

The cover features a solid orange background. At the top, there are four vertical bars of varying heights and widths, with the leftmost one being a thick, curved shape. A wide, light-colored curved band sweeps across the lower half of the cover from the bottom left towards the top right.

Danish Foreign Policy Review 2020

Edited by
Kristian Fischer and Hans Mouritzen

DIIS · DANISH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Preface

This *Danish Foreign Policy Review*, a continuation of the *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook*, addresses Danish foreign policy globally, regionally and domestically. In addition to the articles by Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod, and Minister of Defence Trine Bramsen, the 2020 *Review* includes three externally peer reviewed academic articles, whose authors represent only their own fields of expertise (for details of each author, see the respective articles). Abstracts of these articles in English and Danish can be found at the front of this volume.

Ryhor Nizhnikau and Arkady Moshes focus on Belarus, a blank spot on the Danish mental map in spite of its geographical proximity. What are the prospects for Belarusia's relations with its Western neighbours, and what policy recommendations can be offered to them?

After some fruitful years, Danish-Chinese relations seem to be entering a new era where it will become increasingly difficult to pursue a 'business as usual' approach. Andreas Bøje Forsby analyses the drivers behind this less benign development.

Inspired by rising tension in the Arctic between on the one hand, the US, and on the other hand Russia and China, Mikkel Runge Olesen reviews the academic literature and formulates two scenarios for the Arctic. What would each of them mean for the Kingdom of Denmark?

Finally, we present a selected bibliography of scholarly books, articles and book chapters about Danish foreign policy published in English in 2019. This volume has been edited by Director Kristian Fischer and Dr.scient.pol. Hans Mouritzen. Stud.scient.pol. Kasper Arabi has served as the assistant editor.

The Editors
DIIS, Copenhagen
May 2020



Chapter 1

Abstracts in English and Danish

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

Belarus in search of a new foreign policy: why is it so difficult?

Ryhor Nizhnikau and Arkady Moshes

Has Belarus been changing tack in its relations with the West since 2014 and to what extent is such a change possible at all? Since the mid-2000s relations have developed in a cyclical pattern, as crises have been followed by attempts at normalisation and rapprochement. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war in eastern Ukraine appear to have been a tipping point. For Minsk, anxious about Moscow's new assertiveness, closer relations with the West promised more breathing space as well as economic opportunities. The West, in turn, could address its own geopolitical concerns by supporting Minsk's relatively neutral stance in the Russia–Ukraine conflict. However, there has been no breakthrough towards a sustainable partnership due to structural conditions. Belarus continues to mistrust the West and ignore its wishes for political and economic liberalisation, whilst the close alliance with Russia prevents engagement in the security domain. These factors will, for the foreseeable future, continue to constrain the Belarusian action space and undermine the prospect of deepening relations with the West. The Nordic countries should, thus, target support to Belarusian grassroots initiatives in order to foster bottom-up change.

Har Belarus ændret kurs overfor Vesten efter 2014, og i hvilken udstrækning er et sådant kursskifte overhovedet muligt? Siden omkring 2005 har forholdet udviklet sig cyklisk: kriser er blevet efterfulgt af normalisering og tilnærmelse. Ruslands annektering af Krim og krigen i Øst-Ukraine forekom at være et vendepunkt. Stillet overfor et mere selvhævdende Rusland kunne tættere relationer med Vesten tilføre Belarus øget handlefrihed såvel som økonomiske muligheder. Ved at støtte Minsk's relativt neutrale profil mellem Moskva og Kiev ville Vesten samtidig tilgodese sine egne geopolitiske interesser. Men strukturelle vilkår har forhindret et gennembrud i retning af et stabilt partnerskab. Belarus mistror fortsat Vesten og ignorerer ønsker om politisk og økonomisk liberalisering, samtidig med at den tætte alliance med Rusland forhindrer samarbejde på det sikkerhedspolitiske område. Disse faktorer vil fortsætte med at begrænse belarussisk handlefrihed og udsigterne til fordybende relationer med Vesten. De nordiske lande bør i stedet støtte belarussiske græsrodsinitiativer for at fremme forandring nedefra.

Danish-Chinese relations: 'business as usual' or strategic disruption?

Andreas Bøje Forsby

For many years Danish-Chinese relations have generally been progressing smoothly, growing deeper and more diversified across a wide range of areas in line with the underlying objectives of the 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' agreement of 2008. China rose to become Denmark's second-largest non-European trade partner, while bilateral cooperation was extended to cover areas like research, education, renewable energy, judicial affairs and tourism. Recently, however, Denmark's relationship with Beijing has become problematised on several accounts. The main drivers of this new development are spillover from the burgeoning US-China great power rivalry and the repoliticisation of fundamental value differences between the two countries amid growing Chinese assertiveness in Denmark and elsewhere. Danish-Chinese relations thus seem to be entering a new era where it will become increasingly difficult to pursue a 'business as usual' approach.

De dansk-kinesiske relationer har i mange år udviklet sig positivt og er blevet mere dybtgående såvel som diversificerede over en lang række områder i overensstemmelse med målene i den strategiske partnerskabsaftale fra 2008. Kina er blevet Danmarks næststørste handelspartner udenfor Europa, medens bilateralt samarbejde omfatter områder som forskning, uddannelse, vedvarende energi, retlige anliggender og turisme. For nylig er Danmarks forhold til Beijing imidlertid blevet problematiseret på flere fronter. Drivkræfterne i denne udvikling er afledte virkninger fra den voksende amerikansk-kinesiske stormagtsrivalisering, genpolitisering af værdipolitiske forskelle mellem de to lande og stigende kinesisk selvhævdelse i Danmark og generelt. De dansk-kinesiske relationer synes således på vej ind i en ny fase, hvor 'business as usual' bliver svært at praktisere.

The end of Arctic exceptionalism? A review of the academic debates and what the Arctic prospects mean for the Kingdom of Denmark

Mikkel Runge Olesen

While the question of cooperation or conflict in the Arctic has dominated academic debates since the Russian flag-planting on the North Pole in 2007, it was not until 2018–2019 that the US declared the Arctic an arena of competition with Russia and China. This article maps the academic debates on the ongoing state of cooperation and conflict from 2007–2020 and groups the existing literature into three camps: ‘the warners’, who see conflict in the Arctic as likely, ‘the reassurers’ who stress that the Arctic region has ‘exceptional’ traits that make conflict less likely and finally ‘the worried’ who fall somewhat in between. On this basis the article formulates two different scenarios for the Arctic going forward and discusses what each of them will mean for the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mens spørgsmålet om samarbejde eller konflikt i Arktis er blevet dominerende i de akademiske debatter siden den russiske flagsætning på Nordpolen i 2007, var det ikke før 2018-2019, at USA beskrev Rusland og Kina som 'konkurrenter' i Arktis. Denne artikel refererer de akademiske debatter om samarbejde eller konflikt fra 2007 til 2020 og klassificerer den eksisterende litteratur i tre lejre: 'alarmisterne' der ser konflikt i Arktis som sandsynlig, de 'fortrøstningsfulde' der ser Arktis som en unik region, hvor konflikt er mindre sandsynlig, og endelig de 'bekymrede', der placerer sig midt imellem. På basis heraf formulerer artiklen to forskellige scenarier for fremtiden i Arktis og diskuterer, hvad de hver især betyder for Rigsfællesskabet.

Chapter 2

Ministerial articles

The international situation and Danish foreign policy 2019

Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod

2019 was a year of changes for Denmark and for Danish foreign policy. Underlying these changes, which will be presented here, is – I would venture – the most profound agent of change of our time: climate change. Quite literally changing the face of the earth and affecting in various ways and degrees, the lives of every single living organism on the planet. For good reason, climate change became the top political issue of the day in the two consecutive elections held in Denmark in 2019 – the general election and, before that, the elections for the European Parliament. Both ushered in political changes in the form of a new Danish Government and a dramatic shift in dynamics of the Danish EU political debate.

The elections also entailed a changing of the guard in the form of a new minister for foreign affairs. Almost as if planned for the benefit of the reader, my predecessor passed me the baton in late June, allowing for Danish foreign policy of 2019 to be divided neatly into two distinct six-month periods. In the traditional inaugural speech made by the incoming minister of foreign affairs, I remarked that Denmark is too small a country to have two different foreign policies. I stand by that analysis. The fundamentals of Danish foreign policy remain unchanged. NATO and the EU remain the bedrocks of Danish foreign and security policy; as they have been since Denmark joined them in 1949 and 1973 respectively – both times under Social Democratic governments.

But on top of these foreign policy foundations lie layers of principles and values; aims, ambitions and approaches. Here, I would say, a number of key changes

have occurred in the latter half of the year. Climate diplomacy became a key new priority of Danish foreign policy; a new forum for fair and sustainable trade was established, to give Danish economic diplomacy and trade policy values and principles-based direction and; in the realm of security policy, Denmark heightened its ambitions and offered to take on leadership of NATO's training mission in Iraq.

Finally, the government made it a key priority to pursue international support to create a fairer and more humane asylum system aimed at reducing the number of spontaneous asylum seekers who risk their lives on dangerous journeys towards the EU while human traffickers benefit from their misfortunes. We need to gain control over the number of arrivals by gradually replacing spontaneous asylum seeking with a more orderly system based on resettlement and the provision of better protection and assistance to more people in their regions of origin. Furthermore, to address the root causes of irregular migration, the EU needs to help create alternatives for young generations in Africa and elsewhere in their home countries. These are just a few examples of changes that will affect Danish foreign policy in the coming years and – I hope – crystallise into a number of concrete further initiatives. I will open this chapter by focusing on three broader trends from 2019 that are likely to stay with us and become premises for any long-term foreign policy strategy. Then I will provide an assessment of the current state of globalisation, which for better or worse is the framework for our current challenges as well as opportunities. From there I shall turn to describe how Denmark addressed the rising threats in Europe's near neighbourhood, as NATO celebrated its 70th birthday as the cornerstone for our common security. Next, I will address the state of the European Union, where a new commission and parliament took office while Brexit was being negotiated, followed by a description of the two central challenges of our time, namely climate change and migration. Finally, I am going to cover the developments in the Arctic and the challenges to international trade, ending with a short perspective of the world in 2020.

The first of the three broader trends is that great power politics is back. Major power rivalry is on the rise. The world is increasingly becoming multipolar. As a result, 2019 saw further cracks in the foundations of the rules and norms that underpin international security. The demise in August of the landmark 1987 INF arms control treaty due to Russian non-compliance was a blow to the Cold War architecture that has provided strategic stability in Europe for 30 years.

With this, arms control and disarmament assumed a grave new urgency. 2019 also saw growing geopolitical interest in our own neighbourhood as Arctic states increased their activity and military presence in the Arctic, while non-Arctic states increasingly showed interest in the region.

Secondly, pressure is mounting on rules-based international cooperation and our key institutions such as the EU, NATO, the UN and the WTO, thus making global decision making harder. The December 2019 downfall of the WTO Appellate Body was one example, the increasing division in the UN Security Council another. Cooperation within the European Union, the anchor for much of our pursuit of Danish interests in the world, was challenged as well. As 2019 drew to a close, the United Kingdom finally got clarity about Brexit, but not about the future of the relationship with the EU nor about what Brexit will mean for Europe's role in the world. Considering all this, it is harder to imagine the world of today coming together to deliver achievements on the scale and ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals or the Paris Accord, both of which were agreed less than five years ago. A disheartening thought. But also a sentiment that I hope could help reanimate global action in defence of multilateralism.

Thirdly, regional instability in global hotspots increased. The Middle East seemed more combustible than ever with tensions growing in the Persian Gulf and the conflict in Syria continuing to have serious regional impact. The 2019 developments in the Strait of Hormuz posed a particular concern for Denmark as the world's fifth largest seafaring nation. At the same time, pressure mounted on the Iran nuclear deal and tensions between the US and Iran escalated. The withdrawal of US forces from parts of north-eastern Syria paved the way for a Turkish military operation in the country. Meanwhile Russia continued its destabilising actions in Syria as well as in Libya, where the long-term conflict developed into a regular proxy war drawing international backers for both sides in the conflict. In the Sahel region terrorist attacks increased, creating more volatility in an already fragile region. While the EU saw a decrease in the numbers of irregular migrants arriving at its external borders, the number of refugees and displaced people in the world has not been higher since the Second World War.

While these broader trends present increasing challenges, they also in my view have provided important new opportunities for Denmark to take lead in driving a positive change. The climate crisis is a case in point. 2019 saw a tipping point in the climate discussion. With news images of the Amazon rainforest and the Australian forest fires burning as a backdrop, there was a strong public demand for political action. This call for action must be heard. When I assumed office in late June, I made a strong green diplomacy one of my top political projects. To this end, a new sustainability strategy for the Danish foreign service was launched. It aims to make the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs one of the five most sustainable foreign services in the world, designating 15 Danish missions abroad as climate front posts and naming Denmark's first climate ambassador.

From the beginning of my tenure, one question has been at the top of my mind: in a world that is rapidly changing, keeping most of us on our toes in day-to-day crisis management, how do we remain at the forefront and deliver on our long-term strategic goals? My answer to that question is through an active foreign policy with a strong strategic focus. Otherwise, we risk letting the urgent overtake that which is most important.

Three strategic points of orientation guide the foreign policy I have pursued since I took office in June 2019:

Firstly, a foreign policy that guarantees our safety and security. In the tradition of Social Democrats such as Hans Hedtoft, who ensured Denmark's role as a founding member of NATO, I want our foreign policy to be farsighted by re-engaging in a dialogue on arms control and non-proliferation and shouldering our part of the burden to actively contribute to transatlantic security.

Secondly, a foreign policy that promotes a fair and sustainable globalisation. Never before have we been so interdependent, and never has there been a stronger need for global solutions to our global problems. At the same time, globalisation has outpaced many of the institutions meant to regulate it. I want Denmark to be at the forefront, reforming and modernising our multilateral organisations to promote green solutions, human rights and new global challenges. Globalisation has generated vast amounts of wealth, but it hasn't been fairly shared. We need to harness globalisation to make sure it works for everyone, not just for those who are already the most wealthy and privileged.

Thirdly, a foreign policy that guarantees Danish jobs and welfare. The Foreign Ministry is working actively to improve conditions for Danish companies in their export markets. We must actively push the EU to improve the social protection of workers, fight tax evasion as well as promote free and fair trade.

Taking charge of globalisation

The world has seen immense progress over the past decades. Millions have been lifted out of poverty. We live longer. Globalisation has brought us tremendous progress and opportunities, opened up markets, brought new and better jobs. Denmark in particular, as a small and open economy, has managed to benefit immensely from the positives of globalisation.

However, there is a flipside to the coin. Globalisation has a dark side. Its benefits and problems are unevenly distributed and its negative side effects in the form of global climate change, mass migration and increased inequality are significant. It challenges workers' rights and wages. We have seen massive tax fraud with global companies dodging their responsibilities. When people fear for their jobs and livelihoods due to unfair competition, wage pressure and social dumping, it undermines social justice and trust in public institutions. 2019 saw massive protest movements sparking all over the globe – from Bolivia to Sudan, from France to Iran. While the triggers for these protests were diverse – ranging from a gas tax to the price of a subway ticket – many of them were linked to the basic challenges to the social contract brought on by globalisation – inequality and increasing distrust of governments.

I will work for a sustainable globalisation that benefits and improves the lives of us all. A race to the top, not a race to the bottom. Otherwise, we risk an anti-globalisation reaction where countries move towards isolationism. I will underline some of the efforts we made in 2019 to this end:

The EU remains our main foreign policy forum for harnessing globalisation; and for this purpose, we need strong European leadership. I will work for an EU that adds value to the daily lives of ordinary Europeans. This includes improving the social protection of workers, whilst fully respecting national welfare systems and well-functioning labour market traditions. Fighting tax evasion. Standing up for fundamental principles like the Rule of Law and ensuring that the

movement of goods, capital, services and labour is not only free, but also fair. I have pushed for the EU to become a Climate Union. This entails that the EU must update its 2030 reduction target and achieve full climate neutrality by 2050. The European Green Deal was a positive step towards this. However, the EU is only responsible for about nine per cent of the world's emissions. We need a strong climate diplomacy to bring China, the US, India and the African continent on board. In my view it is obvious for the EU to take a lead on this. The EU also plays a vital role in addressing irregular migration. In 2019 the Danish Government actively promoted a fairer and more humane asylum system in the EU with the ambition to reduce spontaneous asylum seeking and to create an asylum system with more orderly conditions.

Denmark lives off free trade. About one in five jobs depends on exports to the rest of the world. However, free trade is not an end in itself. Trade should also be fair and sustainable. Our trade policy and trade agreements must ensure that increased trade benefits workers as well as company owners. This is why, in 2019, I launched a new Forum on Fair and Sustainable Trade Policy as a platform for debate and new ideas. We need free trade agreements that not only improve our national budget, but also fight poverty, curb tax evasion and promote sustainability and the green transition – on a global scale.

Finally, we need a stronger EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. As the largest contributor of development assistance and the world's largest trading block the EU has the means, but punches below its weight in international affairs. We need to leverage the EU's instruments – trade, development, energy, digital policy, security and defence policy and foreign affairs – towards advancing our interests, priorities and values abroad. Moreover, we need to use the EU sanction instruments effectively when countries do not abide by the rules-based international order. I made this point clear with strong support from 21 member states at the first EU Foreign Affairs Council under the reign of the new EU high representative and vice-president, Josep Borrell, in December 2019.

