



## Danish Institute for International Studies

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# Danish Foreign Policy Review 2019

Edited by  
Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen



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# Preface

*Danish Foreign Policy Review*, a continuation of *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook*, addresses Danish foreign policy globally, regionally and domestically. In addition to the articles by Minister of Foreign Affairs Anders Samuelsen, and Minister of Defence Claus Hjort Frederiksen, the 2019 *Review* includes three externally peer reviewed academic articles, whose authors represent only their own 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.

Rasmus Mariager and Anders Wivel present and elaborate on the conclusions of their recent report, 'Denmark at War', for an international audience. Their focus is on the Danish decision-making processes regarding participation in the Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

Inspired by the Brexit turmoil, Rasmus Brun Pedersen investigates the crucial, but gradually waning, role that the UK has played in Danish European policy over the years. What should Denmark's future strategy be in its EU policy?

According to Louise Riis Andersen, the long-term trend since the 'good old days' of Danish United Nations policy has pointed towards a lower level of engagement. In the light of the global crisis for multilateralism, she argues that the UN should again become a cornerstone of Danish foreign policy.

*Danish Foreign Policy Review 2019* has been edited by Director Kristian Fischer and Dr.scient.pol. Hans Mouritzen. Stud.mag. Emilie Sort Mikkelsen has served as the assistant editor.

The Editors  
DIIS, Copenhagen  
May 2019



# Chapter 1

## Abstracts in English and Danish

*This chapter includes abstracts of the academic articles  
in English and Danish.*

# Denmark at war: great power politics and domestic action space in the cases of Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq

*Rasmus Mariager and Anders Wivel*

Between 1990 and 2018 Danish policymakers committed Danish troops to 76 military operations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, spanning from small observer missions to the wars following from the break-up of Yugoslavia and the war in Afghanistan. This article zooms in on the processes leading up to Danish policymakers' decisions to engage Denmark militarily in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, each of them important steps in the development of Denmark's military profile. Focusing on the interplay between international developments and domestic constraints, we identify the decision-making patterns and discuss the implications for Denmark's military engagements now and in the future. We conclude that Denmark's military engagement was driven primarily by the willingness of Danish policymakers to accommodate US requests for military contributions, typically even before they were communicated as concrete US preferences or demands.

*Fra 1990 til 2018 udsendtes danske tropper til 76 militære operationer i Europa, Mellemøsten, Afrika og Asien. Denne artikel fokuserer på beslutningsprocessen op til de danske militære engagementer i Kosovo, Afghanistan og Irak, der hver for sig udgjorde vigtige skridt i udviklingen af Danmarks militære profil. Vi analyserer samspillet mellem internationale udviklinger og indenrigspolitiske begrænsninger med henblik på at identificere mønstre i beslutningsprocesserne og at diskutere implikationerne for Danmarks militære engagementer nu og i fremtiden. Vi konkluderer, at Danmarks militære engagement primært var drevet af de politiske beslutningstageres villighed til at tilpasse sig USA's forventninger om militært engagement, typisk endog før de var formuleret som konkrete ønsker fra amerikansk side.*

# Oh Brother, Where Art Thou? The United Kingdom and strategies in Danish EU policy

*Rasmus Brun Pedersen*

The United Kingdom has played a central role in Danish EU policy as it has helped Denmark to balance the costs of entrapment and abandonment. The UK was originally the Danish mentor in European policy, as the two joined the EC together, and Denmark has often negotiated in the shadow of British bargaining positions. It is demonstrated here, however, that the strategic relevance of the 'special relationship' to Danish EU policy has diminished over the years. The article also focuses on the relevance of Brexit for the Danish opt-outs, especially in relation to the security and defence area. It is recommended that Denmark as a small state should aim at tying the UK as closely as possible to the common European security and defence area and the wider EU cooperation in order to balance potential entrapment costs in the coming years.

*Storbritannien har traditionelt spillet en central rolle i dansk EU-politik ved at bidrage til at håndtere det danske integrationsdilemma. UK var oprindelig Danmarks mentor i Europapolitikken, da de to blev medlemmer af EF samtidig, og Danmark har ofte forhandlet i skyggen af britiske positioner. Det påvises imidlertid her, at den strategiske relevans for dansk EU-politik af det særlige forhold til UK er aftaget med årene. Artiklen fokuserer også på betydningen af Brexit for de danske forbehold, i særlig grad forsvarsforbeholdet. Det anbefales, at Danmark som småstat forsøger at knytte Storbritannien så tæt som muligt til den fælles europæiske sikkerheds- og forsvarspolitik, såvel som til det bredere samarbejde, med henblik på at afbøde potentielle integrationsomkostninger i de kommende år.*

## The UN – a forgotten cornerstone in Danish foreign policy

*Louise Riis Andersen*

The role of the UN has been waning in Danish foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. By drawing on the notions of foreign policy doctrine and order policy this article explores how the UN has been marginalised over the years. It also suggests that the crisis of the rules-based order and multilateralism may pave the way for a revitalisation of Danish UN activism. It is argued that in most respects Danish UN policy has gone through a change in degree only, sustaining a 'small state Nordicity' as usual, albeit at a lower level of engagement. In a few important respects, however, it has been a change in kind, based on a growing belief in the utility of military force alongside a stronger concern for commercial interests and domestic political constraints (especially regarding migration). Against this backdrop the article suggests that a coherent Danish response to the crisis of the rules-based order would be to reinstate the UN as a cornerstone of Danish foreign policy.

*Efter den Kolde Krig har FNs rolle i dansk udenrigspolitik været gradvist aftagende. Med udgangspunkt i begreberne doktrin og ordenspolitik afdækker denne artikel, hvordan FN er blevet marginaliseret gennem årene. Der spørges samtidig, om krisen for den regelbaserede orden og multilateralismen kan bane vej for en revitalisering af dansk FN-aktivisme. Ændringerne i dansk FN-politik er i de fleste henseender gradvise snarere end kvalitative. Der er stadig tale om en nordisk småstatsprofil, om end med lavere engagement. Men på enkelte meget centrale punkter har Danmarks forhold til FN ændret sig afgørende. Det gælder især brugen af militær magt, fokuseringen på danske kommercielle interesser samt vægtningen af indenrigspolitiske hensyn (især på migrationsområdet). På den baggrund argumenterer artiklen for, at det danske svar på krisen i den internationale retsorden burde være at genetablere FN som en hjørnesteen i dansk udenrigspolitik.*

# Chapter 2

## Ministerial articles

# The international situation and Danish foreign policy 2018

*Anders Samuelsen, Minister of Foreign Affairs 2016-2019*

## Introduction: charting a clear course through troubled waters

While the world continued to become wealthier, healthier and better educated, 2018 also proved a tumultuous year in international affairs. Security concerns came very close to home with a foiled assassination attempt by Iran on Danish soil, a chemical attack on British soil and several cyberattacks taking aim at Danish interests and those of our allies. Russia expanded its aggressive actions to the Sea of Azov and the INF treaty began to unravel after years of Russian non-compliance. The conflict in Syria continued apace and the crisis in Venezuela intensified. But as the year finally drew to a close, there were also grounds for cautious optimism in the realm of international security affairs: negotiations in Stockholm had secured an agreement on a partial ceasefire in Yemen and there were signs of momentum in the Afghanistan peace process.

It was a tough year for proponents of freedom, democracy and free trade. According to Freedom House, the level of freedom declined globally for the 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. The space for human rights and civil society faced increasing pressure. The ruthless extrajudicial killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi came to epitomise this backslide, galvanising most of the international community – Denmark included – to pressure Saudi Arabia to allow a full and transparent investigation in order to hold those responsible accountable.

The WTO remained challenged by an increasingly fragile global consensus on the multilateral trading system. A trade war broke out between the US and China, and tariffs were even increased between the EU and the US.

In many ways, developments in Europe stood out from much of the global uncertainty and turbulence in 2018. Spring seemed to last a little longer in Europe. Economic growth continued, amounting to an about 2% increase across the EU. Youth unemployment hit an EU-wide 18-year low. The EU signed free trade agreements with Japan and Singapore, pushing the number of countries with which the EU has trade agreements above the 70 mark – corresponding to more than 40% of the world's GDP. The flow of illegal migration across the EU's borders was down to pre-crisis levels, about 90% lower than in 2015. And the Eurobarometer registered a 35-year high in average support for the EU across the 28 member states.

This is not to say that the EU faced no challenges. Far from it. Brexit continued to move slowly but inexorably forward. In November 2018 negotiators of the European Commission and the United Kingdom reached a deal on the terms of the Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement. The EU27 subsequently endorsed the agreement at the level of the European Council. But the unwavering unity among the EU27, so important in ensuring a hitherto orderly and productive negotiation process, was not mirrored by the necessary level of support in the British parliament. An overwhelming majority of the British House of Commons voted against the deal, significantly raising the spectre of a so-called 'no-deal' outcome.

Meanwhile, the necessary – but difficult – procedure to address serious concerns over the rule of law in Poland continued. Moreover, the so-called Article 7 procedure was launched in order to address rule of law concerns in Hungary. However difficult, the processes were necessary as they addressed some of the values and principles at the very heart of the EU *acquis*.

The Arctic continued to climb up the international agenda. Several countries, including the United States, Russia and China, increased their engagement. The consequences of climate change became ever more visible, exacerbating the challenges posed by rising sea levels but also opening up new trade opportunities. The region continued to stand apart from much of international affairs as an example of pragmatic, rules-based international cooperation,

primarily anchored in The Arctic Council. The Kingdom of Denmark placed a high premium on this diplomatic feat and worked to unlock the vast economic potential of the region while maintaining its unique environment and heritage.

When one opens a newspaper or reads an academic analysis of the foreign policy challenges of the day, predicaments are almost always addressed with the luxury of hindsight. Assumptions can be applied to simplify and structure the world, variables neatly sorted into tables. From a practitioner's point of view the world of foreign affairs looks quite different: full of dilemmas, unknowns and open endings. The landscape is nuanced, the horizon often unclear and moving targets abound. Nevertheless, as Foreign Minister, I have to arrive at a decision, balancing several competing interests, working within ranges of probability and with insufficient data. This requires that one navigate following a clear set of interests and values – and with a clear sense of direction.

A resolute foreign policy; this dictum captures the course I strove to chart in 2018. It represents my belief that we must fight harder for the values and principles that make up the foundation of our society. How can a small state defend democratic values in an uncertain world, where great powers are increasingly questioning the very pillars of our liberal order?

My answer is this: we must step up. When Denmark has strong interests at stake, we must be more prepared to stand up and take the lead internationally in fighting for what we believe in – and accept the enhanced risk that comes with assuming greater responsibility. Of course, we should always carefully consider how, when and with whom we lead the way. But we must be less risk averse and more resolute. This belief guided my approach to Danish foreign policy in 2018 – provided my coordinates, if you will, in charting a clear course through troubled waters.

This chapter captures the main strands of Danish foreign policy in 2018. It begins by assessing the fragile state of the international rules-based order – an overarching challenge linked to many of the issues facing us in 2018. Next, the chapter describes how Denmark addressed challenges to transatlantic security including Russia and threats posed by disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks, and how we dealt with developments in the Middle East. This leads the chapter into a description of how Denmark navigated developments in Europe and the issues dominating the EU agenda, including Brexit and

migration. Finally, the chapter describes the Kingdom of Denmark's Arctic policy in 2018 and takes stock of the year to come, briefly introducing the Danish Foreign and Security Strategy for 2019-2020.

## Retreat of the international rules-based order?

In one of the noteworthy books of 2018, the American historian Robert Kagan argued that 'the jungle is back' in international affairs.<sup>1</sup> The garden of rules-based order and multilateral cooperation, carved out in the wake of World War II and nurtured in the decades since, is receding. The jungle, where might is right, is growing back in international affairs. With World War II a distant memory, and even the Cold War era firmly behind us, the liberal democratic world has come to take the rules-based order for granted. We have forgotten that it was the exception, not the rule, as the organising principle of international affairs.

From the vantage point of a small, open, democratic and globalised country, several trends seem to confirm Kagan's point. The United States has been increasingly questioning the value of the international institutions and agreements it had driven forward since World War II. In May the Trump administration decided to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal. In June the US left the UN Human Rights Council. That same month the US hiked tariffs on steel and aluminium from the EU in one swift move that captured the extent to which the US was now ready to enforce a much more protectionist approach to international trade.

As the US was stepping back, China was stepping forward. The year saw a further increase in China's ability to project power and to influence the norms and rules that underpin global governance. On the one hand this follows naturally from China's rise as a global power; as China ascends, they will, understandably, have a greater bearing on our planet's future. On the other hand, we must be fully cognisant that our societal models, our approach to international cooperation, free trade and human rights, are different.

Russia's malignant international behaviour continued throughout much of 2018 – in Ukraine and Syria, for instance, as set out below – undermining the basic 'traffic rules' underpinning international security. Divisions in the UN Security Council deepened, to the point where the council seemed paralysed in the

face of ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen. Facing the crossroads between democratic consolidation and autocracy, many countries unfortunately moved in the latter direction. This came at the expense of respect for human rights, space for civil society, protection of religious minorities, and freedom of the press. In normative discussions, from New York to Geneva, the voices that questioned the universality of human rights grew in numbers and force.

Undoubtedly, plenty of developments in 2018 suggested the jungle was indeed growing back. However, although the garden will need to change, the law of the jungle need not overcome it. There is cause for concern, but there is equally no need to rush to a pessimistic conclusion.

Let me highlight three important lines of effort that reflect how Denmark fought for the rules-based international order in 2018:

First, the United States is – and must remain – the guarantor of the rules-based international order. We may disagree on certain policy issues and will make this clear to our American friends when necessary. But this does not detract from Denmark's strong national interest in supporting US global leadership and a strong transatlantic partnership. In this spirit Denmark worked to ensure a successful outcome at the NATO summit in Brussels and to stand firmly with the US in the fight against ISIL. Moreover, we are working closely with the US and our European allies to maintain our transatlantic unity in addressing Russia's destabilising actions. Finally, while our methods may differ, we share many of the American aspirations for reforming the UN Human Rights Council and the UN in general.

Second, the EU needs to fulfil its potential as a global leader in the fight for a rules-based international order. As the largest trading block in the world and the leading global contributor of development assistance and humanitarian aid, the EU has the building blocks to be an even stronger actor on the global stage. For this reason, Denmark pushed to advance a stronger, more effective EU Common Foreign and Security Policy – working, for instance, to unite the EU member states in taking a tougher stance against Iran while protecting the Iran nuclear deal.

Third, we need to work within the multilateral system to push for further reforms – to keep our multilateral institutions fighting fit and legitimate. Reforms are vital to ensure that our multilateral organisations continue to deliver public goods that bring tangible, positive benefits to our citizens. Let me highlight three examples. First, Denmark made reforming the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and ending the anti-Israel bias institutionalised by Item 7 on the HCR agenda two central pillars of our candidature to the HRC. Since our candidature was successful, we will take these reform priorities forward once we join the council in 2019. Second, Denmark engaged actively in advancing the reform process in the UN, taking the lead in the reform track on the UN's development system. Third, during the Danish chairmanship of the Council of Europe, we successfully launched the so-called 'Elsinore Reform Process' to help safeguard the future of the Council of Europe as an irreplaceable platform for dialogue and cooperation between 47 European countries.

## Security in an unpredictable world

It has become commonplace in international affairs to expect turbulence. Unpredictability has become predictable. So, it was hardly a surprise that many of the challenges on my desk in 2018 stemmed from developments across the Middle East and the broader European theatre. While far from an exhaustive list, the following seeks to capture some of the dominating issues:

Albeit still regrettable, it came as no surprise that Russia's malign behaviour continued. Russia seemed determined to undermine European security and the international rules-based order. The good news, however, was the unwavering show of transatlantic unity in response. As a reaction to the despicable chemical attack in Salisbury, in a coordinated action of historic dimensions, 28 countries across the Atlantic expelled 150 Russian diplomats. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the United Kingdom, Denmark expelled two Russian diplomats. This collective action sent a powerful message to the Kremlin. As expected, Russia launched a vivid campaign of lies and disinformation to confuse and blur what had really occurred in Salisbury. Some may recall the ludicrously implausible interview aired on Russian TV with two of the presumed perpetrators offering blatantly false stories about their excursion as mere tourists to Salisbury. In the end the Russian campaign backfired. The truth of what had happened in Salisbury was plain to the world.

Salisbury became a new chapter in the Russian playbook on disinformation and lies, adding to a long list of campaigns since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014. Through these activities, Russia sought to undermine democratic processes, sow public discord and instigate international division. In response, the international community began to address the challenges in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner. The EU presented an action plan on disinformation. Like-minded countries stepped up their cooperation, exchanging experiences, analytical tools and methodologies. 'Building resilience' became a new catchphrase, underlining the need to bolster societies against disinformation and other hybrid threats. The Danish government presented its own action plan in September 2018 in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2019.

Russia continued its aggression in Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea. The illegally constructed Kerch Bridge between Russia and Crimea opened in May 2018. It resulted in restrictions on international shipping activities in the Sea of Azov and Ukrainian ports. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November Russian naval vessels attacked three small Ukrainian vessels approaching the Kerch Bridge on their way to the city of Mariupol. This was the first time the Russian military had openly engaged in a military confrontation with Ukraine at sea. Russia had opened a new front and 24 innocent Ukrainian sailors and their vessels were detained. Despite continuing Russian aggression, Ukraine continued to show impressive, although at times slow, reform progress. The Ukraine Reform Conference in Copenhagen in June 2018 added new impetus, including a ground-breaking decision by the Ukrainian parliament to establish a High Anti-Corruption Court.

The cyberthreat remained very high, tangible and evolving. The threat derived especially from foreign states, but 2018 also witnessed criminal groups and other non-state actors increasingly mastering advanced hacking tools. As one of the most digitised countries in the world, Denmark is particularly exposed. At the same time Denmark has a strong interest in a secure, free and open global IT infrastructure, based on common rules and cooperation, involving both states and tech companies. Therefore the Danish government, with the backing of a broad majority in parliament, took steps to both strengthen our national resilience against cyberattacks and to increase Denmark's cyber-diplomacy. In the EU, we worked closely with our partners to improve our joint ability to prevent, deter and respond to cyberattacks by implementing the ambitious EU

Cyber Package announced by the Commission in September 2017. In NATO, we have declared our readiness to contribute with our military cyber-capability in Alliance operations and missions. And in the UN we undertook efforts to advance responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, arguing that the rules-based international order should be extended to the digital realm. Last, but not least, we enhanced our cooperation with friends and allies to hold states to account for hostile cyber activities. For instance, we joined the UK, US and other countries in attributing the NotPetya cyberattack to Russia.

2018 was also the year in which one of the most important arms control agreements between the United States and Russia was dealt a terminal blow. The reason: Russian non-compliance. The INF treaty has been vital to European security since its completion in 1987. After many years of extensive efforts by the United States to induce Russia to return to compliance, the United States decided to suspend its obligations and initiate its withdrawal from the treaty. The decision was made with full NATO backing and can be reversed if Russia changes its course of action before August 2019. An arms control agreement not adhered to by all parties is not effective; it provides only insecurity. The Russian missile SSC-8 is in violation of the INF treaty and mounts significant political and military challenges to NATO and Europe. NATO will come up with an appropriate response, while at the same time continuing to engage Russia on arms control and disarmament. Despite Russia's decision to also suspend its treaty obligations and initiate its withdrawal, Denmark and NATO will continue to call on Russia to return to compliance. The continuation of the INF treaty is in everyone's interest.

If the collapse of the INF had a sliver of a silver lining, it was the reaffirmation of the strength of the Alliance. The debate on burden-sharing stole the headlines, but while allies must contribute more to collective defence – and they are – NATO is more than budgets and cash. The Alliance is more active than ever, projecting strength and reassuring allies. Despite the penchant of pundits for gloom and doom, important decisions were taken at the NATO summit in 2018, demonstrating to the careful observer that NATO is a well-oiled machine. These steps included reinforcements of the NATO command structure and a 'Readiness Initiative' to strengthen NATO's ability to respond at short notice. Additionally, steps were taken to strengthen NATO's ability to combat terrorism and to project stability. In all, NATO came out of 2018 stronger than ever. NATO remains the vital bond between Europe and North America. A guarantee for

our collective security and freedom. The summit reaffirmed this bond. Allies reconfirmed their commitment to stand ready to defend the Alliance against all threats and from any direction.

As NATO stepped up, so too did the EU, strengthening its contribution to European security. The Council started work on implementing the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and established 34 collaborative projects. The Commission presented proposals to include financial support in the next EU budget for the EU Defence Fund as well as for dual use civilian-military infrastructure, which can increase military mobility across Europe. Such budgetary funding for defence-related initiatives would have been unheard of not that long ago. For Denmark, these new initiatives pose both possibilities and challenges, as areas covered and not covered by the Danish defence opt-out are increasingly interlinked. Consequently, the Danish government asked the Danish Institute for International Studies to undertake a report on the EU's developing common security and defence policy in order to shed light on how Danish interests are best served.

In the Middle East, Iran was high on the international agenda throughout the year for various reasons. Let me highlight two: Iran's foiled assassination attempt on Danish soil and the US decision to leave the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran (JCPOA).

In October 2018 the Danish Security and Intelligence Service announced to the public that they had foiled a planned assassination attempt by an Iranian intelligence agency on Danish soil. The decision by the Danish government to publicly attribute the averted plot to Iran was not taken lightly. It reflected our conviction that we had to send a strong signal to Iran that such actions are unacceptable; we had to draw a line in the sand. For this reason, the Danish Government also announced that Denmark would pursue a robust response at the EU level in the form of targeted sanctions against those responsible.

I spoke with the Iranian Foreign Minister directly on the matter. We also summoned the Iranian ambassador to Denmark and recalled our ambassador in Tehran for consultations – a strong diplomatic signal to underscore the gravity of the situation.

Denmark greatly appreciated the swift and strong expressions of solidarity and support from allies near and far. But I also knew I had to toe a fine line in order to ensure EU unity around targeted measures against those responsible for such unacceptable behaviour in Europe. As a result, we made it clear from the outset that Denmark's support for the JCPoA remained unchanged. At the same time, our support for the nuclear deal did not – and should never – give the Iranian regime *carte blanche* to pursue its interests through reckless and destabilising actions, in Denmark or elsewhere. I made this point very clear at the meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in November 2018 and, a month later, by following up in numerous bilateral contacts with EU colleagues. With the strong support of the high representative and vice-president, Federica Mogherini, and working with several EU member states – France, in particular – we succeeded in galvanising EU support for targeted sanctions against Iran in early 2019.

The US decision to leave the Iran nuclear deal was another pressing issue in 2018. The US and the EU share the same concerns as to challenges posed by Iran. We also agree on the need to address the threats emanating from the regime's destabilising actions. Yet our approaches differ. The clearest expression of this was towards Iran's nuclear programme.

While the US and the EU share a steadfast commitment to preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, we differ on how to reach this goal. From both a European and Danish perspective, the nuclear agreement remains the single best way to prevent this. As is well known, this view was not shared in Washington. Moreover, and as forewarned, the US decision to leave the JCPoA brought with it the reintroduction of American nuclear-related sanctions against Iran, which included secondary sanctions with extra-territorial applicability.

