular routes.<sup>11</sup> The UNHCR Rome office identified 80 people deported to Rwanda who ended up in Europe, many through the catastrophic Libyan migration system. In 2018, following damaging media coverage and protests from activists and migrant milieus in Israel, the Israeli Supreme Court found the project to be illegal and required the government to monitor it. After initially defending the project, Prime Minister Netanyahu decided to halt the deal. Rwanda never acknowledged its existence.<sup>12</sup>

The lack of Danish and British engagement with the collapsed Israeli-Rwandan deal is notable. According to British media reports, the December 2022 High Court verdict revealed that neither the Johnson, May, Truss nor Sunak governments ever assessed the experiences of the Israeli-Rwandan policy.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, Danish media did feature exposés on that project, and the Minister of Immigration was asked about it in parliament.<sup>14</sup> However, the SD government did not offer any reflections on, nor did it pause on account of, the Israeli experiences. Rather, it attempted to accelerate its Danish policy. The stages of this development will be the focus of the next section.

## Diplomatic overtures and strategies of legitimisation

In the European aftermath of the mass displacement from Syria, a choice of interpretation seems to have been made within the Danish Social Democratic party. Rather than critically appraising the analyses pointing towards a focus on deterrence, controlling external borders and collaborating with so-called partner countries, the political choice of direction was an entrenchment of these ideas. In particular, within the Danish SD, all bets seemed to be placed on the idea of externalisation.

Around 2017, the SD top management contracted the small, three-person, consultancy firm Migration Management Advice to provide policy advice to the party leadership, conduct internal workshops and provide presentations for key party networks. That same year a four-page exposé entitled ‘the dysfunctional asylum system’, where Danish externalisation was pitched as the solution, was published in the party members magazine.<sup>15</sup> By 2022 SD no longer collaborated with the firm but, meanwhile, the UK monitoring board for the Rwanda-MoU had appointed one of its staffers.<sup>16</sup>

After the 2019 elections, the SD formed a minority one-party government supported by the Social Liberals, the Socialist Peoples Party and the Unity List. The externalisation policy did not feature as a main theme in the election campaign and was not referenced in the four parties’ agreement paper, which referred to a common ground of a ‘Retfærdigt Og Humant Asylsystem’ (ROHA) (‘a fair and humane system of asylum’). However, thereafter the SD interpreted the ROHA formulation as a mandate to pursue its own externalisation policy. Despite disagreement, the parliamentary coalition behind the SD government chose not to challenge the existence of the one-party government on account of the policy.

In the autumn of 2020 the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod, announced the creation and appointment of a so-called special envoy on migration, Anders Tang Friberg, to collaborate with an 11-person Migration Task Force located in the Ministry of Immigration and Integration. In the accompanying press release, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod, said that a more ‘fair and humane system of asylum’ would be reached ‘among other things by

establishing one or several reception centres outside the EU', an ambition that 'the new envoy and the strengthened task force can contribute to realise'.<sup>17</sup> Quickly thereafter the government began to approach a string of countries. Although the government repeatedly refused parliamentary and media requests to identify the countries involved, Freedom of Information requests filed by journalists at the newspaper *Jyllandsposten* made it possible to identify the targeted countries through released meeting agendas only partially redacted as well as non-redacted expenses for hotels, planes and taxis in certain locations.<sup>18</sup> This revealed a list of countries including Ethiopia, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Albania, Morocco and Rwanda.

Media exposés noted how this list of countries visited by the envoy as possible partners for a 'humane asylum system' included some of the world's most notorious police states and military dictatorships, as well as extremely poor countries already hosting large, displaced populations.<sup>19</sup> However, despite the intense media focus, and contrary to ministerial press releases of 2021-2022, as of spring 2023 none of these visits have yielded a Danish externalisation deal. This indicates that these visits were more informal approaches by the envoy rather than concrete negotiations, an interpretation corroborated in spring 2021 during the run-up to the L226, by then-Minister of Immigration Tesfaye who, in parliament, acknowledged that there were no concrete negotiations between Denmark and Rwanda about a 'reception centre'. One year later, Tesfaye did refer to negotiations underway with Rwanda, but could not confirm talks about a centre when asked directly, but only negotiations about two general tracks on development and refugees.<sup>20</sup>

For years, SD government spokespersons appealed to impending or difficult 'reality negotiations' when asked why no externalisation deal had emerged despite year-long promises to the contrary. However, these appeals did not acknowledge the bi-directional effects of externalisation, but rather served as a shielding strategy against questions about why the policy had not materialised. 'Reality negotiations' were invoked to provide vague claims that a final agreement was close, and only a matter of 'when the price is right'.<sup>21</sup> This was also used to justify why the Danish ministries of immigration and foreign affairs, the migration task force and the special envoy redacted or refused to share information from the alleged ongoing negotiations. These references to 'reality negotiations' have simply explained their ongoing nature and used

the argument of sensitive relations to foreign powers as a reason for blocking media or civil society insight through freedom of information requests.

The creation of a special envoy for migration represented a further entrenchment of the SD policy.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the creation of a cross-ministerial migration task force involving the ministries of immigration and foreign affairs, as well as the 2022 announcement of a two-person overseas political office in Rwanda’s capital Kigali can be seen as a relative de-prioritisation of a range of other foreign policy areas in favour of (im)migration. As such, this development can be seen as the eclipsing of foreign policy by justice and home affairs (JHA) policy priorities with respect to relations to Africa, a development noted as also ongoing at the EU level since the 1990s (van Munster 2009). Whilst these areas naturally form continuums of interests, the struggle between interior and foreign policy networks about the focal points on migration and border control is a longstanding chasm in European and Danish politics. At the EU level, this is seen in the diverging analyses and recommendations of the Justice and Home Affairs Council’s responsibility for migration management issues since the 2000s, after the earlier placement of them squarely under foreign policy and transportation.

Of course, Danish, British and European externalisation policies do exhibit clear linkages to the sphere of foreign policy. The political ambition of accepting zero asylum seekers, stated by prime minister Frederiksen in 2021,<sup>23</sup> has also had clear implications for the kind of foreign policy and diplomatic efforts pursued. The *comme il faut* of the JHA political focus on asylum politics has, as its logical consequence, a drive for externalisation in order to put a halt to the arrival of asylum seekers in European territory. Yet, this led to stark dilemmas or outright contradictions to the Frederiksen government’s explicit claim to be promoting human rights. This contradiction stands out in its 2022 Foreign Policy Strategy. The 31-page strategy refers to human rights and their violations more than 40 times, emphasising value diplomacy, safety diplomacy, climate diplomacy and economic diplomacy. The character of the repressive and rights-violating regimes approached as possible hosts for Danish externalisation are at odds with the strategy’s focus on human rights.<sup>24</sup>

On migration diplomacy, the strategy states that ‘people should not risk their lives chasing a better future in Europe and Denmark...’ and ‘we must intensify



the formation of alliances with those willing to be a vanguard in finding solutions...'; that 'new approaches are required if we are to break the inhumane business model of human smugglers'; and that 'we must intensify Denmark's and the EU's efforts along the most significant migration routes to Europe. We want to strengthen the political, commercial and developmental relations to third countries, who want a closer collaboration on migration'.<sup>25</sup> North Africa in particular was singled out as a key area of intervention being 'the last stop before Europe on the African migration routes.' To this effect, the strategy allocated DKK 190 million in 2022 to capacity-building of border control and asylum systems in countries of 'regions' and 'transit', and a further DKK 110 million to expand the return and deportation of rejected asylum seekers. This engagement, the SD government strategy stated, was meant to 'strengthen the countries' ability to manage refugee- and migration pressure' whilst at the same time also 'strengthening the respect for human rights'.<sup>26</sup>

A strategy of legitimacy-via-association has also been observable on the part of the SD government. Between 2016-2018, SD spokespersons routinely referred to several North African and Middle Eastern countries as likely hosts for Danish externalisation. However, in all cases these countries' governments had not been consulted, and when made aware, rejected any involvement.<sup>27</sup> SD ministers and spokespersons then stopped referring to specific host countries. Yet, after Law 226 was passed in June 2021, the African Union (AU) still chose to weigh in with an unprecedented critique of the Danish policy:

The African Union condemns in the strongest terms possible, Denmark's Aliens Act, which was passed recently [...] This law effectively externalises and exports the asylum process beyond the borders of Denmark [...] The African Union views this law with the gravest of concerns and wishes to remind Denmark of its responsibility towards international protection for persons in need [...] The Africa Union perceives such attempts as an extension of the borders of such countries and an extension of their control to the African shores. Such attempts to stem out-migration from Africa to Europe is xenophobic and completely unacceptable. Denmark's Aliens Act will successfully allow Denmark to abdicate its international responsibility to provide asylum and protection to those that enter its territory, and will play to distort the international asylum regime.<sup>28</sup>

Similar challenges also befell SD attempts to associate their policy with influential non-state actors. In 2018 the SD spokesperson Sass Larsen described externalisation as a way to ensure that the last percentages of the world’s displaced persons not already in the global South, should be sent to camps there from the global North. Claiming that these camps would be operated by the UNHCR and the EU meant, he guaranteed, that it would be in accordance with their human rights. Unfortunately for the government, both actors immediately refused to be portrayed as allies for the SD plans.<sup>29</sup> The Commission explained that asylum seekers have a right to have their applications processed in the country they ask for asylum in. It would be in breach of the EU’s Asylum Procedures Directive, to administratively transfer people to another country. If Denmark were to initiate a deal with Rwanda it would therefore be acting against EU law, according to the EU Commission, and Denmark would face exclusion from the Dublin Regulation and a case at the European Court.<sup>30</sup> While Denmark is, formally speaking, not bound by this EU legislation due to its legal opt-out, it has, however, negotiated parallel agreements with the union. This has meant a *de facto* participation in policies such as the Dublin Regulation and Frontex. In 2023 an EU Commission representative replied to the SD’s hopeful voter message of a promising EU track to externalisation, by saying: ‘This is not our Europe. This is not the European way of life. This is not what defines us’.<sup>31</sup>

This section has shown that while the critique of incoherent argumentation from other countries and international institutions seemed to inspire some restraint during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the developments in Danish and British politics between 2016-2023 have arguably been different. The balance struck in SD and Tory discourses between deterrence and human rights has been contradictory. The following section identifies and discusses various attempts to legitimise externalisation efforts in Danish and British politics.

## 'We pat them on their backs': arguments of deterrence, utility and humanitarianism in Danish externalisation politics

The political plans to mass deport (or 'transfer') asylum seekers from Denmark and the United Kingdom to a third country have been framed as 'saving a broken asylum system', and the prospect of being deported to Rwanda is often invoked as a signalling act, allegedly deterring people from irregular crossings of the deadly Mediterranean or British Channel boat routes in the first place. This rationale has been accompanied by the language of human rights and protection invoking humanitarian care and ethos through several arguments for externalisation advanced in Danish and British contexts. These have revolved around claims of utility, disclaimed responsibility, *realpolitik* and humanitarian ideals.

The notion that the tragic deaths of migrants can be disrupted by preventing people from crossing the Mediterranean or the English Channel has been challenged by many researchers. Accordingly, the plans possibly reflect the governments' lack of engagement with the research literature on the linkages between displacement, border control and smuggling dynamics. In the Danish case, it also reflects the SD government's lack of engagement with the many public consultations in the run-up to Law 226. According to IOM analyses of unsafe migration routes and fatality data, many more migrants lose their lives *before* reaching the Mediterranean. The sea is also relatively more monitored than the practices of repressive state authorities along the migration routes in Eastern Africa and Maghreb (IOM 2014).

Denmark and the UKs' portrayal of the policy through humanitarian scripts is an apt illustration of a point made by Chimni (2000: 51). He describes how European attempts to co-opt the language of rights for border control purposes 'obscure the fact that the Northern commitment to humanitarianism coexists with a range of practices which have for their objective its violation'. The utilisation of human rights language is not new and can be seen as an example of 'humanitarianised border control' (Chimni 2000; Fassin 2011; Lemberg-Pedersen 2020; Pallister-Wilkins 2022).

The 1986 Danish proposal (and to a lesser extent the British 2003 *New Vision* document) also invoked humanitarian discourses, such as when it urged ‘the mobilisation of the collective political will of the international community to seek long-term and equitable solutions’ to the lack of protection for refugees (Lemberg-Pedersen 2017). The Schlüter government invoked arguments such as increased (but conditional) aid, ‘burden sharing’ and the creation of UN-run ‘processing centres’ outside Europe.<sup>32</sup> Such discourses illustrate how states make use of humanitarian language to enable large-scale control and containment policies, which use ‘the language of rights to justify a range of questionable practices.’ The resulting humanitarian scripts display starkly contradictory narratives and flawed assumptions about the causes and effects in displacement dynamics.

In the 2010s, initially, the purpose of containment, border control and deterrence of prospective asylum seekers through externalisation was stated rather openly. But when mired in widespread criticism from the EU, the EP, the UN, the AU, humanitarian NGOs and Danish civil society actors, government discourses began to change in the 2020s. The emphasis was now placed more on idealised appeals to humanitarian values and used terms such as ‘brutal smugglers’ and ‘vulnerable boat migrants in need of protection’. The imagery of thousands of drowning boat migrants soon dominated claims that the policy would have a deterrent effect. However, a discursive pattern is observable when it comes to the relative weight granted to discourses of deterrence and of human rights by the Danish Government. The former is emphasised more when communicating the policy to domestic audiences, whereas the latter takes precedence when seeking to justify the policy to actors such as the UNHCR, the EU and the UN. Correspondingly, issues like development aid, innovation and entrepreneurship were emphasised when Danish and British ministers have visited Rwanda.

Another argument often marshalled for the SD policy has been a *utilitarian claim* that ‘every time Europe spends 135 DKR on asylum seekers, 1 DKR is spent on people in regions of origin’,<sup>33</sup> intended to show that many more people can be protected for the same money through externalisation. Of course, assessing this utilitarian cost argument is to grant its premises a semblance of feasibility, but while the specific 135/1 comparison quickly unravelled under examination due to flawed statistics,<sup>34</sup> the general argument of cost efficiency still merits

some consideration, as it trades on powerful intuitions concerning the use of taxpayer money. Moreover, analysing the argument is useful for specifying the problems facing this particular form of argumentation.