Security: providing safety in a less secure world

2019 saw continued shifts in global economic, political and military power. We faced a combination of known challenges and so-called 'new' threats from cyber and influence campaigns. The European security architecture and international system of arms control and disarmament came under severe pressure.

Unsurprisingly, I spent much of my time as foreign minister engulfed in decisions on security policy. Overall, our response has been ensuring an active Danish international security profile with new contributions to military operations in the Sahel as well as to NATO missions. We worked to further consolidate NATO as the main pillar of our security policy, recognising that the transatlantic link will remain the supreme guarantor of Denmark's security. We also decided to prioritise our engagement in dialogues on arms control.

In 2019 we saw a continuation of harmful and assertive Russian behaviour that threatens to undermine the rules-based international order. In our eastern neighbourhood, the continued conflict in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula entered its sixth year. In the Middle East and North Africa, Russia increasingly inserted itself as a significant, albeit opportunistic, player in Libya, while continuing its decisive support for the regime in Syria. Raising the perspective to a global level, Russia jeopardised international security and stability by disregarding its obligations under the INF treaty, leading to the demise of the treaty on 2 August. Importantly, Denmark and our Allies confirmed our commitment to the preservation of effective international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security. While continuously adapting and shaping measures and policies to counter Russian assertiveness, channels were kept open for dialogue, including in highly important areas such as the Arctic.

I believe that democratic and independent societies adhering to the rule of law are the best bulwark against Russia's assertiveness. In Ukraine, the election of President Zelenskyy and a new parliament in 2019 ushered in a period of unprecedented reforms. To help sustain this momentum, the Danish Neighbourhood Programme continues its support to Ukraine's reform process, notably regarding anti-corruption.

2019 also marked the 70th anniversary of NATO. Despite differences between some Allies on issues such as Syria, Iran and burden sharing, the NATO leaders meeting in London once again demonstrated that NATO remains the platform where Europe and North America discuss, decide and act together on strategic issues. Allies reconfirmed Article 5, the collective defence clause of NATO and took a wide range of decisions. Overall, 2019 proved that NATO at 70 is still fit for purpose and able to constantly adapt to the ever-changing and ever more unpredictable security landscape – an Alliance which remains the cornerstone of Denmark's security and safety for the next decades to come.

Following the announcement by Trump of the withdrawal of US troops from northeastern Syria on 6 October, Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring with the stated objective of addressing the security threat from PYD/YPG. Together with the rest of the EU, Denmark condemned the operation and rapidly adopted strict measures on arms exports to Turkey.

The broader, more basic, paradigm of the conflict remained unchanged: that only a politically negotiated solution to the conflict can bring about sustainable peace and stability in Syria. As demonstrated through the UN's launch of the constitutional committee and the subsequent meetings at the end of 2019, the Assad regime remains, however, unwilling to engage politically. Consequently, Denmark together with the EU, the US and other like-minded countries is determined to maintain the pressure on the regime through sanctions, conditioning reconstruction support on political changes, and refraining from any steps towards normalising relations with Damascus until a genuine political process is irreversibly underway.

The progress achieved by the Global Coalition against Daesh/ISIS in 2019 was significant. Daesh/ISIS no longer controls territory and almost eight million people have been liberated from its control in Iraq and Syria. Still, the terrorist group is adapting its methods to the situation and hopes to use regional instabilities as an opportunity to conduct attacks in Iraq and in Syria. Globally, Daesh/ISIS continues to maintain several local branches and numerous affiliated networks. The group's murderous ideology retains global appeal – unfortunately also in Europe. Therefore, we will continue our efforts until Daesh/ISIS no longer has safe havens from which to operate, no longer poses a threat to our homelands, and no longer spreads its hateful ideology. This is one of the reasons why the new Danish Government offered NATO to take over

the command of NATO's mission in Iraq by the end of 2020 – a testimony to our strong commitment both to the NATO Alliance and to our determination to continue fighting Daesh/ISIS.

Freedom of navigation and the security of European and non-European vessels and crews in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz came under significant pressure in 2019. In complementarity with existing maritime security efforts and initiatives in the region, the new Danish Government decided to support the European-led maritime surveillance mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH). EMASOH aims to ensure a safe navigation environment and to lower the existing tensions in the region by providing enhanced maritime situation awareness and surveillance through the deployment of maritime surveillance assets. As an important additional element, EMASOH encompasses vital diplomatic efforts aiming at long-lasting de-escalation.

During 2019 the nuclear deal with Iran came under increased pressure. Iran gradually began to suspend its compliance with commitments under the nuclear deal, including by increasing stockpiles of low enriched uranium and restarting nuclear research and development. Measures were also taken to support the nuclear deal. France, Germany and the UK launched INSTEX – a financial mechanism to facilitate trade with Iran – and in November, I announced Denmark's accession as shareholder to INSTEX.

The Sahel region has increased in strategic importance to Danish and European foreign policy and security interests. Following the collapse of Libya, the Sahel is only one border away from Europe. Extreme poverty, lack of basic social services and increased competition over scarce resources are among the root causes of the crisis. In addition, weak states with limited control of their vast territories have enlarged the playing field for terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organised crime. In 2019 attacks from terrorist groups increased significantly and have forced large numbers of civilians to flee their homes. A robust, long-term, integrated approach is needed. In 2019 Denmark began to contribute to the French-led anti-terror Operation Barkhane as well as significantly strengthening its contributions to the UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA. To respond to the humanitarian crisis, Denmark has also increased its humanitarian contributions, supplementing its existing stabilisation, development and humanitarian efforts in the region.

Europe: new European Commission and Brexit greenlighted

European politics of 2019 was characterised by elections to the European Parliament and the subsequent appointment of a new European Commission under the leadership of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Brexit also continued to command attention throughout 2019 until the British election brought some clarity at the end of the year.

In Denmark, turnout for the European Parliament election reached an all-time high with 66% of voters participating, coinciding with a peak in support for the EU amongst Danes. The campaign for the European elections demonstrated the importance that voters attach to fighting climate change and accelerating the green transitions. This has put its mark on the priorities of the new Commission that has put the so-called New Green Deal at the very top of its political agenda for the next five years. This I strongly support.

The new Commission President has also put special emphasis on her wish to lead a so-called 'geopolitical commission' with the ambition to make the European Union a stronger, more assertive actor in world affairs and to try to shape a better global order by reinforcing multilateralism. With global competition increasing and the need for united action to solve global problems such as climate change and migration, the EU has to show stronger international leadership. From a Danish perspective, there is in my mind no doubt that there is both scope – and a clear need – to enhance the EU's ability to promote and protect European interests in the wider world. As the most effective vehicle for our foreign policy, we can drastically increase the reach and impact of Danish foreign policy efforts by working through the EU. This is the case both when it comes to strengthening the EU as a foreign and security policy actor, and when it comes to transforming the EU's very substantial economic, regulatory and commercial strength to influence beyond the borders of Europe. This said, the Danish government's view regarding the Danish opt-outs remains unchanged.

I also think that the other main priorities of the new Commission appear timely and in line with Danish priorities. This is especially the case for the Commission's ambition to create a Europe that is fit for the digital age and the

crucial objective of ensuring a European economy that works for people. The Danish Government is committed to working closely with the new European Commission and the European Parliament with a view to turning the new European agenda into reality, while constantly fighting to promote Danish interests and ideas.

A dominant issue in 2019 was the MFF (Multi-Annual Financial Framework) negotiations. During 2019 the MFF negotiations went from technical clarifications to several political discussions among ministers in the General Affairs Council and were discussed at the European Council in June and December.

Like previous rounds of negotiations, long and complex discussions are expected to reach an MFF agreement for 2021–2027. The MFF will have a profound impact on public finances for all member states and establish key parameters for decision making at European level until 2027.

This round of MFF discussions is particularly challenging for several reasons. First of all, Brexit changes the dynamics of the discussions. As a large net contributor, the UK leaves a financial gap. Moreover, traditionally the UK argued for a smaller EU budget and its absence further complicates discussions between member states like Denmark, supporting a small and focused EU budget, and member states arguing for a larger, wider EU budget.

A broad majority in the Danish Parliament support the government's approach to the MFF negotiations. I am very aware that the success of the EU is measured by our ability to deliver tangible results for our citizens – not by the size of the budget. The Danish Government has consistently argued for a budget of one per cent of EU GNI, the Danish rebate and for a modernisation of the EU budget to deal with common challenges like climate, migration-related issues such as support for Africa, and excellence-based research.

Brexit continued to affect the EU dossier in 2019 and following several postponements the EU27 and the new UK Government led by PM Boris Johnson finally agreed in October on a revised withdrawal agreement and a political declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship. The UK parliamentary elections on December 12th paved the way for approval of the agreement in the UK Parliament and the European Parliament, and thus

for the UK leaving the EU on 31 January 2020. At the core of the agreement was a revised protocol on Ireland, aiming at avoiding a 'hard border' between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The agreement also defined a satisfactory solution for the many EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens in living in EU27 countries. It stipulated a transition period until the end of 2020, with a possibility for prolongation, during which the UK would remain bound by EU rules and the two sides could negotiate the terms of their future relationship. These negotiations commenced in the first part of 2020, following the British withdrawal.

The Danish Government will continue to work for a strong relationship between the EU and the UK after Brexit. However, it has to be a balanced relationship. We cannot risk compromising the single market or the EU's decision-making autonomy.

Climate: a turning point for climate action?

Positively, 2019 marked a clear shift in popular attention to the climate agenda with a strong and vocal call for urgent political action – particularly among the young with the Fridays for Future movement. Climate was a headline topic of discussion at both the European elections in May and the general election in Denmark in June. I find this very encouraging.

The government responded to this clear mandate from the Danish people by presenting a historically ambitious climate agenda, both by national and international standards. The new Danish Government is taking on global leadership in the fight against climate change and in the promotion of a just green transition that leaves no one behind. We will work with partners from both public and private sectors as well as civil society to reach the goals and promote innovative financial mechanisms both in Denmark and internationally. Public-private partnerships where private businesses and investors collaborate with labour unions, civil society and the government are an important part of the Danish DNA.

The main lever for the government's climate diplomacy is the long-standing green transition of Danish society and the broad political support for a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Denmark by 70% by

2030 going towards net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. This is also the starting point for Danish support to a new multiannual EU budget with strong emphasis on climate and for an ambitious implementation of the European Green Deal, including a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 55% by 2030.

Throughout 2019 Denmark was actively engaged globally to increase global climate ambition and to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Denmark has launched SDG7 leadership as a priority effort and initiated alliance building with multiple stakeholders to combat climate change, with energy transition and access to green energy for all at centre stage.

The UN Climate Action Summit in September was an important stepping-stone towards the COP25 in Madrid in December 2019 and the submission of new or updated, nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in advance of COP26 in Glasgow, which at the time of writing has unfortunately but inevitably been indefinitely postponed on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. Denmark took an active part in the summit as co-lead of the energy transition track together with Ethiopia and a broader coalition of partners. To enhance the likelihood that this commitment includes climate investment opportunities in developing countries, Denmark is working with the UN to establish a climate investment partnership, which aims at ensuring better matchmaking between investors and governments. Bridging the climate investment gap in developing countries with the resources of private investors is an important element in the response to the effects of climate change.

As we approach COP26, more ambition is required to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. To this end I have significantly strengthened the Danish climate diplomacy by a number of organisational changes at the ministry of foreign affairs to further higher global ambition on climate change and green transition as well as appointed Denmark's first dedicated climate ambassador.

We also tasked ourselves with ensuring that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs becomes one of the five most sustainable foreign services in the world, including by appointing 15 embassies as climate front posts and mainstreaming climate throughout foreign policy, development policy and trade policy. Moreover, with the Financial Act of 2020, the government has more than doubled the level of overseas development assistance aimed at supporting

climate and environment programmes. The plan is to further strengthen the focus on climate in the Danish overseas development assistance and integrate climate markers in all relevant development projects.

Irregular migration: low levels, growing pressure

In 2019 the EU saw a decrease of six per cent in the number of irregular arrivals at the external borders compared to 2018, and a decrease of 92% compared to 2015. This development, however, masks great variation in migratory pressure towards the EU from the main migration routes. Where the western Mediterranean route (from Morocco to Spain) and the central Mediterranean route (from Tunisia and Libya to Italy and Malta) saw reductions of 50% and 40% respectively, the eastern Mediterranean route (from Turkey to Greece, Bulgaria and Cyprus) witnessed a significant increase of 50%, which also increased the pressure on the western Balkan route.

In order to further reduce migratory pressure at the external borders, the EU continued to strengthen cooperation and partnerships with strategic third countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Turkey. The EU also developed its engagement with sub-Saharan African countries through its comprehensive partnership approach to migration, including through the EU Trust Fund for Africa. In addition, the EU continued its political dialogue with the African Union on issues like remittances, human smuggling and reintegration of returned irregular migrants. In the ongoing negotiations over the future EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021 to 2027, Denmark argued that a sufficient level of resources should be earmarked in the next EU budget for future migration efforts to reduce irregular migration and strengthen border control. Even though successful steps have been taken in the EU to jointly address the migration crisis in 2015 and 2016 and frontline states today are better prepared and ready to manage their external borders, there is no room for complacency. Since 2019, the Danish Government has been actively working on the promotion of a fairer and more humane asylum system. The long-term ambition is to reduce spontaneous asylum seeking and to create an asylum system with more orderly conditions. This would entail that resettlement gradually becomes the primary pathway to Europe for refugees. The possibility

of transferring spontaneous asylum seekers to reception centres in safe countries outside the EU needs to be explored as a key instrument in reducing the incentive to migrate irregularly to Europe. Our aim must be to end the life-threatening and often fatal journeys of migrants, which leave so many of the world's already most vulnerable at the mercy of human smugglers and at risk of abuse, trafficking, rape and all manner of human suffering.

A vital element of a fair and humane asylum system is the provision of better help for more people in the regions of origin and along the migratory routes, as well as more assistance to address the root causes of irregular migration and displacement. To this end, I strongly believe in Europe building up new partnerships. In order to address both migration and climate challenges we must strengthen our cooperation with the African continent and ensure a sustainable transition.

A key to lifting Africa will be for the EU to scale-up and make better use of the EU's position as Africa's biggest aid and trade partner, and stand firm on our values through closer cooperation. The development in Africa represents opportunities: green investments and job creation from green transition, a growing middle class, innovative and talented youth and economic growth with an increasing number of African countries graduating to middle-income status. However, there are also great challenges: inequality and poverty, irregular migration and displacement, gender inequality, including SRHR, climate change, population growth and a lack of jobs and peace and stability. The EU must address both sides of the coin strategically, in order to ensure a more prosperous life, including for the growing, young population in Africa (60% of its fast-growing population being under the age of 25).

The Arctic: suddenly at the centre of world politics

In 2019 the Arctic continued moving up the global agenda. With warming in the Arctic happening at twice the rate of the average global warming, the effects of climate change are evident. The permafrost is melting and weather conditions are becoming more unpredictable, with far-reaching effects on the

environment and the people living in the Arctic. Along with rising temperatures, tensions were also on the rise.

The thawing Arctic ice entails that new shipping routes are emerging and increased accessibility, which equally creates new opportunities and new challenges. Commercial and scientific activities benefit from better accessibility, which can be a vehicle for economic growth, prosperity and development in the region.

The primary causes of climate change have their origins outside the Arctic, but have tangible effects in the Arctic. A somewhat similar dynamic can be observed concerning geopolitical developments. Worldwide great power dynamics now also influence the dynamics of the Arctic region.

As the geopolitical interest in the Arctic grows, the Arctic states are increasing their activities and military presence in the Arctic. Meanwhile, non-Arctic states are also showing increasing interest in the region. This underlines the importance of maintaining a close dialogue with both Arctic and non-Arctic states in order to ensure that the ambition of the Arctic as a low-tension region remains our common endeavour. The Arctic Council remains the primary international forum for Arctic issues and international cooperation in the Arctic.

The US is the most important ally of the Kingdom of Denmark – and an essential partner in international cooperation and trade. 2019 was of course also marked by a much-talked-about US offer regarding Greenland. The Greenlandic premier, Kim Kielsen, declared that Greenland was open for business, but not for sale. In the wake of the postponement of the US state visit to Denmark, I for my part was in close contact with the US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, reaffirming the close-knit US–Danish relations. Later in the autumn my Greenlandic colleague, Ane Lone Bagger, and I continued the constructive dialogue that the Kingdom of Denmark has with the US on Arctic and Greenlandic matters at a meeting with Secretary Pompeo in Washington, our key message being that we welcome the increased US interest in the Arctic and Greenland and that this interest can and should be to the benefit of Greenland.

Throughout 2019 Denmark and Greenland have worked closely with the US on US activities in Greenland. The cooperation includes plans to open a US consulate general in Nuuk and the exploration of possibilities for US investments in infrastructure in Greenland, with the overall objective of ensuring that US interest in and presence in Greenland will bring tangible benefits to the Greenlandic society.