The reinstated US sanctions challenged Iran's incentive to stay committed to the JCPoA and continue to abide by the tough and thorough inspections regime conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency. In the wake of the American decision, many European companies withdrew from the Iranian market and cancelled planned activities. This had a severe impact on Iran's economy and generated frustration and concern among European businesses.

The EU struck a careful balance in dealing with this regrettable transatlantic divide. We kept close and regular contact with our American friends, underlining that while we differ on method we agree on the overall strategic goal: a peaceful Iran without a military nuclear programme. To this aim, we continued to cooperate closely across the Atlantic to address shared concerns, not least regarding Iran's ballistic missile programme and destabilising regional behaviour. To shore up the JCPoA, a number of EU member states, led by France, Germany and the United Kingdom, worked hard to develop a financial Special Purpose Vehicle to facilitate continued non-sanctioned trade with Iran. While these efforts had not yet come to fruition by the end of 2018, they signalled a commitment to leveraging the EU's position as the largest trading block in the world to protect key European security interests. Moreover, the EU adopted the so-called 'blocking statute', in effect prohibiting European adherence to US secondary sanctions on Iran.

Thankfully, the transatlantic differences on the JCPoA did not prevent the EU and the US from cooperating closely on Iran and other challenges emanating from that corner of the world.

In Syria, notwithstanding important progress in the fight against ISIL, a sustainable political solution remained elusive and the humanitarian crisis dire. The Syrian regime regained military control over much of the country, demonstrating a ruthless disregard for civilian life. A particularly dark chapter of the conflict was written in April 2018, when the Syrian army conducted a chemical attack on the Syrian city of Douma, prompting a US-led military response with Danish political support. On the verge of another tragedy in September 2018 Turkey and Russia concluded a de-escalation agreement in Idlib, relieving urgent concerns about a military campaign in the region, home to around three million civilians. However, the deal remained fragile and its implementation wanting throughout the year.

The UN-led diplomatic effort remains our best hope of ensuring the necessary political changes in Syria that can lead to a long-term resolution of the Syrian conflict and the causes that ignited it. For this reason, Denmark, the EU and the US remained firm supporters of the UN Special Envoy for Syria. Denmark remained a strong voice in support of pressuring the Assad regime to engage in a political process, including through EU sanctions. Moreover, we continued to press for keeping accountability high on the international agenda, through

the EU and our support to other relevant international organisations, to ensure that the most serious crimes committed in the conflict do not go unaccounted for.

The significant progress achieved by the Global Coalition against ISIL in 2018 stood out as a noteworthy source of optimism last year. The so-called caliphate, which once controlled vast swathes of Syria and Iraq, had all but disappeared by the year's end. However, an enduring defeat of ISIL had not been achieved. History is full of grim reminders that groups like ISIL do not need to control territory to remain a threat. Although on the back foot, ISIL frequently conducted assassinations and armed attacks in both Syria and Iraq. Globally, ISIL maintains several local branches and numerous affiliated networks. And ISIL's murderous ideology retains global appeal – also in Europe. Therefore, our military and civilian contributions to the coalition must continue. Our shared goal of a lasting defeat of ISIL will only be achieved when ISIL no longer has safe havens from which to operate, no longer poses a threat to our homelands, and no longer spreads its hateful ideology.

The killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2018 drew massive international condemnation and spurred immense pressure on the Saudi government. It sharpened the world's attention on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia and the actions of the Saudi-led coalition in war-torn Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been responsible for most of the air strikes. Early on, Denmark was among the strongest voices in the EU calling for a firm response. Denmark decided to send a clear signal: in November 2018, due to Saudi Arabia's actions in Yemen and the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suspended the export of arms and military equipment to Saudi Arabia, as well as that of dual-use products that can be used for human rights violations. Some countries have taken similar steps, including Germany, Finland and Norway, and Denmark encouraged other countries to follow suit.

## Europe: delivering tangible results and protecting European values

With European Parliamentary elections around the corner and the end of the term of the current Commission approaching, 2018 turned out to be a year of reflection on the future of the EU. For me, one of the key lessons of Brexit is very clear: the EU needs to listen carefully to what our citizens want and expect from us – and then deliver. For this reason, the Danish government gave priority to reinforcing the Danish debate on the EU throughout 2018.

With debates taking place across the country, the Danish government – in close cooperation with the Danish parliament and civil society – reached out to the Danish citizens with the aim of getting their input on what the citizens expect from the EU. I personally participated in a number of debates and was encouraged by the enthusiasm for debating Europe – and by the large number of young people who took part in the discussions.

While no debate can provide a detailed and exhaustive understanding of what the Danish people want from the EU, the debate left us with a number of clear ideas and impressions:

Firstly, the EU should focus on the largest and most important issues such as climate change, migration and terrorism, where common solutions are most effective, and where the member states cannot address the challenges equally well by acting on their own.

Secondly, we need to respect the differences and diversity amongst member states. I am certain that most Danish citizens recognise the need for EU cooperation in many areas; yet, the Danish way of doing things is also highly appreciated and dearly cherished, particularly in areas steeped in strong Danish cultural and political traditions.

Thirdly, Brexit has clearly influenced the Danish debate. In particular, Brexit has been a powerful reminder of the many advantages associated with EU membership. Brexit has underlined the advantages of the single market, including the numerous Danish jobs that are dependent on the single market.

It is also increasingly clear that a large majority of Danes are positive about the Danish EU membership – a conclusion supported by several surveys.

I generally share these views, and I am proud to say that they also converge with the overall objectives of the Danish government. Our aim is to ensure that the EU is strong, lean and efficient. We need to make sure that the EU delivers tangible solutions to the problems on which our citizens demand action at the European level. The Danish government will continue to work for this approach to be reflected amongst the priorities of the new Commission and the new strategic agenda to be defined by the European Council in 2019.

Whilst against a regrettable backdrop, the protection of fundamental values, and especially the rule of law, was a dominant issue in the European debate throughout 2018. These values are intrinsically important and lie at the heart of the European project. Moreover, our fundamental values and the rule of law also have a direct impact on very practical and tangible issues. The European legal order rests on the trust in and between the legal systems of all member states. If there is doubt about basic principles such as the independence of the judiciary in individual member states, it risks eroding the foundation for the single market and the freedom of movement, as citizens and businesses will think twice before establishing themselves or doing business in such countries. For all these reasons, I firmly believe that we cannot consider adherence to fundamental values as just a national issue. On the contrary, we must have the courage and principle to openly discuss concerns over adherence to fundamental European values, and we must be ready to act with determination when legitimate and well-founded questions about the respect for the rule of law are raised.

On Brexit, the main task for the EU27 remained to get the best out of a deeply regrettable situation. In this respect, we reached a milestone in November 2018, as the European Commission and the British government agreed on the terms of the British withdrawal. The withdrawal agreement was subsequently endorsed by the EU27 at the level of the European Council. The agreement was of fundamental importance, as it would provide the basis for an orderly British withdrawal from the EU. It offered legal certainty to all those citizens, companies, and regions worried about the consequences of the British decision to leave the union. We succeeded together in this first major step, thanks to the

strong unity of the 27 member states. Furthermore, we also managed to agree on a political declaration, setting out the framework of our future relationship that we hope to negotiate as soon as possible after the British withdrawal.

Denmark's fundamental approach to Brexit remained consistent: we followed our national interests. This meant maintaining EU27 unity around the objective of keeping the UK as close as possible to the EU in the future, while at the same time ensuring a balance of rights and obligations to preserve a level playing field and protect the integrity of the single market.

Regrettably, as the year drew to a close, the Brexit process remained fraught with uncertainty as the British ratification process in the British parliament proved very challenging. This dramatically increased the risk of a no-deal scenario. For this reason, Denmark continued its preparation for such a scenario. But it is in no one's interest that the UK leave without a deal. My hope is that we can move beyond this stage of uncertainty as soon as possible and start negotiations on our future economic and political relations with a view to building our common future with the UK, who will in all circumstances remain our friend, ally and partner.

Finally, 2018 was a year of further remarkable progress in reducing the flow of irregular migrants to Europe. Overall, the number of irregular border crossings to the EU had decreased by 90% compared to the peak in 2015. The EU and its member states achieved this through a comprehensive approach. This included strengthened control at the EU's external borders and enhanced cooperation with partner countries on return and readmission; support for capacity development to improve migration management in countries of transit and origin and efforts in addressing the root causes of irregular migration through development cooperation in third countries. Despite the great progress, there is no room for complacency. Although the numbers have declined, migration will remain a strategic challenge for Europe in the decades ahead, with the population of Africa expected to increase from 1.3 to 2.5 billion people by 2050. The solution must be comprehensive, sustainable and address the underlying causes that will otherwise lead many of the next generation in Africa to leave their homes and depart on a hazardous journey with an uncertain destination.

## Free trade: harder times, but never more important

In the trade policy arena, 2018 was a turbulent year. The trade conflict between the US and China sent ripples throughout the global markets although, in the end, the economic consequences were not as dramatic as we could have feared. Generally, 2018 continued to see an uptick in new protectionist measures and unilateralism at the cost of free trade, open markets and rules-based, multilateral cooperation. The EU worked actively in the trilateral working group with the US and Japan as well as in a bilateral track with China to counter trade-distorting policies. Now, in early 2019, China and the US seem to be moving closer to a trade agreement. This will likely bring more stability to the markets. From a Danish perspective, it will be important that any new bilateral agreement serves to level the global playing field to the benefit of all WTO members.

The EU felt the heat of a more assertive and unilateral US trade policy. In March President Trump decided to levy additional tariffs on European steel and aluminium products with reference to national security concerns and global overproduction. The US also threatened to increase duties on EU cars and car parts. The EU strongly opposed the unilateral measure taken by the US. *First*, EU member states consider themselves close allies of the US rather than a threat. *Second*, the EU works actively alongside the US in the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity to counter overproduction enabled by state subsidies and state ownership of steel industry.

In response the EU moved to rebalance the economic relationship in a proportionate, non-escalatory and WTO-compliant manner. The EU also initiated a case against the US at the WTO in order to underpin the importance of a rules-based approach. Further escalation was avoided when in July 2018 President Trump and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker agreed to embark on a constructive trade dialogue. For the remainder of 2018 the parties scoped and prepared the ground for future negotiations regarding elimination of tariffs on industrial products and increased regulatory cooperation, hopefully to commence in 2019.

Successful negotiations will unlock significantly more trade and reduce red tape. On both sides of the Atlantic, small and medium-sized enterprises in particular would gain by such joint action. However, the risk of a US decision to impose additional duties on European cars and car parts remains, which would cause the transatlantic trade dialogue to deteriorate and prompt an EU reaction.

Challenges to the WTO and the core of multilateral trade rules increased during 2018. The most worrisome and acute dispute was the US veto against the appointment of new judges to the Appellate Body. This could lead to its breakdown as soon as in 2019. Bilateral trade tensions between the US and China continued to impact dynamics inside the WTO. The EU and a number of other members took the lead in efforts to modernise the WTO and strengthen the organisation's ability to address unfair trade practices. One promising area where we may see increased traction in 2019 is e-commerce, an area of crucial importance for the modern economy. A group of members, including the EU, has decided to move forward in a so-called plurilateral format (i.e. short of consensus among all members, as is otherwise the norm in the WTO) and develop common rules to help maintain the WTO's relevance in a changing global context.

Amidst all the gloom, the EU was able to sustain progress in opening up new markets through ambitious FTAs. The Council and the European Parliament endorsed an ambitious FTA with Japan, allowing it to enter into force in February 2019. According to a study by the Federation of Danish Industries, full implementation would likely see Danish exports to Japan increase by 30-50%. Other examples of the EU's positive and successful bilateral trade agenda include the signing of the EU-Singapore trade and investment agreements, the agreement in principle regarding the modernisation of the agreement with Mexico, and the assumption of bilateral trade talks with Australia and New Zealand with a view to concluding ambitious and comprehensive FTAs as soon as possible.

In short, 2018 was a challenging year – also in trade policy. But rarely in recent times has it been more important to stand up for multilateralism, free trade and open markets. These principles have served us well in the past and should remain our beacon in turbulent times.

## The Arctic: increasing opportunities and rising challenges

The Arctic continued to change rapidly in 2018. Challenges and new opportunities fuelled a growing international interest in the Arctic – also from non-Arctic states. Temperatures continued to rise twice as fast in the Arctic as compared to the rest of the world. The effects were visible, with ice melting and sea levels rising.

When the Arctic changes, it affects the entire world. The dramatic effects of climate change create challenges and risks, but also open up new economic opportunities in the form of new sailing routes, responsible extraction of natural resources and increased tourism. It is important to address the challenges and risks whilst making the most of the new opportunities for the benefit of the people living in the Arctic region.

As the primary international forum for Arctic issues, international cooperation in the Arctic should continue to take centre stage in the Arctic Council. In the Arctic Council, common challenges are addressed through common solutions, based on consensus among the eight Arctic states and in consultation with the permanent representatives of indigenous organisations. The key role of the Arctic Council was underlined by the nomination of the Arctic Council for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018. The growing number of observers in the Arctic Council is a sign that non-Arctic stakeholders are realising the importance of being actively engaged in the region. We welcome partnerships with stakeholders working for a sustainable development of the region.

As the geopolitical interest in the Arctic continued to grow in 2018, we closely followed the strategic and military developments in the region, including the enhanced Russian military presence, with our allies and partners. Nevertheless, we remained dedicated to our common goal of maintaining the region as a low-tension area. To date, despite different positions on conflicts and disagreements in other parts of the world, the Arctic states have managed to uphold a region characterised by peaceful and constructive cooperation and dialogue. The celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ilulissat Declaration in May 2018 was an important symbol of the commitment of all Arctic states

to the goal of a region marked by low tension, where disputes are resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiations within the framework of international law.

As an example of constructive dialogue in line with the spirit of the Ilulissat Declaration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, together with the Government of Greenland and Global Affairs Canada, established a joint task force in order to make further progress on the outstanding boundary issues in the waters between Canada and Greenland. The task force will explore options and provide recommendations on how to resolve these issues between the two nations. This includes the sovereignty of Hans Island, the maritime boundary line in the Lincoln Sea, and the Labrador Sea continental shelf overlap beyond 200 nautical miles.

The constructive cooperation in the Arctic was further underlined by the entering into force of the Arctic Council's new international agreement on enhanced international Arctic scientific cooperation, with Denmark as the depositary state for the agreement. Another important step was the historic agreement to prevent unregulated fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean signed in Ilulissat, Greenland. Finally, throughout 2018, the Kingdom of Denmark also sought to advance sustainable economic development for the people living in the Arctic – to improve innovation, spur entrepreneurship, marshal business financing in the Arctic, and to advance better framework conditions for business in the Arctic region.

## Conclusion: looking ahead

An eventful and challenging year lies ahead in 2019 in the realm of foreign and security policy. The threat environment in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East will continue to generate complex and cross-border challenges requiring effective international action. This will be a year of change on the European scene: elections to the European parliament, the dawn of a new European Commission, and crunch time for Brexit. Finally, the multiple pressures on the international rules-based order will continue, placing further strains on the liberal values that underpin our multilateral institutions.

As Foreign Minister, I will continue to chart a clear course forward. We must be prepared to stand up and pursue a resolute foreign policy when Denmark has strong interests at stake. The EU is Denmark's most important foreign policy platform. If necessary, we must be ready to take the lead in mobilising common EU action, for instance in supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression. If EU unity cannot be attained, we must be prepared – if necessary – to go beyond the EU and show the way with like-minded countries, for instance when casting our vote on key issues in the UN Human Rights Council.

Our foreign policy priorities are clear. In November 2018 the Danish Government published its second Foreign and Security Policy strategy, covering the period 2019-2020. Like its predecessor, discussed here in the pages on the Danish Foreign Policy Review 2018, the strategy does not provide an exhaustive list of Danish foreign policy. It is rather an attempt to sharpen our focus, to distill Danish foreign and security policy into a short list of main priorities. In brief, the priorities are: strengthening and reforming the rules-based international order; addressing security threats in the European neighbourhood, the Middle East and in cyberspace; advancing a strong, streamlined and effective EU; refugees, migration and development; economic diplomacy, strategic partnerships and the new digital world order; and the Arctic.

That EU and security policy is high on the Danish foreign policy agenda should come as no surprise. But the priorities also reflect how foreign policy is changing to encompass new arenas, new stakeholders, new instruments – and new challenges. The rules-based order, for so long taken for granted, has become something we must fight for. On this battleground, we must keep our foreign policy firmly rooted in Danish interests and values – and a readiness to accept the increased risk that comes with assuming greater responsibility.

## Note

- 1 Kagan, Robert (2018). *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*. New York: Random House.

# Danish defence in the midst of change

*Claus Hjort Frederiksen, Minister of Defence 2016-2019*

'Today, the world's great powers find ourselves on the same side – united by common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos. The United States will build on these common interests to promote global security. We are also increasingly united by common values. Russia is in the midst of a hopeful transition, reaching for its democratic future and a partner in the war on terror. Chinese leaders are discovering that economic freedom is the only source of national wealth'

(US National Security Strategy, 2002).

## The rules of the game are changing

It is remarkable how things change. Not so long ago the major great powers were – to a degree at least – on the same page, as we see expressed in the quotation above from the 2002 US national security strategy. Since then, times have certainly changed dramatically.

Today, the tectonic plates are in motion and the rules-based international order which has guaranteed Denmark's security, prosperity and values is increasingly being brought into question. In a nutshell, the world around us is becoming less stable. Denmark – and the Danish armed forces – are witnessing this change and adjusting to it. In the east, we must be able to deter and reassure as Russia continues its aggressive behaviour, challenging the norms and rules

our security is built upon. In the south, military and civilian efforts to enhance the stability of fragile states and to combat terrorism remain a necessity. In the north, climate change has increased accessibility to the Arctic and triggered great power interest in the area. Furthermore, Denmark is continuously having to mitigate the effects of cyber and hybrid threats occurring in the grey zone between war and peace. The security landscape facing Denmark is daunting, precisely because we cannot allow ourselves to ignore any of the above. Instead we need to face the threats and challenges simultaneously, and coordinate closely with our allies and partners. It is a major and costly task, but it is important and necessary.

## Denmark – a core NATO ally

The new security landscape was the backdrop when we negotiated the current Danish defence agreement. It was finalised in January 2018 and will continue to guide the development of the Danish armed forces until 2023. The defence agreement represents the most substantial increase in Danish defence spending since the end of the Cold War – in line with the pledge made at the NATO summit in Wales in 2014. The defence agreement will enable Denmark to address the multifaceted security landscape and strengthen our responsiveness and ability to participate in the full spectrum of military operations, including collective defence, counterterrorism, and stabilisation operations – as well as provide us with an increased presence in the Arctic. Furthermore, the agreement will significantly improve our resilience to threats in the grey zone between war and peace – not least in the cyber domain.

To be more specific the defence agreement will provide the army with a deployable brigade as well as new light infantry and reconnaissance units. The navy's frigates will be able to take part in area air defence with defensive missiles and receive enhanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities. The Danish air force is taking the first steps towards a transformation into a so-called 'fifth generation' air force with the acquisition of F-35 fighter jets. The intelligence service will increase its cyber capabilities and work to offer offensive cyber effects to NATO. Finally, the home guard, the reserves and other national structures will increase their focus on protecting vital infrastructure and deliver host nation support to allies in transit through Denmark. In sum, the defence agreement will be a great leap forward for Danish defence.

At the NATO summit in Brussels in July 2018 the debate about fair burden-sharing within the Alliance became too divisive. In my view there was too much talk about cash and too little about values. However, at the summit it was agreed to redouble the efforts to share the burden of security more fairly, with more cash, capabilities and contributions to missions and operations. This triggered a new negotiation process in Denmark resulting in a supplementary defence agreement in January 2019 aiming to raise defence spending to 1.5 % of GDP in 2023. Also, it set the Wales commitments as the premise for the next defence agreement after 2023.

I acknowledge that fair burden-sharing within NATO is important. The present security situation requires us to boost our spending on defence – that goes for Denmark as well. At the same time, it is of the utmost importance that the US commitment to Europe is maintained in the NATO framework. But burden-sharing cannot be reduced to a mathematical figure; burden-sharing is equally about the ability to provide relevant *capabilities* and *political will* when and where necessary. Make no mistake, Denmark will continue to carry its fair share of burdens and maintain its position as a core ally of the Alliance.

In order to fully grasp why it is necessary to boost our spending on defence, please allow me to put a bit more ‘flesh on the bone’ and go through the threats and challenges facing Denmark and how we have chosen to respond to them. Finally, I will provide you with a brief outlook with regard to Denmark’s priorities for the coming years.

## The eastern flank – responding to a revisionist Russia

Today we are witnessing a more assertive Russia, threatening its neighbouring countries and employing various means to undermine the European security architecture. Moscow continues to demonstrate an appetite for showing force and invests heavily in its military close to NATO’s borders in blatant disregard of international norms and principles. The assassination attempt using a military-grade nerve agent in Salisbury and the aggressive behaviour in the Kerch Strait are recent examples of an unacceptable trend. By the end of 2018 Russia’s long-term material breach of the INF treaty, with the development and

deployment of the SSC-8 ground-launched cruise missile system, could no longer go unchecked. Denmark therefore fully supported the US decision to suspend the INF treaty on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2019. Taken together, Russia's actions undermine trust. They are furthermore occurring in a situation where there is less dialogue between Russia and the West compared to Cold War times. Increased instability and risk of misunderstandings have unfortunately become the new order of the day. We have to engage with Russia on difficult issues, such as weapons control and arms reduction, and continue our dialogue with Russia through the NATO-Russia Council. This is an important pressure-release valve in avoiding misunderstandings and tensions. But we have to speak to Russia from a strong and firm base. As a small country there are limits to what we can do on our own. Transatlantic unity, credible deterrence and defence in our alliance remain crucial.

The Baltic Sea region has been negatively affected by the overall tension between NATO and Russia. It is therefore only natural that Denmark has enhanced its focus and presence in this area in particular. In 2018 Denmark participated in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) operation in Estonia with approximately 200 soldiers. The Danish contribution formed part of a British-led, battalion-size battle group. EFP sends a clear signal of solidarity across the Alliance and thus gives credibility to NATO's Article 5. The EFP essentially works as a 'tripwire' in the sense that the Alliance as a whole would be activated in case of a hostile incursion into NATO territory. The battalions are defensive, in place on a rotational basis and strictly abide to the regulations of the NATO Russia Founding Act.

Responding to a gap in NATO's command structure in the Baltic states, Denmark has taken the initiative to establish a *Multinational Divisional Headquarters* in Latvia together with Estonia and Latvia (MND North). The headquarters is a reflection of Denmark's strategic focus on the Baltic region and is based partly in Adazi in Latvia, partly in Karup in Denmark. It will become part of NATO's force structure and will enhance planning, training and operational command and control in the Baltic region.

As a further sign of our Baltic focus Denmark contributed to Baltic air policing from January to April 2018. Furthermore, Denmark carried out the command of NATO's Standing Maritime Group 1 in 2018. It patrolled primarily in northern European waters, participated in NATO exercises and conducted assurance measures in the Baltic Sea.