Financially, the few existing examples of externalisation policies have involved exorbitantly high costs. For instance, under the Australian 'Pacific Solution' policy, often cited as inspirational by SD politicians, the 2014 cost of externalising 2,200 asylum seekers to Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia amounted to €859 million.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, by 2021, at least €5.98 billion had been transferred by the EU to Turkey under the so-called EU-Turkey press statement. Further questions concern the financial and political costs of negotiating host state agreement and then securing continued compliance. Thus, even before the UK-Rwanda MoU has been initiated, the Johnson government has paid €137 million to the Kagame regime (Gower, Butchard and McKinney 2022).

More fundamentally, however, the argument faces massive problems establishing its very basis of comparison. This is because the absence of crucial information means that the costs of its extraterritorial components cannot be ascertained due to confusion about the policy's scope and ambition. Thus, the aforementioned 2016 comments from SD spokesperson Sass Larsen described an idea of 'sealing off' the EU's external borders, collecting all asylum seekers in camps in North Africa and 'doing the humanitarianism there'. If any asylum seekers still managed to arrive in Denmark on their own, 'they must be escorted back nicely' to those camps. That same year his SD colleague, Peter Hummelgaard Thomsen, also described the policy as 'enormous refugee cities with hospitals, schools, universities, farms and companies'. Confronted with the lack of hosts for such ambitions, SD toned down the rhetoric, talking instead of 'asylum camps'. In early 2018 the vision was downscaled once more, to so-called 'reception centres' in North Africa, and in 2021, Minister of Immigration and Integration Mattias Tesfaye described an experimental 'mini-centre' as a pilot project in a host country. By late 2022, Tesfaye – having then transferred into the Ministry of Justice – told journalists that early on the dialogue with Rwanda had faced a barrier consisting of the fact that Rwandan authorities actually refused to assume responsibility for asylum seekers rejected in Denmark. This problem, he said, could necessitate the construction of yet another mini-centre *in yet another country*, to which Rwanda could also transfer people.<sup>36</sup> Taken together, the downward spiral of the externalisation vision from 'enormous refugee cities' to experimental 'mini-

centres’ in uncertain and possibly multiple locations testifies to the lack of connection between a humanitarianised SD communication strategy and the political reality of displacement geopolitics.

This illustrates how unanswered questions include crucial issues such as the numbers of people transferred; security and governance conditions; the kind, the scale and number of facilities; legal responsibilities; monitoring, and even the number of countries involved. This point also illustrates why region of origin expenses appear much cheaper in the argument’s comparison; namely because it trades on accepting the lower standards of living, safety, protection and basic rights afforded to people in the so-called regions of origin, already experiencing mass displacement. Moreover, the argument also seems to assume that externalisation *removes* expenses for control from one country and *relocates* them to another. Yet, on its own terms, Law 226 actually entails the opposite: namely the geographic *multiplication* of control, expanding the systems of several countries. This would lead to increased costs including for components in Denmark, such as surveillance, patrols and the mass incarceration of all asylum seekers, the construction of a two-tier legal and appeals system, chartering deportation flights, and post-deportation control and monitoring. Consequently, the combination of the extreme costs associated with known externalisation practices, problematic assumptions, and an inability to specify components of the SD policy taken together undermine the utilitarian argument of cost-saving externalisation.

In a 2022 white paper the SD government stated, ‘Status quo is not an option. We cannot keep accepting an outdated asylum system run by human smugglers’.<sup>37</sup> In the UK, Home Secretary Suella Braverman similarly claimed that illegal migration was out of control and the global asylum system broken.<sup>38</sup> However, as pointed out by the UNHCR, the EU Commission and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the functioning of asylum systems cannot be separated from the states responsible for administering them. The DRC has therefore countered that the asylum system is not ‘broken’ but saves millions of lives every year. It is not broken unless the SD’s success criteria are something else, such as turning a protection system into a deterrence mechanism. If the goal of the system is to avoid tragic deaths on the Mediterranean, then creating safe, legal and orderly routes for asylum seekers and labour migration remains an option available to states such as Denmark and the UK, rather than externalisation of asylum and residence. What I call the argument of

*disclaimed responsibility* then amounts to a denial of co-responsibility for the functioning of asylum systems, which seems instead to place responsibility on the so-called smugglers. It strikes at the heart of the continued legitimacy of the asylum system, undermining an international system whereby all states assume territorial responsibility for protecting displaced persons.

While the contradictions in humanitarian scripts are illustrative of the lack of coherence in the policy at the level of argumentation, relations between Rwanda and Denmark from 2021-2023 also illustrate the bi-directional effects of externalisation policies, that is how the policy relation can transform both actors involved. Unfortunately, the extent to which Danish governments and the media have acknowledged the implications of this has been limited.

At the level of argument, the Danish Government's engagement with the bi-directional political-moral implications of externalisation diplomacy has oscillated between two incompatible positions. On the one hand, the assumption of humanitarian and moral values has at times been unceremoniously dropped when Danish ministers have been confronted with the discrepancy between their stated ambition of human rights and Rwanda's human rights record. Thus, the Danish collaboration has been criticised for legitimising a regime accused of disappearing opposition figures and journalists, repressing its population and shooting refugee protestors. Confronted with this, government ministers have invoked *realpolitik*, and stated a refusal to 'raise a finger on moral issues' with their Rwandan counterparts, opting instead for 'patting them on the back', highlighting their innovative humanitarian policies and the two countries' good bilateral collaboration.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, in a 2022 white paper on its externalisation policy, the Frederiksen SD government employed a different line of argument using highly humanitarian language. Here, conditions at the external EU borders were described as inhumane extortion: 'when we see migrants being used as a means of political extortion on the border to the EU, or when we hear of migrants losing their life crossing the English Channel'.<sup>40</sup> The onus is placed on migrants as victims, and the implication drawn is that the diplomatic relations are of a kind where cynical non-Western actors – either states or 'smuggling gangs' – use Europe's humanitarian systems and democratic intentions for exploitative purposes. This argument, also deployed by Braverman in the UK House of Commons,<sup>41</sup> therefore depicts the deplorable consequence for human rights

as a regrettable situation where *realpolitik* is *imposed by others* upon European states against their will and *because of their humanitarian values*. However, as pointed out by Albahari (2018: 126), it is the implementation of European policies on control, containment and criminalisation of migration and search and rescue, which have shut down the safe and legal routes to seek asylum on European territory. What I call the inverted humanitarian argument therefore rests on a basic premise that inverts the agency behind, and thus responsibility for, the humanitarian consequences of European policies. It is an argument about allegedly unavoidable suffering that bypasses the responsibility of European states and EU institutions for making it so that people cannot ask for asylum without first paying smugglers for life-threatening crossings. This interpretation is strengthened by considering the nature of the ‘patting them on their back’ argument, which defends the collaboration with rights-violating regimes based on ‘realpolitik’. The latest example of this was prime minister Mette Frederiksen’s visit and talks on border control with the Egyptian military dictator Al-Sisi in March 2023.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has analysed the Social Democratic (SD) Frederiksen government’s attempts to construe a Danish externalisation policy, mirrored by successive Tory governments in the United Kingdom. It has analysed how this policy drive has been pursued through party and government initiatives, accompanied by a series of arguments appealing to claims of legitimacy, deterrence, utility and humanitarianism, depending on the audiences targeted. Appeals to moral grammars of rescue, care and human rights, however, stand in stark contrast to the premises, omissions, critique and experiences facing this policy.

The Danish and British policies constitute a deepening of European attempts to control and contain people seeking protection. By rendering asylum seekers on their territory ‘deportable’, people currently in possession of the right to apply for asylum would be deported from the two countries’ territory. Recent criticism from the UNHCR, the EU Commission and the AU that this would breach international law was already voiced about older variants of the idea. British policymakers discussing the 2002-2003 *New Vision* were well aware of the conflict with European states’ legal obligations to avoid *non-refoulement*:



We would need to change the extraterritorial nature of Article 3 (ECHR) if we want to reduce our asylum obligations. Article 3 is the only article of ECHR which applies to actions that occur outside the territory of the State. If we only had to concern ourselves with torture, inhuman and degrading treatment that happens in the UK, we could remove anyone off the territory without obligation. Coupled with a withdrawal from the Geneva Convention, refoulement should be possible and the notion of an asylum seeker in the UK should die (UK Government 2003: 9).

The unrealised nature of Law 226 and the halted Danish negotiations with Rwanda, of course make any human rights violations caused by the Danish policy hypothetical. But the last-minute stop to the British deportation flights in June 2022 illustrates how such a risk can quickly turn imminent. Political arguments have been made that the Danish policy would not lead to the same violations as, for example, the Australian model of inspiration. But these aside, it is noteworthy how the SD and British Conservative governments have all but avoided engaging with the dismal consequences of the collapsed Israel-Rwanda/Uganda externalisation deals of 2013-2017.

Because of the abandonment and refoulement of those deported from Israel and the ultimate illegality and collapse of the Israel-Rwanda/Uganda programme, it is highly relevant for assessing the SD and Sunak governments' plans. Many of those rendered deportable ended up in irregular migration networks, even arriving on European territory. This represents a serious empirical problematisation of the common argument that externalisation will 'break' the business model of smugglers. In the absence of legal migration routes, such as the possibility of filing asylum claims, the Israeli policy actually ended up feeding that very business model by creating inhumane and desperate conditions as well as incentives to create 'repeat business' for irregular networks.

The public consultations on Law 226 criticised the process's passing of legislation where this responsibility is not clarified, but remains branched out into two models. Thus, Law 226 effectively codified, but did not resolve, what we can call an *open hypothetical disjunction* (either model 1 or model 2).<sup>43</sup> This despite the fact that the disjunction itself is based on flawed premises since case law already states that states *can* incur responsibility for the rights of people when entering into international collaboration on migration control

outside their own territory. But as noted by the RLI Declaration (2022): ‘The fact that externalisation measures are partly or wholly implemented outside a State’s own territory will not usually release it from compliance with primary obligations imposed by specialised regimes of international law’. Two years on, no resolution or clarification of this problem with the law has been forthcoming, yet it remains in effect. Organisations and civil society actors have criticised that this effectively means that any Danish Government can attempt to use it to seek out other host countries for externalisation than the much-criticized Rwandan regime.

The hypothetical appeals to the policy are therefore set to continue, as are argumentation strategies appealing to legitimacy-by-association, utility, disclaiming responsibility for an allegedly ‘broken’ asylum system, and portrayal of the policy as humanitarian. In Denmark and the United Kingdom, the massive political attention afforded to externalisation ambitions has derailed other asylum political discussions, otherwise urgently needed, such as the expansion of asylum applications from diplomatic representations, humanitarian visas, evacuation, and reception and responsibility-sharing practices in Europe. Instead, the controversial Australian policies, or the legally problematic EU-Turkey press statement are vaguely referenced as models to be emulated by the policies-to-come.

This, however, ignores that unlike these hypothetical plans, pragmatic and solution-oriented alternatives already *do* exist in Europe, and some have been implemented recently. These include the evacuations following the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the temporary protection afforded some of those escaping the war in Ukraine. Accordingly, even if negotiations with Rwanda have been paused and Law 226 still has not been implemented, a real and worrying effect of the political capital invested in these ideas has been a gradual homogenisation of Danish and British asylum political imagination along the lines of externalisation.

## Notes

- 1 Martin Lemberg-Pedersen, PhD, is a honorary associate professor at the Department of Politics and International Studies (PAIS), the University of Warwick. The author wishes to thank Nik Feith Tan and the anonymous reviewers for comments on earlier versions of this article.
- 2 Ritzau/Berlingske Tidende (25.1.2023) Ren dansk aftale om et modtagecenter i Rwanda er sat på pause [A purely Danish deal on reception centre in Rwanda has been paused]. Available at: <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/ren-dansk-aftale-om-et-modtagecenter-i-rwanda-er-sat-paa-pause>
- 3 L226 was portrayed as being in compliance with Denmark's international obligations, and consequently the legislation also foresees a few exceptions to the generalised transfers, among other reasons involving health, where a national asylum process would need to remain.
- 4 Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) *Udkast til forslag om indførelse af mulighed for overførsel af asylansøgere til asylsagsbehandling og indkvartering i tredjelande*: 5.
- 5 The proposal mentions some possible exceptions, such as the right to privacy and family life, seriously ill foreigners, Dublin transfers, as well as other poorly defined 'groups of foreigners', which can be exempted due to 'resource or other factual considerations'. Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) *Udkast til forslag om indførelse af mulighed for overførsel af asylansøgere til asylsagsbehandling og indkvartering i tredjelande*: 11
- 6 Skærbæk, M. (21.6. 2021) Rasmus Stoklund afviser, at modtagecenter kan presse Danmark ud af Dublin-samarbejdet. Men han frygter, at vi bliver en asylmagnet, hvis det skulle ske. [Rasmus Stoklund rejects that reception centre can pressure Denmark out of the Dublin collaboration. But he fears that we will become an asylum magnet, if that were to happen]. Politiken. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8253578/Rasmus-Stoklund-afviser-at-modtagecenter-kan-presse-Danmark-ud-af-Dublin-samarbejdet.-Men-han-frygter-at-vi-bliver-en-asylmagnet-hvis-det-skulle-ske>
- 7 Danisi, Carmelo (20.4.2017) Taking the 'Union' out of 'EU': The EU-Turkey Statement on the Syrian Refugee Crisis as an Agreement Between States under International Law. EJIL:Talk! Blog of the European Journal of International Law. Available at: <https://www.ejiltalk.org/taking-the-union-out-of-eu-the-eu-turkey-statement-on-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-as-an-agreement-between-states-under-international-law/>