The new developments in the Arctic prompt the need to increase efforts to ensure adaptation and sustainable development, and to keep the Arctic peaceful, secure and safe. This includes strengthening the partnership and cooperation within the Kingdom of Denmark. In 2019 I began the work to ensure a higher degree of involvement of the Faroe Islands and Greenland in foreign and security policy matters of particular relevance to them. For me this is a pivotal part of undertaking responsibility for the foreign and security policy of the Kingdom of Denmark. Looking ahead, an important landmark for the Kingdom of Denmark will be the new joint Arctic strategy between Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, expected to launch in early 2021.

Trade: turbulent times continue while global challenges increase

In 2019 unilateralism and protectionism unfortunately continued to darken the sky, threatening to let the rules of the jungle trump the rules of international trade.

A blatant symbol of the derailment of the multilateral trading system was the collapse of the WTO Appellate Body in December, caused by the persistent US veto against appointment of new members. Without a two-tier dispute resolution system, we risk reverting to the GATT of the 1980s, when managed trade and 'might is right' prevailed in trade dispute settlements. The EU has continued to take the lead in reforming the WTO in order to keep the organisation relevant and fit for new challenges. The EU has proposed an interim multiparty mechanism for appeals, with 15 WTO members joining recently. In close collaboration with Japan, the US and the EU are attempting to create new transatlantic momentum.

The bilateral trade dispute between the US and China continued during 2019 with new tariff hikes. A phase 1 trade agreement in January 2020 averted further escalation but did not resolve the conflict. The average level of tariffs is still significantly higher than in 2017, and fundamental disagreements remain unresolved for the next phase. In other words, the trade agreement marked a ceasefire, not lasting peace.

EU-US trade relations remained in a stalemate in 2019. Negotiations on industrial tariffs never really took off – despite negotiating mandates being in place on both sides. The EU rejected the American pressure to include agriculture in the talks, while the looming American threat of tariff hikes on cars and car parts continued to hang like the sword of Damocles over the EU. Meanwhile in the WTO case of Airbus state subsidies, the US exercised its right to impose countermeasure duties in October and in March this year, due to insufficient compliance by the four European Airbus countries. The EU has sought to build new momentum in the transatlantic relationship. Attempts to strike a mini deal with the US administration on regulatory cooperation and reduction of red tape are ongoing. Although the bilateral challenges are significant, the fundamental converging interests of the EU and the US underline the necessity of cooperation and joint action. Therefore, while still safeguarding our European interests, it is key that EU continues to look for common ground with the US, not the least in order to confront unfair trade practices on the global markets.

In 2019 the Commission rightly described China as an important cooperation partner, but also an economic competitor and a systemic rival. This perception guides the EU engagement with China, both bilaterally, e.g. in the ongoing negotiations for a comprehensive agreement on investment, and multilaterally within the WTO, in order to uphold the rules-based international order and to ensure a level playing field that eliminates unfair Chinese trade practices.

The EU continued to sustain progress in opening up markets through ambitious trade agreements, such as with Singapore, which entered into force in November 2019. A free trade deal with Vietnam in the pipeline for spring 2020 will become the EU's 70th free trade agreement. The EU and the four Mercosur countries also signed an ambitious political agreement, which aims to consolidate a strategic partnership and create significant opportunities for

trade and sustainable growth. When implementing these agreements, it will be pivotal to keep partners committed to the strong provisions made on labour rights, sanitary standards, climate and sustainability.

Continued popular support for international trade requires engagement and dialogue with citizens and stakeholders on matters of concern. For this reason, I launched a new forum on fair and sustainable trade policy, which will provide a platform for an open debate on dilemmas and issues in relation to global trade. I fervently believe that free trade is not – in and of itself – enough. Trade must also be both fair and sustainable. That should be the guiding principle of our trade policies and our economic diplomacy – and as of last year they are, at least for Danish trade policy.

Conclusion: where do we go from here?

Judging by how 2019 ended, the year that lies ahead will be no less challenging and eventful. On 27 December a rocket attack on an Iraqi military base killed an American civilian contractor and wounded US military service members as well as Iraqi personnel, triggering a direct response from the US. There is little doubt that the instability of 2019 will continue to demand international attention and action in the coming year.

Adding to the challenges in 2019, the emergency of COVID-19 has the potential to be a game changer on many levels, including in foreign policy. While it is not for this chapter on 2019 to address the COVID-19 crisis, this will affect our engagement in international affairs in 2020 and beyond. The crisis has the potential to accelerate the trends described in the beginning of this chapter: major power rivalry, pressure on the rules-based international order, anti-globalisation, and to increase instability and insecurity in the world. I believe that this also holds the opportunity for increased international cooperation in delivering answers to the crisis. An opportunity the Danish Government will use proactively to strengthen multilateralism and resilience of our societies in an era of globalisation.

While the pandemic undoubtedly will force us again to adapt to a world that is changing rapidly, it will not change the fundamental strategic priorities that guide our foreign policy. As foreign minister, I will continue to strengthen

Denmark's security engagement to ensure the safety and security of Danish citizens. I will pursue a policy to promote a fair and sustainable globalisation and promote multilateral cooperation that delivers solutions to global problems such as climate and migration as well as health, now made even more relevant by the COVID-19 crisis. The Foreign Ministry, its embassies and I will continue our tireless work to promote Danish exports, to contribute to Danish welfare and jobs. Finally, as it celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2020, the Foreign Ministry will continue its continuous adaptation and realignment to ensure that we keep abreast of our rapidly changing world.

Security and defence in an unpredictable world – turned upside down by COVID-19

Minister of Defence Trine Bramsen

At the time of writing, international responses to the spread of COVID-19 seem to have turned the world upside down. As we left 2019 behind and entered 2020, the world gradually plunged into a global crisis which by now has gone way beyond health issues, affecting livelihoods around the world. Our everyday lives have altered dramatically. Our sense of security is changed.

Whether these changes will be lasting or temporary remains unknown. Open questions and tentative assumptions persist. And any answers remain, by nature, provisional. But what we do know is that a global crisis such as the corona crisis will have an impact on the international system. On its structures and institutions. It will have an impact on the Kingdom of Denmark – beyond the enormous health and economic consequences we are already witnessing. For a small, open economy whose prosperity and safety is deeply dependent on the world around us, much is at stake.

As Minister of Defence, it is my top priority to make sure that the corona crisis does not develop into a security crisis – neither nationally nor internationally. It is of the utmost importance that we maintain all critical functions, readiness and preparedness at home, that we demonstrate our solidarity with partners and allies, and that we retain our level of ambition with regard to our contributions to international operations and missions – now and in the months to come.

In the long run we will have to consider the broader consequences of the crisis for the global order and for Denmark – including for our defence and security policy. While it is too early to draw firm conclusions, the crisis does seem to have the potential to accelerate many of the global security challenges and dynamics we have seen emerge the last decades. And this is a crucial point: The complex threats and difficult security challenges we faced before Corona hit us have not become less relevant – rather, they have become even more complex and unpredictable.

The world is more complicated and competitive than ever before. Great power competition is back with a more aggressive Russia and assertive China. The technological revolution is reshaping how we live, work, and fight. The global economic and political centre of gravity is shifting from West to East. And the prospect of cooperation framed by international law is challenged. If the rules-based international order continues to deteriorate into an older model, based on power politics and zero-sum games, small states – by definition vulnerable in a world where only might makes right – are most at risk.

The world is also becoming less stable. In the east, Russia continues its malign behaviour, challenging the norms and rules our security is built upon. In the south, military and civilian efforts to stabilise fragile states and combat terrorism have not become less relevant. In the north – as the accessibility to the Arctic as well as the geostrategic interest in the region increase – we must follow the strategic and military developments very closely. Hybrid and cyber-threats remain high, tangible and evolving. These are daunting challenges that must be faced simultaneously and in close cooperation with our partners and Allies. This is a major and costly task. But it is both important and necessary.

The rest of this chapter outlines the main strands in Danish defence and security policy in 2019. When looking ahead, there is no doubt that there will be a *before* and an *after* the coronavirus. Thus, I will conclude with a brief outlook of the possible implications of the current crisis for Danish security and defence.

Strengthening European security and transatlantic relations: unity, cohesion and solidarity

2019 marked the 70th anniversary of NATO. While many headlines on the occasion questioned whether the Alliance would endure in light of the external threats and internal pressures, NATO has demonstrated a willingness to prove the doomsayers wrong. The Alliance is now more active than ever – projecting strength and reassuring Allies. And NATO remains a cornerstone of Danish defence and security policy.

Throughout its history, NATO has endured because it adapts to each successive new challenge. Allies have continuously generated political support for the Alliance through constant conversation, even if not always cordially. While adapting to the new and ever more challenging security environment, NATO has increased its focus on deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic area and renewed its focus on collective defence. 2019 was yet another case in point. NATO must ensure that we are able to manage threats and challenges from all strategic directions. At the heart of this stand the unity, cohesion and solidarity of the Alliance across the Atlantic. The US is of key importance to European security, as is Europe for US security. Our common values – democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law – bind us together. The Transatlantic bond is strong.

Denmark is contributing to NATO to ensure we have the right forces in the right places at the right times. 2019 was no exception. We contributed with a significant number of forces to NATO's high readiness forces – and decided to contribute to the NATO Readiness Initiative – to ensure that Allies can be reinforced if needed. The ability to reinforce depends on necessary military mobility; our national support as a host nation; and the enablement of military forces crossing our borders. Tasks that Denmark is ready for.

A key element in NATO's response to a more aggressive Russia has been the establishment of the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), a 'trip-wire' function in the Baltic States and Poland. It underlines our solidarity and our shared security, and it is a clear signal that an attack on one Ally is an attack on all

Allies. Denmark participates in the eFP in Estonia with approximately 200 soldiers in the British-led, battalion-size, battle group on a continuous basis. In 2019 Denmark contributed to the Air Policing in the Baltics for the seventh time since 2004 with F-16 fighter aircraft to enforce air sovereignty over the Baltic States. Also, our contribution to NATO's deterrence and defence in the Baltic Sea region continued in 2019 with the establishment of Headquarters Multinational Division North in Latvia. Estonia, Latvia and Denmark are framework nations.

These activities are strong signals of Denmark's long-lasting strategic partnership with the Baltic States as well as our regional responsibility and commitment. And they accentuate that Denmark continues to be a core ally in NATO. The Alliance continues to be the cornerstone of Denmark's security and defence. We have shown readiness and political will to carry our fair part of the burden, both when it comes to cash, and to capabilities and contributions. The Danish Defence Agreement for 2018–2023 and the Supplementary Defence Agreement from January 2019 raise defence expenditure to 1.5% of GDP in 2023. The Defence Investment Pledge agreed at the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 will also be the premise for the next defence agreement after 2023.

In the years to come we will face new challenges, and new threats will emerge. It is of key importance in our endeavour to counter these challenges that we stand united, preserve the strong Transatlantic bond and reinforce our common values and principles, which bind us together and make us all stronger. NATO's 70th anniversary showed the enduring strength of our Alliance and the values we share.

As NATO has stepped up and reacted to the intensified threats, so too has the EU. In response to the more unpredictable security situation, the Union has increased its cooperation on security and defence significantly the last few years. It is in Denmark's interest that the EU is able to respond to the challenges which Europe faces, even though there are areas and issues where Denmark does not take part because of our defence opt-out. These challenges include the EU being able to address root causes related to terrorism, radicalisation and migratory flows, as well as building Member States' societal resistance to hybrid and cyber-threats. It also includes crisis management abroad, as the EU implements stabilising initiatives in the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa.

In 2019 the European Commission established a new Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space. Work on implementing the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) progressed, and efforts to enhance military mobility in the EU advanced. Furthermore, steps were taken in the implementation of the European Defence Fund.

NATO is the cornerstone of Denmark's security, but the Danish government supports an active role for the EU in defence and security, noting that the Union should keep a clear focus on initiatives which directly benefit its citizens. In this context, there is a potential for increased cooperation between the EU and NATO, bolstering the resilience of member states and Allies.

Terrorism, instability and migration in the world's most fragile regions: dire straits

In 2019 Denmark contributed considerably to the international efforts to fight terrorism as well as uncontrolled and irregular migration, along with efforts to stabilise some of the world's most fragile states and regions.

These are areas of key priority for the Danish government and they are addressed through a concerted effort. Substantial military contributions were deployed to Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq, the French-led Operation Barkhane in the Sahel region and the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA). These efforts will continue in 2020.

The situation in Afghanistan remained of great concern. 2019 was set to be a decisive year for Afghanistan, as political developments had the potential to position the country on a course of stability. Yet Afghanistan entered a highly uncertain 2020. Denmark supported the continued US efforts at upholding the peace agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban, as a precursor for the necessary intra-Afghan peace talks and a precondition for stability in the country. Denmark remain committed to NATO efforts in Afghanistan. We must not again let Afghanistan become an incubator for terrorism, and we must do our utmost for the future of the Afghan people who have endured so much hardship.

2019 was a turbulent year for Iraq as well. We have followed the uncertain situation concerning Iraqi leadership, civilian protests, and attacks on Coalition and Allied installations with close attention. In 2019, ISIS was brought to a fall with the collapse of their physical territory, and Iraqi security forces achieved substantial progress in their ability to fight the organisation. This stood out as a notable source of optimism last year.

Denmark has contributed to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS since 2014, primarily focusing on the training of Iraqi security forces. Looking ahead, Denmark will continue its resolute contribution to help Iraq in its fight against terrorism. In 2019 I was pleased that it could be announced that Denmark will take over command of the NATO Mission in Iraq in December 2020. This is a significant effort for a small country, and a testimony to the Danish commitment to the international fight against terrorism.

During the last few years the security situation has deteriorated in Mali and its neighbouring countries, particularly Burkina Faso and Niger. To assist international efforts to fight terrorism and stabilise the western part of the Sahel region, the Danish Parliament approved new Danish military contributions to Mali in 2019, specifically to the French-led counterterrorism mission Operation Barkhane. Since December 2019, Danish forces have transported personnel and goods in close cooperation with other European Allies in support of the mission. Additionally, it was decided to contribute to MINUSMA with a transport aircraft and an intelligence team to support the UN efforts in Mali. Denmark is also engaged in stabilisation and defence capacity building in the region, and in 2019 a Danish military advisor was deployed to Mali as a new initiative to assist in the implementation of the stabilisation activities, including training activities and support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

In 2019 Denmark continued to engage actively in peace and stabilisation activities through the implementation of multiannual programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states and regions, including Afghanistan, Ukraine and the Sahel region. These activities are funded by the Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF) which in 2019 amounted to more than DKK 500 million. In 2019 two new programmes were launched: one focused on stabilising Syria and Iraq and another on promoting maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Activities funded by the PSF range from mine action activities in Iraq to training and educational activities in Mali and advisory tasks in Ukraine. The peace and

stabilisation activities are often part of a wider and comprehensive Danish engagement launched to complement military and other efforts.

Our efforts in hotspots around the world also have the objective of mitigating uncontrolled and irregular migration, as Europe still faces enormous challenges in this regard. Mediterranean states – torn by instability – continue to be a source, recipient and transit hub for displaced people. No European country can face this challenge alone. In 2019 Denmark contributed to Frontex – the European border and coast guard agency – with substantial capacities, including a fixed wing aircraft, coastal patrol boats, a vehicle with thermal imaging, and a number of expert personnel. This effort continues in 2020 as the migratory pressure remains of concern. Denmark continues to shoulder its part of the burden, also in this area.

Spurring progress and maintaining stability and security in the Arctic

In 2019 we experienced a continued change in the Arctic. The global reshuffling of power balances accompanied by an increasing leadership vacuum have left their mark on the political security landscape. Better accessibility to the region as a result of the dramatic effects of climate change creates opportunities for extraction of natural resources, for tourism and for the intensification of scientific and commercial activity. At the same time, we are witnessing an increase in military activity.

As the geostrategic interest in the region increases, Denmark, together with our partners and our allies, follows the strategic and military developments closely. Denmark and Greenland have a close and growing cooperation with the USA in the Arctic. Russia is increasing its presence and deploying new capabilities to its northern military district. While we have only seen limited spillover in the Arctic from Russia's malign behaviour in Ukraine and elsewhere, Russian military buildup does carry with it a risk of militarisation of the region, with potential ramifications even beyond the Arctic. Access to and influence on the Arctic has come to play a role for China as well. While China's long-term interests in the region pertain to access to trading routes and resources, the Chinese military is strengthening its knowledge of the region. Moreover,

the potential risks related to large-scale investments from state and non-state actors outside our security community remain a challenge as they carry a risk of political influence when dealing with investments in strategic resources.

The Danish government's ambition is to foster growth and prosperity in the Arctic, and we remain dedicated to maintaining stability and security in the region. Most of the development in the Arctic is taking place through constructive cooperation and dialogue. This must continue. At the same time, we cannot afford to be naive: our ambition of stability and security is being challenged. We must strengthen our situational awareness and increase our presence in order to ensure stability, security and safety.

As announced by the Danish prime minister at the NATO leaders summit in December 2019, the Danish government has allocated DKK 1.5 billion to new capabilities for enhanced surveillance and presence in the Arctic and North Atlantic region. The new capabilities will enhance the situational awareness in these regions and will include better communication links, air surveillance, and utilisation of space assets.

Current developments in the Arctic undoubtedly call for an even greater commitment from Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. We must enhance cooperation and strengthen dialogue within the Kingdom of Denmark. This is a key priority for the Danish government. Mutual understanding for our shared defence and security challenges is crucial. We can only ensure our security and safety together. At the same time, we cannot reach adequate situational awareness in the Arctic by ourselves. Several of the Arctic states are facing similar challenges to us. To ensure our mutual interests, an even closer cooperation between the Arctic allies will be instrumental.