In addition to this, Denmark has supported the ongoing defence reform in Ukraine through dedicated training, advisory support and financial contributions. Denmark's support is meant to improve Ukraine's defensive capabilities and, in the long run, contribute to peace and stability in Denmark's eastern neighbourhood. In sum, Denmark has been heavily engaged on its eastern flank. We have been highly involved elsewhere as well – not least in the south.

## The southern flank – counter-terrorism and stabilisation of fragile states

Since 2014 Denmark has contributed vigorously to the fight against ISIL – the so-called 'caliphate' that brought chaos and medieval killing and torture to Iraq and Syria. We all clearly remember the dreadful terrorist attacks by ISIL on European soil – be they in Paris, Nice, London or elsewhere. Terrorist attacks that were, in many cases, coordinated from Iraq and Syria or organised from Europe itself by so-called 'lone wolves', often inspired by ISIL. *The Coalition against ISIL*, including Denmark, has changed the situation on the ground. In 2018 important progress was made in retaking territory previously held by ISIL which led to its demise as a territorial entity. That said, it is too soon to be writing the obituary of this frightful organisation. Through regrouping and adaptation of its tactics, ISIL will continue to pose a dangerous threat not only internationally but to Iraq and the stability of the region as a whole. Denmark's military contribution to the fight against ISIL will therefore continue. It currently consists of approximately 250 deployed forces – the majority of them taking part in the training of Iraqi forces at Al Asad airbase in western Iraq. Denmark also supports the coalition with mobile radar and personnel, providing airspace surveillance in support of the coalition's air operations. In 2018 Denmark further contributed with force protection measures as well as a C-130J transport aircraft operating out of Kuwait. In addition to our operational engagements, Denmark has also supported the broader stabilisation efforts in both Syria and Iraq in 2018, including through demining activities, with a view to facilitating the safe return of civilians.

Beside a strong commitment to Iraq and Syria, Denmark has continued to prioritise Afghanistan. The Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan remains a

critical out-of-area operation. The Danish defence contribution to Afghanistan broadly consists of two parts: a military contribution of approximately 155 soldiers to NATO's Resolute Support mission and a stabilisation engagement focusing on capacity building of the Afghan forces. The military contribution is centred in Kabul and includes, among other things, advising the Afghan officer corps as well as escorting and securing key personnel in and around Kabul. The stabilisation efforts focus on the development of the Afghan army as a whole. The Danish contribution includes an annual 20 million DKK to NATO's Afghan National Army trust fund aimed at education in human rights and international humanitarian law.

Closer to home, since November 2018 Denmark has contributed to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Frontex, with a surveillance aircraft and personnel stationed on the Greek island of Crete. Denmark monitors the Greek archipelago with the purpose of identifying illegal immigrants, curbing cross-border crime and combatting illegal fishery. The Danish contribution has made a difference from day one, where eight assumed smugglers were caught in a joint operation conducted in close cooperation with the Greek authorities. Overall, the southern flank was a highly prioritised area of operations for Denmark in 2018 and it will continue to be so in 2019.

## The northern flank – navigating Arctic affairs

These years, we are witnessing how climate change brings major transformations to the Arctic. Better accessibility to the area creates opportunities for tourism, extraction of natural resources and the intensification of commercial and scientific activity. At the same time, however, we are witnessing increased military activity in the area, pointing towards a growing geopolitical significance of the Arctic. I expect this to increase over the coming years. It is the ambition of the Danish government to foster growth and prosperity in the Arctic while at the same time working hard to ensure security in the region. Denmark is prepared to rise to this ambition despite the difficulties of the enormous distances involved and the extreme weather of the Arctic. So far, we have only seen limited spillover in the Arctic from Russia's aggressive behaviour in Ukraine and elsewhere, but Russian military build-up in the Arctic carries a risk of militarisation. Denmark acknowledges that the Arctic region plays an important role for Russia and the Russian economy. From this follows

a natural interest in developing and protecting Russian investments there. However, the Danish Defence Intelligence Service has assessed that the build-up is not only defensive but also includes some offensive elements. It is a clear priority for Denmark to ensure that the Arctic remains a low-tension area and that cooperation with all Arctic nations, including Russia, continues. That being said, we should not be naïve and we will follow Russia's actions closely.

Besides Russia, access to and influence on Arctic affairs has come to play a role for China as well. This is evident from China's first Arctic strategy of January 2018 whereby China is working to enhance its influence through increased cooperation on research and trade. In this context, a number of both state and non-state Chinese actors have shown a persistent interest in Greenland. Because of the interconnection between Chinese companies and China's political system there are, however, certain risks related to large-scale Chinese investments. This is obviously due to the effect that such investments would bring to bear on an economy the size of Greenland's. In addition, it carries a risk of potential political interference when we are dealing with investments in strategic resources. Thus, we need to be clear-sighted when it comes to China and its interests. That said, China is an important strategic partner of Denmark. We must continue to engage with China and to demonstrate the value of the rules-based international order.

In 2018 we have continued the strong presence of our Danish armed forces in the Arctic in line with the defence agreement. The Arctic Command has been reorganised and we have intensified our air surveillance and established a pilot project on satellite surveillance of parts of the region. The increasing accessibility of the region is leading to more ships traversing Arctic waters, which in turn leads to a greater need for search and rescue capabilities. In 2018, among other things, a search and rescue (SAR) exercise was conducted with the French fleet in the waters around Greenland. As part of the implementation of the Arctic Agreement of December 2016, a Danish frigate will be deployed in the North Atlantic for the first time in 2019. Furthermore, we have acquired additional survival equipment, stepped up training and education in emergency management in Greenland and strengthened our emergency management of the marine environment.

# Challenges in the grey zone between war and peace

## Hybrid threats

The threats against Denmark are not only of a classic and geopolitical nature. New tools are constantly being put to use and this challenges how we think about defence and national security. National sectors and infrastructure beyond defence have become the focus of hybrid threats that target our media and seek to identify logistical vulnerabilities such as energy infrastructure or the legitimacy of our democratic institutions. In recent years we have witnessed influence campaigns targeting domestic political discussions in Western countries as a tool to promote an anti-Western and anti-democratic agenda. A number of examples of Russian attempts to influence elections and referendums in Europe and the United States have been uncovered. According to the Danish Defence Intelligence Service, the threat against the parliamentary election in Denmark is low. We are a robust and well-educated society, and we have taken steps to prepare ourselves. But we have to remain vigilant. And we must be aware that campaigns in other countries against the upcoming European parliamentary elections could indirectly influence the national elections in Denmark in 2019.

In September 2018 the Danish government presented a plan that aims at strengthening our society's resilience to influence campaigns. The Election action plan consists of 11 initiatives which aim at reinforcing the work carried out by public authorities to counter influence campaigns, securing the parliamentary elections, giving advice to the main actors in the election and establishing a closer cooperation with relevant actors in the social and written media. Facing these new types of threat also requires international cooperation and our 2018 accession to the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki reflects our ambition to work together with our allies and partners on this important issue. Hybrid threats also figured prominently in the July 2018 Brussels NATO declaration and Denmark supports reforms that enable assisting a NATO member, should it become the target of a hybrid attack.

## Cyberthreats

The cyberthreat against Denmark remains at a very serious level, not least as a result of our high degree of digitalisation and the open character of Danish society and economy. The extensive use of digital solutions provides us with many benefits. Unfortunately, it also provides a broad array of targets for cybercriminals and foreign hacker groups out for money, sensitive information or the disruption of essential functions of society. As part of our ambition to protect against cyberattacks across society, the Danish government launched a national strategy for cyber and information security in the spring of 2018. It lays out 25 concrete initiatives that increase our protection against cyberattacks. The strategy is the result of a cooperative effort between 13 ministries and it has a particular focus on heightening cybersecurity in sectors with critical infrastructure: energy, telecommunications, health, finance, transport and the maritime sector. The strategy follows the defence agreement, in which 1.4 billion DKK was devoted specifically to cyber-related issues. Our efforts to protect Danish society from cyberthreats are also reflected in the development of capabilities to carry out military operations in cyberspace, also known as 'Computer Network Operations'. NATO recognised cyberspace as a military domain in 2016 and has called for member states to develop capabilities of this nature. Denmark answered the call in July 2018 by announcing that we would be both able and willing to provide offensive cyber effects to NATO operations. We are now among the NATO member states that are capable of delivering potent cyber effects and we will continue to develop our computer network operations capabilities to ensure that Danish defence remains at the forefront of technological development.

## Cooperation on defence and security within the European Union

NATO remains the cornerstone of our security, but the European Union also plays an important role. In 2018 the deepening and widening of the EU's defence cooperation have continued unabated. The strategic environment has only furthered the wish to strengthen and improve the use of EU defence and security tools. In 2017 a number of new defence initiatives were launched, including the European Defence Fund (EDF), aimed at improving conditions for the European defence industry, as well as the permanent structured

cooperation (PESCO) with a view to the development and deployment of defence capabilities. In 2018 the focus has shifted towards the implementation of these initiatives as well as on ensuring coherence between them.

The development within the EU's defence cooperation continues to highlight the consequences of the Danish defence opt-out. The integration of the EU defence cooperation with other areas of cooperation has blurred the previously rather clear-cut lines between defence and non-defence. It is in Denmark's obvious interest that the EU is able to efficiently respond to the challenges that Europe faces. This includes comprehensive crisis management abroad addressing the root causes related to terrorism and migration, as well as building member states' societal resilience and defence capacities to counter cyber and hybrid threats. The Danish government also supports efforts to improve the conditions for the European defence industry, including Danish companies. While fully respecting the defence opt-out, Denmark will continue, where possible, to engage in and positively contribute to this development.

In my mind, there is no doubt that the current strategic environment requires a strong and active EU. Thus, Denmark fully supports the development of the EU's cooperation on security and defence in full complementarity to NATO. Seen through the EU-NATO prism, the strengthening of the EU defence cooperation contributes to transatlantic burden-sharing. Close cooperation between the EU and NATO is today perhaps even more crucial than before, given the character of the threats that confront the EU and NATO alike. A lot of progress has been made already since the signing of the joint declaration at the NATO Warsaw Summit in 2016. Cooperation now exists in areas such as cybersecurity, irregular migration and hybrid threats as well as between the operational engagements in the Mediterranean Sea. This positive trajectory must continue; anything else would be to our own disadvantage. Moreover, we must continue to discuss whether the Danish defence opt-out is in Denmark's interest. My view on this is clear: it is not.

## Danish defence and security policy – what lies ahead?

Danish defence and security policy is not only an issue of international missions and operations. As always, the Danish armed forces have provided security to all parts of the Kingdom of Denmark in 2018. In Denmark, in Greenland and in the Faroe Islands, the Danish royal navy and air force patrol and conduct search and rescue operations. Personnel from the army and the home guard have supported the Danish police along the border to Germany. We contribute to counter-terror operations in Copenhagen and our F-16 fighter jets maintain quick reaction alert in Danish airspace. The above-mentioned examples provide only a glimpse of the comprehensive security tasks our soldiers perform on a daily basis. The assignments they perform are vital for our everyday life and the safety of our citizens across all parts of the territory. These important national security tasks will be continued unabated in the years ahead.

Looking beyond our borders, it is reasonable to assume that activity and challenges along ‘the flanks’ will continue. We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of wishful thinking and expect them to go away. The premise for our priorities in terms of defence and security will therefore be to continue to work hard to confront the threats and challenges emanating from the east, the south and the north – simultaneously. Likewise, cyber and hybrid threats are here to stay. Therefore, the ongoing story about Danish security and defence policy will be a story of *continued alert and continued multilateralism*. New priorities, operations and activities will surface in 2019, but the strategic challenges will remain.

On the eastern flank Denmark will continue the enhanced strategic focus on the Baltic Sea region. The overall aim is to strengthen defence and deterrence, develop and expand our activities and maintain the transatlantic engagement in the Baltic Sea region. The increased Danish focus on Nordic defence cooperation must also be seen in this light. The importance of tying the US into the Baltic Sea region cannot be overestimated. In 2019 Denmark will contribute specifically to the Enhanced Air Policing mission (EAP) in September to December with four F-16 fighters and we expect to deploy an armoured infantry company to the UK-led battle group in Estonia in 2020, similar to our

contribution in 2018. At the same time the phased build-up of the Multinational Divisional Headquarter North in Latvia will be continued.

Concerning the southern flank, Denmark will deploy the frigate Niels Juel as part of the French aircraft carrier group in March and April 2019. Initially, it will be deployed to the eastern Mediterranean to support the campaign against ISIL and later move to the north Indian Ocean where it will participate in exercises and maritime security operations. Our contribution to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan will be continued. In order to contribute to international counter-terrorism efforts in the wider Sahel region, the Danish government intends to send two transport helicopters and approximately 70 troops to the French-led Operation Barkhane at the end of 2019. With regard to the UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA, Denmark furthermore intends to contribute with a transport aircraft to the mission for six months from November as part of a rotational basis together with other contributing nations. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the United Nations has appointed Lieutenant General Michael Lollesgaard as chief of the new UN mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement in Yemen (UNMHA). In short, a Danish footprint in the development in the broader Middle East and North Africa will be manifest in the years to come.

## Multilateralism – two jubilees in 2019

A key guiding principle for Denmark's priorities on security and defence in the coming years will be continued multilateralism. As stated in the foreign and security strategy of the Government covering 2019-20, it is obviously in the self-interest of Denmark to further develop and strengthen multilateral cooperation. The international rules of the game ensure that small and large countries can peacefully co-exist, that all have a seat at the table, and that each country is free to choose its own future.

Denmark will therefore continue to support and strengthen the key international organisations and multilateral fora in the defence area: NATO, the European Union, the United Nations, Nordic Defence Cooperation and more flexible frameworks such as the Coalition against ISIL.

In 2019 we have two important multilateral jubilees, one more known than the other:

2019 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nordic Defence Cooperation, NORDEFECO. Many important achievements have been made since the memorandum of understanding was signed ten years ago. NORDEFECO has proved itself a pragmatic and results-oriented defence cooperation. The agreement on Easy Access, the agreement on better exchange of air surveillance data in peacetime (NORECAS) and contributions to military operations, such as the UN mission in Mali, all illustrate that NORDEFECO serves its purpose. In order to further develop the Nordic defence cooperation, the ministers of defence agreed on a new 'Vision 2025' for NORDEFECO at their meeting in November 2018. A significant development is the aim to extend Nordic defence cooperation to crisis and conflict situations.

In addition to providing political guidance, Vision 2025 sets 16 concrete targets for the future cooperation including enhanced training and exercises, cooperation in the field of total defence, improved resilience to hybrid threats and cyberattacks, enhanced Nordic-transatlantic cooperation, strengthened dialogue with the Baltic countries and capability development. In 2019 preparations for the Danish chairmanship of NORDEFECO in 2020 will begin and be a highly prioritised task. In light of the recent developments and progress, I have taken steps to further strengthen Denmark's focus on Nordic defence cooperation.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 marked 70 years since the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington DC with Denmark as a founding member.

Back then, as well as today, NATO represented a vision of security through collaboration and credible deterrence. It is an alliance bound by shared history, values and goals. We are committed to each other through our desire to live in peace and to defend the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. NATO rose from the ashes of two world wars. The horrors of the world wars displayed what can happen when international relations do not have a foundation in commonly-accepted rules and strong institutions. In such a world, where might equals right, the risk of conflict is high.

In light of the evolving security landscape today, the transatlantic Alliance remains as valuable as it was seventy years ago. As stressed in the first paragraph, the world is changing – and NATO is changing with it. But our mutual commitment to one another remains permanent. That is important. Despite friction and hard words in 2018 this has been clearly confirmed by all parties. NATO is and will remain the cornerstone of Denmark’s security and defence.



# Chapter 3

## Academic articles

# Denmark at war: great power politics and domestic action space in the cases of Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq

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## Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War small states have taken on a new role in military affairs (Rickli 2008; Mello 2014). For most of European and international history, small states have been viewed as pawns in great power politics, subject to invasion and domination by the militarily stronger (Maass 2017). Recurrent wars among the great powers created a perennial problem of survival for small states struggling to adapt to the parameters set by the great powers in order to secure their national security and territorial integrity (Løvold 2004). However, the past decades have seen both a changing political agenda and a change in warfare creating a new role for small states in military affairs and in international warfare.

Politically the end of the Cold War transformed the division of labour between small states and great powers (Archer, Bailes & Wivel 2014). Great powers remain the agenda setters in international affairs to be sure, but small states are now expected to contribute actively to the maintenance and development of international society. Consequently, free-riding has become much harder for small states.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the risk of great power war, and interstate war in general, has greatly diminished. The risk of interstate war has been replaced by that of frequent intrastate wars, often with the political and military involvement of international society (Gleditsch, Melander & Urdal 2016), including military deployments by small states. As noted in the introduction to a recent volume on European participation in international military operations,

'[t]here seem to be endless calls for foreign intervention in different crisis spots all over the world' (Britz 2016a: 1). Over the past decades Denmark has proven to be one of the most eager and consistent suppliers of troops to meet this demand. Between 1990 and 2018 Danish policymakers committed Danish troops to 76 military operations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, spanning from small observer missions to the war in Afghanistan and the wars following on from the break-up of Yugoslavia with each of the two latter leading to deployments of more than 10,000 Danish troops (Mortensen & Wivel 2019).

This article maps the decision-making processes leading up to four parliamentary resolutions on Danish military engagement: parliamentary resolution B 4 of 8 October 1998 on a Danish military contribution to the NATO effort in the Western Balkans; parliamentary resolution B 148 of 17 June 1999 on Danish participation in the international force in Kosovo; parliamentary resolution B 37 of 14 December 2001 on Danish military participation in the international effort against terrorist networks in Afghanistan; and parliamentary resolution B 118 of 21 March 2003 on Danish military participation in the multinational effort in Iraq. Based on this mapping we identify the most important characteristics of Danish decision making on military participation and discuss the future prospects for Denmark's military engagement.

The analysis is based on an independent inquiry into Denmark's military participation commissioned by the Danish parliament in 2016 and published in 2019.<sup>3</sup> The inquiry benefitted from unrestricted access to all relevant source material registered in the archives of Danish authorities such as the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Command. We supplemented these sources with access to private archives and interviews with central political decision makers and officials. The study's four decision-making processes took place under Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's Social Democratic–Social Liberal government of 1998–2001 and Anders Fogh Rasmussen's Liberal–Conservative government of 2001–2003 and this allows us to explore continuity and change between centre-left and centre-right governments. Parliamentary resolutions B 4 and B 148, both relating to Denmark's military involvement in the Kosovo war, were adopted during the Social Democratic–Social Liberal government. Resolution B 37 on the Danish military engagement in the Afghanistan war was formally adopted during the Liberal–Conservative government, but the first part of the decision-making process took place under the Social Democratic–Social

Liberal government prior to national elections in November 2001. Finally, the decision-making process for resolution B 118 on Danish military engagement in the Iraq war took place under the Liberal–Conservative government.

Following this introduction, the article will proceed in six steps. First, we briefly outline a framework for understanding the military engagement of small states. The aim is not to introduce a new foreign policy theory, but to construct an analytical prism allowing us to systematically compare the four decision-making processes.<sup>4</sup> Applying this analytical prism to Danish military engagement, the following three sections identify the influence of external factors, domestic politics and, finally, the shadow (lessons) of the past and shadow (expectations) of the future in order to explain the Danish decisions to go to war in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. Subsequently, we conclude the inquiry and, in the final section, we use our analysis as a platform for a brief discussion of the future of Danish military engagement in a less stable liberal international order.

## Explaining Denmark's military engagement

Foreign policy decision making in any state takes place in what we have called an 'action space' defined by the boundaries within which actions are deemed possible, i.e. the 'freedom for manoeuvre' or for 'influence over one's own behaviour' (Mouritzen 2006: 115). We start from the assumption that the action space for Danish decisions on military engagement is delineated by external and domestic conditions for policymaking and that decisions made by policymakers within this action space are affected by the shadow (lessons) of the past and the shadow (expectations) of the future. The decision to engage militarily is, typically, a response to a threat to the national security of the state, to regional stability, international society or a combination of these factors. Denmark's bilateral and multilateral relations condition its ability to respond to these threats. Bilateral relations with, primarily, the United States and, secondarily, the United Kingdom are essential for Denmark's ability to respond militarily (Mouritzen 2007; Jakobsen & Ringsmose 2015). NATO continues to constitute the multilateral cornerstone of Denmark's national security, as it has since the early days of the Cold War (Villaume 1999; Ringsmose & Rynning 2017), whereas the United Nations plays an important role because of its

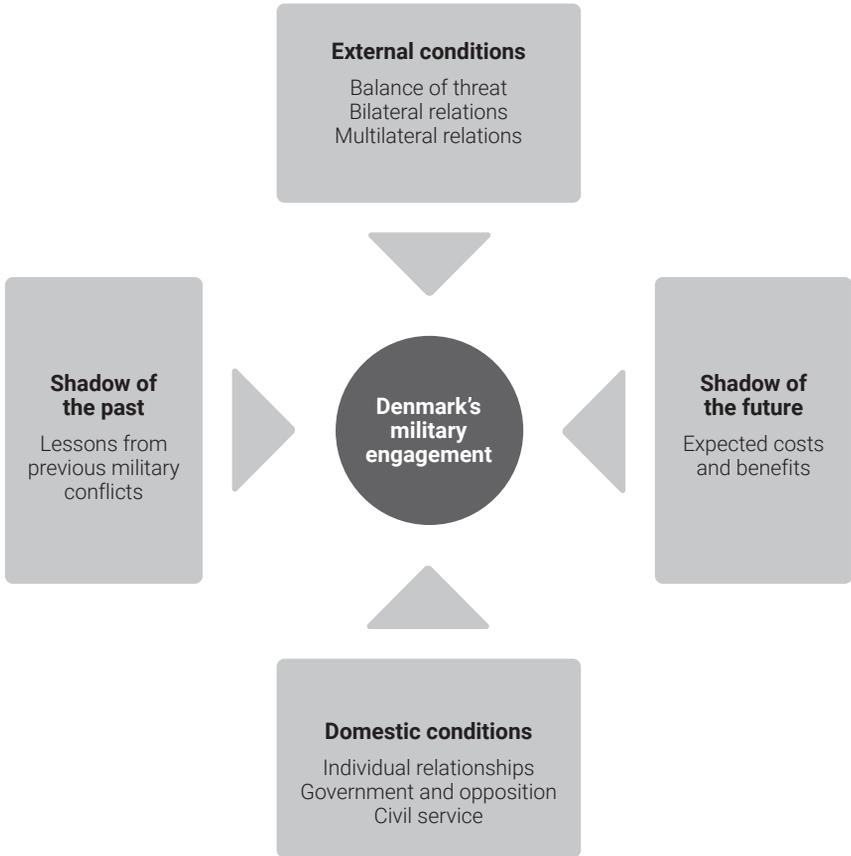
monopoly over legitimating military engagement on behalf of international society in general (Jakobsen & Kjærsgaard 2017).