- 8 Lønstrup, D. (10.8.2016) Læk afslører omfattende overgreb på børn i Australiens ø-flygtningelejr. [Leak exposes massive abuse of children in Australia's island refugee camp] *Politiken*. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/udland/art5631847/L%C3%A6k-afsl%C3%B8rer-omfattende-overgreb-p%C3%A5-b%C3%B8rn-i-Australiens-%C3%B8-flygtningelejr>; cf. Evershed, N., Liu, R., Farrel, P. and Davidson, H. The Nauru Files. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2016/aug/10/the-nauru-files-the-lives-of-asylum-seekers-in-detention-detailed-in-a-unique-database-interactive>
- 9 Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) Forslag til Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven (Indførelse af mulighed for overførsel af asylansøgere til asylsagsbehandling og indkvartering i tredjelande) [Proposal to change the immigration act (introducing the possibility for transferring asylum seekers to case processing and residency in third countries)].
- 10 Gjertsen, M.N., and Kaae, M. (8.10.2014). Liberal alliance: Afvis alle krigsflygtninge. [Liberal Alliance: Reject all war refugees]. *Jyllandsposten*. Available at: <https://jyllandsposten.dk/politik/ECE7093609/Liberal-Alliance-Afvis-alle-krigsflygtninge/>
- 11 Birger, L., Shoham, S. and Bolzman, L. (2018) 'Better a prison in Israel than dying on the way'. Testimonies of refugees who 'voluntarily' departed Israel to Rwanda and Uganda and gained protection in Europe. Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/11bR\\_8cski2tRDczmQBfTI6GHUuuFK\\_JZ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11bR_8cski2tRDczmQBfTI6GHUuuFK_JZ/view)
- 12 Beaumont, P. and Holmes, O. (2.4.2018) Israel suspends plan to resettle African asylum seekers despite deal. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/02/israel-agrees-un-deal-scrap-plan-deport-african-asylum-seekers>
- 13 Syal, R. (19.12.2022) Rwanda dream could still become a nightmare for Suella Braverman. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/dec/19/rwanda-dream-could-still-become-a-nightmare-for-suella-braverman>
- 14 Udlændinge- og Integrationsudvalget 2021-22. UUI Alm.del – endeligt svar på spørgsmål 471. Offentligt. Available at: <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20211/almdel/uui/spm/471/svar/1896761/2600700.pdf>
- 15 Bruun, M. (2017) Det Dysfunktionelle Asyssystem. *Socialdemokraten* (4.12.2017); Birk, C. (19.1.2018) 'Rådgivningsfirma hjælper Socialdemokratiet med at udforme asylpolitikken', *Kristeligt Dagblad* [online]. Available at: <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/s-udformer-asyllpolitik-med-konsulenthjaelp>
- 16 Redder, A. (7.9.2022) Han er hjernen bag Socialdemokratiets store asylplan: I fredags dukkede hans navn op på britisk liste – og det vækker nu opsigt. *Jyllandsposten*. [He is the brain behind the Social Democrats' big asylum plan: This Friday his name appeared on British list – and that turns heads]. Available at: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE14382213/han-er-hjernen-bag-socialdemokratiets-store-asyllplan-i-fredags-dukke-de-hans-navn-op-paa-britisk-liste-og-det-vaekker-nu-opsigt/>

- 17 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (10.9.2020) Ny ambassadør skal åbne føre for modtagecenter uden for EU. [New special envoy must open the doors for a reception centre outside the EU]. Available at: <https://um.dk/da/udenrigspolitik/udenrigspolitiske-nyheder/newsdisplaypage/?newsid=9ba7c7d2-5175-4fee-975d-711da5b7367f>; Ravnborg, J. (10.9.2020) Jeppe Kofod udnævner Danmarks første migrationsambassadør. *Altinget.dk*. Available at: <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/jeppekofod-s-udnaevner-danmarks-foerste-migrationsambassadoer>
- 18 Redder, A., Broberg, M.B. (4.5.2021) *Hidtil har udlændingeministeren holdt det skjult. Nu afslører dokumenter at Danmark forhandler med Etiopien om modtagecenter* [Thus far, the Minister of Immigration has kept it a secret. Now documents reveal that Denmark is negotiating with Ethiopia about a reception centre]. *Jyllandsposten*. Available at: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12951128/hidtil-har-udlaendingeministeren-holdt-det-skjult-nu-afslorer-dokumenter-at-danmark-forhandler-med-etiopien-om-modtagecenter/>; Redder, A., Broberg, M.B. and Albers, M.L. (6.5.2021) Regeringens topdiplomat har i hemmelighed været i dialog med Egypten om nyt asylsystem: 'Det er en chokerende udvikling, det her'. [The top diplomat of the government has secretly been in dialogue with Egypt about new asylum system: 'This is a shocking development']. *Jyllandsposten*. Available at: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12959335/regeringens-topdiplomat-har-i-hemmelighed-vaeret-i-dialog-med-egypten-om-nyt-asylsystem-det-er-en-chokerende-udvikling-det-her/?loggedIn=true>
- 19 Redder, A., Broberg, M.B. (4.5.2021) *Hidtil har udlændingeministeren holdt det skjult. Nu afslører dokumenter at Danmark forhandler med Etiopien om modtagecenter* [Thus far, the Minister of Immigration has kept it a secret. Now documents reveal that Denmark is negotiating with Ethiopia about a reception centre]. *Jyllandsposten* Available at: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE12951128/hidtil-har-udlaendingeministeren-holdt-det-skjult-nu-afslorer-dokumenter-at-danmark-forhandler-med-etiopien-om-modtagecenter/>
- 20 Høj, O. (13.4.2022) Tesfaye: Danmark forhandler med Rwanda. [Tefsaye: Denmark is negotiating with Rwanda]. *dr.dk*. Available at: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/seneste/tesfaye-danmark-forhandler-med-rwanda-om-asylsystem>
- 21 Klarskov, K. (24.1.2021) Mattias Tesfaye er gået på jagt hos 'en god håndfuld' lande for at finde et sted til et modtagecenter for asylansøgere. *Politiken*. [Mattias Tesfaye has gone hunting after 'a good handful' of countries to find a place for a reception centre for asylum seekers]. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8073671/Mattias-Tesfaye-er-g%C3%A5et-p%C3%A5-jagt-hos-%C2%BBengod-h%C3%A5ndfuld%C2%AB-lande-for-at-finde-et-sted-til-et-modtagecenter-for-asylans%C3%B8gere>
- 22 The position of a special envoy on migration appeared uncertain in the Spring 2023 however, as the first appointee, Anders Tang Friborg, ended his term in August 2022 and no replacement had yet been announced by Spring 2023. Still, by then, the idea had been picked up by the German minister of interior, who in a press interview entertained the idea of opening a similar position.

- 23 Ritzau/*The Local*. (22.1.2021) Danish prime minister wants country to accept ‘zero’ asylum seekers. Available at: <https://www.thelocal.dk/20210122/danish-prime-minister-wants-country-to-accept-zero-asylum-seekers>
- 24 Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022) *Udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitik strategi*. Januar 2022. København: Udenrigsministeriet.
- 25 Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022) *Udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitik strategi*. Januar 2022. København: Udenrigsministeriet: 41.
- 26 Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022) *Udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitik strategi*. Januar 2022. København: Udenrigsministeriet: 42.
- 27 Mansø, R.G. (6.2.2018) Tunesien vil ikke huse Mette Frederiksens lejre. [Tunisia does not want to host Mette Frederiksen’s camp]. *dr.dk*. Available at: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/tunesien-vil-ikke-huse-mettefrederiksen-lejr>; Ritzau. (7.2.2018) Marokko afviser S-forslag om dansk modtagecenter. [Morocco rejects Social Democratic proposal for a Danish reception centre]. *Jyllandsposten*. Available at: <https://jyllandsposten.dk/international/Afrika/ECE10288134/marokko-afviser-sforslag-om-dansk-modtagecenter/>
- 28 African Union (2.8.2021) Press Statement on Denmark’s Alien Act provision to Externalize Asylum procedures to third countries. Available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20210802/press-statement-denmarks-alien-act-provision-externalize-asylum-procedures>
- 29 Damkjær, O. (2018) Tvivl om FNs rolle i socialdemokratisk asylforslag. [Doubt about the United Nation’s role in Socialdemocratic asylum proposal]. *Berlingske Tidende*. Available at: <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/tvivi-om-fns-rolle-i-socialdemokratisk-asylforslag>
- 30 Munksgaard, M.M. (2.9.2022) EU-Kommissionen advarer: Så snart Danmark sender asylansøgere til Rwanda, kommer der et juridisk efterspil. [EU Commission warns: As soon as Denmark sends asylum seekers to Rwanda there will be a legal consequence]. *Altinget*. Available at: <https://www.alinget.dk/udvikling/artikel/eu-kommissionen-advarer-saa-snart-danmark-sender-asylansoegere-til-rwanda-undersoeger-vi-om-aftalen-er-lovlig>
- 31 Ritzau (14.3.2023) EU-Kommission siger blankt nej til Rwanda-model. [EU Commission flat out refuses Rwanda-model]. *Jyllandsposten*. Available at: <https://jyllandsposten.dk/politik/ECE15333183/eukommission-siger-blankt-nej-til-rwandamodel/>
- 32 Danish Ministry of Immigration (1986) in the UN Third Committee. Summary Record 39th meeting. UN General Assembly forty-first session. 7 November 1986. Distr. General A/C.3/41/SR.39.1986: 8.

- 33 Social Democrats (SD) (2018) *Retfærdig og Realistisk. Helhedsplan for dansk udlændingepolitik*: 10. Available at: <https://www.socialdemokratiet.dk/media/wozlqnux/retfaerdig-og-realistisk-ny.pdf>; See also Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) *Udfordringer i asylsystemet – og regeringens forslag til et mere retfærdigt og human system* [Challenges in the asylum system – and the government’s proposal for a more just and humane system]: 7.
- 34 Problems with the statistics included that the number for European expenses turned out to be directly imported from German estimates for two years, which were later downgraded, while the numbers for expenses in regions of origin were imported from one year’s estimated UNHCR budget, covering the Agency’s operations in the entire world. See: Machmüller, A. and Okkels, O.K. (16.2018) Faktatjek: meningsløse tal i socialdemokratisk asyludspil. *dr.dk*. Available at: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/faktatjek-meningsloese-tal-i-socialdemokratisk-asyludspil>
- 35 Tan, N.F. (2015) Den australske asyl-model vil næppe virke for EU. [The Australian asylum model is not likely to work for the EU]. *Berlingske Tidende*. Available at: <https://www.berlingske.dk/kommentatorer/den-australske-asyl-model-vil-naeppe-virke-for-eu>
- 36 Hummelgaard, P. (6.1.2016) Nej, vi socialdemokrater er ikke Dansk Folkeparti light. *Politiken*. [No, we Social Democrats are not Danish Peoples Party light]. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/art5605975/Nej-vi-socialdemokrater-er-ikke-Dansk-Folkeparti-light>; Klarskov, K. (24.1.2021) Mattias Tesfaye er gået på jagt hos ‘en god håndfuld’ lande for at finde et sted til et modtagecenter for asylansøgere. *Politiken*. [Mattias Tesfaye has gone hunting after ‘a good handful’ of countries to find a place for a reception centre for asylum seekers]. Available at: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art8073671/Mattias-Tesfaye-er-g%C3%A5et-p%C3%A5-jagt-hos-%C2%BBengod-h%C3%A5ndfuld%C2%AB-lande-for-at-finde-et-sted-til-et-modtagecenter-for-asylans%C3%B8gere>; Redder, A. (10.10.2022) Efter hård intern kritik: Nu afslører Tesfaye en opsigtsvækkende detalje om asylforhandlinger med Rwanda. [After fierce internal critique: Tesfaye reveals a remarkable detail about the asylum negotiations with Rwanda]. Available at: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE14480345/efter-haard-intern-kritik-nu-afsloerer-tesfaye-en-opsigtsvaekkende-detalje-om-asylforhandlinger-med-rwanda/>
- 37 Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) *Udfordringer i asylsystemet – og regeringens forslag til et mere retfærdigt og human system* [Challenges in the asylum system – and the government’s proposal for a more just and humane system]: 2.
- 38 Whannel, K. (2.11.2022) Rishi Sunak admits not enough asylum claims are being processed. *BBC News*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-63486665>
- 39 Miles, J.K. (3.6.2021) Tesfaye: Jeg vil ikke løfte pegefingern [Tesfaye: I will not raise the index finger] *Ekstra Bladet*. Available at: <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/dansktopolitik/tesfaye-jeg-vil-ikke-loefte-pegefingern/8608287>

- 40 Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration (2022) *Udfordringer i asylsystemet – og regeringens forslag til et mere retfærdigt og human system* [Challenges in the asylum system – and the government’s proposal for a more just and humane system]: 2.
- 41 Dickie, D. (20.3.2023) SNP told ‘stop siding with smuggling gangs’ as Suella Braverman brands them ‘all talk and no action’. *Scottish Daily Express*. Available at: <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/politics/snp-told-stop-siding-smuggling-29505964>
- 42 In 2022, Denmark supported the Egyptian regime with DKK61 million for the purposes of border control in the Mediterranean. See Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2022) *Udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitik strategi*. Januar 2022. København: Udenrigsministeriet.
- 43 See Danish Refugee Council (3.3.2021) Høringssvar til forslag til lov om ændring af udlændingeloven (Indførelse af mulighed for overførsel af asylansøgere til asylsagsbehandling og indkvartering i tredjelande). Available at: [https://integration.drc.ngo/media/i4mhymdv/asylbehandling-i-tredjelande\\_3-marts-2021.pdf](https://integration.drc.ngo/media/i4mhymdv/asylbehandling-i-tredjelande_3-marts-2021.pdf); Amnesty International (4.3.2021) Høringssvar: Amnesty Internationals bemærkninger til udkast til forslag om indførelse af mulighed for overførsel af asylansøgere til asylsagsbehandling og indkvartering i tredjelande. Available at: <https://amnesty.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Amnesty-Internationals-hoeringssvar-eksternalisering-4.-marts.pdf>



## References

Adderley, Laura Rosanne and Fett, Sharla M. (2022) 'Slave trade refugees and imperial agendas: the resettlement of "liberated Africans" into British West Indian regiments and Liberian militias, 1808-60'. In Lemberg-Pedersen et al. *Postcoloniality and Forced Migration. Mobility, Control, Agency*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Albahari, Maurizio. (2018). 'From Right to Permission: Asylum, Mediterranean Migrations, and Europe's War on Smuggling.' *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 6(2), pp. 121-130.