Alteration and adaptation in the Baltic Sea region

As tensions between NATO and Russia have increased, the Baltic Sea region has also been negatively affected. Russia's military exercises and build-up in the region creates a challenging environment, just as it increases the risk of miscalculations and misinterpretations and of unintended escalation. As

such, it has only been natural that Denmark has adapted and has enhanced our focus on the Baltic Sea region.

For many years Danish defence has focused on the Baltic Sea region. This is our neighbourhood. A key priority is that we contribute to collective defence in NATO, including through the reinforcement of Allies. While Denmark is not a frontline state in the Baltic Sea region as we were during the Cold War, Denmark's geographical position does shape our responsibilities and tasks in NATO as well as the expectations of our Allies and partners. This is reflected in the development of a capable and deployable mechanised infantry brigade through strengthened manning and capabilities such as more and upgraded battle tanks, ground-based air defence and more artillery. Another key element is to accommodate reinforcements arriving to and passing through Danish territory in order to reinforce Allies in a crisis situation, not least the Baltic states. This is reflected in host nation support efforts underway, including work to ensure military mobility.

In 2019 Denmark, Estonia and Latvia inaugurated the Headquarters Multinational Division North (HQ MND-N) in Latvia. As part of NATO's force structure, the purpose of HQ MND-N is to enhance planning, training and operational command and control in the Baltic Sea region. Our commitment to deterrence and defence in the region is also reflected in the continued contribution to the Headquarters Multinational Corps North East (HQ MNC-NE) together with Germany and Poland and of contributions to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia.

The challenges of a digital and interconnected world: The cyber frontier

As a highly digitally connected country, we improve our welfare by digitising aspects of our daily lives. Healthcare, energy and transportation are some of the key sectors where we increasingly benefit from digital technologies. While the societal benefits are immense, the increasing digitisation nonetheless poses a great security threat. It is crucial that we are capable of protecting ourselves in cyberspace.

A 2019 survey from the Danish Emergency Management Agency showed that cyberattacks are perceived as the number one security threat by Danes. And for good reason. The cyber-threat to Denmark is serious. This has been the reality for some time. However, it is a reality in flux: the challenges we face in and from cyberspace are constantly evolving and adapting.

Over the last year, we have witnessed cyberattacks against small as well as major Danish businesses. In addition to economic losses, an added risk from cyberattacks is the erosion of trust. Trust in our digital identities online, trust in technology, and trust in government. It is a top priority for the Danish government that this risk does not materialise. New and emerging technology is also a key focal point. Security must be the top concern in the roll-out of the new 5G technology. When it comes to critical infrastructure, it is vital that we do not risk our long-term security to achieve a short-term economic gain.

In 2019 Denmark presented its Joint Doctrine for Military Cyberspace Operations encompassing both our offensive and defensive cyber capacity. This makes Denmark one of the first countries to have a fully published doctrine on warfare in cyberspace. By publishing the doctrine, we aim to normalise the concept of cyber operations and promote the open and rule-based values that are integral to a free and secure cyberspace.

We share these values with allies and partners. In 2019, EU member states agreed on a cyber sanctions regime aimed at groups and individuals engaging in malicious cyberactivity. Furthermore, as part of a broad coalition of countries, we publicly declared our support for Georgia in response to disruptive Russian cyberactivity. Along with our allies and other likeminded countries, we will continue to hold accountable those who seek to undermine our security.

Steps towards stronger Nordic cooperation on defence

In 2019 many efforts were put into preparing for Denmark to take over the chairmanship of the Nordic defence cooperation, NORDEFECO, in 2020 following a successful Swedish chairmanship. NORDEFECO has evolved significantly over the past years responding to emerging changes in the political, security

and threat landscape. NORDEFECO continues to gain importance and to play a more prominent role in regional security and stability. The Nordic states are bound together by geography, values, culture and our common history. There is a long tradition of cooperation in the defence area. The fact that the Nordic countries face similar threats and challenges today makes strong cooperation between our countries even more important and relevant.

In 2018 the Nordic defence ministers adopted the NORDEFECO Vision 2025 outlining concrete targets for the Nordic defence cooperation in the following years ahead as well as an ambition to enhance the cooperation beyond peacetime to crisis and conflict. In 2019, I along with my fellow, Nordic, colleagues, initiated discussions on how to fulfil the ambition. These deliberations will continue during the Danish chairmanship. The objective of the discussions is not to create a new military alliance but rather to strengthen our ability to act together in different levels of conflict and crisis.

A significant result in 2019 was the establishment of a NORDEFECO crisis consultation mechanism as a tool for enhanced information-sharing and consultation between the Nordic countries in situations where regional stability, or territorial integrity or security may be threatened. An important purpose of the mechanism is to contribute to better shared situational awareness and possible joint messaging. Another noteworthy result was the decision to expand the existing NORDEFECO agreement on the use of Alternative Landing Bases (ALB) in the other Nordic countries to include armed aircraft. In 2019 an important achievement on a more practical level was the successful conducting of the Nordic exercise 'Arctic Challenge Exercise' together with the US and several other countries. It was the biggest fighter aircraft exercise in Europe in 2019 and was conducted at the most ambitious 'flag-level'.

Looking ahead, we have laid out an ambitious programme for our chairmanship in 2020, aiming both at implementing the NORDEFECO Vision 2025 even further as well as continuing to develop the ability of the Nordic countries to address and cooperate around new threats and challenges at all levels of crisis and conflict. The focus areas of our chairmanship programme include enhancing security and defence in the Baltic Sea region and in the Arctic, improving Nordic cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict, strengthening cybersecurity as well as green defence, and consolidating and strengthening the Nordic-transatlantic bond even further.

Navigating in an unpredictable world

The pressure on all Allies to deliver on the Defence Investment Pledge agreed at the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 continued through 2019. In Wales, we pledged that we would halt the decline in our defence expenditure and aim to increase it in real terms and move towards 2% of GDP. This with a view to meeting our NATO capability targets and making up NATO's capability shortfalls.

Danish defence took big steps forward in terms of meeting many of the NATO capability targets in the short term with the Defence Agreement of January 2018 and the Supplementary Agreement of January 2019. More will be done in the coming years based on the defence agreement, which is founded on broad support in our parliament. And our defence budget is not linked directly to GDP, so it will not suffer from the expected decline in GDP due to the corona crisis. Collective defence in NATO is and will remain the core task, and Danish defence is under development to play its part and contribute in important ways.

To the north, Danish defence will continue to adapt to operations in a more demanding environment in the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic. Arctic Allies have special responsibilities and roles, and must be able to monitor the increased commercial, scientific and military activities in these vast areas. We will also continue our contributions to crisis management and stabilisation operation efforts in the south, including taking over command of NATO Mission Iraq and contributing to the French-led Operation Barkhane in the Sahel.

The Danish defence will remain a modern, interoperable and deployable force with an increased ability to participate in high-end warfare, if necessary, as part of NATO's collective defence. That requires forces at high readiness, training and exercises, robustness and the ability to operate in all environments and domains along with our strategic partners, for example in the framework of the British-led Joint Expeditionary Force or the French-led European Intervention Initiative. Danish defence must remain relevant in the current and future security environment which will require continued investment, integration of new technology and, ever more importantly, the ability to recruit and retain skilled soldiers and officers.

Looking ahead to a world turned upside down

As Minister of Defence, my top priority is to ensure the safety and security of Denmark, of the Danish people and of our welfare society. The volume, the speed and the unpredictability of the threats we face, call for a steady hand at the helm. Challenging times lie ahead for our security and defence.

The corona crisis' profound societal and economic implications carry with them the potential to deepen existing conflicts and crises even further, and to expose underlying fragilities. An increase in global instability and insecurity could trigger an aggravation of terrorism, migratory flows and malicious cyber and hybrid activities. Some actors, including Russia, are exploiting the situation to serve their political and economic objectives, and to undermine the solidarity in both NATO and the EU. The crisis may also reinforce the tendency towards increasing competition and confrontation between global and regional powers, challenging multilateral institutions and global norms even further. China will most likely continue exploiting any political vacuum left by the US.

I will end by emphasising the point that it is crucial that the corona crisis does not develop into a security crisis. We must take actions to ensure that our continued efforts and hard-fought battles are not in vain. Terrorist organisations must not regain foothold; fragile states must not fall back into chaos. We must prioritise Denmark's commitment to maintaining an effective multilateral order as a global public good in its own right, rather than as a vehicle for the realisation of narrow national interests. The corona crisis has, with great clarity, underscored the need for effective global cooperation. We must secure Denmark's position in a strong European and Transatlantic relationship. Partnerships and alliances are of key importance, and it is our obligation to adapt and act accordingly. Denmark is committed to our partners and to the NATO Alliance.

And finally, we must make sure that we are at the forefront of the world we live in. This time we are facing a pandemic. We don't know what the next 'black swan' will be. We need to be alert, to take precautions, and to adapt. It will take time to recover from the crisis. It will be a major task, not least economically. But the challenges and threats we face now will not dissolve – and new ones await. We must continue to invest in our security and defence. Our readiness, preparedness, resilience and robustness is a prerequisite for us to live our

everyday lives safely in a society based on the democratic values we treasure so highly, and for us to enjoy our welfare, our freedoms and our rights. All too clearly, the corona crisis has taught us precisely that.

Chapter 3

Academic articles

Belarus in search of a new foreign policy: why is it so difficult?

Ryhor Nizhnikau and Arkady Moshes¹

Introduction

Belarusian foreign policy appears to be at a crossroads. For more than two decades it has been unquestionably Russia-centred. Despite the proclaimed multi-vectoredness, Belarus has been deepening ties and integrating with Russia in economic and security spheres. Minsk has shown sporadic interest in developing economic relations with Africa, Asia, Latin America and some European countries, but relations with the West have been antagonistic for most of the time.

By the end of 2019, however, Belarus–Russia relations had descended into open crisis. Instead of commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Union State of Belarus and Russia by means of adopting a new far-reaching integration plan, the parties revealed deep disagreements over energy and other issues. It could no longer be denied to observers that Russia had embraced a new Belarusian policy in a much more assertive and conditionality-based stance than before.

The deterioration of Russia–Belarus relations coincided with and, in part, was caused by Minsk’s attempts to seek rapprochement with the West. In February 2016 the EU suspended its sanctions imposed on the Belarusian regime in 2010, which was, formally, a response to the release of remaining political prisoners but, more importantly, also an encouragement for Belarus’s refusal to *de jure* recognise Russia’s annexation of Crimea. In 2019 Belarus and the EU finalised the visa facilitation and readmission agreement and continued

a discussion over a basic framework agreement. Belarus–US relations also received a strong impetus, which culminated in the agreement to return ambassadors, recalled back in 2008. During his visit to Minsk in February 2020, the secretary of state Mike Pompeo even offered Belarus support in its oil dispute with Russia and promised the delivery of American oil. A visa-free regime for short-term visits was introduced by Belarus for EU and US visitors. Meanwhile, internally, Belarus launched the so-called ‘soft Belarusianisation’ policy – a set of minor identity-building projects and initiatives to promote Belarusian language and culture.

In the wake of Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine and the subsequent worsening of the Russian–Western relations, it was widely argued that Minsk’s bargaining position had improved. Latvian foreign minister, Edgars Rinkēvičs, claimed that a ‘window of opportunity’ had emerged in relations between the EU and Belarus, specifically underlining the latter’s ‘proactive position’ in Ukraine peace talks. Barton argued that ‘Western leaders want Belarus to switch its allegiance’², while after the visit of Belarusian foreign minister Vladimir Makei to London, Grant noted that ‘Belarus–EU relations have never been better’³. *Minsk Barometer*, a monitor of Belarusian foreign and security policies, recorded steady improvement of ties. Belarusian commentators have consistently explained the benefits for the West of supporting Belarus, stressed the need to strengthen ties⁴ and rejected the notion that Belarus–EU relations had reached a ceiling.⁵

This article analyses the evolution of Belarusian foreign policy since the early 2000s, focusing on the developments in Belarusian–Russian and Belarusian–Western relations. While the article underscores the dynamics of Belarus–Russia relations as one indicator of country’s ability to make foreign policy choices, it explores whether Belarus has been changing tack in its relations with the West since 2014. Specifically, it addresses the puzzle of Belarusian foreign policy’s inability to fundamentally revise the status quo in Belarus–West relations.

A question is raised about the effective limits of Belarus’s freedom for geopolitical manoeuvre. Should one now view Belarus as a new regional security entrepreneur and a ‘neutral’ power, exercising a strategy of ‘balancing’, ‘hedging’ or ‘wedging’, or, on the contrary, expect it to become Crimea 2.0, eventually to be incorporated into Russia?

The article explains why no breakthrough towards a sustainable partnership with the West has been achieved so far. It is argued that Belarus's 'new' foreign policy is constrained by a set of interconnected fundamental factors. First, Belarus is deeply structurally dependent on Russia in economic, security and cultural spheres. Second, these dependences are institutionalised, which makes Belarusian foreign policy even more path dependent. Third, although Belarus currently realises the need for and potential benefits of interaction with the West, it views the latter primarily as a tool to reduce economic dependence on Russia and ease pressure from Russia. At the same time, it rejects the Western, value-based, approach and excludes the possibility of economic reforms and political liberalisation, which are pre-conditions for any large-scale economic engagement with the West. Finally, even though Belarusian and Western geopolitical interests may currently converge to a significant extent, the worldview of the present Belarusian leadership remains almost identical to that of Russia, which *inter alia* includes mistrust of the West and a perception of the West as being in decline.

Traditionally, Belarus has been at the fringes of the foreign policies of Nordic countries, overshadowed by the Baltic states, and has been under-studied in academic and policy literature. Yet, Belarus's proximity to the Baltic Sea region and its strategic location between Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine and Russia currently increase its significance for stability and security of the region and this demands closer attention to developments in the country.

Understanding Belarusian foreign policies and behaviour: a theoretical aspect

Traditionally, foreign policies are understood through interests and instrumentality on the one hand, and common values, culture and identity on the other. The foreign policy literature pays particular attention to multiple asymmetries (economic, military, diplomatic and institutional) between powers, to how they structure relationships and affect interests on both sides (Womack 2016; Long 2017), as well as to how they provoke smaller states' foreign policy reactions (Lobell et al. 2015).

Three major paradigms – neorealist, institutionalist and domestic-level – explain small state foreign policies, their persistence and/or change. Domestic-level explanations focus on state-society relations and analyse how state regime type, political system, identity and culture, oligarchs and other veto groups and elite perceptions shape state choices (Moravcsik 1997). Neorealist and institutionalist approaches both primarily focus on ‘differences in capabilities’ between states, underlining the role of material and normative considerations. Neorealist approaches focus on interests and argue that smaller states are primarily driven by the distribution of power (material resources) in the international system (Browning 2006). They analyse characteristics of the system as well as its constraints and incentives (Lobell et al. 2015), including how a basic set (constellation) of relationships to the strong powers drives smaller state behaviour (Mouritzen 1994; cf. Browning 2006: 671). Institutional accounts focus on formal and informal rules, including shared values and common governance institutions. They show how state behaviour is shaped by norms, values and common histories, rather than material considerations (Keohane 1989; Flesmes & Lobell 2015). From this perspective, small states can act as norm entrepreneurs, persuading states to adopt new norms and developing their power through image and perception-building (Steinsson & Thorhallsson 2017; Thorhallsson 2012; Ulriksen 2007).

Balancing and bandwagoning are presented as two major strategies. While balancing policies aims to benefit from manoeuvring between the great powers in a conflict environment, bandwagoning is a cooperation-based policy, characterised by accommodation to and compliance with the regional hegemon (Walt 1985; Browning 2006). Furthermore, the response to new challenges may include internal balancing with the creation of new military capabilities, and external balancing through the formation of military alliances (Waltz 1979). However, besides these ‘extremes’, a number of other in-between strategies are tested, including ‘hedging’ and ‘wedging’. Wedging aims to increase leverage by exploiting disagreements between competing powers (Gnedina 2015), while hedging aims to proactively develop new means for achieving own policy goals (Koga 2018) and, specifically, to avoid entrapment. Variations of these strategies described in the literature include institutional balancing, soft balancing, indirect balancing, freeriding and accommodation (see for example, Catalinac 2010).

The literature on foreign policy in the post-Soviet space extensively discusses existing asymmetries to explore the strategies of small states regarding their military, economic and diplomatic capabilities vis-à-vis both the EU and Russia. For example, Gnedina (2015) discusses how foreign policies of West-oriented post-Soviet states, namely Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, were driven by balancing considerations against a threat coming from Russia. However, Dragneva and Wolczuk (2016) explained Ukraine's policies through existing economic dependencies on Russia. The factors of domestic elites (Moshes & Nizhnikau 2018), identity and regional divisions (Nizhnikau & Moshes 2020) have also been taken into account to explain foreign policies. Russia-oriented states follow the opposite strategy, pursuing security and economic interests by integrating, but they also attempting to balance dependence through cooperation with the West.