Domestic politics also restrict the action space of decision makers (Kaarbo 2015). State, foreign and defence ministers play important roles in determining Denmark's military engagement. However, these policymakers are part of a political decision-making process that includes dialogue between government and opposition that takes place in the foreign policy committee, in public debates (inside and outside parliament) and between party leaders, all of which serves to disseminate information from government to opposition and to clarify which decisions a majority in the parliament can give their support to. Hence this process helps identify the action space available to the government when it engages with allies and partners about a possible military contribution. Finally, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Intelligence Service provide and interpret information upon which politicians base their decisions. They determine the legal basis for military engagement and produce policy papers etc. laying the ground for decisions on Denmark's military commitment.

Within this action space decision makers are affected by the shadow (lessons) of the past and the shadow (expectations) of the future. Decisions on military engagement are typically based on Denmark's experiences in previous wars and conflicts. The defeat in 1864, when Denmark lost one third of its territory, played a decisive role in Denmark's defence policy and military engagement right up until the end of the Cold War and continues to affect political debates on Danish foreign and security policy (Glenthøj 2018; Mouritzen 2014). Likewise, Danish military success in Bosnia in 1994 and the subsequent Danish military engagement in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East are viewed by policymakers as prerequisites for a new understanding of the armed forces as a legitimate and effective foreign policy instrument (Wivel 2013). These lessons of the past interact with expectations of the future gains and costs of a military engagement, both in relation to the general possibility of maximising Danish interests and values in the long term, and specifically in relation to the costs and benefits associated with concrete decisions to engage militarily in the short term.

These assumptions are summarised in figure 1.

Figure 1. Framework for understanding Denmark's military engagement



## External influences: responding to international demand and adapting to the United States

Denmark's military involvement in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq was largely a consequence of international developments. At no time did these developments constitute a short-term threat to Danish national security. However, in all cases the developments did constitute a threat to regional security and the international community. Two factors played a decisive role in the engagements: a long-term increased demand for military engagement in the international community, and the US desire for Danish military engagement to contribute to an intervention in the specific conflicts.

The increased demand for military engagement is a consequence of a transformed balance of threat after the Cold War. Defence policy and military policy, including military engagement, have historically been understood as a response to external threats. This also applies to the history of Danish foreign policy (Mariager & Wivel 2019: Chapter 4). Since the Cold War, so-called 'failed states', terrorism and other unconventional threats have replaced interstate wars and the threat of major power conflict as the significant challenges to national, regional and global security in the eyes of the Danish armed forces, civil service and political decision makers (Committee on the Development of Danish Defence 1992; Danish Government 1990; 1993). This did not reduce the importance of bilateral and multilateral relations but changed the nature of these relations, putting more demands on smaller allies to demonstrate their continued usefulness to great power allies in a world of complex and changing security challenges (Breitenbach 2015: 28). In bilateral relations, especially the relationship with superpower allies, and in multilateral relations, most prominently in the form of the United Nations as the representative of the international community, military alliances such as NATO and international coalitions came to play a more prominent role in countries' decisions on military engagement (Mariager & Wivel 2019: Chapter 3, see also Britz 2016b; Mello 2014).

Denmark's post-Cold War security and defence policy is characterised by willingness as well as ability to meet international demand for participation in international military operations, in particular when this demand comes

from the United States. Danish decisions to meet international demands for international military engagement are typically institutionally and ideationally pragmatic. From 1990 to 2018, the Danish parliament authorised troop deployments to 33 UN operations, 25 NATO operations and 10 international military coalitions with the remaining 8 out of the total of 76 operations embedded in other institutional frameworks. These 76 operations constitute a six-fold increase over the period 1945-1989, when Denmark contributed to just 13 international military operations. In comparison with other Nordic countries, the UN does not hold a special status for Denmark when it comes to military engagement (Wivel & Marcussen 2014). While the UN was the exclusive framework for Denmark's military engagement in the period 1948-1989, NATO is now the central organisation, both in terms of political weight and of the number of soldiers sent abroad in connection with Denmark's military engagement. However, it should be noted that 11 out of the 25 NATO operations (and 8 out of the 10 operations embedded in international military coalitions) were authorised by the UN (Mortensen & Wivel 2019: 555-57, 560-61).

The public rationale for Denmark's military engagement as stated in official speeches and parliamentary resolutions includes a variety of reasons for troop deployments including peacekeeping and peacemaking, protection of civilians and of the rules and norms of international society more generally as well as solidarity with and support to allies. As is typical of small states, Denmark's military engagement is demand-driven by external developments, i.e. Denmark will rarely initiate military engagement on its own, but Danish decision makers are willing to respond positively to international demands for troop deployments (Jakobsen 2015). Danish political decision makers have mainly been willing to meet US-driven demands for international military engagement since 1990, often attempting to precipitate US preferences before they are formulated as explicit wishes or demands.

Danish ability to deploy troops internationally has been underpinned by a sustained reform of the Danish armed forces, most radically in 2004 when Denmark de facto gave up territorial defence in order to focus on flexibility and deployability 'out of area'. At the same time, the goals of Danish military engagement have changed from the Cold War focus on peacekeeping to encompass peacemaking and civilian protection. As a result, the troops' mandate has changed from self-defence to often including a so-called 'robust' mandate that, among other things, includes offensive use of force.

Parallel to and linked with this development, and unlike during the Cold War, Denmark is now willing to engage its military, even when there is disagreement between the great powers and when the UN has not authorised a given military operation, despite the fact that Danish governments continue to view great power agreement and UN authorisation as desirable for a small country like Denmark. Denmark's first military engagement without UN authorisation was Operation Allied Force in Kosovo in the spring of 1999, which followed parliamentary resolution B 4 of 8 October 1998, on a Danish military contribution to a NATO effort in the western Balkans.

In three of the four decision-making processes examined Denmark's military engagement was a response to an American preference for military intervention. The exception was parliamentary resolution B 148 of 17 June 1999 on Danish participation in an international force in Kosovo, which was based on a direct UN mandate and which was considered by Danish policymakers to be a continuation of Operation Allied Force. In the other three conflicts, Denmark was prepared to follow US policy and Danish political choices for military engagement were a reaction to US requests for a clear Danish position.

Public arguments in favour of Danish military engagement in Operation Allied Force focused on the need to prevent a humanitarian crisis in former Yugoslavia as a result of the Serbian regime's behaviour towards the Kosovo Albanian population (Wivel 2019: 378-84). These arguments were central to the Social Democratic–Social Liberal government's presentation of the motion to approve parliamentary resolution B 4 on Denmark's military engagement. In the media, in parliamentary debates and in the Foreign Policy Committee, the government consistently based its recommendation for military engagement on humanitarian arguments. However, in government discussions behind closed doors, and especially in the Prime Minister's Office, concern for NATO's future if member states failed to act decisively and the desire to play the role of a constructive and competent ally, willing and able to meet the demand for military engagement, played a much more important role (Olesen 2019). A Danish veto would effectively prevent NATO from carrying out a military operation and place Denmark at odds with a number of alliance partners – not least the US. The US was the driving force behind the desire for military intervention and had informed alliance members that, while there was room for various reasons to support a NATO intervention, it was essential that alliance members supported intervention or at least did not oppose it. For

Denmark, however, the decision to engage militarily under the auspice of NATO and without a UN mandate was a breach of 50 years of military engagement exclusively under the aegis of the UN. Consequently, the government waited as long as possible to choose between the UN Security Council and NATO but when China and Russia blocked UN action in the Security Council, the Danish government chose NATO. Government members were concerned about the potential consequences a NATO operation without a clear UN mandate could have on the international legal order and the future security and influence of small states. However, in public statements the government underplayed this risk and justified the decision as an 'emergency policy', a policy of necessity allowing NATO to act on behalf of international society to prevent a humanitarian disaster. Proponents argued that a NATO intervention would not serve as a precedent, because of the allegedly exceptional nature of the conflict (Wivel 2019: 382-83).

The starting point for the motion for resolution B 37 in December 2001 on Danish military engagement in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan was a general US desire for a broad international coalition combined with specific US wishes for how Denmark could contribute militarily to this coalition. US preferences were communicated in the context of the decision by NATO members by invoking Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC (Jensen & Schmidt 2019). The situation in Afghanistan and how it affected the balance of threat mattered little to Danish decision makers, although the importance of Afghanistan for international society and international security played an indirect role. The US-led coalition was seen as a response to the terrorist attacks of September 11 on New York and Washington, and the Danish decision was based on the shock that 9/11 had triggered in most of the world, not least in the US and among the superpower's allies, including Denmark. Rather than a response to a concrete threat, the decision on Danish military engagement was a matter of Danish solidarity with the United States.

The nature and content of Denmark's military engagement was shaped early in the decision-making process and some time before an official US enquiry about a potential Danish military contribution. A number of conversations and contacts between Danish and US diplomats and military officials played an important role in the process. Following the terrorist attacks on New York

and Washington on 11 September 2001, Danish government ministers, Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen in particular, declared unequivocal solidarity with the United States. The prime minister was adamant in his message that Denmark would go 'all the way' in supporting the US. At the same time, a number of formal and informal discussions took place between Danish and US military officers. Shortly afterwards in what an American civil servant characterised as 'explicit discussions', on 10 October 2001 Danish military officers led US officials to expect a concrete military contribution. The subsequent presence of a Danish liaison at US Central Command also had a significant impact on the United States' later expression of interest in Danish military engagement, as it was to this person that the US expressed interest that Denmark should deploy special forces in Afghanistan.

Like in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the Danish military engagement in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 also came in response to a US desire for Danish military engagement (Schmidt 2019). Danish government policy on Iraq had shadowed US and UK policies since the 1990s and, like the US and the UK, various Danish governments of the 1990s and until January 2003 demanded that Iraq destroy its weapons of mass destruction. This argument was abandoned in early 2003, when the UN weapons inspectors became increasingly uncertain as to whether Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and, if so, whether the country was in possession of anything but very small quantities. From this point in time, Denmark, in line with American and British arguments, focused more on Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions. Danish positions on Iraq shadowed those of both the US and the UK, but there was a clear hierarchy in relation to the two: the United States was clearly the most important partner for Denmark. The United States drove the process towards an invasion of Iraq. British policies, while largely following the US, also attempted to influence US policy in a direction that also served Danish interests. British Prime Minister Tony Blair thus tried to persuade US President George W. Bush to commit to a policy based on clear UN legitimisation of a military engagement. Unlike Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and the Social Democratic–Social Liberal government during the debate leading up to the adoption of resolution B 4 on military engagement in Kosovo, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen stressed both in public and behind closed doors that, in his opinion, siding with the US served both Denmark's long-term security interests and the promotion of Danish values such as democracy and human rights.

## Domestic politics: the government's economical information practices and the importance of forums other than the Foreign Policy Committee

The Constitutional Act of Denmark requires the government to discuss matters of importance to Denmark's foreign policy with the Foreign Policy Committee of the Danish parliament. Discussions with the Foreign Policy Committee are subject to confidentiality. The government has some discretion as to what constitutes matters of importance, and while decisions on committing Danish troops to participation in armed conflict are always considered important, the government decides when to inform parliament and assesses which aspects of, for example, negotiations on troop deployments with allies need to be conveyed to parliament.<sup>5</sup>

In all four decision-making processes regarding troop deployments in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, the government followed an economical strategy for informing the Foreign Policy Committee. The Social Democratic–Social Liberal government as well as the Liberal–Conservative government observed the formal rules of the Danish Constitutional Act (and were keen not to violate these rules). However, at the same time parliament was informed on a 'need to know' basis and was involved in actual decision making at a stage in the process when it would have potentially devastating consequences for Denmark's bilateral relations to renege on its commitment to engage militarily. The Foreign Policy Committee was, typically, briefed immediately prior to the presentation of proposals for a formal decision on Danish military engagement but following an often around four week-long dialogue with allies and inputs from the civil service and the armed forces, which shaped and concretised the content of a potential military commitment. Thus, while no formal commitments to troop deployments were made before discussions in the Foreign Policy Committee and in the parliamentary assembly and the subsequent passing of a formal parliamentary resolution, the government had, de facto, politically committed Denmark to contribute prior to involving parliament.

Prior to the decision in October 1998 on a Danish military engagement in Operation Allied Force in the Western Balkans and the decision in June 1999 to participate in an international force in Kosovo, the Danish government

informed the Foreign Policy Committee of the envisaged decisions before they were adopted in the parliament, and there is no evidence that the government withheld important information from the committee during the decision-making process. However, in both cases, the government briefed NATO on the expected outcome of the decision-making process before informing the committee. The Prime Minister's Office assessed that this procedure did not violate formal rules, but also found that communications with NATO constituted a de facto political commitment by Denmark.

A similar pattern is discernible prior to the decision on Danish military involvement in the international effort against terrorist networks in Afghanistan. There were no violations of former rules by either the Social Democratic–Social Liberal government or by the Liberal–Conservative government, which took over office in December 2001 after an election in November. In late October government consulted with the foreign policy committee prior to sending a Danish liaison to the US Central Command in Florida, where the US military coordinated the military response to 9/11 with allies, and on December 5 the newly elected government obtained the Foreign Policy Committee's support to start negotiations with the US on a Danish military contribution to the fight against terrorist networks in Afghanistan. Both consultations with the committee were responses to US inquiries about a potential Danish role in the military response to 9/11 and, in both cases, the committee followed recommendations from the incumbent government to accommodate the US requests. However, in both cases consultation with the committee began after an extended dialogue with US authorities under both governments, for example the above-mentioned 'explicit discussions' which took place as soon as 10 October 2001, that is two months prior to the 5 December discussion in the Foreign Policy Committee.

Prior to the decision on Danish military participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq in 2003, the government informed the Foreign Policy Committee that the purpose of the use of force towards Iraq was to disarm the regime of Saddam Hussein, but without stating that regime change in Iraq had been an official goal of US foreign policy under both the incumbent and the previous US President.<sup>6</sup> The government also failed to inform the committee about a meeting between Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and US Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz in March 2002, where the Iraq issue was discussed. Finally, the government stated before the Foreign Policy Committee that there was a sufficient legal basis for the use of force against Iraq at a

time when the Foreign Ministry's own international lawyers had, for months, assessed that the legal basis for a military operation without a direct UN mandate was in essence a political decision. As in the other decision-making processes, there is no basis for concluding that the government did not comply with its formal duty to consult the Foreign Policy Committee. However, the government had continued the economical information practice in the Foreign Policy Committee as had been the case in the Kosovo and Afghanistan wars.

The economical information practice created a considerable action space for the government. By only informing the Foreign Policy Committee selectively and late in the process, the government successfully expanded its own action space by affecting the conditions for parliamentary scrutiny and opposition. Consequently, the government could engage with partners and allies, primarily the United States, accommodating their preferences with fewer restrictions and making commitments that could be formally rejected by parliament, but not without real political consequences for Denmark's international credibility and multi- and bilateral relations in the future.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to increasing the action space of government ministers, the economical information practice also increased the importance of informal negotiations outside formal committees and parliamentary plenary sessions. The government still needed to communicate with the opposition in order to get an impression of whether or not parliament would back a resolution on Danish military action, but government-opposition dialogue was, to a large extent, conducted in informal forums, most importantly in the circle of parties backing the five-year defence agreements and via contacts between the prime minister and leading politicians in the opposition. This practice was criticised by those parties excluded, most vigorously by the far-left Red-Green Alliance who designated the circle of parties behind the defence agreement a 'reserve committee', i.e. conveying the message that the government was circumventing formal rules for communication with parliament (Wivel 2019: 400).

Advice from the civil service and the armed forces was given to a very small circle of ministers, senior officials and military officers, who for long periods were in close dialogue with senior US defence and civil service officials without informing the Foreign Policy Committee let alone parliament at large. This economical information practice underpinned what was already a significant asymmetry between government and parliament both in access

to information, including military intelligence, and in professional advice from the civil service. Consequently, when leading government members conveyed a vague message on whether the government was planning to deploy troops and what kind of deployment would, in that case, be likely, they were unlikely to be held accountable by parliamentarians. Thus, in 2001, in the run-up to Denmark's military engagement in Afghanistan, Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen maintained that Denmark should do what Denmark was 'best at' without specifying what kind of contribution this would entail, whether, for example, it would include the special forces, which later did indeed come to be part of the Danish contribution. A similar process took place prior to Denmark's military engagement in Iraq, when Liberal Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen consistently refused to unpack what he meant when arguing that a military intervention must be 'UN anchored', or to answer what he typically referred to as 'hypothetical questions', e.g. whether a military intervention was likely to follow if international society failed to dismantle Iraq's arms programmes.

Consequently, the content of Denmark's military engagements in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq was shaped in lengthy, step-by-step dialogues between the Danish government, diplomats and military officers and their counterparts in other contributing countries, in particular the United States. At times, the dialogue between representatives of Danish and US armed forces seems to have taken place prior to and independent of both the government and the parliament, especially in the run-up to parliamentary resolution B 37 on Denmark's military engagement in Afghanistan. Conversely, the legal advice from the civil service to the government became part of the political process. In the process leading up to the decision on a Danish military engagement in Iraq in 2003, civil service assessments of the legality of military intervention developed in parallel with political developments. A law note on the legal basis for the use of force in Iraq was originally drawn up by the legal service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 2002, but then adjusted in winter and spring 2003, in line with developments in Iraq and the likelihood of a direct UN mandate to intervene. There is no evidence that assessments followed instructions from the Prime Minister's Office or other authorities or members of the government. Rather, they seem to reflect a culture of civil service responsiveness vis-à-vis government preferences, in this case the government's desire to set up a legal case that justified the use of force against Iraq.

## Between past and future shadows

During the 1990s Denmark committed to 30 new military engagements, more than twice as many as during the entire Cold War. A small majority (16) of these commitments were under the auspices of the United Nations, while eight were under the auspices of NATO. Of the eight, all except Operation Allied Force in Kosovo were authorised by the UN. Operation Allied Force was thus an important step in the development of Denmark's military activism, which in itself was based on the experience of previous engagements such as the so-called 'Operation Beat up the Bullies' (Operation Bøllebank) in Bosnia in 1994. In Bosnia, Danish troops took part in actual acts of war for the first time since the loss of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg (i.e. a third of the kingdom's territory) in 1864 in the war with Prussia and Austria. However, this time Danish troops fought successfully and won the battle. The lesson for Danish policymakers of this and subsequent operations was that Denmark could successfully contribute to military operations, and that operations aimed at peace-building and the protection of civilian populations were best conducted under the auspices of NATO, both for the sake of goal achievement and for the protection of the participating troops.

In the parliamentary debates of the time, Denmark's decision to contribute to a NATO operation without a direct UN mandate was viewed as a necessary exception that would not form a precedent (Wivel 2019: 378-84). However, the decision was a breach of 50 years of Danish military engagement only taking place under UN authorisation.<sup>8</sup> This break became the starting point for future debates on Denmark's military engagement, especially in the discussion leading up to parliamentary resolution B 118 of 21 March 2003 on Danish military participation in a multinational effort in Iraq, where government ministers, not least Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and parliamentarians from the Conservative and Liberal government parties, argued that there was now a precedent for Danish military engagement based on previously adopted UN resolutions. Thus, the Kosovo War, came to serve as a shadow of the past in arguments leading up to the Iraq War. Participation in the two coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq was part of a general development of Denmark's military engagement towards NATO becoming the central institutional framework by the end of the 1990s, and where international ad hoc coalitions formed to meet specific security challenges had become more common.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, it is worth noting that the publicly argued rationales for military

engagement in all four decision-making processes drew on classic Nordic foreign policy priorities such as the protection of civilian populations and the protection and strengthening of international society and an international legal order. These arguments were also made behind closed doors in the Foreign Policy Committee and in government meetings, but in the latter case 'realist' national interest arguments on the importance of alliance commitments and maintaining good bilateral relations with the United States typically played a much more prominent part. In this sense, shadows of the past played a role as an argument when decisions were made and subsequently publicly defended.

Expectations about the future consequences of military engagement decisions played a role in all four decision-making processes, although there is no evidence that Danish policies were the consequence of political pressure from the US, the UK or other major powers or international organisations. In three of the four decision-making processes – parliamentary resolution B 4 of 8 October 1998 on a Danish military contribution to Operation Allied Force; parliamentary resolution B 37 of 14 December 2001 on Danish military participation in Operation Enduring Freedom against terrorist networks in Afghanistan; and parliamentary resolution B 118 of 21 March 2003 on Danish military participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq – NATO (Kosovo) and the US (Afghanistan and Iraq) requested a clear Danish position on whether and how to contribute to the military operations. While these requests were never formulated as demands, there could be no doubt among Danish policymakers that Denmark's international partners desired and expected a robust military commitment from Denmark. As such, Denmark's future relations to, especially, the US and NATO (shadow of the future) contributed to shaping the war decisions.

Rather than an actual cost-benefit analysis for and against a military engagement, the Danish decision in both Afghanistan and Iraq was, from an early stage in the process, formed in dialogue with the United States, which at the same time played a very important role as a disseminator of information on the nature and development of the threat. Rather than clear expectations of costs and gains from participating or not, Denmark seems to have been a part of group-think process, where information-sharing and dialogue in a narrow circle shaped the motions for resolutions that were later submitted to parliament.<sup>10</sup> There was no systematic effort to learn from the past or to make scenarios for the future. Rather, commitments were gradually shaped in a step-by-step dialogue with allies.

## Conclusions: shaping Danish decisions on military engagement

Three general conclusions follow from our analysis.<sup>11</sup> First, Denmark's military engagement was driven by the willingness of Danish political decision makers to accommodate US requests for military contributions. Most fundamentally, Denmark's military engagement was a reaction to US initiatives and expression of the eagerness of Danish policymakers to live up to US expectations, typically even before they were communicated as concrete US preferences or demands. This was most evident in the decision-making processes leading up to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (B 37) and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq (B 118), where the Danish military contributions were shaped through an extended dialogue with the US. It also applied to Operation Allied Force in Kosovo (B 4), where the United States was the driving force behind the desire for a NATO operation and the US position played a decisive role in government meetings behind closed doors, while the subsequent participation in the Kosovo Force (KFOR) was linked to Denmark's participation in Operation Allied Force.

To varying degrees, the public arguments in favour of Danish military engagement made by policymakers recognised the decisive role of the US in the Danish decisions. However, in public, political decision makers typically emphasised classic Danish (and Nordic) foreign policy values such as preventing a humanitarian disaster (Kosovo), defending democracy and freedom (Afghanistan) and maintaining the international legal order (Iraq) (Wivel 2019). In contrast to this, behind closed doors in confidential government negotiations decision makers tended to emphasise arguments about potential consequences for relations with important allies when considering troop deployments. In all three conflicts Washington, London, Berlin and Paris played a bigger role for Danish decision making than did the likely consequences of the military operation for the people of Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. In Kosovo specifically, the risk of a humanitarian crisis did play a role in government deliberations, although alliance commitments and interests in a functioning NATO and a strong relationship with the United States were deemed more important.