Amnesty International; Caritas Europe; Danish Refugee Council; Greek Council for Refugees; Human Rights Watch; International Rescue Committee; Oxfam; Refugee Rights Europe. (2021) *Open Letter: Five years after the EU-Turkey statement, European civil society demands an end to containment and deterrence at the EU's External Borders*. Available at: <https://oxfam.app.box.com/v/JointCSOLetter18March2021>

Amnesty International. (2018) 'Israel: Deportation of African asylum-seekers is a cruel and misguided abandonment of responsibility'. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/03/israel-deportation-of-african-asylum-seekers-is-a-cruel-and-misguided-abandonment-of-responsibility/>

Balzacq, Thierry. (2009) 'Frontiers of governance: understanding the external dimension of EU justice and home affairs'. In Balzacq (ed.) *The External Dimension of EU Justice and Home Affairs: Governance, Neighbours, Security*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-34.

Bialasiewicz, Luiza. (2012). Off-shoring and out-sourcing the borders of Europe: Libya and EU border work in the Mediterranean. *Geopolitics*, 17(4), pp. 843-866.

Casas-Cortes, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias and John Pickles. (2015) 'Riding routes and itinerant borders: autonomy of migration and border externalization'. *Antipode* 47(4), pp. 894-914.

Cassarino, Jean Pierre. (2018) 'Beyond the criminalization of migration: a non-Western perspective'. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies* 4(4), pp. 397-411.

- Chimni, B.S. (2000) 'Globalization, humanitarianism and the erosion of refugee protection'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13(3), pp. 243-63.
- Davies, Thom, Arshad Isakjee, Lucy Mayblin and Joe Turner. (2021) 'Channel crossings: offshoring asylum and the afterlife of empire in the Dover Strait'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 44(13), pp. 2307-2327.
- Deridder Marie, Lotte Pelckmans and Emilia Ward. (2020) 'Reversing the gaze: West Africa performing the EU migration-development-security nexus', *Anthropologie & Développement* 51, pp. 9-32.
- Fassin, Didier. (2011) *Humanitarian Reason. A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- FitzGerald, David Scott. (2019) *Refuge beyond Reach. How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gammeltoft-Hansen, Thomas. 2011. *Access to Asylum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- German Ministry of Interior. 2005. *Effektiver Schutz für Flüchtlinge, wirkungsvolle Bekämpfung illegaler Migration*. Berlin: Bundesministerium des Innern.
- Ghezelbash, Daniel. (2018) *Refuge Lost. Asylum Law in an Interdependent World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gower, Melanie, Patrick Butchard and C.J. McKinney. (2022) 'The UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership'. Commons Library Research Briefing.
- Hansen, Peo. (2007) 'EU migration policy in the post-Amsterdam era: The contradictions between migrant "integration", flexible labour immigration and refugee protection'. In Berggren, Erik. (ed) *Irregular migration, informal labour and community: A challenge for Europe*. Maastricht: Shaker Publishing.
- Hyndman, Jennifer and Alison Mountz. (2008) 'Another brick in the wall? Non-refoulement and the externalization of asylum by Australia and Europe'. *Government and Opposition* 43(2), pp. 249-269.
- IGC. (1995) *Reception in the Region of Origin*. Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies in Europe, North America and Australia.

- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2014) *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration*. IOM: Geneva.
- Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin, Sharla Fett, Lucy Mayblin, Nina Sahraoui and Eva Magdalena Stambøl (eds.) (2022) *Postcoloniality and Forced Migration. Mobility, Control, Agency*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin, Zachary Whyte and Ahlam Chemlali. (2021) 'Denmark's new externalization law: motives and consequences'. *Forced Migration Review* 68, pp. 36-39.
- Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin. (2020) 'The humanitarianization of child deportation politics'. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 36(2), pp. 239-258.
- Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin. (2019) 'Manufacturing displacement. Externalization and postcoloniality in European migration control'. *Global Affairs* 5(3), pp. 247-271.
- Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin. (2017) 'Effective protection or effective combat? EU border control and North Africa'. In Paulo Gaibazzi, Stephan Dünwald and Alice Bellagamba (eds.) *Eurafrican Borders and Migration Management*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 29-60.
- Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin. (2015) 'Losing the right to have rights: EU externalization of border control'. In Erik André Andersen and Eva Maria Lassen (eds.) *Europe and the Americas: Transatlantic Approaches to Human Rights*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 393-417.
- Moreno-Lax, Violetta. (2017) *Accessing Asylum in Europe: Extraterritorial Border Controls and Refugee Rights under EU Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moreno-Lax, Violetta. and Martin Lemberg-Pedersen. (2019) 'Border-induced displacement: the ethical and legal implications of distance-creation through externalization'. *Questions of International Law* 56, pp. 5-33.
- Mussi, Francesca and Nikolas Feith Tan. (2017) 'Comparing Cooperation on Migration Control: Italy-Libya and Australia-Indonesia'. *UCD Working Papers in Law, Criminology & Socio-Legal Studies*. Research Paper No. 09/17.
- Noll, Gregor. (2003) 'Visions of the exceptional: legal and theoretical issues raised by transit processing centres and protection zones'. *European Journal of Migration and Law* 5 (3), pp. 303-341.

- Paik, Naomi A. (2013) 'Carceral quarantine at Guantánamo. Legacies of US imprisonment of Haitian refugees, 1991-1994'. *Radical History Review* 115 (Winter 2013), pp. 142-168.
- Pallister-Wilkins, P. (2022) *Humanitarian Borders. Unequal Mobility and Saving Lives*. London: Verso.
- Refugee Law Initiative (RLI). (2022) 'Declaration on Externalisation and Asylum'. *International Journal of Refugee Law* 34(1), pp. 114-119.
- Schuster, Liza. (2005) *The Realities of a New Asylum Paradigm*. Working Paper No. 20. Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.
- Tan, Nikolas Feith. (2022) 'Visions of the realistic? Denmark's legal basis for extraterritorial asylum'. *Nordic Journal of International Law* 91 (Special Issue: Nordic Visions of International Migration and Refugee Law), pp. 172-181.
- Tan, Nikolas Feith. (2021) 'Conceptualising externalization: still fit for purpose?' *Forced Migration Review* 68, pp. 8-9.
- UK Government (2003). *A New Vision for Refugees*. London: UK Government.
- van Munster, Rens. (2009) *Securitizing Immigration. The Politics of Risk in the EU*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

# Scandinavia's choices of partner countries in Africa. Is the poverty criterion still dominant?

*Anne Mette Kjær, Jan Pettersson and Elling Tjønneland<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

Since the early years of development cooperation, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have channelled aid to many poor countries. In Africa, they have focused on a number of primarily English-speaking countries, some in western Africa but many in the southern and eastern part. This has changed as all three now focus increasingly more on fragile areas e.g. the Sahel. However, the change has been most pronounced in Denmark's choice of partner countries. Of a number of eastern and southern African partner countries, in 2023 only Uganda and Kenya remain. Denmark's geographic focus in Africa is now squarely on the Horn and the Sahel.

This change is interesting for at least three reasons. First, country choice is a way to examine the motives and purposes of development policy decisions and therefore constitutes one entry point into understanding the drivers behind aid allocation. Second, it is evident that Norway and Sweden, the two countries that we often see as likeminded in the international development community, have not gone down the same path as Denmark, as they still have a strong presence in the southern and eastern parts of SSA. This difference enables us to inquire into whether the Scandinavians use different criteria for country choice and therefore have different motivations driving aid allocation decisions. Finally, the countries with which we choose to cooperate in Africa have varied structural and contextual conditions affecting the prospects for poverty reduction and sustainable development, the two aid purposes most emphasised by the OECD DAC. Hence, changes in partner choice can have important implications for our ability to promote predominant development aid goals.

The purpose of this chapter is to characterise and compare Denmark's, Norway's and Sweden's choices of partner countries in Africa over time with a view to identifying the motivations behind these choices. We focus on partner countries in Africa mainly because it has been a prioritised region for the Scandinavian countries. We focus on bilateral aid because it illuminates the donors' geographic focus much better than multilateral aid, which is given as core contributions to organisations without targeting specific countries. Of course, bilateral allocations through multilateral organisations earmarked for specific purposes also reach Africa, and we include them to the extent that they are targeted at a specific country. The term used for 'partner country' has differed between the three Scandinavians and over time. They have been called 'recipient' countries, 'priority' countries, 'programme-cooperation' countries, 'partner' countries or, as in Denmark since 2021, 'expanded partnerships' (MFA 2022). Here, we use all terms as they were applied at the time they were adopted. In the analysis, we draw on available policy documents, OECD DAC data, secondary literature as well as our own knowledge from previous research and our various roles related to development policy.

In the following, we first address the literature on criteria for and purposes of development aid and partner country choice. We then outline each of the three Scandinavian governments' choices of partner country over time before moving on to discussing and tentatively explaining the differences.

## The literature on donor motives and partner country selection

The selection of partner country is fundamental, because it reveals 'implicit preferences and political choices at the heart of development co-operation efforts', as an OECD DAC issues paper expressed it in 2006 (OECD DAC 2006). Choice of partner country can thus be an important indicator of a donor's motivations and reasons for aid-giving. Generally, there is consensus that a number of motivations and purposes lie behind foreign aid and thereby behind the choice of partners, such as diplomatic, developmental, commercial, democracy promoting, and human rights motivations (Lancaster 2007, pp. 6-7).

The weighting of these different purposes varies between donor countries, depending on a range of factors such as the position of the state in the international system, and on domestic politics and institutions. To illustrate, Carol Lancaster (2007, pp. 108-9) observes how US development policies have always reflected a mix of diplomatic purposes (due to its superpower position in the international system) and development purposes (due to pressure from humanitarian domestic interest groups). As is well known, US foreign assistance was channelled to such countries as Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire, as a part of the containment policy during the Cold War. In the new millennium, overseas development assistance would be directed to areas which were thought to give rise to terrorism (Fleck & Kilby 2010; Kraxberger 2005). For other bilateral donors, economic motivations could be dominant or there could be historical reasons for choosing specific partners. French aid has been regarded as driven by its status as a former colonial power and its wish to maintain a sphere of influence in the Francophonie, whereas Japanese aid has traditionally been motivated by commercial considerations and therefore directed towards countries considered promising for Japanese firms (Lancaster 2007, p. 217). In a 2000 study, Alesina and Dollar (p. 33) found,

...considerable evidence that the pattern of aid giving is dictated by political and strategic considerations. An inefficient, economically closed, mismanaged non-democratic former colony politically friendly to its former coloniser, receives more foreign aid than another country with similar level of poverty, a superior policy stance, but without a past as a colony.

Nordic foreign aid has generally been seen as overridingly development oriented rather than diplomatic or strategic. Alesina and Dollar (2000) found the Nordics to be an exception to their observed pattern, as the Nordics respond more to factors such as income levels, good institutions in the receiving countries, and openness, rather than matters such as whether they vote favourably in the UN or whether they are an important ally. In fact, many scholars have observed the existence of a so-called 'Nordic model', one that is characterised by aid generosity and focused on the will to contribute to poverty reduction (Engh 2021; Selbervik & Nygaard 2006). As small countries with limited influence in the international system, development aid generosity has been a way for the Scandinavian countries to achieve more international

influence than their relatively small country size dictates, in other words, to 'punch above their weight' internationally (Stokke 2019b; Olesen, Pharo & Paaskesen 2013). In their choice of partner countries, the Nordics have thus focused more on development needs of partner countries than on whether they were of importance for other more strategic or commercial reasons, although particularly the latter has always also played a role (Berthélemy 2006; Kjær et al. 2022). To illustrate, finding a positive relation between bilateral aid and bilateral trade, Pettersson and Johansson (2011) note a particularly strong link with donor imports of strategic materials. Another consideration for the Nordics has, in line with the Paris Declaration of 2005, been whether the recipient country has absorption capacity and whether prospects for a genuine partnership can be identified (Bach et al. 2008; Wood et al. 2011).

But these traditional drivers behind the Nordics' choice of recipient country may be changing. In the 2000s and the 2010s, many bilateral donors started to direct more attention to fragile states, partly as a way to combat terrorism in the aftermath of the terror attacks on the twin towers of 11 September 2001, and partly to reduce conflict and impede large migration flows. Moreover, as the implications of climate change have become more evident, donors tend to want to channel aid towards climate mitigation. Middle-income countries have much higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than low-income countries and therefore receive aid for transitioning to greener energy (Dissanayake et al. 2020).

Observers have thus noted that the choice of recipient countries has generally become much more tied to donor countries' domestic situations in terms of terror, climate, migration, etc. (Bermeo 2017, p. 738; Heinrich, Machain & Oestman 2017). This tendency has increased the amounts of ODA directed to middle-income countries (MIC). Dissanayake et al. note that even if ODA would promote welfare best if used in the poorest countries,

donors are under considerable pressure to spend in MICs and almost certainly do so more than is optimal for the purposes of improving the welfare of the poor as efficiently and effectively as possible (...) while these are all observed behaviours that reflect the political economy of aid provision, they are – for the most part – deviations from the optimal allocation of ODA from the perspective of global development and/or poverty reduction (2020, p. 7).



In sum, there are many motivations and different aid purposes behind country choice, such as strategic geopolitical interest, economic interests, concerns about migration, and more idealistic motivations such as a wish to reduce poverty and inequality. These purposes offer a first guide to understanding country choice, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Aid motives and partner country selection**

Motives and purposes for ODA	Implications for choice of partner country
Development	Countries with largest development needs Low-income countries Countries with large proportion of poor
Diplomatic/geopolitical	Countries who are important allies Countries important for regional stability Countries that are former colonies
Democracy, human rights	Countries with prospects for better governance
Migration reduction	Countries closer to the donor country Fragile states
Climate mitigation	Middle-income countries

These motives point to different criteria such as whether a country is a low-income country, whether a large part of the population is below the national poverty line, whether it is a geopolitically important country, and whether it is a country of origin of refugees.