Belarusian foreign policy behaviour can be viewed as an attempt at diplomatic and/or economic 'hedging' (Meister 2018), 'wedging'⁶ in the Russia–West conflict or 'balancing'⁷ vis-à-vis Russia in times of rising asymmetry in Belarus–Russia relations. Yet these strategies have a limited capacity to explain Belarusian foreign policy. Belarus supports some and rejects others of Moscow's initiatives (Meister 2018). While arguably pursuing strategic 'hedging' by increased participation in (previously ignored) international forums and developing ties with China, it rejects deeper engagement. It also opposes even minor steps towards political liberalisation such as suspending the death penalty, and openly resists the economic reforms necessary to gain new resources and develop alternative trade and financial opportunities in the West. Similarly, Minsk's potential 'wedging' strategy in the conflict between Russia and the EU is undermined by its continued reliance on the alliance with Russia and mistrust of the West. The government policy avoids crossing the red lines in security and political relations with Moscow. While it has pursued some internal balancing by strengthening its own military capabilities, at the same time it has continued to deepen security ties with Moscow. Overall, Belarus has not shown any signs of readiness to go beyond declaratory demarches against Moscow despite growing asymmetries and diverging interests.

Who calls the shots: Russian actions and Belarusian reactions

The key point to bear in mind when analysing Belarusian foreign policy of the last two decades is that its main task has been to preserve, to the extent possible, the model of Russian–Belarusian relations which had emerged by the end of the 1990s. Within this model, Minsk agrees to trade geopolitical loyalty at large and certain elements of sovereignty for massive economic subsidies, while maintaining a significant degree of autonomy on specific matters. Correspondingly, it is Russian actions aimed at revising the status quo that trigger a Belarusian response – not the other way around – and affect its stance vis-à-vis the West.

In this regard, three distinct periods of Belarus–Russia relations can be identified since the early 2000s. They differ from each other in accordance with the growing degree of Russian regional assertiveness and specific demands upon Belarus, and are marked by increasing Belarusian dependence on Russia and by the gradual loss of Belarus’s bargaining power and ability to effectively apply contestation strategies.

Bargaining with Putin in the 2000s

A Belarus–Russia alliance emerged in late 1990s and deepened during the 2000s. The treaty on the Russian–Belarusian Union State, signed in December 1999, was followed by a number of comprehensive bilateral and multilateral security and economic initiatives, which institutionalised Belarus–Russia cooperation in military, security and economic affairs. Agreements committed the parties to defend each other, to create common migration and economic spaces and to coordinate foreign policies. In return for Belarus’s legal commitment to bilateral and multilateral integration initiatives, Russia provided economic support, which played an important role in stabilising the regime of Aleksander Lukashenko by sheltering it from Western pressure and sanctions imposed for rigging elections and repressing political opponents. Belarus actively bandwagoned Russia in the international arena, including adopting a negative stance towards EU and NATO enlargement and the NATO campaign against Yugoslavia, but it maintained room for manoeuvre in bilateral relations, which allowed occasional defiance of Moscow’s initiatives.

After Putin became Russia's president, however, Moscow immediately stated its intention to go further in bilateral reintegration. As early as 2002, Russian president Vladimir Putin proposed to Belarus that it could enter Russia as six separate subjects of the Russian Federation. Proposals for economic and political integration, including a common currency and the sale of some of the country's strategic enterprises to Russian companies, were regularly made to Minsk throughout the 2000s. Belarus's refusal to integrate politically, as well as repeated violations of economic deals, sparked multiple bilateral conflicts, especially in the energy field. During the 2004 and 2007 gas conflicts Russia tried to 'discipline' its ally by cutting the energy subsidies. Yet, Minsk was still able to secure acceptable compromises and cherry-pick in terms of implementing agreements. It apparently preserved a noticeable degree of self-confidence in its dealings with Moscow. It is noteworthy that during that time Belarusian–Western relations also remained conflictual. For instance, in early 2008 Belarus expelled the US ambassador and ten US diplomats from the country and forced the US embassy to reduce its staff to a minimum.

The Russian–Georgian military conflict of 2008 signalled to Minsk that the rules of the game in the post-Soviet space might be changing. Belarus chose to distance itself from Russia and refused to follow Russia's suit in recognising the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia – apparently against Moscow's expectations. Bilateral tensions deepened. Belarus accused Russia of financing the opposition and effectively suspended the realisation of several Russian security initiatives, such as the unified air defence system and CSTO's Collective Rapid Reaction Force. In turn, in January 2010 Russia halted oil supplies to Belarusian refineries, introduced a 100% duty on oil exports to Belarus, banned milk imports and blocked the disbursement of a US\$500 million loan. President Lukashenko decided not to attend bilateral summits and demonstratively left the country on the eve of (then Russian prime minister) Putin's arrival in Belarus to participate in a meeting of the Union State's Council of Ministers in March 2010.

To balance growing Russian pressure and the increase its bargaining power, Belarus actively engaged with the West. Normalisation of relations with the West, starting with the EU, quickly followed. In May 2009 Belarus joined the EU's new flagship initiative, the EU Eastern Partnership, which offered deeper ties and some possibilities for incremental integration with the EU to six post-Soviet countries. In April 2010, in his annual address to the parliament,

Aleksander Lukashenko praised the crucial assistance that the EU and the West had offered to withstand Russian pressure. The IMF issued US\$3.5 billion in loans to Belarus in 2009 and in November 2010 proposed to further increase the support. High-profile Western politicians, including the foreign ministers of Poland and Germany, Radoslaw Sikorski and Guido Westerwelle, visited Minsk.

However, arguably, this phase of interaction with the EU was still only an element of bargaining with Russia and not an attempt at balancing. It helped Belarus to negotiate a deal with Moscow, including over energy. Restarted discounted oil supplies alone offered Belarus an annual US\$4 billion subsidy. The December 2010 presidential elections in Belarus, which culminated in arrests and trials of prominent opposition figures and thus caused a new wave of Western sanctions, put a logical end to the period.

Transition from bargaining to institutionalised dependence (2011–2014)

The rift with the West exacerbated Belarus's worst economic crisis in its history, which further increased its dependence on Russia and created new asymmetries in the bilateral relationship. As the IMF refused to offer Minsk a new programme in 2011, Russian loans became the only realistic option. In 2011–2015 Belarus borrowed US\$8 billion from Moscow, which came with a set of strings attached. Moscow conditioned its aid with, among other things, the request to sell state assets worth \$7.5 billion in 2011–13. As a result, in June 2011 the Belarusian government sold Beltransgaz, its gas pipeline system, to Russia's Gazprom for \$2.5 billion.⁸

A qualitatively new development was a deepening institutionalisation of Belarus's dependence on Russia. The Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, which harmonised customs rules and formally deprived Belarus of foreign trade sovereignty, started to operate fully in 2012. Later on, Belarus and Russia engaged in launching the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which came into being in 2014 and, unlike the largely declaratory Union State, implied a stricter implementation discipline. Belarus, together with Kazakhstan, was able to influence the outcome of negotiations on the institutional design of the union and, importantly, to ensure that the EAEU would not become a vehicle for political reintegration of the post-Soviet space around Russia. But the question of whether, in principle, Belarus might be willing to stay outside the union was

not even asked. However, in return Minsk continued to obtain the benefits it sought. Besides new loans, privileged oil and gas pricing was maintained. In addition, Moscow provided a \$10 billion credit line to build a nuclear power plant in Belarus.

Avoiding entrapment after 2014

After Russia's annexation of Crimea a new shock, a stronger and much more protracted one than in 2008, was felt in Minsk. The rules of the game in the post-Soviet space were changed once again and formal recognition of territorial integrity of a state by Russia was no longer a guarantee of the inviolability of borders. That caused serious concerns in Minsk and made it take a middle ground both concerning the Russia–Ukraine conflict per se and the Russian–Western reciprocal sanctions. Eventually it paved the way towards a political rapprochement between Belarus and the West.

However, in the eyes of Moscow this must have meant that Belarus had failed the 'ally test' and bilateral trust was finally ruined. A new approach did not take long to crystallise. It was aimed at guaranteeing the necessary degree of Belarus loyalty and political proximity to Russia while decreasing the level of subsidies and could be dubbed a 'same for less' relation.

This became evident already during the energy conflict of 2016–2017. In spring 2016 Belarus refused to pay the \$132 per 1000 m³ (tcm) of gas, due in accordance with a 2011 intergovernmental agreement and unilaterally decided that \$73 per tcm was the right price. In response Russia cut oil deliveries to Belarus by one third. Russia also imposed restrictions on Belarusian imports: meat and dairy products primarily. Moreover, Moscow suspended tranches of the Eurasian Development Bank's \$2 billion loan earmarked for Belarus for 2016–18.

Eventually, Belarus largely succumbed to the Russian terms – perhaps, for the first time in two decades not being offered a real compromise. A new gas deal, signed in 2017, symbolically lowered the price to \$129 and \$127 per tcm for 2018 and 2019 respectively. Minsk also signed the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union, which it had refused to sign in December 2016. The gas price for 2020, again set at \$127 per tcm, does not imply any concessions either (especially taking into account universally falling fossil fuel prices) and is very

far from Minsk's desire to receive gas at the same prices as the neighbouring Russian region of Smolensk. Importantly, the contracts are short-term.

Another challenge for Belarus is linked with the ongoing 'tax manoeuvre' in the Russian oil industry, which will remove the very possibility of tax-free Russian oil supplies to Belarus at an estimated cost of up to \$10 billion in 2019–24. At the time of writing (March 2020), Minsk has failed to negotiate any compensation.

The new model, which conditioned economic support with further real and not rhetorical integration, was presented in the so-called 'Medvedev ultimatum'. Speaking in the Belarusian city of Brest in December 2018, the then Russian prime minister Dmitry Medvedev outlined two scenarios for Belarus–Russia relations. The continued status quo would eventually deprive Belarus of its privileged economic status. Belarus would receive increased support from Moscow only if it agreed to fully implement the Union Treaty of 1999 with its far-reaching integration clauses, including single currency and common fiscal policy with Russia and, conceivably, supranational political institutions.

During 2019 a detailed framework for achieving deeper integration between the two countries was being negotiated. Out of 31 roadmaps, 30 were officially confirmed as ready but then the process was stalled, apparently over the most difficult clauses. In view of domestic developments in Russia (adoption of a constitutional amendment allowing Vladimir Putin to seek re-election in 2024) Moscow's immediate motivation towards pushing through political integration with Belarus is now likely to subside, but that by no means implies a renewed interest in unconditional subsidising of Belarus. In these circumstances, interaction with the West will remain a necessity for Belarus.

Drivers of Belarusian foreign policy

Another question is whether Belarus has the capacity to implement a balancing, wedging or hedging strategy. Analysing the structural dependence of Belarus on Russia, on the one hand, and a value gap, mutual distrust and negative 'institutional memory' between Belarus and the West, on the other, this section will argue and explain how these factors narrow the potential for an application of contestation strategies and make them too costly for the regime.

Dependence on Russia

Structural dependence on Russia is the key driver of Belarusian foreign policy. Belarus depends on Russian energy subsidies, access to the Russian markets and Russian financial support. The IMF estimated Russian economic subsidies to Belarus at US\$100 billion in 2005–2015 alone. For a country of 9.5 million people with a GDP of some US\$60 billion (in 2018), which experienced severe economic difficulties, Russian subsidies are a crucial factor that allows the ruling regime to keep the national economy afloat and maintain the social contract with the population. In 2019 Russia accounted for 49.2% of Belarus' total trade (41.2% of total exports and almost 56% of imports).⁹ The European Union, in turn, accounted for only one fifth of Belarus's external trade. Russia also accounts for 38% of Belarusian state debt. Belarus owes \$7.3 billion to the Russian state, besides commercial loans and the above-mentioned \$10 billion credit line for the nuclear power plant.

Second, Belarus is culturally closely attached to Russia. Official Belarusian nation-building has been based on Soviet symbols. An emphasis on common values, common history and common language with Russia was a cornerstone of Belarusian official ideology for decades, together with the legacy of the Great Patriotic War and the unity of Slavic peoples. In late 2016 surveys revealed that 74% of respondents considered themselves to be close to Russians, 71% named Russian as their main language of communication, and 65% approved of the alliance with Moscow (Moshes & Nizhnikau 2019). Soft Belarusianisation policies (minor support of Belarusian culture and language), introduced recently, stumble upon a lack of consistent state support and are mostly carried out as small-scale, apolitical projects by civil society. The promised teaching in schools of history and geography in the Belarusian language did not start.

Ideological proximity worked as leverage for Belarus in the 2000s. Growing asymmetry in economic ties was balanced by Minsk's ability to present itself as a driving force of integration processes in the post-Soviet space, a spiritual cradle of Eastern Orthodox civilization and a defender of the 'Russian World' during times when Russia sought close partnership with the West. After 2014 Moscow stripped Belarus of this ideological claim, which strengthened the Kremlin's capability to exploit the already shaped cultural preferences within large segments of Belarusian society. Dominance of Russian media in the

Belarusian media space further facilitated the dissemination of Russian messages.

Third, Belarus and Russia are full-fledged military allies, with a high degree of institutionalisation of their security and military cooperation, ongoing legal and technical approximation, and joint command structures and infrastructure. Moscow and Minsk operate a regional air defence system and jointly protect the bilateral Union State's airspace. Beside large-scale 'West' exercises that take place every two years, different military branches, such as air defence, the air forces and special units, hold regular joint training. Overall, Belarus and Russia officially hold over 40 military exercises and numerous trainings every year.

In addition, their military doctrines are closely aligned. The new military doctrine Belarus adopted in 2016 emphasises defence ties with Moscow, and common interests and threat perceptions.¹⁰ A Union State military doctrine is yet to be finally adopted, but the draft is based on military doctrines of both states and primarily addresses such new threats and challenges as 'hybrid wars' and West-instigated regime change.¹¹

Mutual mistrust of the West

In contrast to Belarus–Russia relations, the West-Belarus relationship has been undermined by mutual mistrust. The mistrust of the ruling Belarusian elite is based on two interrelated factors. First, it views the Western liberal system as antagonistic and its policy as aimed at bringing about regime change in Belarus. In multiple pronouncements, Alexander Lukashenko has accused the West of funding the opposition and even of training the militants.

Second, the Western policies are seen as hypocritical. Lukashenko consistently accuses the EU of 'double standards' and mistreatment. In 2009 he noted 'Why do you not require Russia to break the law, because they have even tougher legislation? Why do you proceed from double standards? [I]f we had such resources as Russia or Kazakhstan, then we would be treated differently'.¹² The regime and its commentators regularly blame the West for its failure to provide promised assistance and investment.

In turn, the West does not trust Belarusian authorities because of their close relations with Moscow. Belarus is perceived in the West not as a neutral actor

but rather as Russia's military ally and is reportedly described as a 'single military whole' with Russia by NATO decision-makers.¹³

Lack of mutual trust has been reinforced by a long-term near absence of contacts between the officials at various levels. Until Lukashenko's visit to Italy in 2016, he had not made any official visits to the EU countries for 14 years. It then took another three years before he visited Austria in 2019. MEPs and Member States' parliament members did not recognise the Belarusian parliament from 1996 until 2016 and refrained from visiting the country. After the 2019 parliamentary elections, the EU re-established its non-recognition of the Belarusian parliament due to electoral irregularities¹⁴. Because of this non-recognition Belarusian parliamentarians could not participate in the work of Euronest – the inter-parliamentary forum for cooperation between the EU and countries of the Eastern Partnership. Military contacts with NATO and neighbouring NATO members were also restricted until 2015.

Even occasional Belarusian diplomatic achievements such as the organisation of the high-level Eastern Partnership meeting in Minsk on 4-5 October 2019 with the scheduled participation of the EU high representative for foreign affairs, Federica Mogherini and the foreign ministers of Lithuania and Poland are nullified by the regime's erratic behaviour. At the event in question Aleksander Lukashenko cancelled his bilateral meeting with Mogherini at the last moment, so that she had to cancel the whole visit to Belarus. In a similar fashion, President Lukashenko cancelled his participation in the Munich Security Conference in 2019 due to a last-moment invitation of Vladimir Putin to extend his stay as a guest in Sochi.

Reluctance to reform

Belarusian interest in the West primarily lies in the economic sphere, in seeking potential financial and trade benefits. However, EU financial assistance is traditionally conditioned on economic reforms (earlier – also on expectations of internal political liberalisation), which the Belarusian president finds unacceptable. His economic vision, in contrast, is based on Soviet ideas and includes disdain for private ownership and market economy (see Moshes & Nizhnikau 2019). For Lukashenko, the raising of tariffs, privatisation and restructuring of state enterprises requested by the IMF are simply wrong: 'I am more and more convinced that we need to stop all bankruptcies and fuss

about anti-crisis managers. Predominantly, these enterprises will be plundered, stolen, and they will cease to exist'.¹⁵ At the same time, the Belarusian leadership fears that market reforms would be painful for the population and would undermine its power base. All in all, any reforms should not change the existing socioeconomic model.

As a result, neither the EU nor Western financial institutions are willing to offer Belarus significant economic assistance. Despite several missions during 2015–2018, the International Monetary Fund officials left the country without an agreement with the government. Belarus only receives small project assistance from the EU, EBRD and the World Bank. This absence of financial assistance, in turn, only reaffirms Minsk's mistrust of the West.