Over time, the decision to commit troops became the default solution provided such decision would not be illegal (as assessed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and provided that Denmark had the military capacities in demand (as assessed by the Danish armed forces in dialogue with allies). Thus, in 1998, before introducing draft resolution B4 on a Danish military contribution to a NATO operation in the Western Balkans, the government debated whether the military engagement would risk expanding the action space of the great powers to intervene militarily, and thus undermine the international legal order and the long-term security of small states, although they only voiced these concerns behind closed doors. In the subsequent decision-making processes prior to military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq such critical reflections on the potential costs of committing troops were voiced almost exclusively by opponents of Danish military engagement.

Second, Denmark's military engagements in all four decision-making processes were shaped over periods of weeks and months rather than days and hours. The decision-making periods leading up to the military commitments in Kosovo were shorter than those prior to the decisions on Danish military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, but in all four cases a series of minor decisions gradually shaped the final military engagement and made it increasingly costly to choose an alternative route. These minor decisions were typically the result of consultations between the government, the civil service and the armed forces and dialogue between Danish government ministers, diplomats and officers and their counterparts in other countries, primarily the United States. By the time the draft resolutions on the form and content of a Danish military engagement were introduced to the Foreign Policy Committee and the parliament, the political costs of not committing troops or of fundamentally reshaping the Danish contribution would have been high in terms of potentially severing the relationship with important allies, not least the United States.

Third, only a very small, informal group of Danish government members, top officials and military officers in dialogue primarily with US officials and military officers were included in the decision-making process. The effect of this de facto marginalisation of parliament in the decision-making process was to some extent offset by the government's use of informal channels of communication between government and parliament. In particular, govern-

ments would channel information to the parliamentary parties backing the five-year defence agreements (i.e. channel information to the parties that are part of a centre-right–centre-left consensus on the aims and means of Danish security and defence policy) rather than to the Foreign Policy Committee where representation is based on party size. The most important consequence of this practice was the systematic exclusion of the far left. Another information asymmetry was between the biggest political parties and the small political parties in the Danish parliament, which included 8-10 parties during the period investigated. The prime minister (also the chairman of the biggest party) would to varying degrees inform the leader of the biggest opposition party on central developments. The combination of late provision of information to parliament and the marked asymmetry in both access to information and support from academic staff between the government and the parliament meant that parliament's formal involvement in the decision-making processes that preceded Denmark's military engagement in the four conflicts was marginal.

In sum, Denmark's military engagement in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq was primarily a function of Denmark's relationship with the United States and the desire of Danish political decision makers to defend the status of Denmark as a constructive and competent ally, willing and able to meet the demand for military engagement and thereby contribute to international order and strengthening the Danish relationship with the superpower at the same time.

The centre-left government of 1998-2001 and the centre-right government of 2001 agreed that maintaining good transatlantic relations was a core national interest. No argument was too big and no argument too small when stressing the importance of this interest. Thus over the course of the four decision-making processes investigated, policymakers made grand strategic arguments about keeping the United States in Europe and maintaining a close relationship with the US in a world of rogue states and terror at the same time as they stressed how this relationship would allow Denmark to pursue policies strengthening international society, such as peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention. This reasoning was supplemented with more down-to-earth arguments on Denmark's role in and influence on forthcoming NATO summits. The emphasis of the arguments – both in public and behind closed doors – shifted from war to war. In 1998-1999, arguments on the importance of strengthening NATO's role in the post-Cold War security environment played a decisive role behind closed doors. In 2001, solidarity with the United States

after the 9/11 attacks was prominent both in public arguments and behind closed doors and in 2003 Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen made no secret of his agreement with the US administration on Saddam Hussein's Iraq regime. However, each time the result was the same: unequivocal support for the policies of the United States. We thus observe a remarkable degree of continuity in the war decisions across the Social Democratic-led governments of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (1993-2001) and the Liberal-led governments of Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2001-2009).

## What now? Denmark's military engagement in a fledgling liberal order

The United States entered the 1990s as the most powerful great power in the history of the modern states system (Wohlforth 1999). At the same time, the end of the Cold War left Denmark surrounded by friendly states and more secure than it had been for 1300 years (Petersen 2006: 427). As concluded in a 1992 report by a committee of leading defence officials, this did not spell the end of insecurity (Committee on the Development of Danish Defence 1992). Denmark was in a privileged position, but short-term territorial military threats against Denmark were to some extent being replaced by long-term instability, arms proliferation, Islamic fundamentalism, poverty and migration (ibid.) In the eyes of Danish decision makers, a strong relationship with the United States was the best way of taking advantage of the opportunities of this new order as well as meeting the challenges it presented.

Today, the United States remains the world's only superpower. However, the interconnectedness of global politics and the diminishing returns of conquest with the advent of both economic and technological developments and changing norms restrict the action space of the superpower (Brooks & Wohlforth 2016; Paul 2018). Moreover, the 'America First' approach of the US administration accompanied by more aggressive policies of Russia and China in their geopolitical spheres of influence have underpinned arguments that we are witnessing the return of the transactional self-help politics of the past (Patrick 2017), and the abdication of the US as a guarantor of a liberal international order (Kristensen 2017).

This development is already affecting Danish military engagement. Recent years have seen an increasing discrepancy in Danish foreign policy between government aims on international activism and budgetary restrictions and more modest and defensive aims in day-to-day politics (Andersen 2018). The 2019-2020 edition of the official Danish foreign and security policy strategy echoes official statements throughout the post-Cold War era by reiterating the continued centrality of the United States and NATO for Danish security but it also signals a stronger role for Europe in Denmark's military engagement (Danish Government 2018). The strategy stresses the continued importance of active military engagement but also focuses on Denmark's geopolitical neighbourhood, in particular the actions of Russia. It underlines the need to deliver on output, but also focuses on input in terms of the defence budget. In that sense the strategy is more a reflection of the complexity of the Danish security environment than a tool to navigate this environment. This complexity is also evident in Denmark's military engagement, which has seen an increased Danish military presence in the Baltic Sea area since 2018, while continuing a strong military engagement outside Europe, underpinned by an increasing defence budget.

In this situation, there is a strong rationale for hedging security relations, relying less on one ally and seeking closer relations with others when it comes to military engagement. The European political space offers an increasing number of opportunities for linking up both with institutions and with strong military powers such as France and Britain. Despite continuing crises, the European Union continues as a framework for peaceful and democratic developments of the region under the leadership of Germany and France. Seeking closer relations with European partners while continuing to work closely with the United States may be a way to maintain or even increase the Danish action space when deciding on future military engagements.

## Notes

- 1 Rasmus Mariager, dr. phil., is an associate professor at the Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen. Anders Wivel, PhD, is a professor m.s.o. ('with special responsibilities') at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen.
- 2 For a contrasting argument that free-riding has, in fact, become easier for small states see e.g. Maher (2011).
- 3 Mariager & Wivel (2019). The article is based on chapter 9 in particular. We thank our research team Regin Schmidt, Mikkel Runge Olesen, Jakob Linnet Schmidt, Sanne Aagard Jensen and Clara Lyngthom Mortensen for their work on the analysis upon which the inquiry is based. The original analysis as well as a collection of sources can be downloaded from <https://krigsudredning.ku.dk/>
- 4 For the original model and the rationale behind it, see Mariager & Wivel (2019: Chapter 2).
- 5 For a discussion, see Rytter & Henriksen (2019).
- 6 At the same time, it is surprising that committee members did not problematise this relationship more vigorously.
- 7 Members of parliament were free to pose questions to the government regarding the decisions being contemplated. Yet, our inquiry reveals that this was by no means an easy task. Posing the right questions in these matters depends upon knowledge about the substance of the ongoing negotiations with allies as well as developments on the ground in the country subject to a potential military operation, and access to this type of information is restricted.
- 8 The Social Democrats, the Social Liberals, the Liberals, the Conservatives and two small centre parties (the Christian Democrats and the Centre Democrats) constituted the majority in favour of Danish military engagement. The Socialist People's Party, the Red-Green Alliance, the Danish People's Party and the Progress Party in addition to two rank and file members of the Social Democratic parliamentary group voted against Danish military engagement in the war.
- 9 This type of cooperation had long been included in the US foreign policy toolbox. See Mariager & Wivel (2019: Chapter 3).
- 10 This does not mean that Denmark always followed all US preferences. Importantly, late in its dialogue with the US about the Danish military engagement in Iraq, the government chose to remove a Danish offer of special forces from the Danish contribution, hoping thus to gain support from the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals.
- 11 For our discussion of lessons that can be derived regarding quality assurance of future decision-making processes, see Mariager & Wivel (2019: Chapter 8).

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# Oh Brother, Where Art Thou? The United Kingdom and strategies in Danish EU policy

Rasmus Brun Pedersen<sup>1</sup>

*'if Lilliputians can tie up Gulliver,  
or make him do their fighting for them,  
they must be studied as carefully as the Giant'*

(Keohane, 1969: 310)

## Introduction

The British exit from the EU has been met with a degree of nostalgia in Denmark, as the country followed the United Kingdom and Ireland into the community in 1973. The tie to the United Kingdom have often been seen as a 'special relationship' due to the important economic, political and security role Britain has played for Denmark in the cooperation over the years. Another reason has been the strategic relevance the UK has held for Denmark in the integration process. Because of the Danish reluctant attitude towards further institutional integration, Denmark has often found itself in a situation where the Danish government has negotiated in the shadow of British scepticism towards further institutional integration. In the theoretical literature the reluctant Danish attitudes struck towards further EU integration have been analysed through the lens of the so-called 'integration dilemma' (Petersen 1998). Denmark has on the one hand tried to harvest the economic and political benefits of its membership while at the same time fearing it will cede autonomy and sovereignty to the EU institutions in the process (Pedersen 2014a). Denmark has historically tried to balance the costs related to being entrapped in a stronger supranational cooperation where the country fears losing sovereignty while on the other hand also fearing the costs related to being isolated and marginalised in the European cooperation if they do not follow the EU mainstream.

Nostalgia aside, this article argues that the 'special relationship' from the Danish perspective has often been more instrumental than otherwise assumed. It proposes that the British scepticism towards further (institutional) integration has often been a useful tool and an asset in the Danish bargaining strategy within the cooperation, as it has helped to absorb and balance the abandonment and entrapment costs associated with the integration dilemma (Pedersen 2013). The instrumental value of the British membership has, however, declined over the past decades leading up to the British decision to leave the EU in 2016. This is largely due to a gradual drift in the British positions that has distanced Great Britain from Denmark on a number of central institutional questions as well on a number of policy areas in the day-to-day workings of the EU institutions. Still, the absence of the UK will be felt in Danish EU policy, not least in relation to the Danish opt-outs where the costs of abandonment and isolation have previously been reduced because of the structural British position in the EU. The renewed vitalisation of the French–German axis coupled with the rise of Russia and the decline in US leadership which means that the US has turned its attention towards the Asian theatre, seem to have accelerated new European agendas, not least in relation to European Security Cooperation. These dynamics will put significant pressure on some of the remaining Danish 'opt-out bastions' in the cooperation. This means that Denmark after Brexit will have to navigate in a terrain where the country has traditionally oriented itself towards the British and the Atlantic ties in order to reduce the cost of Danish marginalisation. The present situation suggests that Denmark has to find new ways to balance the costs associated with the integration dilemma either by abandoning its opt-outs or by adopting new outsider strategies to cope with the new dynamics in the security and defence area.

## The integration dilemma and an explanation of Danish EU policy

The Danish literature has traditionally studied the country's cooperation and integration in the EU through the lens of Snyder's 'alliance security dilemma' (1984: 466-68; 1997: 180-92). In this dilemma, (small) states are assumed to face a situation where they have decided to join an alliance or institutional arrangement that is difficult to leave because of certain entrapment mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> Within the cooperation states are assumed to have shared

interests but also that the interests are not identical; moreover, to the extent they are shared, they may be valued in different degree. As most alliances and cooperation's are asymmetric, this suggests that the larger member states have the capacity and the ability to set the pace and direction of the cooperation, which might differ from the positions of the smaller states. Smaller member states are therefore assumed to be caught in a tension between a 'fear of abandonment' and 'fear of entrapment' (Petersen 1998; Kelstrup 2014). Entrapment occurs when the development in a given organisation changes and might turn detrimental to one's interests or when it moves too far in a direction not favoured by the small state. The entrapment costs, therefore, are that small states can be forced to accept new agendas, policies and even further integration on areas that they originally were not willing to accept. In a cooperation like the EU, with a relatively broad range of policy areas and agendas, this fear is often very clear for small states. This relates to the fact that they are often not able to set the pace in the cooperation nor determine the direction of the cooperation (Snyder 1984: 466-67). Such costs can take different forms, but for small states, it has often been argued that such costs fundamentally are associated with the loss of sovereignty and self-determination.

The other side of the dilemma relates to the costs of maintaining assets of sovereignty at the expense of remaining a member of the international cooperation. Such costs relate to the fear of abandonment. Abandonment is often referred to as the fear of being left behind, of losing relevance or being marginalised within the international cooperation. For small states such costs can also relate to situations where they are left outside the cooperation, where they do not have any influence over the direction of the agenda, nor over decisions that they will be dependent on, despite their outsider status. Such costs relate to the situation both Denmark and Norway face as non-members of central elements of the monetary area, although the countries' economic situations hinge upon developments within the Euro-zone. Abandonment costs can also relate to situations where states decide to stay in the cooperation, only to find themselves placed in an isolated position. For most states, the cost of abandoning is often higher than the cost of remaining in the cooperation. Small states in the EU often seek to further their interests by trying to preserve as much autonomy as possible while influencing the actions of the great powers. They seek to expand their influence over the great powers mainly through international organisations, but nevertheless participation typically reduces

political autonomy. Thus, small states face a dilemma between autonomy and influence. The cooperation in the EU aggravates this dilemma by increasing the potential costs and benefits of institutionalisation. Both costs and benefits are likely to rise continuously as the process becomes ever more binding and encompasses increasingly more issue areas. A state facing this 'integration dilemma' either surrenders autonomy and risks entrapment in a process leading to still more dependency, or it preserves autonomy and thereby runs the risk of abandonment, i.e. of forgoing the chance of influence over other states and other gains stemming from integration (Kelstrup 1993; Petersen 1998).

It should be noted that all member states experience the dynamics represented in the integration dilemma, but the literature has often argued that the small states in the cooperation often feel the dilemma more severely than the larger member states, since the larger states might have bigger chances of influencing institutional changes and of directing the pace of integration. This suggests that the larger member states have relatively fewer costs associated with entrapment since they can either stop, or even jeopardise, the integration process by refusing to take part. Small powers may seek to avoid entrapment by opting out of parts of the integration process, but only at a high risk of abandonment, because they have no decisive effect on the integration process or its chances of success (Wivel 2005: 396; Adler-Nissen 2009: 57).

### **Managing the costs in the integration dilemma**

The literature has traditionally described the Danish integration dilemma as a zero-sum game between gaining influence on the one hand and maintaining autonomy on the other (Kelstrup 1993, 2014; Petersen 1998). The Danish relationship with the EU is, therefore, often described as troublesome. On the one hand, Denmark wants the economic (and political) benefits of increased cooperation. On the other hand, the fear of losing sovereignty to the supranational institutions and the great powers has always played a role. Historically, the fear of the excessive cost of being 'left behind' has motivated Danish support for further constitutional integration (Branner and Kelstrup 2000; Pedersen 2009). The official Danish line has been to adopt positions that avoid the extremes of being entrapped in supranational commitments that would entail significant reductions in the country's autonomy or of being left completely isolated in key areas. Denmark has therefore never sought full autonomy in the form of non-membership. The official Danish position has

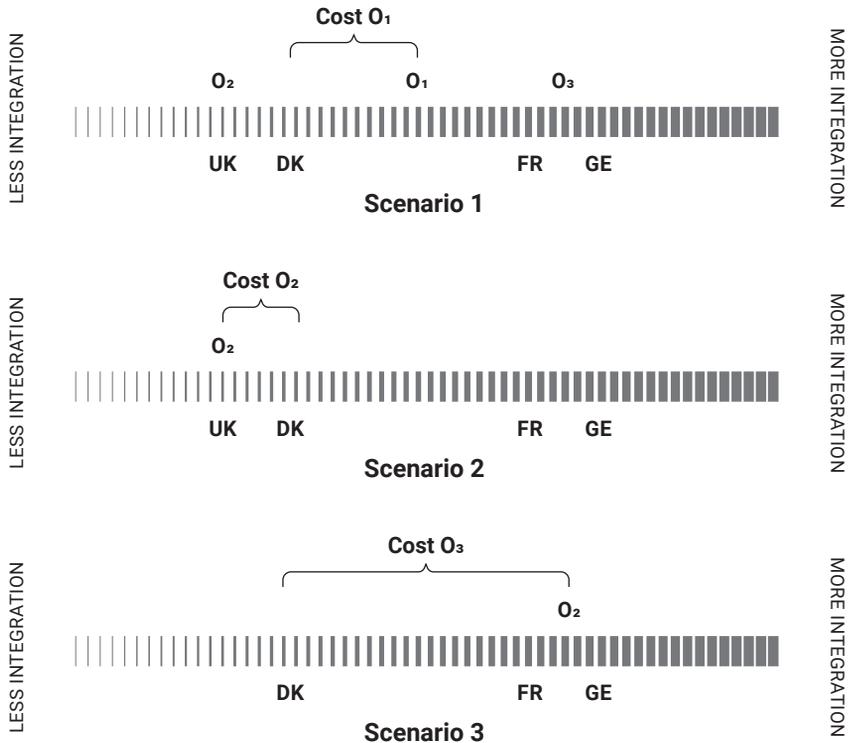
been that leaving the EU would reduce both influence *and* autonomy, which means, 'Danish actors and institutions seek both autonomy and influence and balance entrapment and isolation considerations at the same time' (Miles & Wivel 2014: 9).

While the dynamics of the integration dilemma are relatively well described in the international alliance literature (Snyder 1984, 1997) and in the Danish integration literature (Kelstrup 1993, 2014; Petersen 1998; Miles and Wivel 2014; Wivel forthcoming), the question of *how* small states like Denmark are able to reduce or manage the costs associated with the dilemma is less well described. In order to address this question the article argues that one of the reasons why small states like Denmark have been able to manage the cost of the integration dilemma and to balance the dilemma historically relates to the country's ability to form alliances with larger, more sceptical countries within the cooperation. In the 1970s and early 1980s Denmark often oriented itself towards France, Greece and the United Kingdom in questions of constitutional integration (Petersen 2006). After the more pro-integration shift in the French position around 1982, Denmark increasingly turned towards the British, and Denmark sought to design bargaining strategies that would allow the country to negotiate in the shadow of the British scepticism towards further institutional integration. This means that Denmark, on central constitutional issues, has tried to position itself close to the most influential intergovernmentalist member state, which has helped to reduce some of the costs in the integration dilemma. By aligning with the British on central issues, the country has thereby avoided paying the full costs of abandonment and marginalisation through the credibility of the potential British veto. In situations where Great Britain has not provided a veto, they have, given their structural position in the cooperation often been able to forge compromises that have been close to Danish positions and preferences. This means that the country could enjoy the relative benefits of the British opposition without bearing the full costs of opposing the French and German axis in the cooperation.

As figure 1 illustrates a small, sceptical member state like Denmark can significantly benefit from designing bargaining strategies where they depend on more sceptical, larger member states to shield them in negotiations and help them to draw out compromises closer to their own ideal positions. In the bargaining scenario it is assumed that there are three credible veto players, the United Kingdom (UK), France (F) and Germany (G), which means that the

outcome of the negotiations will either reflect a compromise between them (O1) or in lowest common denominator positions because of a potential British veto, which will reflect the British ideal point (O2). Both outcomes are closer to the Danish ideal point compared to a scenario where the UK is not taking part in the negotiations. In such a situation, there will only be two credible veto players, which means that the outcome will most likely reflect a compromise between French and German positions (O3). This logic illustrates that the hypothesised costs of entrapment and abnonnement for Denmark are lower when the country can rely on a large more sceptical ally who can either absorb or reduce the cost as is illustrated in scenarios 1 and 2 below. In opposition to this, scenario 3 illustrates a situation without the United Kingdom where it is demonstrated that the cost for Denmark in this situation is larger compared to scenarios 1 and 2. The limitation of this logic is that the sceptical British positions will only be an asset for Denmark so long as a large heterogeneity in the two countries ideal positions does not develop.

**Figure 1. Three scenarios of abandonment and entrapment costs for Denmark, with and without the UK**



## Developments and trends in Danish EU policy

The Danish relationship with Great Britain has, throughout the membership, undergone different phases. Below, three different phases are identified and illustrated as they represent different situations where the relationship between Denmark and the United Kingdom has changed and which have resulted in a change in the costs associated with the Danish integration dilemma. In the following, it is argued that the first phase represents a period from roughly 1973 to 1992, where a relatively high capability existed between the Danish and British positions on central institutional questions. This meant that Denmark was able to rely on the British scepticism in order to avoid excessively high costs related to the integration process. The second phase runs from 1993 to 2016, where both Denmark and Great Britain had opt-outs from central areas of the cooperation. During this period, Great Britain continued to have an important role for Denmark in relation to the reduction of the abandonment cost related to the Danish opt-outs. Throughout the period, we saw a growing discrepancy between the British and Danish positions, which meant that the strategic relevance of the British was reduced. The final period marks the present time since 2016, where we have seen larger differences in position between Denmark and the United Kingdom, which means that Britain a priori cannot be expected to play a strategic role in balancing the Danish costs related to the integration dilemma.

### **Phase 1: the 'special relationship' in the early days of Danish membership**

A central theme in Danish foreign policy after the Second World War was how Denmark should position itself in Europe and the new international system. In this period, Britain played a central role in readmitting Denmark into international society after the Second World War, which meant that there was a natural Danish orientation of Danish foreign policy towards the UK (Mariager 2012). In order to integrate the country into the emerging international order Denmark pursued a foreign policy structured around a compartmentalisation whereby security policy was dealt with in NATO, while taking a normative, value-based dimension from the UN and the Nordic cooperation and where Denmark's economic politics was aligned with its European partners (Hækkerup 1965). In the early post-war period, Denmark was oriented towards the British positions, and the country was the most important market for Danish exports at the start

of the 1970s when approximately 20% of exports were going to the United Kingdom (Wivel 2018).<sup>3</sup> Denmark also had an increased economic interest in joining the EEC in order to get access to a larger market and to be able to enjoy the benefits of the cooperation. From the beginning it was economic and agricultural interests that were guiding Danish considerations of joining the then EEC. The British decision to apply for membership became decisive since Denmark was dependent on the large exports of Danish agricultural products to the UK. At the same time, the United Kingdom was considered a central ally around Danish interests related to free trade, a strong Atlantic tie and a continuous important role for the national state in the cooperation and as a guardian against dominance by the continental powers over Europe (Pedersen 2014a). From a Danish perspective, there was a strong perceived identification with the British, from which originated a sense of special relations between the country and its larger ally.