However, these motivations are quite broad and therefore do not offer a clear explanation for why one recipient country is chosen over another. For instance, why would Malawi be chosen as a partner rather than, for example, Mozambique, when both countries are equally poor? For this, we would have to examine factors more particular to each bilateral donor. Scholars have pointed to domestic factors such as political institutions, the nature and strength of domestic interest organisations, or the role of ideas (Lancaster 2007; Kjær et al. 2022). For example, pointing to political institutions, Carol Lancaster (2007) has argued that a strong parliament tends to direct foreign aid towards the poorest countries, whereas a strong executive would be more strategic. Regarding interest groups, strong development NGOs would also tend to argue for aid to go to the poorest, whereas business interests would likely lobby for aid to be channelled to middle-income countries where there are

more growth opportunities (Lancaster 2007; Bach et al. 2008). Finally, several observers mention pure chance or coincidence: a bilateral donor can partner with countries that they happen to already have a project in, or other more random and contingent factors. Finally, speaking the same language matters, so many Western donors have preferred English-speaking recipient countries (Bach et al. 2008). In the following, we outline the three Scandinavian donors' choice of partners in Africa over time.

## Denmark's partner countries in Africa

During the first decade of official Danish assistance to poor countries, four main recipients were selected. These included Tanzania and Kenya in Africa (India and Bangladesh in Asia). It is unclear exactly why the choice ended with the two eastern African countries, but the fact that there had been a common Nordic education project in Tanzania, 'the Kibaha Education Centre' seemed to play a role, as it was easy to continue activities already established (Bach et al. 2008, p. 163). Indeed, Tanzania's independence president, Julius Nyerere, was clear that education was a top national policy priority, and this appealed to the Scandinavian donors. In addition, the English language spoken in Tanzania and Kenya seemed to have played a role. In the 1960s more than ten per cent of all of Denmark's aid projects went to Tanzania, and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Tanzania remained the main recipient of Danish ODA (Bach et al. 2008). More countries were subsequently added to the list as they gained independence, such as Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, Mozambique and Angola. Denmark also began to engage with and support the SADCC (Southern African Development Coordination Conference), partly to strengthen the fight against apartheid in South Africa (Kelm-Hansen 2000; Bach et al. 2008). Countries in other African regions were added, but it is fair to say that the south-eastern region dominated.

The number of projects as well as recipient countries in Africa grew substantially over the 1970s and 1980s. The large number of projects and recipient countries proved to be a challenge, and how to concentrate on fewer and larger recipients became an issue. Observers appear to agree that the predominant view throughout the period was that Denmark should prioritise recipient need more than any other consideration when trying to focus aid on fewer countries (Kelm-Hansen 2000; Bach et al. 2008, p. 346; Elmegaard Bladt

2011). In the early 1980s the number of recipient countries of Danish aid had risen to 66. A process to reduce the number of partner countries was set in motion, and in this process it is clear that the poverty concern continued to feature strongly in the selection (Bach et al. 2008, p. 429). A set of criteria against which partners should be chosen was developed by the chairman of Danida's board and the head of the Danida secretariat, and approved by the designated parliamentary committee. The first priority on the list was 'the level of development of the recipient country, its development needs and the country's own development plans'. Secondly, the presence of other donors (for example whether there was 'donor-crowding') was to be considered. Thirdly, the opportunity to have a sensible dialogue with the recipient country about 'how to do development' and promote poverty reduction was considered desirable. Absorptive capacity and reasonably stable institutions were also criteria that were considered important for aid to function effectively. Further down the list Danish economic and business interests featured, but only if 'all the other criteria were fulfilled'. Other Danish foreign or domestic policy goals were absent from the list (Kelm-Hansen 2000, p. 225). The parliament's foreign policy committee agreed on the criteria, and they also decided to have at least two Francophone countries on the list.

With these criteria as a guide, the aim was to settle at about 20 partner countries in the developing world, but with an increasing focus on Africa. A process that took place over the subsequent 5-7 years began. Projects in different countries were phased out and new partners chosen that were able to meet the criteria. By the mid-1990s, the process had resulted in a list of 20 so-called 'programme-cooperation countries' of which 13 were in Africa (see Table 2). Eight of these were in eastern or southern Africa. It is evident that the overriding purpose to reduce poverty was the main criterion guiding the choice of country. As the 1999 OECD DAC peer review noted, the approach 'gave much weight to the poorest countries and to Africa. It is indeed noteworthy that 18 of these countries are low-income countries (LICs), including 11 least-developed countries (LLDCs), with only Bolivia and Egypt classified as lower middle-income countries. Thirteen countries are located in Sub-Saharan Africa' (OECD DAC 1999, p. 12).

In 2001 a new centre-right government came to power in November which kept the poverty criterion as a main motive for choosing partner countries. However, the government was determined to cut the volume of aid (specifically

by DKK 1.5 billion), as this had been part of their election campaign. Therefore, the number of recipient countries was reduced in the early 2000s, and Eritrea, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Egypt were 'deselected', with the argument that they failed to meet criteria of 'good governance'. This provoked a great deal of criticism, also from the OECD DAC, which in its review in 2003 noted that 'Because of its long-term formal commitment to partnership with the governments in Zimbabwe, Eritrea and Malawi, some have suggested that Denmark might have had a better chance of influencing them by being present rather than by leaving'.

One newcomer was Mali in 2006 but after the addition of Mali, the number of priority countries in Africa remained stable for some years. Thematically, security concerns had entered the stage after the September 11 terror attacks in New York, which made the government direct its attention to combating terrorism. This did not have any immediate effect on choice of partners in Africa, but Afghanistan became the largest recipient of Danish aid in the 2000s. This was in spite of the fact that the government explicitly wanted to focus more on Africa and, inspired by Tony Blair in England, even established an Africa Commission to focus on how to create jobs and develop employment in Africa.

In 2009 the governing party, the Liberals, proposed to phase out development aid for Asia and Latin America in order to focus more on Africa. Within Africa, aid was also focused more on fewer countries. In 2010, it was decided to phase out aid to Zambia and Benin and to close embassies there as a part of the process to concentrate on fewer countries (Elmegaard Bladt 2011). Denmark thus had 11 remaining partner countries in Africa in 2011 when a new centre-left government came to power, a government which did not increase, nor did it decrease development aid or the number of partner countries, except for leaving Ghana. In 2011 Ghana had become a lower middle-income country, which made Denmark decide to phase out aid to the country and to gear the embassy towards trade rather than aid-related activities.

In 2015, a new centre-right government was formed, whose member parties had campaigned for aid cuts. A result was that, even if it was mainly Latin American and Asian countries that were cut, it was also decided to leave two African countries: Zimbabwe (which in the meantime had re-entered as partner country after a coalition government with Tsvangirai had formed in

2008), and Mozambique. The finance bill in 2016 stated that the government wished to ‘focus development cooperation where poverty is prevalent and where Denmark has strategic interests and best can make a difference’ (MFA 2016). In 2017 South Sudan was removed from the list in order to ‘concentrate activities in fewer fragile countries in order to better make an impact’ (MFA 2017a). In 2018, Denmark thus had eight ‘priority countries’ in Africa, as Table 2 illustrates.

In 2019 a new social democratic minority government decided to phase out aid to Tanzania, which, like Ghana, had graduated to lower-middle income status, and to close the Danish embassy there. This came with a new concept of ‘expanded’ and ‘targeted’ partnerships. In countries with expanded partnerships, Denmark will ‘have a particularly close bilateral partnership, in which all our development policy instruments can be utilised. In such countries, we will implement a comprehensive development programme’ (MFA website 2023). In countries with targeted partnerships, Denmark’s involvement will be ‘narrower and focus on specific issues of particular relevance to Danish interests and expertise’ (ibid). The government thus decided to focus the expanded partnerships in Africa, and within Africa it wanted to concentrate on the Sahel and the Horn where ‘Denmark has interests and values at stake’ (MFA 2020a). At the moment of writing, Denmark has expanded partnerships with Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali (pending a constitutional process in that country), Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda, as is shown in Table 2.

In sum, Denmark’s main motivation in development aid, i.e. to contribute to poverty reduction, has been noticeable in its choice of priority countries, and this is to some extent still the case. Denmark’s current development strategy, ‘The World We Share’ states that the largest number of poor people live in fragile states and therefore, Denmark wishes to target aid to these places even if it is difficult. The strategy is also clear on the aim to address irregular migration. The current focus on the Horn of Africa and the Sahel reflects this motivation very well, as Denmark no longer has ‘expanded partnerships’ with any southern African country. In eastern Africa, Denmark has Uganda and Kenya left, and in western Africa, Denmark’s partners are located in the Sahel region. Denmark’s country strategic frameworks for Kenya and Uganda, the only stable country partners of Denmark in Africa, emphasise these countries’ importance as absorbing a large number of refugees and dampening conflict in the region (MFA 2017b; MFA 2020a). As the Uganda strategy 2018-2023 states in its very first sentence: ‘With

**Table 2. Denmark’s main recipient/programme countries, Africa, 1991-2021**

	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020	2021–
	<b>Egypt</b> <b>Ghana</b> Kenya Mozambique <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> <b>Zimbabwe</b>  Benin (f92) Zambia (f92) Burkina Faso (f93) Eritrea (f94) Niger (f94) Malawi (f95)	Egypt <b>Ghana</b> Kenya <b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> Zimbabwe  Benin Zambia <b>Burkina Faso</b>  Eritrea (t99) Niger (f97t99) Malawi	Egypt <b>Ghana</b> Kenya <b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> Zimbabwe (t01) <b>Benin</b> Zambia Burkina Faso  Eritrea (t01)  Malawi (t01)	Egypt (t06) <b>Ghana</b> <b>Kenya</b> <b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> Uganda Zimbabwe (f10)  Benin Zambia Burkina Faso  Niger (f10)  Mali Ethiopia (f10)	Ghana (t13) <b>Kenya</b> <b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> Zimbabwe  Burkina Faso  Niger  Mali Ethiopia South Sudan <b>Somalia</b> (f12)	<b>Kenya</b>  Tanzania <b>Uganda</b>  Burkina Faso  Niger  <b>Mali</b> <b>Ethiopia</b> South Sudan (t17) <b>Somalia</b>	<b>Kenya</b>  Uganda  <b>Burkina Faso</b>  Niger  <b>Mali</b> <b>Ethiopia</b>  Somalia
Partners	7–13	12–13	9–12	9–12	11–12	8–9	7
Share of bilat. aid %	44.7	45.9	35.9	34.6	27.0	18.9	22.3
<b>Share of largest 5%</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>20.1</b>
African recipients	22 – 32	15–23	17–25	25–37	21–40	19–39	39
African share bilat. Aid%	55.4	49.0	43.3	51.1	36.4	29.1	38.4

- i) Numbers in brackets refer to first year (f) and exit year (t), respectively.
- ii) Partners: Min and max number of partner countries in one year during the five-year period.
- iii) Share of bilat. aid: Partner countries’ average yearly shares of bilateral aid.
- iv) **Share of largest 5** (countries marked in bold): Largest five African recipients’ shares of bilateral aid (the sum of every year’s five largest over the period as share of the period’s total bilateral aid). From 2006–2010 Nigeria, not in the list of countries, was the fifth largest recipient. In 2021 Tanzania was the fifth largest recipient. In 2023 Tanzania receives 25 million DKK in phase-out support and the embassy will close in 2024.
- v) African recipients: Min and max number of African countries receiving aid in one year during the five-year period.
- vi) African share bilat. aid: African countries’ average yearly shares of bilateral aid.

Source: Partner countries: the authors; Aid flows and African recipients: constructed from CRS data (downloaded 22 March 2023), using commitments.

Uganda being a poor but stable country situated in an increasingly unstable region and being the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, Denmark has a clear interest in a continued Danish-Ugandan partnership' (MFA 2017b, p. 1). Or as regards Kenya, 'Denmark and Kenya share a range of strategic interests in terms of addressing irregular migration and managing refugee flows, countering violent extremism and terrorism, cultivating commercial opportunities and free and fair trade, promoting shared values, and a global commitment to sustainable development' (MFA 2020b, p. 4).

The 2021 OECD DAC peer review also observes that 'Climate change and irregular migration have shaped Denmark's approach to development co-operation over this review period' and that 'Denmark's geographical focus has shifted to the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, with a decreasing presence in southern Africa and Asia'.

This gives rise to the question of whether partner selection and deselection is still guided mainly by the criterion of poverty, which has been dominant ever since the 1960s. To some extent this is the case, given that Tanzania as well as Ghana has been phased out due to the 'graduation' argument, i.e. that they are now no longer among the world's poorest. However, Kenya remains a partner country even though it is not a low-income country. Along the same line of argument, the Sahel region and the Horn are very poor regions, but Denmark has left other poor countries such as Mozambique (or in Asia, Nepal) in order to focus on fragile areas. Indeed, Denmark has followed an international trend to increase focus on areas with conflict, with one of the main reasons being that they are areas of origin of refugees (Bermeo 2017).

From the perspective of climate change, which is an overriding concern for the current centre coalition government in Denmark, Malawi or Mozambique would have been obvious choices since they are very hard hit by unpredictable precipitation and flooding. It seems then, that even if poverty reduction is still important to the government, strategic concerns e.g. about areas of origin of refugees and Danish interests play a large role.

It is also worth noting that even if Africa has been the government's more explicitly prioritised region, Africa is allocated an increasingly smaller share of total ODA. While the ODA share of GDP has declined since 2000 from over 1% to 0.7%, the share of bilateral aid to the African partner countries, as noted

in Table 2, has declined from 44.5% in the 1990s to 22.3% in 2021. Going by data reported on Danida OpenAid, Africa received 28% of all ODA in 2003 and 17% in 2021. In the proposed finance bill for 2023, bilateral aid for Africa only makes up DKK 500 million out of a total aid budget of about DKK 20 billion. This obviously reflects the impact of the war in Ukraine. But it also reflects the increasing share of bilateral aid given as earmarked funds to multilateral organisations, which is not always assigned to a particular country or region.

## Sweden's choice of partner countries with a focus on Africa

At the very dawn of Sweden's official development cooperation in the early 1950s, Ethiopia and Pakistan were selected as the first recipient countries of Swedish aid, and projects were also begun in other countries (Ceylon, Ghana, Liberia, Tunisia). Berg et al. paint a picture of a country selection at the time determined more by coincidence and individual preferences of politicians and government officials than by any formally established allocation principles (2021, ch. 19). In addition, there was a limited number of independent countries to cooperate with.