Decreasing dependence on Russia would require taking drastic measures, which the regime is not willing to do. Furthermore, the personalist system makes policymaking totally Lukashenko-centred and even minor policy changes depend on his approval. As a result, no substantial discussions take place within the government and in the society over key issues. Even when the relevant authority formulates a policy (such as the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic), they are quickly overturned by the president. Outside the regime, there are no strong elite groups which could offer an alternative.

External context

Mistrust and differences over principles are further aggravated by the West's lack of strategy and unity towards Belarus and the EU's general weakness as a geopolitical actor. The EU regional ambitions are scaled down as compared with two or even just one decade ago, and Brussels does not seem to see the Belarusian issue as an urgent one. The EU is seemingly lost in formulating what to do after normalisation has been achieved. Even though the EU's new policy in the Eastern Neighbourhood downplays the significance of values and refocuses the efforts on building resilience of Eastern partners, it fails to articulate mechanisms for addressing Belarusian structural deficiencies, including its excessive dependence on Russia. In the absence of new funding opportunities, the West also largely pays lip service only to Belarus's security initiatives, such as 'Helsinki-2', and its self-promotion as a mediator and 'donor of stability and security' in the region.

Belarus in response expresses its irritation over the lack of tangible results of interaction. In his April 2016 address to the parliament, Lukashenko pointed to the EU's inability to go beyond declarations describing Belarus' current stage of relations with the West as *govorilnya* – 'a talking shop' (Moshes 2016). In May 2019 he refused to attend the jubilee summit of the Eastern Partnership in Brussels.

Meanwhile, Belarus's regional political ties remain weak. Unlike Ukraine, which fostered numerous allies and advocates in the EU among Central European and Baltic states, Minsk antagonised several of its neighbours over the years. Minsk for a long time was idiosyncratic towards Poland, as Warsaw was seen as one of the drivers of the anti-Lukashenko policies in the West and indeed hosted opposition and civil society activists exiled from Belarus. Belarus damaged its ties with Lithuania over the construction of a nuclear power plant on the Lithuania border. Only Belarus–Latvia relations are, as of now, conflict-free. It wasn't until after 2016 that Belarus intensified contacts with CEE countries, and even held the presidency of the Central European Initiative (CEI) in 2017.

Minsk's relations with Nordic countries suffer from similar problems. Besides Sweden, which was actively involved in democratisation and human rights violations in Belarus, there was little interest in promoting political and economic ties and a lack of policies that would go beyond the support of the EU's general line. The Nordic Council also made little effort, even though it was one of the key supporters of the European Humanitarian University, a Belarusian university in exile. After the 2010 elections, relations with Nordic states deteriorated significantly, which peaked with the closure of the Swedish Embassy upon the demand of Minsk.

After 2014 contacts were re-established. Swedish foreign minister Ann Linde underlined that there is a need for 'a dialogue with Belarus if we want to influence the development of events, its development in a democratic direction. The best way is to meet and talk'. During the joint visit to Minsk of foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland, Ann Linde and Pekka Haavisto respectively, Lukashenko expressed his interest in expanding cooperation with the Nordic countries. However, the limitations are, once again, obvious on both sides. While pursuing the EU general line, both the Swedish and the Finnish diplomats emphasised the importance of democratic principles and human rights as a precondition

for strengthening ties. In response, Lukashenko indirectly accused the West of efforts to undermine his regime: 'I told them [*foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland*]: do not give them [*opposition*] money. You give money, and they buy cars, build houses. [...] We see all this and what we do not see, the Russians will tell us, especially where this money is coming from. Usually it comes through Lithuania and Poland, with Americans and Germans financing'.¹⁶

Unlike the EU, China is seen as a viable alternative for Minsk and a natural target of a 'hedging' strategy. Since the 2000s Belarus has been actively promoting economic, educational and cultural cooperation with China. China was presented as Belarus's 'best friend'. In 2009 Belarus was granted dialogue partner status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. In 2013 Belarus joined the Belt and Road Initiative and in 2015, during a Xi Jinping state visit to Minsk described as 'historic' by the Belarusian side, Belarus and China signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and a joint declaration on the further development and deepening of a comprehensive strategic partnership. Belarus attracted some Chinese investments (including some \$400 million into the Great Stone industrial park) and actively borrows money from Beijing, which overall holds a fifth of its state debt. Aleksander Lukashenko and Belarusian top state and military officials regularly visit China. Furthermore, Belarusian analysts maintain that 'Belarus, for Beijing, [...] continues to remain an exceptional partner, including for ideological considerations, which can be capitalised upon in the future as a geopolitical factor'.¹⁷ The two countries are also developing military ties, including cooperation on the Multiple Launch Rocket System Polonez, and they carry out regular joint military exercises.

However, trade and economic relations remain unbalanced and do not suit Belarus fully. China's economic assistance is not politically conditioned, but it is not always financially beneficial. In 2019 bilateral trade reached US\$4 billion but Belarusian exports to China were only US\$608 million. China opened its markets to Belarusian food exports, but it does not present a full alternative to the Russian market and is mostly interested in potassium imports. Chinese credits are often bound, and for this reason are not fully used by the Belarusian side. According to the Belarusian National Bank analysis, only one third of the US\$16 billion credit line opened by the Export-Import Bank of China and China Development Bank in 2009-10 was used, despite a crisis and a need for money (Gruzinskaya 2019: 69). Out of a new US\$7 billion credit line opened in 2015, Belarusian companies borrowed barely a half, and according to the

then deputy prime minister, Vladimir Semashko, even that was done 'very reluctantly'.¹⁸ Only the Export-Import Bank of China offers discounted interest rates while Belarus's constant requests to lower the interest rates overall are not met (Gruzinskaya 2019: 70). Some high-profile projects, like the modernisation of the cement plants and Svetlohorsk pulp and paper mill, met with criticism from Minsk concerning the quality of the workforce and equipment as well as the unfair terms of Chinese investment programmes.

Finally, while China makes no political and economic demands on the Belarusian regime, it offers no political support vis-à-vis Russia. For China, Belarus is a secondary political partner, as it is not party to any Chinese regional initiatives to promote trade and investment in Central and Eastern Europe, such as the '17+1' and, objectively, is only a minor economic partner. Minsk has only potash and support in the UN to offer, which are of limited value to Beijing.¹⁹ Russia, in turn, is a crucial partner and it is far from evident that China would even hypothetically agree to jeopardise its relations with Russia over Belarus. As a result, while Chinese loans can offer temporary shelter from Moscow's pressure, this money does not provide a viable economic, political or security alternative for Belarus.

Conclusions and policy implications

This article analyses the evolution of Belarusian foreign policy. It discusses the qualitative rearrangement of Belarus–Russia relations after the annexation of the Crimea and addresses the puzzle of Belarusian foreign policy's inability to fundamentally revise the status quo in Belarus–West relations. The rapid deterioration of the Belarus–Russia relationship raised questions about its future and Belarus's ability to balance (internally and externally), hedge or resort to intra-alliance opposition vis-à-vis Russia. The ongoing bilateral energy disputes provoked Minsk's strong disagreement with Russia's new policies and a search for new economic and energy alternatives to Moscow, including in the West.

This article shows that these developments are not fully explained by dominant approaches to Belarusian foreign policy built on key theories of small state foreign policies as well as intra-alliance behaviours. Belarus has not fully

pursued any of the foreign policy strategies (wedging, balancing, hedging or variants thereon), which could hypothetically offer an opportunity to avoid entrapment and extract benefits from great power rivalries at the times of Russia–West tension. Moreover, the policy hardly addressed the country's domestic vulnerabilities, which would be necessary to restore, even partially, its bargaining power.

To explain this puzzle, this article shows how Russo-centrism has been driving Belarusian foreign policy under President Lukashenko and suggests to primarily look at drivers of Belarusian foreign policy, which emerged as an outcome of choices made by the Belarusian government during the 2000s and which impose considerable limitations on its actions today.

The article outlines several main factors. The key driver is Belarus's comprehensive structural dependence on Russia, which has deepened steadily. Belarusian economy, finances and trade are strongly attached to Russia, Belarusian security and military policies are Russia-oriented and Belarusian society and its cultural preferences are under the strong influence of Moscow and exhibit a high commonality of values and attitudes. Importantly, after 2014 Belarus was, to a large extent, deprived of much of its leverage over Russia, as it failed to reaffirm its military importance as a Russian ally to the Kremlin and Russian public opinion and lost its status as a primary defender of the 'Russian World' along with the image of being a leading force for integration in the post-Soviet space.

Institutionalisation of bilateral integration made Belarusian foreign policy even more path dependent. Besides bilateral initiatives at sectoral levels, including military, security, migration and others, Belarus committed itself to Russia-led multilateral platforms, such as the Eurasian Economic Union and CSTO. As a result, any policies contesting Russia became extremely costly and would require drastic domestic change.

Second, the Belarusian ruling elite deeply mistrusts the West, its values and principles, and considers it to be an unreliable partner and a declining power, which constantly violates its own principles. For Minsk, it is still difficult to fully grasp how the West functions and, in particular, how a small country (like Lithuania, for example) can block a common EU policy. This only increases

Belarus' perception of the West as hypocritical and 'toothless'. As a result, although Belarus pursues closer ties with the West, it remains suspicious of the Western agenda.

Subsequently, due to distrust and the rejection of the Western, value-based, approach, Belarus is extremely reluctant to initiate any of the West-advocated reforms. It views them as potentially destabilising and harmful for the survival of the regime, practically a precursor to regime change. Belarus views interaction primarily as a tool to lower economic dependence on Russia. However, since economic reforms and political liberalisation are primary conditions for any large-scale assistance, this perspective restricts the extent of the Western engagement with Belarus, which causes occasional rhetorical eruptions against the West from Minsk.

Finally, the West lacks a Belarusian strategy. On the one hand, the EU ambitions towards Belarus are not on any significant scale and the Belarusian issue is not viewed as an urgent one. In this regard, the revised ENP policy, the downplaying of values and the focus on resilience have facilitated normalisation between Belarus and the West. On the other hand, the EU has profound difficulties in identifying its further steps after the normalisation has been achieved and the overall goals of its 'critical engagement' with the Belarusian regime. As a result, the EU policies currently pursue mutually exclusive objectives, which do not even theoretically aim to address Belarusian structural deficiencies.

Furthermore, Belarus seems to prefer China to the West. China, with its ideologically 'friendly' political and economic model, does not set any political conditions to its assistance. It is also perceived as a power that can be an alternative to Russia and whose position Russia will not ignore, compared to that of the West. Yet Beijing's support also comes at a price. It sets economic conditions, which are often economically unviable for Minsk. Beijing is also not ready to offer Belarus sufficient economic support to balance the dependence on Moscow.

These factors will continue to define Belarusian foreign policy and establish its limits for manoeuvre. While geopolitical calculations will push the sides towards maintaining the new status quo, the structural conditions will prevent further progress and limit Belarusian policy options as before.

In these circumstances, where the West's choices are limited and its 'pragmatic' engagement with Belarus is built on internally conflicting grounds, the way to proceed is to address the context rather than take a diplomatic line as such. The long-term strategy can be built on several elements. First, while continuing normalisation and intensification of bilateral contacts with the regime, the West should clearly outline a set of material benefits and conditions under which they can be obtained. At present concepts of (state and society) resilience, 'more for more', negative conditionality (sanction regimes) and 'critical engagement' are simultaneously proclaimed and utilised unevenly by different EU actors. Unlike Moscow's offers to Minsk, which are straightforward, Western policies and benefits are not clear and provoke uncertainty. This should change and be replaced with a transparent incentive mechanism. Even if the regime continues to reject the conditions in the mid-term, the offer should be on the table to enhance the lobbying potential of small pro-reform groups among the Belarusian business and political elites.

Second, political, economic and military contacts should be maintained and expanded to alleviate the problem of mutual mistrust. By socialising with their peers, Belarusian elites will better understand the mindset and decision-making processes and procedures of their Western colleagues. The Eastern Partnership can serve as one of the possible platforms for this and thus should be revitalised to generate contacts, regional synergies and real partnerships between regional and national authorities.

Finally, and most importantly, the EU should foster and promote societal changes. As Belarusian society modernises and becomes more open, it demands change, more rights, freedoms and opportunities. Yet, while it increasingly rejects the existing Belarusian political and economic system, it lacks opportunities and alternative visions, since pro-regime and pro-Russian forces monopolise resources and occupy the cultural and media spaces. In this regard, the EU should identify groups for change within Belarus, engage with them and facilitate their work in the country, if need be protecting them from possible pressure from the regime. This task, in particular, will require attention to carefully select the counterparts within Belarusian civil society in order to avoid previous mistakes, when either marginal forces or government-organised imitators were chosen. The experience of Eastern Ukraine, where the population showed a high level of scepticism towards the EU despite the collapse of their pro-Russia attitude after 2014 (see Nizhnikau & Moshes

2020), highlights the urgency of this task for the future of Belarus–West relations. These steps will not bring any short-term results, but they will prepare the ground for a meaningful engagement in future. Over time, the EU can demonstrate and convince significant parts of the Belarusian elite and wider society of existing commonalities of both interests and values between Belarus and Europe, which can become a decisive factor during the post-Lukashenko transition.

The Nordic countries could become part of this effort, or even spearhead it in certain aspects. Together with their Baltic partners, they could take the initiative, where it would take the EU time to adjust policies. They could specifically focus on fostering domestic changes, not so much through formal dialogue with the regime but rather by supporting small-scale grassroots apolitical and educational initiatives which actively emerge within the country, and by promoting European values within the society.

Notes

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Danish-Chinese relations: 'business as usual' or strategic disruption?

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Introduction

The year 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Denmark, which was among the very first Western countries to recognise and establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. With the corona virus pandemic taking its toll on both countries, preparations for official anniversary celebrations were understandably brought to a halt in early 2020. Even in the absence of the disruptive pandemic, however, one might ask if the current state of bilateral affairs leaves much to celebrate. Indeed, in January 2020 the Chinese embassy in Copenhagen decided to launch a public relations offensive on its homepage and in the media, targeting the erection outside the Danish Parliament of a temporary 'pillar of shame' linked to the Hong Kong protests and a cartoon in *Jyllandsposten* with corona virus-like symbols in place of the five stars in the Chinese flag.² The Chinese protests came against the backdrop of two broader development trends that have strained relations between Denmark and China: First, the emergence of a pronouncedly more China-critical atmosphere in the Danish Parliament, primarily generated by growing Chinese assertiveness, including a number of highly controversial Chinese influence activities in Denmark that have been brought to public attention (Forsby 2018c). Second, an increasing number of spill-over effects from the US-China great power rivalry, causing Denmark to side with Washington against the interests of Beijing over geostrategic questions like potential Chinese investments in Greenland and Chinese tech giant Huawei's involvement in 5G digital infrastructure (Forsby 2019a).

Meanwhile, bilateral relations between Denmark and China still seem to rest on a quite solid and diversified political framework, encompassing no less than 58 memorandums of understanding as part of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement between the two countries. A new, updated work programme for the strategic partnership is currently being negotiated between the two sides, aimed at bringing new impetus to existing collaborative mechanisms and expanding cooperation within key focus areas like sustainable development and the green growth sector.³ Moreover, Denmark is the only Nordic country to have established such a formalised and wide-ranging partnership with China and one of a very few European countries granted permission to open a cultural institute in Beijing. Strong commercial and trade interests remain at the centre of Danish–Chinese relations, and whereas most other countries run significant trade deficits, Denmark has managed to enjoy relatively balanced trade relations with China. The willingness of a group of major Danish export companies to pay for the expensive (US\$24 million) new panda mansion in Copenhagen Zoo, inaugurated in April 2019, is suggestive of the importance attached to the Chinese market by the Danish business community. And perhaps the corona crisis may foster new bonds of solidarity between the two countries, with Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofoed – ‘heartened by a message from his Chinese counterpart’⁴ – stating that ‘the Danish government stands ready to continue dialogue and cooperation with China in response to this global crisis’ (Udenrigsministeriet 2020).

Broadly speaking, it raises the question of whether current Danish-Chinese relations are likely to continue along the lines of what might be termed ‘business as usual’, centred on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, or whether recent negative development trends could be a precursor of an emerging ‘strategic disruption’ of bilateral ties? The answer offered in this chapter is that the bilateral relationship, still somewhat narrowly predicated on shared economic interests, seems increasingly vulnerable to processes of politicisation and securitisation, being driven not only by growing concern in Denmark about China’s present political trajectory, but also by the wider US-China great power rivalry. Taken together, these politicisation and securitisation processes are likely to prove disruptive to the strategic partnership between Denmark and the PRC.

The chapter is organised into four main sections after this introduction. The first section provides an overview of 70 years of official diplomatic relations

between Denmark and the PRC, tracing the twists and turns in the bilateral relationship along the way. The second section zooms in on the comprehensive strategic partnership, examining the character of the collaborative framework, including the scope of the economic relationship. In the third section, the role played by political differences between the two sides is explored in some detail, notably the ongoing bilateral dialogue on human rights. The final section takes a look at how the burgeoning US-China great power rivalry affects relations between Denmark and China, in particular with respect to Chinese investments in Greenland and Huawei's position in Denmark.