This is a part of the background to Denmark's choice to apply for membership of the EEC in 1961 together with the United Kingdom, Norway and Ireland, as well as the decision to withdraw the application after the French parliament prevented British membership of the EEC. Denmark reapplied together with the United Kingdom and Ireland in 1970 and joined the EU on 1 January 1973, after a referendum in 1972. In the 1970s and early 1980s Danish EEC policy was primarily aimed at keeping a low profile. On the one hand the strategy was aimed at receiving the economic benefits of gaining market access and the Common Agricultural Policy (Nedergaard 2014; Petersen 2006: 63-4) while, on the other hand, Denmark was a reluctant member on issues related to further institutional and constitutional integration (Petersen 2006: 195; Rüdiger 1995). On constitutional questions, the official Danish position was to protect the 1972 institutional status quo by guarding the intergovernmental nature of the cooperation. The logic was that the country had accepted EEC membership under some specific institutional preconditions that should not be altered towards more supranationalism (Pedersen 2009, 2013). Theoretically speaking, maintaining the institutional status quo was considered a means to reduce further entrapment costs of the cooperation and maintain the political costs and risk in the domestic arena at a tolerable level, as it helped to decouple the market question from the domestic electoral competition. Until the mid-1980s, shifting Danish governments regularly argued that there was no need to amend the Rome Treaty as long as the existing institutional framework

was not fully utilised politically (Pedersen 2013). This meant that changes in the balance between the institutions were opposed by the government, and the intergovernmental structure was to remain the guiding principle for policymaking.

In this phase such positions were defensible due to the British (and French) resistance to further institutional integration (Pedersen 2013, 2014a;2014b), which ensured that Denmark had strong allies on the issues. In this period, Denmark often sought to coordinate its bargaining positions with the British in order to avoid Denmark becoming isolated in the EEC negotiations – or at least sought to resist institutional changes in the shadow of the British scepticism. This strategy was, for instance, the case during the negotiations in the Dooge Commission (Petersen 2006; Pedersen 2013) where Denmark tried to avoid the risk of further institutional entrapment and at the same time minimise the risk of becoming isolated in the cooperation. Theoretically, the period represented a situation where Denmark and the British had more or less the same preferences regarding further institutional integration, meaning that Denmark had a close ally on the issues, which helped to balance and reduce the entrapment and abandonment costs. This situation can be illustrated in the figure below where the expected outcome (\*) of negotiations over further institutional agreement would reflect outcomes close to the British – and Danish – ideal position.

**Figure 2. Convergence between Danish and British positions towards further integration**



The official Danish preference for maintaining the institutional status quo was put under pressure in the early 1980s, when several initiatives were attempted in an effort to relaunch the Single European Market and create a European Union. The debate focused on the need for institutional reforms, including changes in the unanimity principle and the balance between the Council and the European Parliament, as these were seen as preconditions for advancing the political cooperation (Petersen 2006; Pedersen 2013).



## Phase 2: opt-outs and a common outsider position

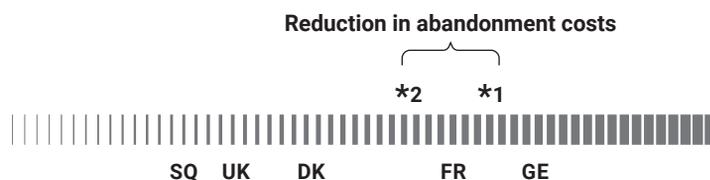
In the period from 1993 to 2016, the official Danish positions gradually became more positive and the question of membership of the EU was less debated in the Danish public as there seemed to be an overall acceptance of the membership and it became an even more central element in the Danish foreign policy strategy (Udenrigskommisionen 1990). This was both a consequence of the changes in the political and security environment in Europe and of the new dynamism within the EU institutions (Wivel forthcoming). The more pro-integrationist outlook was, however, severely handicapped by the Danish rejection of the Maastricht Treaty in a referendum in 1992. The rejection once again meant that Denmark was put in a vulnerable position, where the country risked being isolated in the cooperation, or even being forced to leave the cooperation. In the aftermath of the Maastricht negotiations Denmark was, however, able to negotiate four opt-outs on central areas as Defence, Economic and Monetary Union, Home and Justice Affairs and European citizenship in the Edinburgh Agreement in 1993, which were later ratified in a new referendum (DIIS 2008).

As the European integration process began to move forward and to entail both deeper and wider integration in particular in the economic and home and justice areas, the overall Danish relations to the EU on these areas was forced to take its point of departure in the Edinburgh Agreement. The Danish opt-outs meant that Denmark was excluded from the decision-making process on these areas and thereby had no options to impact upon the direction of the cooperation in these important areas (Adler-Nissen 2009, 2014).

Because of the opt-outs Denmark had to pragmatically accept and accommodate the deepening of the cooperation on these areas, as it was considered as an unavoidable condition for the country's continued EU membership (Sørensen & Wivel 2017). A key priority for Denmark in the negotiations of the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001) and Lisbon (2007) was therefore to ensure the continued acceptance of the Danish opt-outs in the cooperation (Wivel 2018). Another reason was, of course, that the Danish policymakers viewed the treaties in the context of EU enlargement necessitating more effective decision-making procedures and changed voting weights (Petersen, 2006: 524-32).

The widening of the Danish opt-outs, due to intensified cooperation on the affected areas, also meant that Denmark feared isolation and marginalisation on central areas.<sup>4</sup> The 'special relationship' between Denmark and the British was less explicitly addressed by the Danish decision makers in this period, but the United Kingdom continued to play an important role for Denmark in the sense that both Denmark and Britain had opt-outs on central areas in the cooperation. This shared outside position meant that Denmark was not completely isolated as an outsider in the period (Adler-Nissen 2016). The British position as a fellow outsider in different situations helped to reduce some of the abandonment cost otherwise related to the marginalised Danish position. This took place primarily in the everyday discussions and negotiations in Brussels, where the structural position of the United Kingdom meant that the countries standing outside the Economic and Monetary Union, for instance, continued to have a certain 'weight', which forced the EURO insiders to accord some considerations to the states in the outsider group(s). In this sense, the British position helped to reduce the costs associated with the integration dilemma because the United Kingdom was able to absorb some of the isolation cost by insisting that the insider group took the outsiders' positions into account. In this phase Great Britain clearly played a central role in preventing the Eurozone from developing into a closed and exclusive club as the UK helped keep the euro-zone relatively open (Adler-Nissen 2016; Sørensen & Wivel 2017: 118). There are also examples of how the British were able to slow the pace of the deepening of the integration on some of the affected policy areas by taking the wind out of the French and German proposals in the period. Theoretically this can be illustrated in the figure below, where \*1 represents the likely outcome of a proposal from the French-German axis without the British positions and the \*2 represents a hypothesised outcome where the insider states have taken the position of Britain into account. The hypothesised difference between \*1 and \*2 represents the reduction in the abandonment costs when the United Kingdom is still a EU member, which means that the British positions are still able to function as a viable asset in the Danish bargaining strategy as they help to reduce the cost associated with the integration dilemma.

**Figure 4. British positions closer to the status quo than the Danish position and changes in abandonment cost**



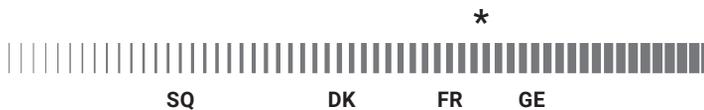
In the final stages of this phase, new dynamics in the Danish and British relationship did however come into force. This related to a gradual shift in the British positions where the country began to adopt even more sceptical stances in its relation to Europe, culminating in the renegotiation process, where the country sought to alter their relations to the community. In this period, the special relation clearly became less special from the Danish perspective since the new British positions distanced the UK from the official Danish position, which meant that the two countries gradually drifted apart in the cooperation due to an ever-increasing heterogeneity of preferences. This meant that the British position as a valuable asset for Denmark became less and less relevant even though the British positions on the areas of the Danish opt-outs did remain important for the country to reduce the cost of isolation and marginalisation.

### **Phase 3: the British exit and the fear of a Danish exile**

The last phase in the British-Denmark relationship began in June 2016 after the British voters, in a referendum on continued British membership, voted 'leave'. The result meant that Britain should withdraw from the cooperation, which at the moment is expected to happen in the autumn of 2019. The British exit from the cooperation will clearly affect the EU as a whole, but Brexit will most likely impact negatively upon the small European states and especially among the small intergovernmentalist and liberal states (Wivel & Thorhallsson 2018). With the British exit, there is an expectation that the cooperation on central areas will intensify further, when Great Britain is no longer there to pull in the other direction. These dynamics could marginalise Denmark further because of the country's formal opt-outs (Christoffersen 2017). Denmark will, after Brexit, stand alone outside justice and home affairs, which include a number of important policy areas. Ireland has an opt-in solution on the

cooperation but also a clause and a protocol in the Lisbon Treaty where they pledge to support cooperation as much as possible. Denmark voted no to changing the Danish opt-outs to an opt-in solution. When more areas change from the old intergovernmental law base to the new supranational base in the Lisbon Treaty, the difference between Denmark and the rest of the European countries will widen. The same will be the case for the intensification of the cooperation in the security and defence, and the economic and monetary areas, where Denmark will be faced with higher isolation and marginalisation costs as there is a strong expectation that the cooperation will continue to deepen in these areas after Brexit. Regarding the monetary area, it has been suggested that the Euro-insiders have taken the outsider groups' position into account because of Britain's structural importance. After Brexit the incentive to take the outsider groups' interests into account will be reduced, which might affect the cost / benefit calculations for small states like Denmark. In the area of security and defence, it is expected that the UK will obtain third party status, which will leave Denmark and Malta as the only countries outside the PESCO cooperation. Theoretically, Denmark therefore stands to bear almost the full costs of its marginalised positions, where there are no others to either pay the cost of rejecting further integration nor to share or reduce the isolation costs of standing outside the cooperation. Such a scenario can be illustrated below where, after the British exit, there will be no credible veto player close to the Danish positions in the negotiations, which means that the likely outcome of further bargaining will move closer to the German and French positions than in the previous scenarios. In this scenario, the Danish integration dilemma costs will therefore be much higher than in the other scenarios. Facing such a situation Brexit does not help Denmark, but rather imposes additional cost on the country which means that the country risks paying the full price of isolation in the areas where Denmark has its opt-outs while also being forced to pay higher entrapment costs in areas where the French-German axis might push for intensified cooperation.

**Figure 5. Danish positions in the EU after Brexit and the distance to the French-German Axis**



As the analysis has shown, the Danish-British relationship underwent significant changes over the years. A central tendency has been that the 'special relationship' has become less special in the sense that the UK has become less relevant for Denmark in its attempt to balance and absorb the costs related to the integration dilemma. A central conclusion is that despite the tendency for Britain to adopt more extreme positions, Denmark has to a large degree continued to rely on the country to reduce the costs of both entrapment and abandonment in the areas related to the country's opt-outs. Following a British exit from the EU, Denmark therefore stands in a new position where it might be forced to either pay the full price of its positions, risking further marginalisation or be willing to move closer to the EU mainstream, which might inflict higher entrapment costs on the country. One obvious strategy for Denmark is to seek new allies in the post-Brexit EU, but as it stands, the number of relevant allies with the same positions as Denmark is rather few, and growing scepticism of the type we have seen in Poland might not be particularly useful for Denmark in its attempts to balance abandonment and entrapment costs. Finding new important allies is also complicated, as there no member states hold the structural power to enforce vetoes to integration development to the same degree of credibility as the UK has been able to do in the past. This means that the strategic relevance of alliances with sceptical member states such as Poland, Hungary and Italy is somewhat reduced.

The impacts of Brexit might, however be most felt in areas related to the Danish opt-outs. As it stands Denmark cannot change its positions radically on the justice and home affairs areas due to the result of the 2015 referendum, where a relatively large majority of voters rejected abandoning the Danish opt-outs. Neither are fundamental changes on the EMU realistic to envisage after the result of the 2000 referendum. This situation means that the area of security and defence is most obvious area to focus on when the Danish government is to consider how to reduce or balance the cost of marginalisation, as their hands are more or less tied in the other areas impacted by the opt-outs. Already the Danish government has declared it a priority to change its opt-outs in the defence and security area because of the changing security environment fuelled by Russia's annexation of Crimea and the American disengagement from Europe, which in turn has led to a revitalisation of the French-German cooperation on the defence and security area (Danish Government 2018).

## Danish post-Brexit strategies and the Danish opt-outs on security and defence

The background for a potential new Danish approach to the European foreign and security area relates to the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PESCO) and the E12 initiative. In December 2017, twenty-five EU member states decided to launch the PESCO, which would allow for a strengthened defence coordination within the EU structures, meaning that the new initiatives and projects are launched within the supranational institutional structures of the cooperation. This means that only Denmark, due to its opt-out, cannot participate in this cooperation together with the British and Malta. At the meeting in the Council of Ministers in March 2018 the 25 members further voted for the enactment of 17 projects that would help to implement the cooperation. These projects deal with areas ranging from the development of common cyber-defence units, joint training centres, cooperation over security and monitoring of maritime areas to military mobility. The initiative reflects German interests in promoting multilateral solutions to the threatening security situation, where the ambition is that the various projects and initiatives related to the PESCO will serve the purpose of repairing relations between the member states and moving the security cooperation away from its intergovernmental nature outside the EU structures and integrating it further into the EU (Tassinari & Tetzlaff 2018).

France was, however, concerned that the structure of the PESCO could lead to lengthy, inefficient, bureaucratic procedures and would therefore fail to achieve its goals. France has been particularly concerned with the operational ability of the PESCO, which in June 2019 has led to France launching the European Intervention Initiative (E12). The E12 is a defence initiative that is located outside the EU framework. The initiative is designed as a separate forum for cooperation among nine European countries, including France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Denmark, with the aim of developing 'strategic autonomy'. The idea is that it will constitute a flexible framework for EU and non-EU member states to cooperate and take various actions during crises (Tassinari & Tetzlaff 2018). From a Danish perspective, this intergovernmental initiative is interesting, as the Danish opt-outs do not prevent Denmark from participating in this framework. The flexible nature of the initiative will, furthermore, allow the British to continue to be involved and participate in a wider European security and defence cooperation after Brexit.

The recent developments within the area are clearly driven by the French-German engine which sees the area of security and defence as potential area for further cooperation and integration in the coming years. It is however also clear that the German and French initiatives represent two very different visions for the direction of the EU security policies. The German approach to security has its roots in the post-Second World War period, where multilateralism became the *modus operandum* for German engagement in international security. Accordingly the use of force and engagement in military interventions and missions will only be based on a strong multilateral foundation in either NATO, the EU or the UN where Germany, due to its self-proclaimed role as a civilian power, prefers to use civilian instruments (Cold-Ravnkilde, Nissen & Fejerskov 2018). In contrast to this approach, the French initiative clearly favours a more flexible and intergovernmentalist approach where a larger space for either unilateralism or the formulation of situation-specific, *ad hoc*, coalitions exists.

There are no doubts that the two initiatives can complement each other, but the above-outlined differences might also eventually reduce the pace of integration and thereby limit the ambitions for a more overall, supranational and unified European security and defence cooperation (Cold-Ravnkilde, Nissen & Fejerskov 2018). This relates to the fact that the two initiatives present very different visions for the future of EU defence and security policy as they represent two different types of strategic culture rather than a single, unified European one (Rynning 2003).

From a Danish perspective, the increased cooperation in security and defence highlights some of the traditional concerns around the Danish relations to the EU as it activates many of the considerations related to the integration dilemma. On the one hand Denmark has certain interests in a stronger European cooperation on these issues, due to the intensified security situation following the rise of Russia and what appears to be a reduction in American prioritising of the European theatre in the US overall security strategy and agenda. Here, increased European cooperation coupled with maintaining the Americans and the British involved in the European security architecture is a clear preference for Denmark. On the other hand, the development also means that Denmark, after the British exit, will become more isolated in this area because of the increased cooperation. Denmark therefore stands in a situation where it has to rethink how to balance or rebalance the integration costs related to these

developments within the defence and security cooperation. At present two overall options exist.

*The first option* relates to the possibility of maintaining and defending the Danish opt-out. This solution holds a number of short-term costs, as the current situation puts pressure on the opt-outs. This means that Denmark will face severe abandonment and isolation costs. These costs are inflicted because of the launch of several programmes under the PESCO framework where Denmark cannot participate in the identification, definition and approval of PESCO projects. There are, however, no indications that Denmark cannot engage in the EI2 initiative. At present, it is still difficult to predict whether the two visions will meet and how the compatibility between them will be. At best PESCO and EI2 could complement each other in terms of membership and operational focus, but the different visions might also prove to be incompatible. This incompatibility might ultimately slow down the European ambitions and the cooperation within PESCO. In the long term, this might help to reduce some of the abandonment cost. Denmark does however have options to support the French version, keeping the British in the cooperation, and thereby reducing some of the abandonment cost by strengthening the Atlantic dimension in the cooperation, meaning that the cost will primarily relate to issues related to the PESCO. In this scenario, it seems un-strategic for Denmark to completely break with either of the two initiatives, as Denmark has to consider whether and how it should strengthen its ties to its European allies and/or maintain its Atlantic focus. In order to avoid marginalisation it seems, however, quite rational for Denmark to put its weight behind the French EI2 initiative. The EI2 suits Danish objectives as it offers a forum outside the permanent EU structures, which gives it a flexible, intergovernmental character that furthermore has the potential to bind the UK closer to the EU (and the Danish positions) in the security area. Such an outcome would clearly benefit the Danish position. Ideally, the EI2 would therefore present an opportunity for Denmark to circumvent the constraints of being outside the EU framework by tying a traditional ally and operational partner closer to the EU and thereby securing that the United Kingdom on the side-lines continues to be a strategic asset in the Danish relation to the EU. Furthermore, the engagement in the EI2 will allow Denmark to continue its tradition for military activism associated with its robust participation in international interventions. A potential risk of this strategy is the question of whether EI2 remains a cooperation framework outside the PESCO and whether the UK will be given third party membership of the PESCO after Brexit.

*The second option* relates to a removal of the Danish opt-out through a referendum. This solution will naturally pave the way for a general inclusion of Denmark in the defence and security cooperation and open up for Danish participation in the PESCO. If the government is successful in this endeavour we will obviously see a reduction in the abandonment cost, as Denmark will have to retreat from one of its central bastions in the EU. This move might, on the other hand, potentially inflict entrapment costs on Denmark. Entrapment costs are here related to a potential situation where the direction of EU cooperation might contradict Atlantic interests and priorities, which might lead to a diplomatic confrontation between the EU and the US. In such a situation, Denmark could potentially be put in a vulnerable position due its traditional Atlantic predisposition and be forced to take a stance for or against the US. For Denmark a movement (much) closer to the European Mainstream on questions related to defence and security might therefore be interpreted by Washington as a potential shift in the Danish security orientation, which might lead to a loss of prestige and status in the eyes of the Atlantic ally. Further European engagement does not, therefore, only entail benefits and a reduction of the abandonment cost, but might also cause a more balanced approach to the question of European and American security provision in order to avoid to large entrapment costs. If Denmark were to exchange its 'outsider' status for an 'insider' position it still seems relevant for Denmark to prioritise intergovernmental solutions that can help to keep the British engaged in the post Brexit-period, as it will continue to be a Danish priority to maintain strong Atlantic ties. Denmark has traditionally not favoured continental solutions to issues related to European security as the US continues to stand as the central guarantor of European security.

## Conclusions

The main argument is that while the UK has historically helped Denmark to balance the costs associated with entrapment and abandonment in its EU policy, we have also seen a reduced relevance of this special relationship in the country's general EU strategy, due to a gradual drift in the British positions over the past couple of years. The absence of Britain will, however, be felt more intensely in some of the specific bastions of the Danish EU policy, where Denmark has relied on British support in order to reduce the costs associated with abandonment and isolation in the cooperation. This is a loss that can be expected to be felt more intensely in the coming years due to the recent Franco-German push for further integration on areas where Denmark traditionally has had opt-outs and has relied on the British positions. In any case the developments in the security and defence area has put intensified pressure on the Danish opt-outs as the country stands to be marginalised in central aspects of the cooperation. The major task for Denmark will be to make the decision to either abandon or maintain its opt-out in the years to come. In either scenario it seems vital for Denmark to support the French initiative in order to keep the British committed to European security and thereby secure an informal role for the United Kingdom in the new European security architecture that is currently emerging. If Denmark, on the other hand, decides to abandon its opt-out in the defence area it clearly becomes easier for Denmark to engage more deeply in the PESCO cooperation while maintaining the opportunity to support the E12 and continuing to work for a close relation to the British in the security area. With the gradual withdrawal of US interest in the continent, along with the increase in regional challenges related to the rise of Russia and to the immigration from Africa and the Middle East, we will, however, see more challenges to the European security initiatives in the years to come, which will call for both European and Transatlantic responses that might revoke the need for a 'special relation' across the Atlantic.

## Notes

- 1 Rasmus Brun Pedersen, PhD, is an associate professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus.
- 2 The article follows Hans Mouritzen's (1991: 217-218) relational understanding wherein small states are defined as the weaker part in an asymmetrical relation.
- 3 In 2017 the United Kingdom was the fourth largest export market for Denmark, with approx. 8% of exports going to the United Kingdom. Approx. 45,000 jobs are linked to the Danish exports to the United Kingdom (<https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/udenrig-soekonomi/udenrigshandel/brexit>)
- 4 Partly as a reaction to this fear, the Danish government tried to abolish the Danish opt-out on Economic and Monetary Union with a referendum in 2000, which ended in defeat by 53.2% of the electorate. Later in 2015 the Danish government tried to abolish the opt-out on Justice and Home Affairs, which also resulted in a clear 'no' vote in a referendum.

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# The UN – a forgotten cornerstone in Danish foreign policy

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## Introduction

The global political landscape is in the midst of a fundamental reordering that looks exceptionally unsettling when seen from Denmark. It may not be the end of the world as we know it, but both inside and outside Denmark worries are growing over the ways in which authoritarianism, nationalism and geopolitics have returned to pressure and potentially undermine the rules-based international order that has been established since 1945. Against this backdrop, the Danish government in 2018 vowed to stand up for that order and ‘uphold the principle that binding international cooperation is in the interest of Denmark and provides the best conditions for peace, prosperity and sustainable development’ (Danish Government 2018: 5). The argument underpinning this article is that this pledge, and the wider Danish worry over the crisis of the existing order, should pave the way for a renewed Danish focus on the UN.

In some ways, and if everything goes as expected, the UN will almost automatically gain a more prominent position in Danish foreign policy already next year, simply by virtue of the Nordic rotation scheme that seeks to ensure maximum Nordic representation in relevant UN bodies. Denmark is thus supposed to announce her candidature to the UN Security Council 2025-26 next year, in 2020, once the current Norwegian candidature for a seat in 2023-24 has been decided. Providing a convincing narrative for the Danish candidatures seems, however, less straightforward than in the past. Once the main centre

of attention for Danish foreign policy activism and an integral part of Danish foreign policy identity, the UN has become a niche interest that only engages a limited range of politicians, civil servants, researchers and NGOs.

One seemingly obvious explanation for this is that the UN is no longer as useful to the pursuit of key Danish foreign policy priorities, as it once was (Jakobsen & Kjærsgaard 2017). Evident as this is when looking at studies of Danish foreign policy since the end of the Cold War (see e.g. Pedersen & Ringsmose 2017), it does not explain why the UN nonetheless continues to be portrayed in official statements as a key cornerstone in Danish foreign policy. Or why Denmark – relative to her size – remains one of the biggest contributors to the UN machinery, currently ranking as the 16<sup>th</sup> largest UN donor in the world. Is this just inertia, or does it reflect a more fundamental Danish interest in supporting the aspirations of the UN charter?