There were a few competing and overlapping attempts in the early 1960s to form criteria for country selection. Berg et al. (2021) point to how country allocation was discussed from two competing viewpoints: that of reaching the poorest countries (without conditioning aid on, for example, type of political system), versus selection of countries conditioned on recipient countries' capability and will to develop (including the possibility for aid to contribute to social equality and political democracy). The parliamentary decision in 1966 was to concentrate Sweden's bilateral aid on Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Tunisia, Pakistan and India (countries already part of Sweden's portfolio) with a strict focus on vocational training, food security and healthcare (in particular family planning). Twelve other countries, where Sweden had ongoing projects, were to be phased out. It was stated that deviations from the allocation criteria above should only be possible for humanitarian aid and for family planning projects (Berg et al. 2021, ch. 19). In the early 1970s a few countries 'aspiring to social and economic justice' were added and support to liberation movements, including in Botswana and Zambia, was emphasised (Berg et al. 2021, ch. 26).



In a combination of institutional path dependence and increased resources from the one per cent target, the countries from the early years have largely remained, while new ones have been added. For Africa, the number of main cooperation countries remained relatively constant at around 13 countries from the mid-1970s to the early 2000s (see Rundin 2002, and Table 4). New partner countries have often been the result of a continuation of an initial humanitarian response (e.g. Liberia, Sudan). Also, support to liberation movements was often transformed into bilateral development cooperation after independence was achieved (e.g. Angola, South Africa. See e.g. Utrikesdepartementet 1977, p. 304). A government committee in 1990 noted a scarcity of motivations behind country choices in official documents, even though the poverty focus has been strong, and speculated that 'maybe one has not wanted to bind oneself by explicit principles for these truly political choices' (Utrikesdepartementet 1990, pp. 41-43).

Africa (mainly Sub-Saharan Africa) has always been one, if not the, main priority in Sweden's bilateral aid. As shown in Table 4, the 10-20 'formal' partner countries in Africa have received between 18 to 38% of Sweden's total bilateral aid during the last three decades, and country-allocated aid to all countries in Africa has totalled 36 to 45% of Sweden's bilateral aid. As in Denmark and Norway, the form and terms, as well as the names, of cooperation with 'selected' partner countries have changed over the years. This limits comparability over time and between donors. The budget bill of 1962 uses the term 'recipient countries' but from the early 1970s on the term 'programme countries' was used, based on principles of inclusion in partner country's own development plans and the use of the partner countries' own administrative systems (Utrikesdepartementet 1990, pp 39-41). In the early 1990s, still using the term programme countries, the government started to formulate multiannual country strategies with a larger focus on Swedish priorities within bilateral cooperation.

While the country strategies set out objectives for Swedish development cooperation with a specific country during a specific period, and thus signal a prioritisation of that country in Sweden's development cooperation, this does not exclude cooperation with countries lacking a country strategy. Indeed, as seen in Table 4, almost every African country has received at least some Swedish aid. This is described in Sweden's International Development Cooperation Yearbook 1999:

Sweden is participating in bilateral cooperation with a large number of countries. The term 'country' is not only used to refer to the state or the government, but to the community as a whole. In the case of countries in which Sweden is involved in more comprehensive or complex cooperation, this is governed by a 'country strategy' [...] prepared jointly by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida (Government Offices 1999, pp. 57-58).

There have been several attempts over the years to concentrate Sweden's number of recipients, the earliest being the concentration policy in 1966 referred to above. A government committee in 1990 noted that, in 1998/99, 93 countries received Swedish aid. Arguing that thinly-spread aid would fail to have catalytic effects of scale, and pointing to challenges of capacity and contextual expertise on the Swedish side, the committee recommended a reduction in the number (although not specified) of recipient countries (Utrikesdepartementet 1990, p. 194). The recommendation had no effect on the total number of partner countries, however. Instead, it almost doubled at the turn of the millennium. In 2001 Globkom, the Committee on Sweden's policy for global development, noted that the (total) number of countries with a strategy had increased from around 20 to around 45 and suggested a reduction to a maximum of 20 countries together with a set of criteria, primarily an increased poverty focus (Government Offices 2001, p. 96, ch. 6.4). The recommendation of a set of criteria did not make it through the referral process into the government proposition (Government of Sweden 2003, ch. 6.4). Instead, it was noted that the government cannot rely on a uniform model for country selection, since conditions are context specific. 'Needs and possibilities to reach results should determine the extent and form for development cooperation with individual countries' (ibid).

In 2007 the government made an attempt to limit the number of recipient countries in a 'country focusing reform' (Government of Sweden 2007). The aim was to focus Sweden's bilateral development cooperation through formal strategies with about 30 partner countries where Sweden has the largest potential to contribute to development, fifteen of which were African countries. The process was explained as having relied on a set of indicators for selection. These indicators were criticised by Hagen (2015) as 'a veritable smorgasbord of indicators and while they come in four thematic groups, [poverty, effectiveness, human rights and democratic governance, and Swedish added value/

comparative advantages] there is no guidance as to their relative importance in different cases, much less an explicit weighting of them'. In addition, Kron (2012) found none of the indicators to have a statistically significant effect for selection. Instead, he argues, the main explanatory factor was whether NGOs affiliated with any of the four governing parties were engaged in a country or not.

For 'graduation' reasons, Botswana ceased to be a programme country in 1998. A few aid-financed interventions followed, but the 2007 decision was to engage in selective cooperation under limited amounts of aid with the aim of transitioning into 'non-aid actor-driven cooperation'. A similar phaseout of traditional aid to Namibia and South Africa took place, and Sweden has not had a proper strategy for any of the three since 2013. The government's appropriation letter to Sida for 2011 instructed the agency to replace the country strategies for Burundi and Sierra Leone with a phaseout strategy and states that no disbursements are allowed after 31 December 2012. While the strategies were phased out, it is worth noting that both countries continued to receive aid through other strategies after that date.

The government's appropriation letter to Sida for 2013 instructed it to phase out aid to Burkina Faso by the end of 2016 at the latest. The main arguments for the phaseout seem to have been the few bilateral, natural or historical connections, and a higher value added from Swedish aid in other contexts (parliamentary session of questions to ministers, 30 November 2012). A plan was decided in June 2013. The elections in 2014 led to a change in government and to an instruction in the appropriation letter for 2015 to resume the cooperation with Burkina Faso. Since 2013, no country strategy in Africa has been phased out, leaving the number of strategies from 2014 onwards at fifteen. The aid policy framework (Government of Sweden 2016), states that '[t]here is a need to regularly review where the added value of Swedish development cooperation is highest. Countries must be chosen based on an overall assessment and a clear basis for assessment founded on where Sweden is particularly well-placed to carry out effective development cooperation.' However, no such overall assessment has so far been made (public), and how this review is to be carried out and what the grounds for the overall assessment would be has not been clarified.

The lack of geographical concentration was also noted by OECD in the 2019 peer review (OECD DAC 2019), leading to the recommendation to ‘enhance the impact of its programming and reduce pressure on staff capacity, Sweden should allocate a higher share of its development assistance to a prioritised set of partner countries’. The government formed after the 2019 elections (the Social Democrats and the Green Party) relied on support from the Liberal and the Centre Party conditioned on a reform package (the ‘January agreement’), where the agreement on aid included the statement that ‘Sweden’s aid shall be focused’, but it was not translated into a reduction in the number of partner countries.

In sum, at the beginning of 2023, Sweden has country strategies with 15 countries in Africa. Still, aid is distributed to countries lacking country strategies through other, thematic strategies, so virtually every African state (51 countries in 2022) receives Swedish aid (including humanitarian assistance, source OpenAid.se). During the entire period up until 2023, the total ODA share of GDP has remained at one per cent. Following the elections in autumn 2022, the new government has announced a reform agenda for aid, including an increased focus. While the agenda remains to be specified, instructions in the appropriation letter to Sida for 2023 suggest a few changes in Sweden’s aid to five African countries: ‘new and prolonged contracts shall, to the extent possible, be avoided in Burkina Faso, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Zambia’.

## Norway’s choice of partner countries in Africa

The past two decades have seen significant shifts and changes in official Norwegian aid to partner countries in Africa. We have witnessed a reduced role of partner countries as recipients of Norwegian aid; we have seen changes in the composition, with old partner countries being phased out and new ones selected; and we have seen changes in disbursement channels and in the delivery of aid (Liland & Kjerland 2003; Hegertun 2021; Stokke 2019a; Tjønneland 2022).

Norway has always had a small number of main partner countries that were targeted for long-term development cooperation, government-to-government cooperation, and bilateral aid. In the early 1970s the concept of ‘main partner

country' was introduced (from the 1990s referred to as a 'programme country'). Aid to such countries was based on rolling four-year country programmes and negotiated through annual consultations between Norway and the selected country. Allocation to these countries was from a special budget item for each programme country. However, beginning in the late 1980s and accelerating after the millennium, several other African countries began to receive earmarked funding, as illustrated in Table 3. They were categorised as 'partner country' as an additional category, separate from the 'main partner countries' or 'programme countries'. Some of the programme countries (e.g. Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe) received less aid funds than many of the new partner countries (e.g. South Africa). By 2000 Norway had five 'main partner' countries in Africa: Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (and had phased out from Botswana and Namibia). Seven other African countries were classified as 'partner' countries: Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The criteria for selecting main partner countries were based on a poverty focus – meaning that they should be among the least developed countries as defined by the UN, or belong to the low-income category of countries. Other, less important, criteria also played a role, such as previous support to the liberation struggle and the regime's commitment to social development. There were some parliamentary debates and disagreements about individual countries. The Conservative Party was opposed to making Mozambique a main partner country in the late 1970s and the Socialist Left Party proposed making Angola a main partner country in the 1980s and 1990s (see also NOU 1995 and Stokke 2019a).

The number of partner countries expanded rapidly after the 1990s – although the main partner countries remained the same top recipients throughout the 20 years after 2000: Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and (until 2015) Zambia, as Table 3 demonstrates. In 2007 the Labour Party-led coalition government abolished the distinction between 'main partner' and 'partner' country.<sup>2</sup> This led to continued expansion of the number of recipient countries. The government proposal of 2010, for example, stated that 11 countries would receive long-term development aid in 2011 (Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) while another four (Zimbabwe, DRC, Eritrea and Somalia) would receive transitional assistance. The special budget items for each of the former

**Table 3. Norway's main recipient/programme countries, Africa, 1991-2021**

	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020	2021–
	Botswana <b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Zambia</b> <b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> Zambia Zimbabwe	<b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Zambia</b> Zimbabwe (t01)	<b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Zambia</b>	Mozambique <b>Tanzania</b> Zambia (t14)	<b>Mozambique</b> Tanzania	Mozambique Tanzania
	Ethiopia (f95)	<b>Ethiopia</b> Eritrea (t99) <b>Uganda</b> Malawi (f97)	Ethiopia  Uganda <b>Malawi</b>	Ethiopia  <b>Uganda</b> Malawi	Ethiopia  <b>Uganda</b> <b>Malawi</b> <b>South Sudan</b> <b>Somalia</b> (f14)	<b>Ethiopia</b>  <b>Uganda</b> <b>Malawi</b> <b>South Sudan</b> <b>Somalia</b> Ghana Mali (f18) Niger (f18) DRC (f19)	<b>Ethiopia</b>  <b>Uganda</b> <b>Malawi</b> <b>South Sudan</b> <b>Somalia</b> Ghana Mali Niger DRC
Partners	5–6	7–8	6–7	6	7–8	8–11	11
Share of bilat. aid %	31.8	17.3	21.6	12.6	14.5	13.7	12.5
<b>Share of largest 5%</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>
African recipients	13–43	39–48	43–49	41–46	38–46	41–46	43
African share bilat. Aid%	52.7	37.8	43.7	29.2	28.3	23,4	20,1

- i) Numbers in brackets refer to first year (f) and exit year (t), respectively.
- ii) Partners: Min and max number of partner countries in one year during the five-year period.
- iii) Share of bilat. aid: Partner countries' average yearly shares of bilateral aid.
- iv) **Share of largest 5** (countries marked in bold): Largest five African recipients' shares of bilateral aid (the sum of every year's five largest over the period as share of the period's total bilateral aid). From 2006–2010 Nigeria, not in the list of countries, was the fifth largest recipient. In 2021 Tanzania was the fifth largest recipient. In 2023 Tanzania receives 25 million DKK in phase-out support and the embassy will close in 2024.
- v) African recipients: Min and max number of African countries receiving aid in one year during the five-year period.
- vi) African share bilat. aid: African countries' average yearly shares of bilateral aid.

Source: Partner countries: the authors; Aid flows and African recipients: constructed from CRS data (downloaded 22 March 2023), using commitments.

main partner countries were abolished; all partner countries would receive funding from the same regional budget chapter post and – increasingly – from thematic budget chapter posts in the aid budget.

The new Conservative Party-led coalition from 2013 reversed parts of this process and called for concentration of the aid disbursements to fewer countries. Its 2016 White Paper on Development Aid introduced three types of partner country: stable, poor countries qualifying for long-term assistance; countries in conflict where aid would focus on peacebuilding and stabilisation; and developing countries of global importance (Norwegian MFA 2016). The last category was abolished in the subsequent 2018 White Paper on partner countries (Norwegian MFA 2018). This led to the selection of 16 partner countries, 10 of which were in Africa. DRC was subsequently added.

The long-term partner countries in Africa are Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Ghana. The fragile group is composed of five: Mali, Niger, South Sudan, Somalia and DR Congo. Mali, Niger and DR Congo are new partner countries. However, many of the former partner countries and other African countries still receive significant aid funding from Norway and, in some cases, more than some of the official partner countries. South Africa is, for example, re-emerging as a major recipient of Norwegian climate funding (mitigation) from the aid budget. Nigeria is also a bigger recipient of aid than two partner countries in West Africa (Ghana and Niger). The biggest changes in aid flows to individual countries took place outside Africa. A number of ODA-eligible countries in the middle-income category emerged as the biggest recipients of Norwegian aid despite not being formal partner countries. These included the Balkans in the 1990s, Brazil in the decade leading up to 2017 (climate funding to protect the Amazon rainforests) and Ukraine since 2014. And with the planned disbursements to Ukraine from 2023, aid to that country will be more than the combined disbursements to all 11 partner countries in Africa.