A short history of Denmark's relationship with the People's Republic of China

While Danish-Chinese relations can be traced all the way back to 1676 when the first Danish merchant ship arrived in Fuzhou, the capital city of Fujian province, the relationship between Denmark and the People's Republic of China draws on a much shorter history. Together with the other Nordic countries, Denmark was among the first Western countries to grant diplomatic recognition to the PRC in January 1950, establishing diplomatic relations five months later and sending a diplomatic envoy to Beijing on June 24 (Brødsgaard & Rowinski 2001: 199–200).⁵ However, with the outbreak of the Korean War, the entrenchment of the Cold War and the US-led Western isolation campaign against the new communist regime in Beijing, Denmark's bilateral relations with the PRC were off to a difficult start. Even economic cooperation – traditionally the backbone of Danish-Chinese relations – proved hard to sustain which meant that annual bilateral trade amounted to less than DKK 20 million as late as in the 1960s (Marcussen 2016: 378–79).

Nevertheless, even if Denmark's policies towards the PRC did not deviate significantly from those of the rest of the Western bloc, Danish governments managed to enjoy cordial, even constructive, relations with the PRC during the Mao era (1949-76) for several reasons. Apart from the early establishment of diplomatic ties, Denmark also immediately stated – and consistently repeated thereafter – its official support for the pivotal 'One China principle' that there is only one China and that Taiwan, despite being self-governed as the Republic of China, is part of a single Chinese state, recognised by the Danish government

as the People's Republic (Brødsgaard & Rowinski 2001: 192). Moreover, Danish-Chinese relations benefited from widespread support in the Danish population and among the left-leaning political parties, including the Social Democrats, for the anti-colonial struggle of developing countries, championed by Mao's China. Accordingly, and unlike the United States and most other Western countries, Denmark actively backed the PRC in its protracted campaign in the United Nations to take over China's seat from the Republic of China, Taiwan, with Beijing's efforts coming to fruition in 1971 (*ibid.*: 200–201; Østergaard 2011: 53–54). Furthermore, the week-long visit in October 1974 of Danish Prime Minister Poul Hartling, the first Nordic head of government to officially visit the PRC, and the state visit by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II in September 1979, the first head of state from northern Europe to do so, were both very helpful in strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries (Petersen 2016: 69; Østergaard 2011: 55–56). As such, Denmark's diplomatic support for the PRC during its early, vulnerable phase laid the foundation for broader and more substantive bilateral cooperation once the ideological fervour of Maoist China had been dampened.

Against the backdrop of the Sino-American rapprochement in the 1970s and Deng Xiaoping's launch of the 'reform and opening up programme' towards the end of the decade, Danish-Chinese relations started to develop across a number of areas. Student exchange programmes were initiated, bilateral agreements on cooperation within science, technology, education and medicine were signed and, perhaps most importantly, from 1982 Denmark offered significant state loans to China, some of which were even interest-free (Brødsgaard & Rowinski 2001: 205–6). As these loans were in reality designed to subsidise Danish exports to China, bilateral trade surged in the 1980s, registering a tenfold increase albeit from a very low starting point. Reflecting the deepening of bilateral ties, the number of high-level visits between Denmark and China multiplied in the 1980s, with Danish Prime Ministers Anker Jørgensen and Poul Schlüter visiting China and Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang being the first Chinese head of government to ever visit Denmark in 1984 (*ibid.*: 221–22).

Growing bilateral cooperation was seriously disrupted, however, following the communist regime's bloody crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square in early June 1989. The incident took place amid a broader reorientation of Danish foreign policy as the centre-right Schlüter government (1982–93) exploited the new strategic environment at

the end of the Cold War to adopt a more activist and values-based approach (Olesen 2012: chapter 6; Pedersen 2012). As a result, the Danish Government spearheaded the international criticism of the communist regime, being the first country to submit an official protest to the Chinese government – and immediately terminating the Danish state loans – while also being among the last Western countries to gradually normalise bilateral relations during 1991–93 (Brødsgaard & Rowinski 2000: 212–13; Østergaard 2011: 57). Furthermore, the moral outcry in Denmark also sparked a demand for the Danish Government to conduct a bilateral human rights dialogue with China to accompany the normalisation of relations. Indeed, human rights concerns remained the pivotal issue of Danish–Chinese relations in the 1990s, causing a new rift in the relationship in 1997 as the centre-left Nyrup Rasmussen government (1993–2001) sponsored a China-critical resolution in the UN Commission on Human Rights at a time when most other Western countries were increasingly focusing on the economic opportunities of re-engagement with the People’s Republic (Ulbæk 2015: 218–19; Østergaard 2011: 60).

At the turn of the new century, Denmark’s relationship with the PRC had once again been fully normalised, ushering in a period of stability and progress in bilateral relations that saw the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement in 2008. Embracing the EU consensus position on China centred on economic and political engagement, Danish governments argued that a policy of engagement would be a more effective long-term strategy of socialising China to adopt Western liberal rights (Forsby 2018a). Meanwhile, with the US embroiled in its post-9/11 fight against Islamist militants, and China being designated a partner in the global war on terror, Copenhagen did not face any serious strategic constraints as it sought to expand relations with Beijing. China’s accession to the WTO in 2001 was also significant in paving the ground for increased economic cooperation by reducing the number of trade barriers. The centre-right Fogh Rasmussen government (2001–2009) significantly upgraded Denmark’s diplomatic resources in China and increased the frequency of Danish high-level visits to China, including two visits (in 2004 and 2008) by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen himself accompanied by large delegations from the Danish business society (Marcussen 2016; Ulbæk 2015: 216–17). The benefits soon materialised as bilateral trade witnessed a dramatic surge in 2004–2008, with Danish China-bound exports skyrocketing from around DKK 5 billion to 35 billion before the global financial crisis set in (Forsby 2017: 31). In order to institutionalise and further expand bilateral ties,

Denmark and China signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement in 2008 encompassing a range of issue areas (see next section).

By the end of the 2000s, Danish–Chinese relations went through another months-long crisis when, in late May 2009, the newly appointed prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, received the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, despite several indications that the Chinese would no longer tolerate such meetings (Ulbæk 2015: 221–22; Østergaard 2011). To avoid a costly freeze of bilateral relations, the Løkke Rasmussen government, backed by parliament, published a controversial verbal note acknowledging China’s ‘core interests’ and reaffirming⁶ Denmark’s ‘One–China policy’, including a specific clause stating that Denmark ‘opposes Tibetan independence’ (Folketinget 2009). With bilateral relations back on track, the Løkke Rasmussen government (2009–2011) and Thorning-Schmidt government (2011–2015) strove to depoliticise relations with the PRC in order to ‘ensure a harmonious and stable relationship’ (ibid.). A first-ever official Chinese state visit in June 2012 by then-president Hu Jintao took place in Copenhagen, followed by Queen Margrethe’s second state visit to China in April 2014. In the meantime, bilateral relations expanded across a number of new areas in line with the cooperative spirit of the new Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement (Sørensen 2016). When taking stock in 2015 at the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations, foreign ministers Martin Lidegaard and Wang Yi heaped praise on the bilateral relationship, declaring that ‘We will be sincere friends and close partners’ (Lidegaard & Wang 2015). However, over the past few years, bilateral relations have been marred by a series of negative incidents and broader strategic challenges, raising questions about the overall soundness and stability of the bilateral partnership (see below).

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and economic relations

In its external relations, the PRC is well-known not only for its strong advocacy of the sovereignty principle and the equality of all states but also, somewhat ambivalently, its tendency to hierarchise the outside world into concentric circles of diplomatic proximity (consisting of non-partners, partners, strategic partners and comprehensive strategic partners, cf. Strüver 2017). The status

accorded to a given country in Beijing's bilateral partnership diplomacy is no trivial matter as it determines the formal framework of political consultation with Beijing. Denmark's position as the only Nordic country enjoying a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China seems to be reflected in the data of Table 1 which compares the five Nordic countries' formal political relations with the PRC across three specific indicators. In terms of the number of high-level visits, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and posted personnel at their Beijing embassies, Denmark thus scores higher than its Nordic peers (Forsby 2019b: 16). Moreover, while there is no simple correlation between a given country's political and economic relations with Beijing, enjoying political goodwill may certainly be helpful in opening up new avenues for economic engagement as suggested by the fact that Denmark has the largest exports to China (on a per capita basis) among the five Nordic countries (ibid.: 2-4).

Table 1. Nordic bilateral relationships with China^a

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Number of active government-level MoUs^b	58	35	28	17	27
Average number of annual high-level visits to China^c	8-9	7-8	3	6-7	7
Total number of staff at Beijing embassy in 2019 (# of posted personnel, i.e. Nordic diplomats/attachés)^d	67(35)	53(23)	7(4)	38(19)	60(31)

a All data in the table are based on interviews with Nordic MFA staff, conducted in September–November 2019.

b This is an approximate number that includes government-to-government memorandums of understanding, but not so-called 'action plans' or non-governmental bilateral agreements between Chinese and Nordic institutions. The number from Norway is from May 2018.

c The average number of high-level visits to China covers ministerial-level visits from the Nordic countries to China over the past decade (in the case of Norway, the number is based on the 2016–19 period).

d The total number of personnel includes locally hired embassy staff, but excludes 'external' service personnel like drivers, security staff etc.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement identifies a number of areas of government-to-government cooperation that are regulated by specific MoUs. From the outset in 2008, the CSP primarily focused on political dialogue and cooperation, climate change and sustainability, research and education as well as a broad range of trade- and investment-enhancing initiatives (CSP 2008). Subsequent MoUs have incorporated additional collaborative issue areas like food and agriculture, certification and accreditation standards, rule of law and anti-corruption measures, tourism and other forms of people-to-people relations (Sørensen 2016). From a Chinese perspective, Denmark is an attractive partner due to its specialised expertise and technological capacity within various sectors that are critical to China's ongoing modernisation project, notably in green areas like energy efficiency, climate adaptation, water cleaning, alternative energy and sustainable urbanisation, where many Danish companies are at the forefront of their respective markets.⁷ Moreover, Denmark's overall development model appears desirable to Beijing in several respects given Denmark's highly developed, well-educated society, the efficient, uncorrupted character of its public sector and its ability to strike a productive, sustainable balance between raw capitalist market forces and socialist ideals about welfare egalitarianism. While these defining characteristics are not unique to Denmark, it stands out from the other Nordic countries in a geopolitical sense thanks to its position as both an EU and NATO member country and its status as a key Arctic state with sovereignty over the vast Greenlandic areas in the high north (Forsby 2017: 38). From a Danish perspective, China is an attractive partner because of the sheer scale of the Chinese market, the rapidly growing purchasing power of Chinese consumers and the growing political clout of Beijing in international organisations as China takes on more responsibilities and increases its international commitments within the existing institutional framework (Taksøe-Jensen 2016).

Some examples may serve to illustrate the scope and specific avenues of Chinese-Danish cooperation in recent years. Sustainable energy constitutes a high-profile issue area that has witnessed sustained, even institutionalised, cooperation under the CSP framework. The Danish Energy Agency has played a key role in assisting China, notably via the China National Renewable Energy Centre, in its efforts to build renewable energy capacities needed for the transition of China's energy production system towards more sustainable sources (Delman 2016: 26–29). Another prominent cooperation project under the CSP has been the comprehensive dialogue between the Danish

parliamentary ombudsman institution and various Chinese ministries on how to promote administrative transparency, bureaucratic accountability, effective regulation and a non-corrupt public sector. Officially initiated in 2013 and supported by a DKK 8.5 million Danish MFA grant in 2015–18, this project still involves a number of specific collaborative exchanges in the existing 2017–20 joint work programme between Denmark and China (Liisberg & Ougaard 2016; CDJWP 2017). A third central area of cooperation under the CSP is research and education where the two countries have established a Sino-Danish Centre as a joint venture between the Danish universities and their Chinese counterparts.⁸ Located in Beijing and operational since 2012, the Sino-Danish Centre coordinates collaboration within six designated research areas and hosts seven Master's programmes in order to increase mobility as well as knowledge sharing between Danish and Chinese researchers and students (Bech 2016).⁹

The deepening of bilateral ties under the CSP has also yielded a number of tangible results that seem to underscore Denmark's privileged partner status. Importantly, Denmark is one of a very few countries which in 2015 was allowed to establish a Danish Cultural Centre in Beijing, following the opening of a Chinese culture centre in Copenhagen the year before. In addition, Denmark hosts more Confucius Institutes (CI) and Classrooms than the other Nordic countries, including since 2012 the world's only Music Confucius Institute located at the Royal Danish Academy of Music (Forsby 2019b: 7, 15).¹⁰ The arrival in April 2019 of two giant pandas, Mao Sun and Xing Er, at Copenhagen Zoo on a 15-year lease contract represents yet another token of the 'long-lasting friendship between China and Denmark', as China's ambassador to Denmark put it at the inauguration of the new panda mansion (Xinhua 2019).¹¹ Furthermore, there has been a spike of Chinese tourists visiting Denmark in recent years, just as the Chinese constitute one of the largest groups of exchange students in Danish universities and vocational schools. In these two regards, however, a similar pattern is discernible in the other Nordic countries (Forsby 2019b: 5–6).

Despite the ongoing diversification of bilateral relations, bilateral trade, economic investments and commercial activities remain at the heart of the CSP. While Danish exports in goods and services to China (including Hong Kong) amounted to merely DKK 5 billion in 2004, they stood at around DKK 70 billion 15 years later, with China having in the meantime become Denmark's

second-largest non-European trade partner after the United States (Danmarks Statistik 2019). Shipping, animal furs/skins, pharmaceutical products, industrial machinery and various kinds of food products generate most of the export revenues, and Denmark has managed – unlike the vast majority of China’s trade partners – to keep trade relations relatively balanced over the past decade. Furthermore, around 500 Danish companies are reportedly operating on the Chinese market, investing on average approximately DKK 50 billion annually (2013–17) in their local Chinese branches and subsidiaries with the result that China has become one of the primary destinations of Danish FDI (Danmarks Nationalbank 2019). Measured in terms of local employees, the largest Danish companies in China are Bestseller (clothing), ISS (cleaning), AP Møller Maersk (shipping), Carlsberg (brewery), Ecco (shoes), Danfoss (thermostats), Novo Nordisk (medicine), Vestas (wind power) and Grundfos (pumps).

We should be careful, however, not to overstate China’s importance to the Danish economy, in particular when compared to Denmark’s traditional Western partners (see also Patey 2020: chapter 6). First, as a share of total Danish exports in goods and services, China-bound exports have constituted approximately 4–5% over the past decade (see Table 2), decreasing somewhat in recent years and still far behind Danish exports to key European partners like Germany, Sweden, the UK and Norway (Udenrigsministeriet 2019a).¹² Second, although the prospects of attracting Chinese investments has always figured prominently in the domestic Danish debate about the rise of China, the scope of Chinese Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) into Denmark has long been rather negligible (i.e. rarely exceeding 1% of total inbound FDI according to Danmarks Nationalbank 2019; see also Forsby 2019b). Finally, economic benefits should always be weighed against not only the costs of doing business in the Chinese market, but also the potential risks that increased economic engagement with China entail. For Danish companies operating in China, such risks include forced/illicit transfer of intellectual property rights, which may erode these companies’ competitive edge, and over-reliance on the Chinese market at a time when emerging US decoupling strategies could easily disrupt well-established business models.¹³

Table 2. Exports in goods/services from Denmark to China, incl. Hong Kong (HK), in billion USD and as a percentage of total Danish exports

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Danish exports (billion USD)	149	158	180	174	182	184	159	158	168
Exports to China + HK (billion USD)	5.40	6.79	7.56	8.36	9.77	9.29	8.01	6.85	7.57
Percentage of total Danish exports	3.6	4.3	4.2	4.8	5.4	5.0	5.0	4.3	4.5

Source: Forsby (2019b)

A new work programme for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is slated to be introduced in 2021. Apart from a green makeover to extend cooperation on climate change and sustainability, reflecting the political agenda of Mette Frederiksen's Social Democratic government (2019→), the updated work programme will reportedly concentrate mostly on existing areas of collaboration. This apparent inability – or perhaps unwillingness – to further widen and deepen the partnership might be an early indicator of how Danish–Chinese relations are becoming more complicated on a number of accounts. It should be kept in mind that even though the CSP encompasses a wide range of collaborative issue areas, it ultimately hinges on shared economic and commercial interests that are buttressed by government-to-government MoUs. There is no set of shared political values, cultural commonalities or security interests that unite the two partners at a deeper level. This may render the CSP vulnerable in the face of growing politicisation and securitisation processes as recent development trends suggest (see below).

The (de)politicisation of political differences

Denmark officially perceives itself as a staunch supporter of liberal democracy on the global stage. In the first-ever Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy (published in 2017), the Løkke Rasmussen government spelt out Denmark's self-image in the opening lines: 'We must fight for the values and freedoms on which our society is built. We want a world with more democracy and freedom, including more freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion' (Regeringen 2017). This message is literally echoed in the most recent iteration of the strategy document (Regeringen 2018).

For many years, however, the promotion of political values in Denmark's relations with the PRC has been reduced to a peripheral concern. This was certainly *not* the case in the early 1990s, in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre, when the Schlüter government was among the most vocal critics of the PRC and actively pursued a critical human rights dialogue with Beijing as bilateral relations were gradually re-normalised (see above). But the public side of the critical dialogue, often referred to as 'megaphone diplomacy', was abandoned in the late 1990s, prompted by a rather unsuccessful initiative by the Nyrop Rasmussen government to sponsor a China-critical resolution in the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), thereby drawing the ire of Beijing. Instead, the Danish Government fell in line with other Western governments that were increasingly seeking to seize the opportunities of economic engagement with China. What emerged in the new century, then, was a more pragmatic China policy whereby Denmark – in the words of Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen – 'was to *engage* China internationally in order to influence it in a way that is informed by those norms and values that we want to promote' (Rasmussen 2004).