To provide for a nuanced discussion of Danish UN policy, the article seeks to disaggregate the general impression of a ‘glorious past and a dim future’ that one is left with when looking, for example, at Danish contributions to UN peacekeeping (Jakobsen 2016). While the downward trend is clear, the reality is, as always, more complex. Not only does Denmark maintain a high profile on some UN issues, the Danish commitment to the UN has never – not even in the glorious past – been the only or indeed most important aspect of Danish foreign policy. NATO/Atlanticism, Nordic cooperation and European integration have, in different constellations, been central to Denmark’s overall positioning in the post-1945 world.

Making sense of the relative marginalisation of the UN in Danish foreign policy begs the question of whether we are looking at changes in kind or changes in degree: does the fact that Danish politicians pay little attention to the UN reflect a fundamental re-orientation of Danish foreign policy identity? Or does it merely indicate a pragmatic turn to other, arguably more effective, channels that provide for promoting Danish interests and values that remain the same as always?

To grasp these questions, the paper will seek to tease out the underlying visions that have guided and shaped Danish UN policy since 1945 and to the present. It will do so by drawing on notions of *doctrine* (Wivel 2014; Pedersen 2015) and *order policy* (Petersen 2004, 2010; Branner 2013). Readers who are primarily

interested in the empirical analysis may skip the conceptual discussion in the section below and go straight to the subsequent identification of the five different phases through which Danish UN policy has evolved from the anxious embrace in 1945 to the shaky present. In closing the article returns to the question of what this evolution may foretell of the future of Danish UN policy and the prospects of a revitalisation of Danish UN activism in a world order in flux.

## Analysing change and continuity in Danish UN policy

The ordering and reordering of the world is conventionally associated with great powers or hegemons. Different eras are thus characterised either by the number of great powers – multipolar, bipolar, unipolar – or the identity of the dominant power: Pax Romana, Pax Britannica, Pax Americana. This, however, does not imply that lesser powers do not think hard about how to best position and secure themselves in a dangerous world. While small states tend to shy away from grand strategic thinking, the notion of foreign policy doctrine may still provide valuable insights into how a state such as Denmark sees her place in the world and tries to improve it (Wivel 2014; Pedersen 2015).

Drawing on Brodin and Mouritzen, Wivel defines a foreign policy doctrine as a set of fundamental principles that guide the formulation of specific foreign policy strategies and decisions (Wivel 2014 Brodin 1972; Mouritzen 1981). These principles are not necessarily clearly enunciated in official documents, but rather ‘construed by the researcher from a multitude of statements in different contexts’ (Mouritzen 1981: 26). To constitute a doctrine, these principles have to be ‘relatively stable but never fixed as they reflect developments in domestic and international society and the lessons drawn by policymakers and the general public from these developments’ (Wivel 2014: 110). As such a doctrine, and the principles it embodies, remain open for interpretation by both analysts and practitioners, it cannot determine or predict specific foreign policy priorities or decisions at a given time. It does, however, provide a general guidance on the ends and means of foreign policy in a manner that ‘signals to domestic and foreign audiences who ‘we’ are and where we see our place in the world’ (Wivel 2014: 110).

The most well-known example of a Danish foreign policy doctrine, the *Hækkerup* doctrine, was captured in 1965 in a small book on Danish foreign policy (Hækkerup 1965). Authored by the Social Democrat Foreign Minister Per Hækkerup, but ghostwritten by civil servants in the Foreign Ministry, the book went beyond party politics to reflect the prevalent thinking of the foreign policy establishment at the time. Its basic ideas remain deeply ingrained in Danish foreign policy thinking and have in various forms framed much debate on Danish foreign policy since – both conceptually and in substance. This includes in particular the claim that:

‘...isolation and neutrality do not offer security for Denmark; security must be sought after where it can be found – this means basing our foreign policy and national security on expanded international cooperation and on the cohesion of the Western world’ (Hækkerup 1965: 29).

Embracing this dogma, foreign policy debates in Denmark have since revolved around *how*, rather than *whether*, Denmark should be internationally engaged. The answer provided in the Hækkerup doctrine is clear: as a small state, Denmark should seek to multilateralise her engagements with other states as much as possible by acting primarily through existing international institutions. The Hækkerup doctrine thus conceptualised and popularised the idea that a sound Danish foreign policy should rest on four ‘cornerstones’, each serving as key outlet for pursuing distinct Danish interests and influence: the UN was foundational to Danish interests in a rule-based international order; NATO was key to Danish security interests; the EU (then EEC) central to the Danish economy, while Denmark shared with her brothers in the Nordic Council a unique cultural identity and history that provided for working jointly to enhance Nordic influence in the world, including through the UN (Hækkerup 1965: 141-2).

Against this backdrop, Danish support for the UN (and Nordic cooperation) is often interpreted as displaying a particularly idealistic or even altruistic strain in Danish foreign policy as opposed to the more interest-based engagement in the EU and NATO. Inherent to the Hækkerup doctrine was, however, a strong belief that distinguishing sharply between interests and values was of little use in foreign policy. Pursuing one without the other would provide neither sense, nor direction. This ‘Pooh bear approach’<sup>2</sup> to choosing between interests and values is so deeply ingrained in Danish foreign policy thinking that the

dichotomy is better understood as a rhetorical tool than as an analytical framework. What may be seen as shifting over time is thus not Denmark's position on a fixed continuum between idealism and realism, but rather the ways in which Danish foreign policymakers define basic Danish interests and values and understand the relationship between long-term possibilities and short-term necessities.

To further grasp that dimension, Nikolaj Petersen's notion of *order policy* is helpful (2004; 2010). Drawing on the so-called English School's approach to international politics, Petersen defines order policy as 'a policy that aims at establishing, sustaining or altering a given international order' (Petersen 2010: 342). Having such a policy is conventionally understood as a luxury afforded to great powers – new or old – as they are the ones who determine the overall structure, foundational rules and dominant values that shape the 'anarchical society' of states (Bull 1977). Petersen, however, suggests that small states, even if less influential than the great powers, may also have and pursue foreign policy aims that go beyond merely adapting to whatever international order the great powers and the relations between them produces.

By virtue of their limited size and inability to rely on brute force or other forms of resource-based politics, small states' security interests are bifurcated: on the one hand, they have a basic interest in surviving as an independent entity; on the other hand, they have a wider interest in an international order in which might does not equal right. This duality has shaped Danish security thinking and led to the simultaneous pursuit of an 'alliance policy' – epitomised in the NATO membership and the reliance on a US security guarantee – and an 'order policy' – associated in particular with the Danish UN engagement and the long-term support for a rule-based order (Petersen 2004: 21).

As suggested by Branner, this implies that the distinction between foreign policy 'activism' and 'adaptation' is better understood as referring to strategic efforts serving different purposes and working within different time frames than as mutually exclusive approaches (2013: 137). Activism refers to aspirational long-term efforts that seek to alter the surrounding environment of the small state, whereas adaptation reflects the same state's necessary short-term adaptation to the existing realities at hand. This provides for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which Denmark historically has balanced activism and adaptation in its foreign policy. Highlighting order policy and Danish UN

activism during the Cold War makes it evident that the 'historical uniqueness' of Danish post-Cold War activism tends to be exaggerated (Wivel 2014: 115). Denmark had elements of activism in its foreign policy prior to the end of the Cold War. By equating Danish 'activism' with the willingness to use military means, the post-Cold War debate moreover overlooks that other aspects of Danish foreign policy do not automatically become 'activist' simply because Denmark increases her military engagements (Pedersen & Ringsmose 2017). On the contrary, activism in one area may allow for or enable adaptation in other areas.

This duality, and the small state necessity of pursuing different interests through different channels, was the main logic behind Hækkerup's four pillars and the functional division of labour between the UN, NATO, European integration and Nordic Cooperation. Its roots, however, go all the way back to the Danish defeat by Prussia in 1864 and the waking up to the grim reality of suddenly being a small state, who was unable to get her way militarily and therefore had a fundamental self-interest in a rule-based international order that provided for peaceful resolution of conflicts (Wivel 2014; see also Pedersen 2015; Mouritzen 2014 and Olesen 2014). In this sense, the pursuit of an activist order policy also underpinned the *Munch Doctrine*, which shaped Danish foreign policy from 1864 to 1940 (Wivel 2014).

Peter Munch, the foreign minister after whom the doctrine is named, is conventionally associated with the emphasis on neutrality and pacifism in the 1930s and the Danish policy of 'laying low' in order not to take sides in what became World War II. In many ways it was precisely this line of reasoning that was discarded firstly by Per Hækkerup with his doctrine of multilateral engagement and again later by Anders Fogh Rasmussen's post-9/11 'super-Atlanticism' (Mouritzen 2007; Wivel 2014). As pointed out by Pedersen, however, Munch's reasoning did not only provide for a 'cautious foreign policy' aimed at delinking Denmark from the troubles of the surrounding world, it also implied that Denmark – to the extent possible – should work with other small states towards promoting binding international cooperation and peaceful means of conflict resolution (Pedersen 2015). A prudent small state foreign policy meant staying out of conflicts between the great powers here and now, while working (as best possible) to advance international institutions that could reduce the importance of resource-based power politics.

One should not conflate the Munch and Hækkerup doctrines, yet it is important to note their similar starting points. They both see international politics as a power game and accordingly view the conditions for small state foreign policy as fundamentally different from those of the great powers: 'Small states, more than great powers, need to follow the rules of the game and signal their respect of the great powers' (Wivel 2014: 122). As noted above, they both further suggest – albeit in different forms and degrees – that Denmark should not merely adapt to the world as it 'is' but rather use her foreign policy actively to make the world safer for small states, by supporting universally agreed rules and multilateral institutions as a way of levelling the playing field for states, big and small, and providing for peaceful means of solving international conflicts.

The question remains as to whether this outlook continues to shape the world view of Danish foreign policymakers or whether it has been modified over the years as the aspirations of a rule-based order seemingly shifted from vision to reality. To open the discussion on these questions, the next section looks at the ways in which Danish UN policy has varied since 1945.

## Danish UN policy from 1945-2018

Given the space available, an overview of more than 70 years of UN engagement with the UN evidently cannot do justice to the multitude of activities and engagements that Denmark has entertained within the wide-ranging and ever-growing UN system. For reasons of clarity, emphasis here is placed primarily on the ways in which the UN has been framed politically within the wider Danish foreign policy, at home and abroad, rather than on the everyday conduct of UN-related initiatives and activities performed by Danish diplomats. In this sense, what is in focus here is what Midtgaard refers to as 'the Danish UN vision', i.e. the aspirational expectations and substantive areas in which the Danish political establishment over the years and in different contexts has found the UN to be of value to Denmark (2005: 20). This overview is based primarily on existing studies. The scholarly literature on the past two decades of Danish UN policy is, however, sparse. Twenty years after the Danish Institute of International Affairs (DUPI) took it upon itself to conduct a major study on the UN, the world and Denmark, this volume still stands as the most comprehensive analysis of Danish UN policy in the post-Cold War

period (1999a). Arguably, the lack of scholarly interest in Danish UN policy is a reflection of the limited political interest in the field.

The overview is divided analytically into five distinct phases. Empirically, however, as will also be evident when reading through the sections, the borders between them are blurred with elements of both change and continuity found on both sides of the dividing lines.

### **The glorious past: 1945-1989**

Denmark takes pride in being a founding member of the United Nations. What motivated Denmark at the San Francisco Conference back in 1945, however, was above all the desire to be included in the good company of the allied forces that defeated Nazi Germany (Götz 2004). The establishment of an important international institution was of secondary importance. Details in the Charter – and how/whether being a member of the UN would impact Danish foreign policy in the future – worried only a very small section of the Danish foreign policy establishment at the time (Lidegaard 1996). To the extent that the UN and Danish membership of the UN was debated in Copenhagen, hopes were that by facilitating cooperation between the great powers, the UN would allow small states, such as Denmark, to go about minding their own domestic businesses of rebuilding their societies after the war. The prospect of Denmark becoming a global player was not at all part of the Danish UN equation to begin with.

In contrast to their subsequent reputation as devoted internationalists, Denmark and the other Nordics initially embraced the UN with cautious scepticism (Jakobsen 2017). Somewhat ironically, the fear of being entangled in great power struggles gradually faded as the Cold War realities of a polarised world order took shape. The Danish decision to join NATO as a founding member in 1949 is widely understood as a response to the shattered hopes of the UN and/or Nordic cooperation as a credible security provider for Denmark (Einhorn 1975). This did not, however, lead Denmark to disengage from the UN. While never quite as enthusiastic as her fellow Scandinavians, Denmark contributed to developing the Nordic brand as peaceful bridge-builders with internationalist, solidarist and egalitarian tendencies (Browning 2007). This included accepting small steps and incremental progress as the name of the game in a world characterised by diversity and power politics.

Ever mindful of its small size, the Danish UN engagement remained decidedly pragmatic throughout the Cold War. Emphasis was placed on preserving and strengthening the authority of the world body in a polarised world, not on advancing morally right positions that might be perceived as disloyal to the concerns of its Western allies. This was particularly evident in the field of disarmament and arms control, which Denmark saw as ‘the last refuge for the weak against the strong’ (Holm 1982). Cognisant of prevailing geopolitical realities, Denmark favoured a ‘balanced’ approach to disarmament, which meant explicitly refraining from supporting ‘one-sided’ initiatives that were seen as potentially destabilising and thus dangerous. Both in principle and in practice Denmark was willing to support whatever solution that the superpowers could agree upon. The transformative ambitions, and arguably naivety, of Danish disarmament policy were nonetheless high: throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Denmark thus worked actively to multilateralise nuclear arms negotiations which both superpowers saw as inherently bilateral (Kierulf 2014: 244).

The small state preference for multilateral deliberations and consensus-seeking diplomacy spurred a strong Danish commitment to the principle of universality. For the UN to work as envisioned by Denmark, all countries – regardless of their domestic governing arrangements – should be allowed to join the organisation and participate on an equal footing in the General Assembly and various committees and councils. Throughout the Cold War and up until 2004, the Danish instructions to the yearly United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) contained almost identical standard references to the principle of universality and the value of dialogue between states and groups of states with different political positions (DUPI 1999a). Excluding states from the UN would – according to the Danish UNGA instructions – ‘serve no other purpose than to reduce the points of contact and the opportunities for influence, thereby impeding the UN’s ability to fulfil its central objective – maintaining international peace and security’.<sup>3</sup>

From the outset, UN peacekeeping provided Denmark with an opportune way to strengthen the UN’s collective security system without undermining her position within the Western alliance. The fact that she could do so in unison with her Nordic sisters and drawing upon the special Nordic brand only made peacekeeping more attractive to Danish decision makers. Over the years UN

peacekeeping operations came to be understood within the Danish foreign policy establishment as something 'natural'; a 'duty for small states' that Denmark should proudly accept and take upon herself (Jakobsen 2016: 746-7).

Off to a later and slightly slower start, the Danish commitment to the UN's development agenda also grew to be a firmly established part of the Danish foreign policy identity during the Cold War. From the official start in 1962, Danish development assistance grew markedly. Since 1978 Denmark has lived up to the UN target of providing 0.7% of its GDP in ODA.

As was the case with its peacekeeping profile, Denmark's identity as a generous donor served several purposes simultaneously. In the Western context, it offered a way of sharing the burden with the USA of paying for the costs of the Cold War. In the UN setting, however, aid was justified overwhelmingly as a display of international solidarity (Olesen 2015). Importantly, at the time international solidarity was widely understood not as a substitute for (genuine) security policy, but rather as intrinsic to the pursuit of (long-term) security (Kjærsgaard 2018). By extending the logic underpinning the Nordic welfare states, reducing poverty and inequality at the global level was seen as vital to long-term stability and the reduction of tensions and conflict potential between the 'industrialised' North and the 'underdeveloped' South.

While the underpinning logic was Social Democrat, Danish UN policy reflected a broadly shared vision of the type of rule-based order the UN was meant to advance and sustain. This vision was construed on the basis of Denmark's structural position in the world, as a small state, and not in response to the current bipolarity of the international system (Midtgaard 2005: 39-40). As such it provided for a general consensus on the importance of the UN at the core of a rule-based order, alongside ongoing political contestations over how to balance short-term security needs and alliance policy versus long-term security aspirations and order policy (DUPI 1999a). The left-wing parties and the Social Liberals prioritised the UN, while the conservatives and the liberals preferred NATO, and the Social Democrats were internally divided. The functional division of labour between Hækkerup's four cornerstones, however, provided for taking into account different interests and values simultaneously without ranking them. Notwithstanding the divisions of the 'footnote era' in the 1980s, 'holding the UN flag high' while displaying alliance solidarity with an emphasis on détente and dialogue within NATO, provided for a broadly shared

Danish foreign policy identity (DUPI 1999a). As the Cold War was drawing to a close, supporting the UN was thus not just something Denmark 'did', but rather an intrinsic part of who Denmark 'was' and how she saw her role in the world.

### **The optimistic interregnum: 1989-2001**

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing unipolar moment prompted a decidedly liberal turn in international politics and Danish foreign policy (Holm 1997). Freed from the overlay of bipolarity, Hækkerup's compartmentalised understanding of the four cornerstones seemed obsolete and the superficial consensus on Danish foreign policy was replaced by a more deeply shared vision of Denmark's role in a new world order. The tensions that previously had called for balancing (long-term) order policy aspirations and (short-term) alliance policy had eased to the point where both were seen to be pushing in the same direction. Denmark's enlightened self-interest in advancing a rules-based international order could and should now be promoted not just through Danish engagement in the UN (and Nordic cooperation) but also – and increasingly – through the EU and NATO. As it turned out, this eventually paved the way for the marginalisation of the UN. Initially, however, Denmark saw the UN, and respect for the UN Charter, as part and parcel of the advancement of international rule of law. This was clearly emphasised in the Danish instructions to the UN General Assembly which, among other things, stated that 'it is the policy of Denmark to defend and advance respect for the UN Charter, the rights of member states and the existing rules of negotiation' (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1990).

As pointed out by Carsten Staur, the former Danish Ambassador to the UN in New York and Geneva, the 1990s was 'a decade in which new ideas took shape' (Staur 2015: 32). Throughout the 1990s the UN served as a conceptual hothouse for the advancement of a 'broad' or 'soft' approach to security that went beyond military threats to include societal, environmental and humanitarian risks to states, people and societies. This also implied a shift from the UN's conventional state-centric focus to a new-found emphasis on human security and human development along with a significant expansion of the human rights agenda as new rights-holders and new dimensions of rights were added to the ones outlined in the original universal declaration of human rights. The early 1990s saw the adoption of a number of progressive declarations on human rights (Vienna 1993), population (Cairo 1994) and

women (Beijing 1995). In 1995 Denmark also got on the UN map as Copenhagen hosted the *World Summit for Social Development*, the largest gathering ever of world leaders at that time.

Denmark embraced all of these ideas and worked actively to advance them both within the UN and through its wider foreign policy efforts, including in particular its considerable and seemingly ever-expanding budgets for development and environmental assistance. By 1992 Denmark had reached its own stated objective of providing 1% of GDP in ODA and as the Danish economy kept growing, so did Danish aid. A substantial, albeit in relative terms decreasing, part of this went to the UN's specialised agencies.

The Danish post-Cold War love for the UN was, however, not unconditional. Or rather, as it was understood at the time, Denmark's commitment to the UN – and her responsibilities as a leading donor – ran so deep that it justified working actively to discipline the UN system and improve its ways of working. In keeping with the Danish saying 'den man tugter, elsker man' (app: Spare the rod and spoil the child), Denmark began using her 'financial body language' to push UN agencies to become more effective and focus on topics that at the time were understood as key to sustainable development and lasting poverty reduction including, in particular, efforts aimed at liberalising political, economic and societal life through good governance, human rights, democratisation, marketisation and environmental protection (DUPI 1999a).

During the 1990s the Danish commitment to UN peacekeeping also shifted, albeit in a decidedly more dramatic manner. As the Security Council began intervening in civil wars, UN peacekeeping missions became increasingly complex. The aim was no longer to monitor a peace agreement or ceasefire between two warring states and/or contain a conflict and prevent it from escalating into global crises, or worse, nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union (Bellamy & Williams, 2010: 8). The aim of the UN's new *Agenda for Peace* was to lay the foundations for lasting peace in societies torn asunder by armed conflict and endemic poverty. Initially, Denmark embraced this new type of multidimensional peacekeeping wholeheartedly and remained one of the largest troop contributors per capita to UN peacekeeping. This, however, changed drastically in the mid-1990s. Following the disasters in Rwanda, Somalia and in particular Srebrenica, UN peacekeeping was severely discredited and serious thought was given within the UN system to discarding

the whole experiment. Along with other Western countries, Denmark drastically reduced its provision of troops for UN-led operations almost overnight in 1995. Denmark, however, remained for a while actively engaged in efforts to strengthen and revitalise UN peacekeeping. The Danish SHIRBRIG initiative of 1996 stands out as the most prominent – and arguably last – example of a high-profile Danish direct engagement with UN peacekeeping.

The Balkan wars left a profound mark on Denmark's foreign policy profile. Not only did they turn Denmark away from UN peacekeeping. As it turned out, they also paved the way for a new-found Danish willingness to use force beyond self-defence and without authorisation from the UN Security Council. The so-called 'Operation Hooligan Buster' in Tuzla, in 1994, was instrumental in convincing both the Danish Armed Forces and leading politicians that 'making a difference in the battlefield' could help a small state such as Denmark elevate its position in the world (Jakobsen 2016: 749-50). The main groundbreaking event, however, was the Kosovo intervention a few years later (Olesen 2019). It was the first time since 1945 that Denmark had deployed military force without authorisation from the Security Council and the decision spurred extensive debate on the legality of the war. In the government's internal discussions, it was clearly acknowledged that the situation called for Denmark to choose between its alliance policy and its order policy, or 'plague vs cholera' as the choice was referred to in a prime ministerial note (Olesen 2019: 148). To clarify the dilemmas of interventions that were 'illegal but legitimate', the Danish government subsequently commissioned a study on the political and legal aspects of humanitarian intervention (DUPI 1999b). Underpinning this request was a belief that state sovereignty and the right to non-intervention would have to yield in 'situations where massive violations of human rights take place' (DUPI 1999b: 9). The problem was to find ways of doing this in accordance with the international rule of law as long as the Security Council provided the non-interventionist great powers, Russia and China, with the right to veto and thus to effectively block the international community from acting with a UN mandate.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century was drawing a close the need for fundamental reforms of the UN along with the promise of support for such reforms, was increasingly shaping Danish UN policy. In his 1997 UNGA speech, the Danish prime minister underlined, '...for the United Nations to face up to the challenges, the United Nations must adapt, must reform, must change, must modernise.'