In general, the overarching purpose of Norwegian aid has remained poverty reduction, but an expanding number of thematic priorities have watered down the poverty focus. This has also implied growing disbursements to countries not in the low-income category. Most of the current 11 African partner countries are in the low-income category as defined by the World Bank. The exceptions are Ghana and Tanzania, which are in the lower-middle income group (Tanzania, however, is also in the least developed country category as

defined by the UN). A main change is the stronger focus on stabilisation and peacebuilding in the fragile group of partner countries. This has emerged as a new and major area for Norwegian aid since the millennium. For the more stable group qualifying for long-term cooperation there is stronger emphasis on promoting growth and also on mobilising of non-aid financial resources. There are, however, no sharp boundaries between the two categories. For some fragile countries, in addition to humanitarian assistance there is also an emphasis on long-term development aid programmes. In DR Congo, for example, aid related to protection of rain forests in Congo Basin is the main sector. Some of the selected long-term partner countries have also slid back into conflict such as Ethiopia and (in Asia) Myanmar, and Mozambique is struggling.

While the overall share of GDI has for some time remained at or above 1%, there have been some major changes in the disbursement of aid in the new millennium. One change is the rapidly decreasing role of direct bilateral aid as a way of providing support to partner countries. This has been replaced with an expanded use of earmarked funding through multilateral institutions (UN agencies) and the development banks, and core funding to the same and to new global funds for health and climate. Some of the earmarked funds are for programmes in partner countries, but much is also earmarked for various global and thematic initiatives. Furthermore, the management and staffing has seen major changes. Aid management is far more centralised in Oslo, disbursements to partner countries is to fewer programmes and projects, and with less capacity in embassies to monitor and make adjustments to the portfolio (see e.g. Tjønneland 2022). These trends have not just led to decreased funding to partner countries but also to a situation where there is hardly any direct government-to-government cooperation left involving financial transfers. Norwegian NGOs are now the most visible expression of Norwegian project and programme aid to partner countries. About 15% of the Norwegian aid is channelled through them, most strongly in fragile countries and in humanitarian aid.

While the choice of partner country in Africa has been guided by the poverty criterion, other concerns have also mattered. In the new millennium, some priorities were derived from concerns linked to the fight against terrorism and radical Islam, and the fear of irregular migration from Africa to Europe. This led to the selection of countries like Mali and Niger as partner countries,



**Table 4. Sweden's main recipient/programme countries, Africa, 1991-2021**

1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020	2021–	
Angola Botswana Cabo Verde (t94) Ethiopia Guinea-Bissau Kenya Lesotho (t 94) <b>Mozambique</b> Namibia <b>Tanzania</b> Uganda <b>Zambia</b> <b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>Angola</b> Botswana (t98) Ethiopia Guinea-Bissau (t98) Kenya <b>Mozambique</b> Namibia <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> Zambia Zimbabwe	Angola <b>Ethiopia</b> Kenya <b>Mozambique</b> Namibia <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> Zambia Zimbabwe (t01)	Angola (t06) Botswana (f09) Ethiopia Kenya <b>Mozambique</b> Namibia <b>Tanzania</b> <b>Uganda</b> Zambia Zimbabwe (f07)	Botswana (t13) Ethiopia <b>Kenya</b> <b>Mozambique</b> Namibia (t13) <b>Tanzania</b> Uganda Zambia Zimbabwe South Africa (t13) Sudan <b>DRC</b> Somalia Burkina Faso Burundi (t13) Mali Rwanda Liberia South Sudan (f14)	<b>Ethiopia</b> Kenya <b>Mozambique</b> <b>Tanzania</b> Uganda <b>Zambia</b> Zimbabwe Sudan DRC <b>Somalia</b> Burkina Faso Mali Rwanda Liberia South Sudan	Ethiopia Kenya Mozambique <b>Tanzania</b> Uganda Zambia Zimbabwe Sudan <b>DRC</b> <b>Somalia</b> Burkina Faso <b>Mali</b> Rwanda Liberia <b>South Sudan</b>	
Partners	7–13	12–13	9–12	9–12	11–12	8–9	7
Share of bilat. aid %	44.7	45.9	35.9	34.6	27.0	18.9	22.3
<b>Share of largest 5%</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>20.1</b>
African recipients	22 – 32	15–23	17–25	25–37	21–40	19–39	39
African share bilat. Aid%	55.4	49.0	43.3	51.1	36.4	29.1	38.4

- i) Numbers in brackets refer to first year (f) and exit year (t), respectively.
- ii) Partners: Min and max number of partner countries in one year during the five-year period.
- iii) Share of bilat. aid: Partner countries' average yearly shares of bilateral aid.
- iv) **Share of largest 5** (countries marked in bold): Largest five African recipients' shares of bilateral aid (the sum of every year's five largest over the period as share of the period's total bilateral aid). From 2006–2010 Nigeria, not in the list of countries, was the fifth largest recipient. In 2021 Tanzania was the fifth largest recipient. In 2023 Tanzania receives 25 million DKK in phase-out support and the embassy will close in 2024.
- v) African recipients: Min and max number of African countries receiving aid in one year during the five-year period.
- vi) African share bilat. aid: African countries' average yearly shares of bilateral aid.

and for the first time Norway channelled aid funds through the EU (The EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons). The engagement in Somalia emerged out of Norway's membership of the Security Council in 2001-2002 where it was the penholder on Somalia. The focus on DR Congo is intimately linked to the Norwegian forest and climate initiative to protect tropical forests. The engagements in some of these countries were, however, also derived from old priorities related to poverty reduction and past engagements. The Mali engagement builds on strong, poverty-focused, engagement beginning in the mid-1980s. South Sudan emerged out of a strong commitment driven by Norwegian NGOs to support the independence struggle. This led to Norway's political engagement in the Sudan/South Sudan mediation. Norway became part of the Troika with the UK and the US, and this created a strong foreign policy interest, reinforcing Norway's South Sudan engagement.

## Motivations compared, tentative explanations, and conclusion

Our narrative account of the Scandinavian donors' selection of partner countries in Africa over time shows some similar trends. The three Scandinavian countries have all focused on low-income African countries. They have all traditionally had a strong presence in eastern and southern Africa. For example, as Tables 2, 3 and 4 show, Tanzania has been a prioritised development partner to all Scandinavians throughout the period studied, until the recent Danish decision to phase out cooperation with Tanzania. For more than twenty years, Norway's main African partners were Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, and Malawi.

The three Scandinavians have all turned their attention more towards fragile states and areas hit by conflict. As indicated in Tables 2, 3 and 4, they also all gave a gradually smaller share to the African bilateral partner countries of between 32 and 44% in the 1990s, to between 12.5% (Norway) and 28.5% (Sweden). The declining share should be seen primarily as a consequence of an increasing share of bilateral aid donated through multilateral organisations and funds through earmarked allocations. This is particularly the case for Norway.

However, there are also some quite striking differences between the three. Denmark has shifted focus in a much more consequential way when it comes to choosing partner country. In this sense, Denmark has been more strategic, whereas Norway and Sweden have maintained more longstanding 'traditional' partnerships. Denmark clearly has the strongest focus on fragility and 'areas of origin of refugees' and is also the only country that has ceased cooperation with southern African countries, which are relatively stable and cannot be considered as countries of origin of refugees.

Norway is still partnering with Mozambique and Malawi, while Sweden remains present in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Both maintain more of a balance between stable and fragile countries than Denmark does. Sweden, however, is partnering with a considerably longer list of countries. It is also evident from the tables that Norway has spent a lesser share of its bilateral aid on partner countries, and Denmark by far the largest share. Denmark has been praised in the OECD DAC for its ability to focus aid, whereas Sweden has been advised to focus in on fewer countries. Since 2000 Norway and Sweden have maintained their commitment to a one per cent ODA share of GDP, while Denmark has reduced its share to 0.7% (Kjær et al. 2022).

Although many different motivations are obviously behind country choice in all three Scandinavian countries, it is evident that of the motivations listed in Table 1, the wish to reduce migration and address irregular migration has played a larger role in Denmark. In Sweden, the wish to reduce poverty and promote human rights and gender equality in a large number of countries seems to have been predominant, although there are of course exceptions to this rule. It seems odd, for instance, that Rwanda has been chosen as a partner seen from a human rights perspective, as Rwanda is considered to be one of the most repressive regimes in Africa. Norway has put greater emphasis on multilateral aid for global public goods, which means that bilateral partnerships have received less attention.

Why do the three Scandinavians differ in motivations and criteria of partner country choice? The answer is of course not to be found in any single explanatory factor. We have examined the domestic politics behind the Nordics' development policies in more depth elsewhere (Kjær et al. 2022). Within the space limitations here, a few tentative explanations to be found in domestic institutional and political factors can be pointed to (Lancaster 2007). In

Denmark, coalition governments excluding the aid-friendly centre parties but with support from far-right anti-immigration parties were hugely important in causing the paradigm shift which characterises Danish development aid and therefore partner country choice (Kjær et al. 2022).

In Norway, the fact that the centre-right development aid-friendly political party Kristendemokratiet maintained an important role played a part in the sizable aid budget and continued poverty focus. However, the ever-increasing GDP also meant that multilateral solutions became necessary, as the Norwegian MFA would be left with managing a very large and growing bilateral package. A combination of foreign policy concerns and very limited debate in parliament on development issues implies that it is the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, to a large extent, has been shaping the implementation of development aid. This is most evident in the rapid rise in disbursements to non-partner countries and the relative decline in bilateral support to partner countries. Foreign policy priorities related to global health, conflict mediation and climate mitigation were important in these processes (Tjønneland 2022).

In Sweden, centre-left as well as centre-right governments have until recently excluded the far-right Sweden Democrats. Centre-liberal political parties have traditionally acted as 'aid guardians', thus also maintaining the goal of poverty reduction and promotion of human rights. However, the centre parties have been weakened, and the current right-wing government, which was formed in 2022, has the support of the Sweden Democrats. This has caused Swedish development aid to change significantly recently. In addition, Sida is the most independent of the three countries' aid agencies, which has arguably contributed to a strong Swedish commitment to long-term programmes in poor countries (Kjær et al. 2022).

An additional factor could be that Nordic cooperation around the formulation of development policy has been rather weak in this millennium. Hence, the Nordics have been observed to grow apart (Kjær et al. 2022). Even if the Nordics still see each other as likeminded and collaborate, for example on the boards of multilateral organisations, the cooperation and coordination of development policy between the Nordics could evidently be stronger. A strong collaboration would arguably enhance the Nordics' international influence and could contribute to increased aid effectiveness on the ground.

In conclusion, we find that Norway, Sweden and Denmark have made different choices during the last decades as regards bilateral partners in Africa. Sweden has maintained quite a long list of diverse partners (now at 15), Norway somewhat fewer (now 11), whereas Denmark has decided to focus on a few countries (presently 7). The geographical focus also differs, with Denmark concentrating on fragile countries around the Sahel and the Horn, and Sweden and Norway present in all parts of Africa. The motivations behind these choices differ, as Sweden has had more of a poverty and human rights focus, Norway a poverty and global public goods focus, and Denmark a poverty and migration focus. These conclusions are very broad brushstrokes, of course, as other motivations such as business and commercial interests clearly have also played a role, as well as random factors, as we have seen in the above.

Partner country choice matters for the effectiveness of aid. Stable partners and equal and respectful partnerships where goals are set mainly by the recipient are still believed to be the best conditions for effective aid. On the other hand, a large proportion of Africa's poor people in need of assistance live in fragile countries characterised by armed conflict or natural disaster, or both. Along the same lines, the many different humanitarian and climate-related crises characterising sub-Saharan Africa call for considerable financing if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be attained. Development aid only constitutes a small part of such financing. It is evident that multilateral channels are needed to reach these targets. On the other hand, bilateral programmes, when they are successful, have been known to achieve results on the ground. So exactly how to strike a balance between multi- and bilateral aid is a question which needs to be addressed. In addition, the growing geopolitical significance of the African continent gives rise to a concern about how that will affect development aid. Will the overriding purpose of development aid in the future be what's best for development or will it be other, more strategic, considerations? The different motivations and purposes of the Scandinavian countries' decisions regarding partner choice show, we believe, that there is a need to discuss such dilemmas and trade-offs.

## Notes

- 1 Anne Mette Kjær is a professor at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. Jan Pettersson, PhD, is the managing director at Expert Group for Aid Studies, Stockholm. Elling Tjønneland is a senior researcher at Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen.
- 2 This was first contained in the government budget proposal to Parliament for 2008 (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007. *St.prp. nr. 1 (2007-2008)*. See part 8.1.).

## References

- Alesina, Alberto and David Dollar, (2000) 'Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?' *Journal of Economic Growth* 5(1), pp. 33-63. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40216022>
- Bach, Christian Friis, Thorsten Borring Olesen, Sune Kaur-Pedersen and Jan Pedersen. (2008) *Idealer og Realiteter. Dansk Udviklingspolitik historie 1945-2005*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Berg, Annike, Urban Lundberg and Mattias Tydén. (2021) *En svindlande oppgift. Sverige och biståndet 1945-1975*. Ordfront Förlag: Stockholm.
- Bermeo, Sarah Blodgett. (2017) 'Aid allocation and targeted development in an increasingly connected world', *International Organization* 71, pp. 735-766.
- Berthélemy, Jean-Claude (2006). 'Bilateral donors' interest vs. recipients' development motives in aid allocation: do all donors behave the same?' *Review of Development Economics* 10(2), pp. 179-194.
- Dissanayake, Ranil, Charles Kenny and Mark Plant. (2020). 'What is the Role of Aid in Middle-Income Countries?' *CGD Policy Paper* 201. Washington DC: Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/what-role-aid-middle-incomecountries>
- Elmegaard Bladt, Lene. (2011) 'Landevalg I dansk udviklingsbistand 1962-2010. Hvem blev valgt og hvorfor?' *Temp, Tidsskrift for Historie* 2(3).
- Engh, Sunniva. (2021) 'The Nordic Model in International Development Aid'. In Haldor Byrkeflot, Lars Mjøset, Mads Mordhorst, and Klaus Petersen (eds.) *The Making and Circulation of Nordic Models, Ideas and Images*. London: Routledge.

Government of Sweden. (2016) *Policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance*, Government Communication 2016/17:60, Government of Sweden, Stockholm, Sweden.

Government of Sweden. (2007) *Förslag till statsbudget för 2008. Internationellt bistånd*, Prop. 2007/08:1 Utgiftsområde 7, Government of Sweden, Stockholm, Sweden.