The sense of urgency was not to be missed and did possibly forebode a growing Danish impatience with the UN. As globalisation had advanced, the number of international organisations working on all sorts of cross-border, transnational issues virtually exploded. The UN was far from the only game in global governance any longer and the Danish belief in its continued relevance, efficiency and even the moral authority of having the UN as the centre of rule-based international order was slowly being called into question.

### **The not so glorious past: 2001-2009**

Following the terrorist attacks on the USA of 11 September 2001, the US-declared 'War on Terror' in many ways sidelined the UN (Boulden & Weiss 2005). The fight against terrorism, however, also gave new impetus to the UN as the key global forum for forging broad-based responses and new legal instruments to address the multiple, interconnected threats of a globalised world, including by addressing their shared root causes. This duality shaped Danish UN policy in the early post-9/11 era.

The 2001 change of government from a Social Democrat–Social Liberal to a Liberal-Conservative government marked a drastic change in Danish foreign policy. The new government's emphasis on cultivating bilateral relations with the USA, while reducing Danish funding for development and environmental assistance and the Danish diplomatic service at home and abroad, prompted a breakdown in the long-standing broad foreign policy consensus. In its place came heated political clashes between the conservative-liberal government and the opposition, led by the Social Democrats, who wished to see Denmark promote a world order based on collective security, rather than individual American leadership (Rynning 2003: 36). These opposing visions of order – the UN's principle of universality versus an 'alliance of democracies' – clashed frontally with the government's controversial 2003 decision to participate in 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' without a UN mandate and based on a narrow majority in the parliament (Mariager & Wivel 2019).

Denmark's willingness to follow the US into Iraq is widely described in the literature as 'deviant' – as representing a fundamental break with Denmark's traditional, Nordic, foreign policy identity (Pedersen 2018). This interpretation was encouraged by the Danish prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who wanted to do away with Denmark's small state mentality and transform

Denmark into a strategic actor, fighting alongside the US to defend liberal-democratic values and the international order against the enemies of freedom (Rynning 2003; Mouritzen 2007). Drastic as the shifts in the prime minister's rhetoric were, they did not disrupt Danish UN policy as much as one is led to believe. The conservative-liberal government continued to see the UN as central to international peace and security and as key to addressing the interconnected threats in a globalised world, not least terrorism. This was particularly pronounced in 2005-2006 during the Danish membership of the UN Security Council.

The Danish candidature for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council had been put forward by the former Social Democrat government in accordance with the Nordic rotation scheme for seeking those seats. The conservative minister for foreign affairs, Per Stig Møller, took this task to heart and has since described it as the highlight of his ten year-long period as minister for foreign affairs (Møller 2017). To him, participating in the work of the council was both an 'international civic duty' and a unique opportunity for Denmark to influence the world in accordance with shared Danish foreign, security and development policy concerns (Løj 2007: 34). The Danish priorities were thus backed by a broad majority in parliament and included – in addition to the fight against terrorism – a focus on Africa, on strengthening the role of the Security Council and international rule of law, and on improving the UN's ability to work at the nexus between security and development (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007). The latter agenda provided for the most visible Danish impact: the co-facilitation of the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission with Tanzania.

In those years, the government's emphasis on using both civilian and military instruments to address the complex security challenges associated with fragile states, the so-called 'comprehensive approach' served to mend the domestic foreign policy divide (Breitenbauch 2015: 118-20). This did not, however, bring the UN to the top of the Danish foreign policy agenda. Apart from the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, Denmark focused on advancing the comprehensive approach within NATO and the EU. Once the Security Council term was over, the UN quickly vanished from the Danish foreign policy scene. In the 2007 parliamentary debate on the 'State of the Realm' [Rigets inden- og udenrigspolitiske situation], neither the prime minister, nor any of the members of parliament mentioned the recently

concluded Danish membership of the Security Council, and the UN itself was referred to by the government only in relation to the upcoming 2009 Climate Change Conference (COP15) that the government had succeeded in bringing to Denmark.

The government's interest in bringing the UN summit to Denmark may be taken to indicate a focus on the UN. It was, however, motivated less by a desire to be active within the UN and more by the dual prospect of repairing Denmark's global reputation in the wake of the Cartoon Crisis and opening up new markets for Danish green tech companies (Jakobsen & Kjærsgaard 2017; Meilstrup 2010). The latter argument is interesting as it points to the growing importance of commercial interests in Danish foreign policy that followed in the aftermath of the 2007/8 financial crisis. Increasingly concerns for the Danish economy and welfare were impacting Danish foreign policy at a more strategic level than in the past.

### **The return of the small state and the rise of new forms of multilateralism: 2009-2015**

In the Danish UN context, 2009 marked the year of the COP15 'runaway summit' that left the Danish prime minister 'humiliated on the world stage' (Meilstrup 2010: 11). The prime minister in question was, however, not Anders Fogh Rasmussen who had left Danish politics just prior to the summit to become NATO Secretary-General, but rather the decidedly more pragmatic Lars Løkke Rasmussen (also liberal). Under Løkke's leadership 'Danish foreign policy began to normalise, moving gradually towards the position it had occupied prior to 2001' (Wivel 2014: 129). Seen through the UN prism, however, 'normalisation' did not imply a return to the form and level of engagement that had characterised the 1990s. Political emphasis remained on the EU and NATO as the most important channels for Danish influence, not least as many liberals saw the rising influence of autocratic states from the Global South as severely damaging to the legitimacy and efficiency of the UN. Prior to becoming minister for development, the outspoken member of the Liberal Party, Søren Pind, thus argued that the UN had become obsolete, and that the time had come to establish new, more exclusive, political structures that could more effectively advance liberal values. Once in office, he toned down his critique (Information 2010). The suggestion that the UN was increasingly irrelevant or 'unfit for purpose' underpinned the waning Danish UN debate throughout the 2010s.

This suggestion was far from unique to Denmark but rather widely seen as conventional wisdom by UN friends and foes UN alike (Andersen 2019). In Denmark, however, the political commitment to and interest in reordering the world through the UN seemed to be fading more rapidly than in other Nordic countries. This became evident when a centre-left government composed of the Social Democrats, the Social Liberals and the Socialist People's Party took over from the liberal-conservative government in 2011.

The centre-left government declared that they would return Denmark to a foreign policy based on 'diplomacy and dialogue' (Danish Government 2011: 38). In order to do that the government introduced a few initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of the UN in Danish foreign policy such as appointing a disarmament ambassador and increasing Denmark's contributions to UN-led missions, including the stabilisation mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the operation to remove chemical weapons from Syria (RECSYR). Under the leadership of Social Democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt, however, Denmark did not retract from its position as a European 'hawk' (Knudsen 2014). In 2014 the Danish government thus declared its willingness to participate in a non-UN mandated, US-led intervention against the regime in Syria even before the US president had made up his mind on whether this would be the best way to respond to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. To justify this position, the centre-left government resorted to the vocabulary of the 'responsibility to protect-principle' (Danish Government 2011: 39).

Referring to Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was a way of providing some form of 'UN cover' for intervening in situations such as Syria, where the Security Council was unable to take action because of Russian or Chinese vetoes. The R2P principle shifts the core question from being about 'the right to intervene' to being about 'the responsibility to protect', yet in the form adapted at the 2005 World Summit, it maintains that the use of force requires prior authorisation from the UN Security Council (Andersen 2015). Legally, the principle thus leaves the choice as one between 'pest and cholera' as it was in 1998 (Henriksen 2017). Politically, however, it was becoming increasingly clear that whereas having a UN mandate remained the ideal, a new foreign policy consensus had been established in Denmark which did not see it as a *sine qua non*, mandatory, condition for deploying Danish troops to international combat missions. The main political lesson drawn from the Iraq war in 2003 was thus that Danish troops should only be deployed with the backing of a

broad majority in the Danish Parliament. Not that they should only be deployed with a UN mandate.

This did not imply a general retreat from the UN. On a number of issues, Denmark maintained its focus on long-standing priorities such as the fight against torture, indigenous peoples and organisational support for making the UN more effective as an operational actor in development, peacebuilding and peacekeeping (Tarp & Hansen, 2013). More often than not, however, these efforts were undertaken by Danish diplomats either posted in Geneva or New York or working from within the legal service of the ministry. Rarely did it attract or require high-level political engagement from ministers. Being visible and taking leadership within the UN system was seemingly no longer a high priority to Danish politicians, but rather, crudely speaking, a chore delegated to dedicated diplomats.

To understand the political reasoning behind this shift, the 'foreign policy vision paper' put forward by the centre-left government in 2013 is illuminating (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). While the paper maintained that the UN was the indispensable global framework for collective action, it also pointed to the limitations of the UN and the rise of new forms of collaboration that were informal, issue-driven, market-based and only open to countries bringing something special to the table (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013: 13). In order to bring 'More Denmark in the World' as the vision paper was entitled, Denmark should engage these new and less institutionalised approaches to global problem-solving, including by relying more on public-private partnerships and strategic sector cooperation as instruments to promote Danish values and interests. This included a renewed foreign policy focus on areas of Danish commercial interests, including fields such health, green energy, urban development and innovation, alongside a sustained emphasis on topics such as human rights, gender equality and sustainable development. Rhetorical emphasis in both instances was placed on the overlap between advancing Danish interests, promoting a rule-based international order and addressing pressing global problems. Crudely speaking: more Denmark in the world was a win-win-win situation, albeit not necessarily for the UN as an organisation, as the Danish emphasis was turning towards a reliance on less institutionalised and arguably more agile and dynamic ways of advancing global agendas.

This process was helped along by the economic crisis that followed the financial crisis. In order to be 'fiscally responsible', the centre-left government followed in the footsteps of the former government and reduced the budget for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs again. This prompted a far-reaching adjustment of the ministry and Denmark's diplomatic representations (Grube 2013; Knudsen, U.V. 2014; Marcussen 2016). The gist of the reform was to shift resources to the EU, which was singled out as the 'single most important platform for the advancement of Danish interests, whether they be political, economic or idealistic' and to emerging markets in order to 'help more Danish companies gain access' (Knudsen, U.V. 2014: 17-18). This demanded reductions in other parts of the world, including the permanent Danish representations to the UN in New York and Geneva. Calling for fundamental reforms and more effectiveness, while reducing the Danish diplomatic presence in the system, increasingly became the Danish way of showing its continued commitment to the UN.

### **In times of crisis and shock: 2015 and beyond**

Following elections in 2015, Lars Løkke Rasmussen resumed the position of prime minister of Denmark and initiated a strategic review of Danish foreign policy to ensure that it was fit for purpose at 'a time of limited resources for diplomacy and defence' (Taksøe-Jensen 2016: 4). The underlying suggestion was thus that the days of spending scarce Danish resources on 'nice to do' priorities were over; in the future Danish foreign policy had to focus on 'need to do' objectives. The ensuing report, however, did not challenge the dogmatic presentation of Denmark as a trading nation with an open and advanced economy that thrives best in a stable and rule-based international order. On the contrary, it maintained that 'Denmark's membership of the EU, NATO and the UN [...] constitutes the foundation for promoting Danish interests internationally' (Taksøe-Jensen 2016: 5). As such it reproduced both the longstanding Danish self-image of being a firm believer in multilateralism – and the Danish reliance on a division of labour between the EU as 'the focal point for handling Denmark's economic interests', NATO as the 'guarantee for Denmark's and Europe's security', and the UN as 'the primary global forum for international peace and security, rule of law and human rights as well as global development' (Taksøe-Jensen 2016: 5).

The rhetorical emphasis on moving towards an 'interest-based' foreign policy did, however, play well into a growing domestic focus on avoiding 'over-implementation' of international obligations (Danish Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs 2015). In the aftermath of the financial crisis, the Danish political discourse had become increasingly focused on 'taking care of Denmark', rather than on trying to 'save the entire world' (Andersen 2018). This became evident also to the outside world with the Danish response to the 2015 migration crisis, which included measures explicitly designed to 'go the edge of the UN conventions' or in other ways provide Denmark 'respite' from its international commitments.

Of particular symbolic importance was the broad majority-backed decision to suspend Denmark's participation in the UN refugee quota system. The fact that this system – designed by former Danish prime minister, Poul Hartling, during his time as UN High Commissioner for Refugees – had always been an object of Danish national pride only added to the impression that something fundamental was shifting in Denmark's commitment to the UN in general and the international rule of law in particular.

2015, however, was not only the year of the migration crisis but also of the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change – and of the Danish launch of its candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council. The former were presented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs as 'large victories' and the latter as 'an integral part of our pursuit of a strong rule-based international system' (Jensen 2016: 12, 18). 2015 also saw former Danish foreign minister, Mogens Lykketoft, being elected to serve as the president of the United Nations General Assembly and receiving much praise for his proactive role in ensuring (more) transparency in the selection of the next Secretary-General of the UN (Terlingen 2017). On issues other than migration, Danish commitment to the UN seemed alive, if not kicking.<sup>4</sup>

'In 2016, the shock came from within'. Thus did the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs open his overview of the international situation and Danish foreign policy in the 2017 edition of the present journal (Samuelsen 2017: 11). Referring explicitly to Brexit, Trump and the surge of anti-globalist and anti-establishment movements in the West, he posited that 'we were disrupted' (Samuelsen, 2017: 11). This analysis brought him to his closing conclusion, which is worth quoting at length for the ways in which it explicitly links foreign policy behaviour and national identity:

‘It is in times of crisis and change that we find out who we are. Denmark is founded on liberal democratic values, human rights and a history of engaging and trading with the world. We believe in a rules-based international order, where decisions are made around a negotiating table. We believe in peace, freedom and free trade and we will continue to engage accordingly’ (Samuelsen 2017: 21).

It was far from only in Copenhagen that Brexit and Trump served as wake-up calls, underscoring that ‘we cannot take the commitment to multilateralism for granted’ (Samuelsen 2017: 19). In Berlin, Brussels and Paris, political leaders such as Angela Merkel, Federico Mogherinio and Emmanuel Macron vowed to protect and sustain existing institutions against the rise of short-sighted and dangerous populist nationalism. In 2017 the European ministers of foreign affairs agreed to include ‘supporting global governance, in particular the United Nations’ as an additional priority for the EU’s global strategy (Forsch 2017). And in 2018, Germany set out to establish an ‘alliance of multilateralists’ – an initiative that was subsequently joined by France and is expected to be launched globally at the UN General Assembly in the autumn of 2019.

Also in Denmark, the government turned to the UN to demonstrate its opposition to some of the new US administration’s policies, including in particular President Trump’s decisions to reinstate the Global Gag Rule. Along with other like-minded donor countries, Denmark thus quickly moved to protect the relevant UN agency, UNFPA, against the curbing of US funding to international organisations and to NGOs working on sexual and reproductive health.

The crisis of the rule-based order, however, is understood to extend well beyond President Trump. The Danish government’s 2018-19 Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy accordingly contained a more broadly stated ambition of standing up strongly for the rule-based international order (Danish Government 2018). This included in particular an emphasis on working to sustain the coherence of the West through renewed commitment to the EU and NATO (Danish Government 2018). A minor element of the strategy, however, also announced a number of UN-related ‘initiatives and focus areas’ aimed at strengthening the Secretary-General’s efforts to reform and modernise the UN. None of these initiatives made headlines or prompted political debate. Apparently, there was nothing controversial in the government’s incremental attempts at strengthening the role of the UN in Danish foreign policy. The

ensuing debate on Denmark's participation in the UN Migration Compact quickly proved that assertion wrong.

As in many other European countries, the migration compact became a topic of major domestic dispute in Denmark in November 2018, just two weeks prior to the meeting in Marrakech where the compact was scheduled to be approved by acclamation. That the Danish People's Party joined the global far-right campaign against the compact was hardly surprising (Cerulus & Schaart 2019). What was surprising, however, was that the rest of the political establishment did not stand up united against the misinformed criticism of the non-binding compact. Scepticism or outright opposition towards the agreement, based on unfounded concerns about its implications for Danish sovereignty, reached deep into the liberal-conservative government and parts of the Social Democrats. The liberal minister for migration who was supposed to participate in the Marrakech conference on behalf of Denmark declined to go, and no other ministers volunteered to take her place. In the end, the question of Danish participation was settled by the prime minister who declared that he himself would fly to Marrakech to send a clear signal that Denmark was part of the international society and understood that 'transnational problems could only be solved through transnational cooperation, not isolation' (Danish Prime Minister's Office 2018).

The process suggests that, domestically, the Danish political commitment to the UN has become more selective and issue-based than the conventional presentation of the UN as a 'cornerstone' in Danish foreign policy suggests. This impression is further strengthened when looking at Danish climate activism and the ways in which it is currently being strengthened (Wivel 2013). In 2017 the prime minister established a climate and global target fund, *Partnering for Green Growth and Global Goals* (P4G) (Danish Prime Minister's Office 2017). Subsequently the government has appointed a special envoy for climate and energy and worked to ensure Denmark the position of lead country for the UN work stream on 'energy transition' prior to the UN climate summit in September 2019. While these efforts are all clearly linked to the UN, they are also examples of the new ad-hoc, informal approach to multilateralism that is outlined above. The P4G thus 'aims to accelerate the sustainable transition by bringing together business, public sector and civil society in partnerships leading to smart solutions'. It is a market-based supplement to, rather than a strengthening of existing state-based institutions or UN agencies. The new

'special envoy' is thus not a career diplomat, but rather has a corporate background as CEO of VESTAS, a major Danish producer of wind turbines. In keeping with this the Danish fight against climate change, is thus domestically presented by the government as a matter of 'business opportunities', rather than, for example, 'international obligations' or 'existential musts'.

As 2018 was drawing to a close, Danish UN policy thus entailed a range of efforts, some of which could be seen as pointing towards a renewed Danish focus in some form or another on the UN, others, however, suggesting that even in Denmark, the support for the UN's approach to multilateralism cannot be taken for granted. By way of conclusion, the next section briefly sums up the ways in which Danish UN policy has changed since 1945 and brings this evolution back to the discussion of a future Danish order policy in a rapidly changing world.

## Concluding remarks

Students, practitioners and observers of Danish foreign policy widely agree that the EU and NATO have become increasingly important to Denmark over the past decades. As a logical extension of this – albeit perhaps less widely acknowledged – the UN has come to play an increasingly minor role in Danish foreign policy. The main question remains, however, *how* the UN has been marginalised. Has there been a change in degree or a change in kind of Danish UN policy? The answer suggested in this article is that it has been both. On most agendas and when working within the UN system – in the state-based organs and as donor to the specialised agencies – Denmark has on the whole maintained its 'small state Nordic profile' that was developed during the Cold War, albeit at a lower level of engagement. In a few, important ways, however, the marginalisation of the UN also reflects a change in kind that has been brought on by both external as well as internal factors.

During the Cold War, the UN served an important function in Danish foreign policy as the premier outlet for revisionist ambitions of changing the international anarchy into a rules-based order with universally agreed rules and multilateral institutions that provided small states a seat at the table. The self-serving purpose of this ambition – or order policy – was to reduce the utility of military instruments at the international level and thus in the long run lower

the importance of resource-based politics. While duly respecting the need for displaying alliance loyalty within NATO, a focus on disarmament, détente and development thus provided for Danish UN activism to promote a rule-based order in which might did not equal right.

The end of the Cold War seemingly did away with the need to balance order policy and alliance policy. Freed from the overlay of bipolarity, the shallow Danish foreign policy consensus was replaced by a more deeply felt political agreement on using all foreign policy instruments to promote international rule of law based on respect for human rights and democracy. In the early 1990s everything thus became order policy. Initially, the UN remained at the centre of this, but increasingly Western-controlled organisations, notably NATO and the EU, came to be seen as the main outlets through which Denmark should make her voice heard and seek to influence and improve the world. This did not prompt Denmark to abandon the UN altogether, but increasingly the political attention shifted towards the need for reforming the UN to make it fit for liberal purpose in a globalised world.

Following the change of government in 2001, the 'old' distinction between order policy and alliance policy was re-introduced as the Danish foreign policy consensus broke down over the Iraq war in 2003. The left-wing opposition criticised the right-wing government for focusing overly on alliance policy, ignoring or missing longer-term Danish order policy interests. This critique, however, was mistaken in the sense that it overlooked the radically different approach to order policy that underpinned the doctrine of 'super-Atlanticism'. Rather than working to reduce the importance of resource-based power politics by building multilateral and universal institutions and promoting peaceful means of conflict resolution, this order policy relied on explicitly siding with the USA as the world's only superpower, not as a short-term necessity, but based on a long-term conviction that this would provide the best way of safeguarding Danish values and interests in an open, rule-based world order.

As it turned out the doctrine of Super-Atlanticism was short lived. In its wake, however, Denmark has not returned to pursuing a conventional small state order policy. On the contrary, the willingness to use military force to defend and expand the existing order, which began in the 1990s, has grown to become a defining feature of Danish foreign policy identity. Delivering also 'at the tip of the spear', as it says on the Danish MFA website, is now widely seen as part

of what places Denmark at ‘the forefront of the fight for an international set of laws and universal human rights’ (<http://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/>). At the same time, Danish ambitions of ‘making a difference’ have been lowered in other fields, as domestic concerns with the need for ‘taking care of Denmark’ have prompted both a growing focus on Danish business interests and a newfound willingness to challenge and question existing UN norms. At the time of writing, Danish UN policy thus comes through as not just marginalized but increasingly incoherent.

As the global landscape is shifting and geopolitics and nationalism resurging, Denmark’s fundamental interest in sustaining a rule-based order has been brought to the forefront of the minds of the Danish foreign policy establishment. Global developments in the past few years have, however, also exposed the inconsistency of contemporary Danish foreign policy and the need for rethinking the ends and means of foreign policy in a manner that can signal more coherently to both domestic and foreign audiences who Denmark is and which type of rule-based order she sees herself being at the forefront of the fight for. Given the present state of global uncertainties, coming up with clear answers as to how Denmark – as a small state – should balance her short and long-term security interests remains anything but simple. The difficulty of the task, however, does not detract from the urgency. As the world around Denmark is changing, there is a growing need for Denmark to reflect on how it sees her own role and position in the changing order and which principles would serve best as a guide to Danish foreign policy activism in the future. This includes confronting old dogmas and new paradoxes in Danish order policy. The preparations for the upcoming campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council provide an opportune moment to revisit Danish UN policy and ask anew why and in what ways, the UN constitutes a cornerstone of Danish foreign policy.

## Notes

- 1 Louise Riis Andersen, PhD, is a senior researcher at DIIS · Danish Institute for International Studies.
- 2 'When asked whether he wanted honey or condensed milk to go with his bread, Winnie the Pooh replied: "Both", and then, so as not to seem greedy, he added, "But don't bother about the bread, please".'
- 3 Author's translation of standard phrase found repeatedly in the Danish UNGA instructions. The most recent version is found in Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003).
- 4 The Danish development strategy from 2017 was approved by an overwhelming majority in parliament. Formulated explicitly on the basis of the 2030 Agenda, the strategy reflects a strong Danish commitment to the SDGs. The strategy, however, also framed development assistance as a way of 'taking care of Denmark', including by using aid as an instrument for securing readmission agreements with countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Morocco and Kenya, and appointing a specific 'deportation ambassador' to that effect (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017a: 23-24).

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# Chapter 4

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*This is a selection of scholarly books, articles and chapters about Danish foreign policy published in English in 2018.*

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