Government of Sweden. (2003) *Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development*. Government Bill 2002/03:122, May 15, 2003. Government of Sweden, Stockholm, Sweden.

Government Offices. (2001) *Globkom, the Committee on Swedens policy for global development*. Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2001:96. Government Offices of Sweden, Stockholm, Sweden.

Government Offices. (1999) *Sweden's International Development Cooperation Yearbook 1999*. Government Offices of Sweden, Stockholm, Sweden.

Hagen, Rune. (2015) *Concentration Difficulties? An Analysis of Swedish Aid Proliferation*, EBA report 2015:03, Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA), Sweden.

Hegertun, Nikolaj. (2021) 'En stille revolusjon av utviklingssamarbeidet?', *Internasjonal Politikk* 79(4), pp. 341-366.

Heinrich, Tobias, Carla Martinez Machain, and Jared Oestman (2017). 'Does counterterrorism militarize foreign aid?. Evidence from Sub-saharan Africa'. *Journal of Peace Research*. 54 (4), 527-541.

Fleck, Robert K. and Christopher Kilby. (2010) 'Changing aid regimes? US foreign aid from the Cold War to the War on Terror'. *Journal of Development Economics* 91(2), pp. 185-197.

Kelm-Hansen, Christian. (2000) 'Det koster at være solidarisk'. *Den permanente utfordring*. Copenhagen: Fremad.

Kjær, Anne Mette, Jan Pettersson, Elling Tjønneland, Marikki Karhu and Jari Lanki. (2022) 'Diverging like-mindedness? Development policy among the Nordics'. *Forum for Development Studies* 49(3), pp. 319-344. doi:10.1080/08039410.2022.2120414

Kraxberger, Brennan M. (2005) 'The United States and Africa: Shifting Geopolitics in an "Age of Terror" '. *Africa Today* 52(1), pp. 46-68.

- Kron, Robert. (2012). Hur kan regeringens val av biståndsländer förklaras? Ekonomisk debatt, 40, 5-15, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Lancaster, Carol. (2007) *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Liland, Frode and Kirsten Alsaker Kjerland. (2003) *1989-2003. På bred front*, Bergen: Fagbokforlaget (*Norsk Utviklingshjelps historie*, bind 3).
- MFA (2016) *Regeringens Udviklingspolitiske prioriteter for finansåret 2016*. Copenhagen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MFA (2017a) *Regeringens Udviklingspolitiske prioriteter for finansåret 2017*. Copenhagen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MFA (2017b) *Denmark-Uganda Partnership. Country Programme 2018-2022*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MFA (2020a) *Regeringens Udviklingspolitiske prioriteter for finansåret 2020*. Copenhagen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MFA (2020b) *Strategic Framework, Denmark-Kenya Partnership 2021-2025*. Copenhagen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MFA (2022) *'The World We Share' Denmark's development strategy*. Copenhagen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MFA website (2023) Dynamic partnerships in a changing world (um.dk). Accessed May 18 2023.
- Norwegian MFA (2007) *St.prp. nr. 1 (2007-2008) (The Development Aid budget)*.
- Norwegian MFA (2016) St.meld. St. 24(2016-2017) *Felles ansvar for felles fremtid. Bærekraftsmålene og norsk utviklingspolitikk*.
- Norwegian MFA (2018) St.meld. St. 17 (2017-2018) *Partnerland i utviklingspolitikken*.
- NOU (1995). *Norsk sør-politikk for en verden i endring*. Oslo: Statens forvaltningstjeneste/Statens trykning.
- OECD DAC (2019), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Sweden 2019*, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris.



- OECD DAC (2006) 'Partner country selection: A different perspective of emerging donors? OECD DAC Issues Paper. Istanbul. October.
- OECD DAC (1999) 'Denmark. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review'. Paris: OECD.
- OECD DAC (2003) 'Denmark. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review'. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2011) 'Denmark. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review'. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2016) 'Denmark. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review'. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2021) 'Denmark. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review'. Paris: OECD.
- Olesen, Thorsten Barring, Helge Ø. Pharo og Kristian Paaskesen (red.) (2013). *Saints and Sinners. Official Development Aid and its Dynamics in a Historical and Comparative Perspective*. Oslo: Akademika Publishing.
- Pettersson, Jan and Lars Johansson. (2011) 'Aid, aid for trade, and bilateral trade: an empirical study'. *Journal of International Trade and Economic Development* 22(6), pp. 866-894. doi:10.1080/09638199.2011.613998
- Rundin, Ulf. (2002) Valet av mottagarländer för svenskt bistånd åren 1950-1990, Magisteruppsats, Department of History, Stockholm University, Sweden.
- Selbervik, Hilde and Knut Nygaard. (2006) 'Nordic exceptionalism in development assistance? Aid policies and the major donors: The Nordic countries'. *CMI report No 8*, Bergen: Christen Michelsen Institute.
- Stokke, Olav. (2019a) 'Norway: altruism under strain'. In Olav Stokke (ed.) *International Development Assistance. Policy Drivers and Performance*, Palgrave MacMillan (EADI Global Development Series), pp. 121-186.
- Stokke, Olav. (2019b) 'The drivers of development aid: What can they tell us about the future?' In Olav Stokke (ed.) *International Development Assistance*. EADI Global Development Series. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-06219-4\_10

Tjønneland, Elling. (2022) 'Norwegian development aid: a paradigm shift in the making?' *Forum For Development Studies* 49(3). doi:10.1080/08039410.2022.2096480

Utrikesdepartementet. (1990) 'Organisation och arbetsformer inom bilateralt utvecklingsbistånd'. Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1990:17. Utrikesdepartementet. Stockholm, Sweden.

Utrikesdepartementet. (1977) 'Sveriges samarbete med u-länderna. Betänkande av biståndspolitiska utredningen'. Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1977:13. Utrikesdepartementet. Stockholm, Sweden.

Wood, Bernard, Julia Betts, Florence Etta, Julian Gayfer, Dorte Kabell, Naomi Ngwira, Francisco Sagasti, and Mallika Samaranayake. (2011) *The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration, Final Report*, Copenhagen: DIIS.



# Chapter 4

## Selected bibliography

This is a selection of scholarly books, articles, and chapters about Danish foreign policy published in English, German or French in 2022

Arendt, Jacob Nielsen, Christian Dustmann and Hyejin Ku. (2022) 'Refugee migration and the labour market: lessons from 40 years of post-arrival policies in Denmark.' *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 38(3), pp. 531-556.

Bjoernsson, Iben. (2022) 'Negotiating Armageddon: civil defence in NATO and Denmark 1949-59'. *Cold War History* 23(2), pp. 1-22.

Creutz, Katja, Kristian Haugevik, Mikkel Runge Olesen, Anna Lundborg Regnér and Jakob Linnet Schmidt. (2022) 'Security debates and partnership choices in the Nordic states: From differentiation to alignment'. *NUPI Report, 01*. Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Dosenrode, Søren. (2022) 'The Danish Defence opt-out and the non-Europeanisation of Danish defence'. In Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (eds.) *Danish Foreign Policy Review 2022*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, pp. 107-137.

Everett, Karen and Barbora Halašková. (2022) 'Is it real? Science diplomacy in the Arctic states' strategies'. *Polar Record* 58(e27), pp. 1-14.

Ewers-Peters, Nele Marianne. (2022) 'Neutrals: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Malta and Sweden'. In Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters (ed.) *Understanding EU-NATO Cooperation*, London: Routledge, pp. 141-165.

Farbøl, Rosanna. (2022) 'Prepare or resist? Cold War civil defence and imaginaries of nuclear war in Britain and Denmark in the 1980s'. *Journal of Contemporary History* 57(1), pp. 136-158.

Fischer, Kristian and Hans Mouritzen (eds.) (2022) *Danish Foreign Policy Review 2021*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.

Forsby, Andreas Bøje. (2022) 'Denmark: enhanced vigilance in countering potential dependencies on China'. In John Seaman, Francesca Ghiretti, Lucas Erlbacher, Xiaoxue Martin and Miguel Oteroiglesias (eds.) *Dependence in Europe's Relations with China: Weighing Perceptions and Reality*, Paris: French Institute of International Relations, pp. 70-76.

Hammerschmidt, Dennis, Cosima Meyer and Anne Pintsch. (2022) 'Foreign aid in times of populism: the influence of populist radical right parties on the official development assistance of OECD countries'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 35(4), pp. 478-499.

- Hedegaard, Troels Fage and Christian Albrecht Larsen. (2022) 'Who can become a full member of the Club? Results from a conjoint survey experiment on public attitudes about the naturalisation of non-EU migrants in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark.' *Scandinavian Political Studies* 45(4), pp. 433-455.
- Henningsen, Troels Burchall. (2022) 'Small state strategy in practice: the formulation and execution of Danish theories of success in the United Nations Security Council, 2005-2006'. *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* 5(1), pp. 129-142.
- Holck, Lotte and Sara Louise Muhr. (2022) 'From institutionalized othering to disruptive collaboration: a postcolonial analysis of the police force in Greenland.' *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 41(7), pp. 993-1013.
- Hviid, Alexander Niels-Jacob. (2022) 'The Arctic window: a view to Greenland's foreign policy'. *Politica* 54(1), pp. 44-63.
- Ibragimova, Irina. (2022) 'Governance for global health: the role of Nordic countries.' *International Journal of Health Governance* 27(2), pp. 150-179.
- Jensen, Mikkel Storm. (2022) 'Denmark's offensive cyber capabilities: questionable assets for prestige, new risks of entrapment'. *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* 5(1), pp. 111-128.
- Kjær, Anne Mette. (2022) 'The paradigm shift of Danish development policy (1990-2020)'. *Forum for Development Studies* 49(3), pp. 345-371.
- Kluth, Michael. (2022) 'Make or buy? Explaining diverging frigate procurement approaches in Denmark and Norway'. *Defense and Security Analysis* 38(2), pp. 190-209.
- Klynge, Casper, Mikael Ekman and Nikolaj Juncher Waedegaard. (2022) 'Diplomacy in the digital age: lessons from Denmark's TechPlomacy initiative.' In Christian Lequesne (ed.) *Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the World. Actors of State Diplomacy*, Brill: Nijhoff, pp. 263-272.
- Larsen, Esben Salling. (2022) 'The military geographies of Denmark: a new place in a familiar landscape'. *Defence Studies* 22(3), pp. 378-397.

- Larsen, Jessica. (2022) 'Towards maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Are Danish efforts fit for purpose?' In Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (eds.), *Danish Foreign Policy Review 2022*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, pp. 138-164.
- Migliorati, Marta. (2022) 'Postfunctional differentiation, functional reintegration: the Danish case in justice and home affairs'. *Journal of European Public Policy* 29(7), pp. 1112-1134.
- Mouritzen, Hans. (2022) 'Wide fluctuations in Danish-Russian relations'. In Michael Kaeding, Johannes Pollak and Paul Schmidt (eds.) *Russia and the Future of Europe*, Cham: Springer, pp. 27-29.
- Mouritzen, Hans. (2022) "'Remember Iraq!": Learning theory and the 2013 non-decision on air strikes against Syria'. In Lina Klymenko and Marco Siddi (eds.) *Historical Memory and Foreign Policy*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11-29.
- Neergaard, Ulla and Graham Butler. (2022) 'Denmark's defence opt-out, the forthcoming referendum, and the changing face of EU defence and security arrangements'. *EU law live* (95), pp. 2-11.
- Oktay, Sibel. (2022) *Governing Abroad: Coalitions Politics and Foreign Policy in Europe*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press. (Ch. 4: 'Reaching across the aisle: Danish commitments during the 1990 and 2003 wars in Iraq', pp. 89-118).
- Olesen, Mikkel Runge. (2022) 'The beginnings of Danish foreign policy activism: supporting Baltic independence 1990-1991'. *Scandinavian Journal of History* 47(4), pp. 370-390.
- Olsvig, Sara. (2022) "'Uagununa Nunarout" ("It's our country"). Greenland's aim to move from trilateralism with Denmark and the US, to US-Greenlandic bilateralism'. In Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen (eds.) *Danish Foreign Policy Review 2022*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, pp. 74-106.
- Olsvig, Sara. (2022) 'Greenland's ambiguous action space: testing internal and external limitations between US and Danish Arctic interests'. *Polar Journal* 12(2), pp. 215-239.
- Patey, Luke. (2022) 'Confronting Coercion'. *The Wire China*, 2022 (2).

Rynning, Sten and Peter van Ham. (2022) 'Denmark and the Netherlands'. In Thierry Tardy (ed.) *The Nations of NATO: Shaping the Alliance's Relevance and Cohesion*, Oxford: Oxford Academic, pp. 208-232.

Røren, Pål and Anders Wivel. (2022) 'King in the North: evaluating the status recognition and performance of the Scandinavian countries.' *International Relations* 1-26.

Sahin, Kaan. (2022) 'Außenpolitische Digitalstrategien: Internationale Erfahrungen, Nationale Formate.' *SWP-Aktuell*, 27. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. (About Denmark, Switzerland and Austria).

Schmidt, Jakob Linnet. (2022) 'Danish and Norwegian responses to SDI: between low-voiced scepticism and outspoken opposition'. In Luc-André Brunet (ed.) *NATO and the Strategic Defence Initiative*, London: Routledge, pp. 164-185.

Tan, Nikolas Feith. (2022) 'Policy analysis: visions of the realistic? Denmark's legal basis for extraterritorial asylum.' *Nordic Journal of International Law* 91(1), pp. 172-181.

Theussen, Amelie. (2022) 'European strategic autonomy: opportunities and threats for Denmark'. In Giedrius Česnakas and Justinas Juozaitis (eds.) *European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security*, London: Routledge, pp. 138-152.

Wivel, Anders, Baldur Thorhallsson and Sverrir Steinsson. (2022) 'From rebellious and reluctant allies to reliant partners: Denmark and Iceland in the transatlantic relationship.' In Tomás Weiss and Geoffrey Edwards (eds.) *Small States and Security in Europe: Between National and International Policymaking*, London: Routledge, pp. 137-154.

Subscribe to DIIS's Newsletter







ISBN (print): 978-87-7236-114-7

ISBN (pdf): 978-87-7236-115-4

ISSN (print): 2596-7983

ISSN (pdf): 2596-6995