In reality, this engagement policy was accompanied by a gradual depoliticisation of political differences between Denmark and China which manifested itself in three ways. First, the most sensitive aspects of the human rights dialogue – i.e. issues ultimately pertaining to the Chinese Communist Party's monopoly of power or the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the PRC – were deliberately multilateralised. Apart from the UNCHR (later the UNHRC), sensitive human rights issues were increasingly delegated to the EU Commission to be addressed at the institutionalised EU–China Human Rights Dialogue (established in 1995), thus allowing Danish politicians to deflect such

issues in the Danish media by referring to the ongoing EU dialogue (Forsby 2018a). Second, starting in the 2000s, parts of the human rights dialogue were 'outsourced' to Danish non-governmental organisations such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights (IMR) and Red Barnet (Save the Children). These NGOs were funded by the Danish Foreign Ministry to conduct a practice- and fieldwork-oriented dialogue with specific Chinese authorities on less sensitive human rights issues including, in the case of IMR, rules of criminal procedure, prison conditions and the rights of migrant workers.¹⁴ Third, Danish politicians openly questioned the underlying rationale of criticising the Chinese communist regime publicly. As bluntly put by then-foreign minister Kristian Jensen in 2015: 'I do not believe in megaphone diplomacy where you end up shouting at each other. I'm sure that the Chinese side will be well aware of our position on human rights by the end of our meeting. But I'll reserve this for the direct dialogue with my Chinese colleagues'¹⁵.

Against this backdrop, what remained of the Danish Government's direct *bilateral* human rights dialogue with their Chinese counterparts can best be described as 'discreet diplomacy'. That is, a series of non-public exchanges of well-known, pre-scripted views taking place in confidential settings at the periphery of discussions about more important issues of shared interest (Forsby 2018a). Over the years, this discreet bilateral dialogue has become subject to various types of regulatory measures. Most importantly, the Danish Parliament has passed a number of legally binding motions, committing the government to raise specific issues during ministerial meetings, including the Tibet issue (Folketinget 2010), the human rights situation in general (Folketinget 2013), organ transplants (Folketinget 2016) and Falun Gong (Folketinget 2018a). Ministers must also report back on the results of this dialogue to the Foreign Relations Committee in the parliament after each high-level visit to/ from China. Moreover, together with its EU partners, Denmark has collectively vowed to address human rights issues bilaterally with China.¹⁶ Finally, the CSP agreement from 2008 explicitly stipulates that the two countries 'place value on the exchanges and cooperation on human rights' and that they will take unspecified 'concrete steps' (CSP 2008). Even so, in the most recent 'Joint Work Programme 2017-20' of the CSP, human rights only figure once in the otherwise ambitious 46-page long document – i.e. a reference to Danish Institute for Human Rights' dialogue with its Chinese partners on how to 'strengthen knowledge sharing and cooperation on the rule of law' (CDJWP 2017).

It should be noted that the observed pattern, whereby sensitive human rights issues have become depoliticised and the human rights dialogue itself multilateralised (or outsourced), is largely reflective of a broader European trend over the past couple of decades (Rühlig, Jerdén et al. 2018). Comparatively speaking, Denmark does not belong among the most active and vocal countries – like Sweden, Germany and the UK – with respect to the way sensitive political differences are addressed bilaterally (ibid.: 13). But in multilateral settings such as the EU and the UNHRC, Danish governments have generally teamed up with like-minded partners in order to adopt a relatively critical stance towards Chinese human rights violations (Forsby 2018b: 32–33). During a UNHRC meeting in November 2018, for instance, Denmark recommended the Chinese government to grant ‘full access to Xinjiang and Tibet for all relevant UN special procedures’ (Udenrigsministeriet 2018).

In the past few years, however, bilateral political differences seem to have re-emerged in the arena of political contestation. In late 2017, a report from a special Danish investigatory commission (Tibetkommissionen) documented that Danish Police Authorities, by confiscating banners and detaining civilians, deprived pro-Tibetan demonstrators of their constitutional right to freedom of expression when then-Chinese president Hu Jintao visited Copenhagen in June 2012 (Bagger et al. 2017). Even if the police campaign was (apparently)¹⁷ not directly orchestrated from above, the commission nevertheless concluded that high-ranking officials contributed to creating ‘an atmosphere’ of urgency to forestall any ‘loss of face incidents’ during Hu’s visit (ibid.: 19). Evidence of Chinese pressure on the Danish Foreign Ministry and other key actors in the lead-up to the state visit was hardly surprising, but the fact that Danish authorities would resort to measures of self-censorship provoked a moral outcry in the Danish media as well as in the parliament. Furthermore, the media have recently documented a series of Chinese ‘influence activities’ in Denmark where the Chinese embassy, behind the scenes, has exerted pressure on various Danish authorities and organisations such as CPH:DOX, the Royal Danish Theatre and Copenhagen municipality. In each case, the objective of these influence activities was clearly to protect Chinese core interests by preventing groups like pro-Tibetan activists or the Falun Gong movement from using their freedom of speech to criticise the PRC (for a detailed account of each case, see Forsby 2018c). While such influence activities are excessively assertive – illustrating China’s willingness to pressure liberal democracies to exercise self-censorship – they hardly reflect a broader strategic agenda of

the PRC to undermine Denmark's and other Western countries' democratic institutions, as some observers have suggested.¹⁸

Apart from China's specific influence activities in Denmark, its overall political development course under Xi Jinping has also negatively affected bilateral relations. The comprehensive re-centralisation of power, the tightened grip on the media, the heavy-handed measures against ethnic and religious minorities (especially in Xinjiang) and the more assertive¹⁹ foreign policy line taken by the Chinese government, have all been extensively covered and commented in the Danish media (for an overview, see Forsby 2020). Meanwhile, even seemingly innocuous aspects of people-to-people relations like the management of Confucius Institutes in Denmark and the arrival of two Chinese pandas at Copenhagen Zoo have recently received predominantly negative media coverage. Taken together, these development trends have generated a pronouncedly more China-critical political environment in Denmark, on full display in late 2018 during a parliamentary debate on 'The Growing Pressure from China' (Folketinget 2018b). Whether or not political differences will thereby—like during the 1990s—once again become a highly divisive and politicised issue in Danish–Chinese relations remains to be seen.

Strategic challenges in the era of US-China rivalry

A US-China great power rivalry has been in the making for several years now. Given the current overwhelming consensus in Washington that the PRC constitutes a coercive and revisionist regime that need to be directly countered (see e.g. Johnston 2020)²⁰, we should expect US-Chinese relations to be increasingly confrontational and subject to security-related concerns that will spur geoeconomic as well as technological decoupling attempts on both sides. In what may be an early indicator of a Cold War-style polarisation logic, the Trump administration has exerted significant pressure on its partners and allies to side with Washington in several matters of strategic importance like the use of 5G technology and China's BRI project (see below). From the perspective of small states like Denmark, the deepening great power rivalry raises complicated questions about how to deal with its spill-over effects and how to avoid being forced, ultimately, to abandon the strategic partnership

with Beijing. Denmark's official foreign policy strategy leaves little doubt about the country's overall strategic affiliation: 'American global leadership is in Denmark's national interest' (Regeringen 2018). In fact, the largely economic character of Denmark's ostensibly *comprehensive* strategic partnership with China is, on closer inspection (Forsby 2019a), no match for the density of political, economic, cultural, technological and not least security relations between Denmark and the United States. As such, when push comes to shove, Copenhagen is more than likely to take its cues from Washington.

Fallout from the US-China great power rivalry has already manifested itself in several respects in a Danish context. Having for many years been merely a blip on the radar, the PRC has recently become a far more substantial security concern in the annual risk assessment reports of the Danish Defence Intelligence Service, FE (as suggested by a growing number of references to China in the reports).²¹ In the most recent edition, apart from dedicating a whole chapter to China like in the previous couple of years, the report puts the spotlight on various aspects of China's growing ambitions and power projection capacity, including its military modernisation, assertive behaviour in the South China Sea, expanding interests in the Arctic, cyber espionage instruments and global influence activities (FE 2019). This change in perceptions, whereby China is increasingly associated with potential risks and security concerns, is discernible in the economic realm as well, especially when it comes to Chinese investments in Denmark. Having previously worked hard to attract Chinese FDI and also having joined the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a founding member in March 2015 (Forsby & Yang 2016), over the past couple of years the Danish Government has become far more wary of Chinese investments, notably in Greenland and the telecommunications sector (Yang 2019).²² Tellingly, Denmark has been supporting the introduction of an EU-wide (non-binding) investment screening mechanism and has even proposed a set of supplementary Danish measures, both of which are clearly targeted at China (Folketinget 2019). In a similar way, initially positive Danish views of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (Forsby & Yang 2016) seem, against the backdrop of active US opposition to the BRI, to have given way to hesitation as indicated by the rather low-level official Danish participation at the most recent Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in April 2019.²³

The underlying tendency to securitise relations between Denmark and China – thus subsuming ordinary administrative rules and economic incentives to

the logic of security – has been particularly noticeable in two areas, namely Chinese investments in Greenland and Huawei's role in Denmark's digital infrastructure. Beijing's growing interest in Greenland is part of a broader strategic agenda aimed at increasing China's presence and influence in the Arctic, having officially portrayed itself as a 'near-Arctic state' (SCIO 2018; see also Sørensen 2018). For several years, the Danish Government has been cautiously supportive of China's Arctic ambitions, assisting the Chinese government in becoming an observatory member of the Arctic Council in 2013, but at the same time deliberately keeping Arctic affairs and Greenland out of the joint work programmes of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (Sørensen 2018). Meanwhile, China's economic engagement with Greenland, notably Chinese investments in Greenlandic mines in Kvanefjeld (uranium and rare earth minerals) and elsewhere, has caused unease in Copenhagen, raising questions not only about export controls and environmental standards, but more importantly about the extent to which large-scale Chinese investments could spur Greenlandic aspirations for economic, and ultimately political, independence from the Danish Kingdom (Yang 2019)²⁴. However, the two most prominent Danish government interventions to pre-empt Chinese investments in Greenland should rather be seen in the context of American security concerns about China's expanding presence in the Arctic.

The first intervention took place in 2016 when a Chinese consortium called General Nice Group showed an interest in purchasing an abandoned marine station in Grønneal, Greenland. Even though an official defence ministry report on Denmark's future missions in the Arctic, published in June 2016, did not mention Grønneal at all (Forsvarsministeriet 2016), the Løkke Rasmussen government announced in December 2016 that it had secured support and funding in the Danish Parliament to reopen the marine station as a strategic and logistical hub for storing resources and training military personnel.²⁵ The turnaround was allegedly prompted by American pressure on the Rasmussen government to prevent the Chinese from establishing any sort of strategic foothold in Greenland where the US operates Thule air base, a critical component in US missile warning and space surveillance systems.²⁶ Another intervention followed in 2018 when China Communications Construction Company, a government-controlled Chinese consortium, was shortlisted by the Greenlandic authorities as a potential contractor in a public tender to build new airport infrastructure in Greenland. Whereas the Obama administration had exerted pressure from behind the scenes, the Trump

administration made it publicly clear that the US was opposed to any Chinese involvement in the airport project. In May 2018 the message was conveyed by US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis to his Danish counterpart and later echoed by the Danish Prime Minister in the parliament.²⁷ In September 2018 the Rasmussen government offered to co-fund the airport project as part of an investment plan that, in practice, would grant Copenhagen veto rights over the selection of external contractors. Despite heavy criticism from several Greenlandic politicians, decrying the intervention as a violation of Greenland's self-governance model under the pretext of security concerns²⁸, the Danish investment plan was finally accepted by Greenland in November 2018.

Beyond Chinese investments in Greenland, the Trump administration has also warned Denmark, and other US partners, against the use of Chinese companies in building their critical digital infrastructure, specifically targeting Chinese tech-giant Huawei as a provider of 5G network solutions. While Huawei seemed to be an ideal partner for the leading Danish mobile network operator TDC – having already jointly managed the existing 4G network – in late 2018 pressure started to build up on TDC to terminate its partnership with Huawei. The Danish Defence Minister²⁹, along with the head of the Danish Defence Intelligence Service³⁰, publicly voiced their concerns about Huawei's ties to the Chinese government which, in turn, prompted Huawei to send a reassuring letter to the Danish Parliament³¹. Eventually, in March 2019, Allison Kirkby, CEO of TDC, presented Swedish Ericsson as TDC's new 5G network partner, justifying her company's decision on commercial grounds, while also acknowledging that 'We're always in a continuous dialogue with the security services because we are running critical infrastructure'³². US warnings against Huawei were also targeted at another part of the Danish Kingdom, when, in November 2018, US ambassador to Denmark, Carla Sands, launched a vigorous PR campaign, urging the Faroe Isles not to grant Huawei any role in the tiny nation's 5G network³³. A media storm erupted the following month as a leaked audio recording of (a second-hand account of) a meeting between the Faroese prime minister, Bardur Nielsen, and the Chinese ambassador to Denmark, Feng Tie, suggested that Mr Feng had directly linked bilateral trade between the two parties to the Huawei question – even if the decision would eventually be based on private commercial considerations only, as the Faroese prime minister subsequently insisted (*ibid.*).

As Denmark finds itself caught in the middle of a US-China great power rivalry, Copenhagen is likely to consult its main European partners in the EU for more policy coordination. Given its EU opt-outs and the absence of any strong foreign policy coordination mechanism at the EU level, Denmark has found it prudent to cultivate a strong bilateral relationship with China. Even so, over the years the EU has come to play a progressively larger role in Danish-Chinese relations in some areas. This is most obvious in the economic realm where Denmark has long worked within the EU to jointly pursue European commercial, investment and trade interests vis-à-vis Beijing (Udenrigsministeriet 2019b). For instance, while Copenhagen has generally subscribed to Brussels' line in dealing with China's request for market economy status (i.e. not granting China such a status), the Danish Government has also supported the EU's more assertive agenda for establishing a level economic playing field with China in order to assist European companies operating in China (Forsby 2019a). 'This applies to areas such as market access, investment protection, transparency, rule of law, protection of intellectual rights and patent enforcement, forced knowledge and technology transfer as well as the opportunity to bid for public contracts' (Udenrigsministeriet 2019b). Moreover, the Danish Government has not only officially welcomed the new EU-level screening mechanism for FDI (see above), which should complement the protracted negotiations on a bilateral EU-China investment treaty, but is also favourably inclined towards the new EU connectivity strategy which is widely seen as a strategic counterpart to China's BRI. Beyond the economic realm, EU-level policy coordination also plays a substantial role in Danish-Chinese relations in areas such as human rights and climate change.

Whether Copenhagen, in its relations with Beijing, will increasingly be looking to Brussels and its main European partners for strategic guidance is far from clear yet. But it should be kept in mind that Denmark has recently backed EU-wide efforts to increase overall policy coordination, including the adoption of a new EU-China Strategic Outlook which simultaneously categorises the PRC as a 'strategic partner', 'economic competitor' and 'systemic rival' (EC 2019). A similarly more nuanced approach to the PRC can be found in the most recent iteration of Denmark's Foreign and Security Policy Strategy (Regeringen 2018), in which both the opportunities and the challenges of China's rise are addressed.

Conclusion

Five years ago, on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Denmark and the People's Republic of China, the foreign ministers of the two countries praised the bilateral relationship in a joint article, observing that 'it has been maturing, underpinned by ever-strengthening mutual trust. [...] China–Denmark relations, in spite of some twists and turns, have kept moving forward steadily' (Lidgaard & Wang 2015). Today, Danish-Chinese relations no longer seem to be defined by progress or stability; nor do they seem to be characterised by mutual trust. Instead, the strategic partnership has become increasingly vulnerable in the face of politicisation and securitisation processes that, taken together, may have a disruptive effect on bilateral relations. First, spillover effects from the deepening US-China great power rivalry are causing the Danish Government to become more concerned with security issues regarding potential Chinese investments or activities in Denmark. Second, China's illiberal political trajectory under Xi Jinping and its growing assertiveness in Denmark – notably its influence activities to safeguard Chinese core interests – have aroused widespread consternation among Danish opinion-shapers and decision-makers, on full display in the media in recent years. In what appears to be a symptomatic manifestation of this development, the Chinese ambassador to Denmark, Feng Tie, recently aired his frustration about the 'biased Danish media'³⁴.

While no longer 'business as usual', it would be premature to completely write off the comprehensive strategic partnership. After all, over the past two decades Danish governments have invested significant resources in cultivating a strong bilateral relationship, creating in the process a number of stakeholders, especially commercial ones, that have benefitted from the relationship. Moreover, in its capacity as the world's biggest trading nation, the largest emitter of carbon dioxide gasses and the second-largest contributor to the UN budget among many other things, the People's Republic of China has risen to become a key actor on the world stage. It means that Beijing is an indispensable partner in tackling most of the common challenges facing international society today, such as pandemics, climate change, the dissemination of weapons of mass destruction, international crime, loss of biodiversity and drug trafficking. On balance, however, all of these *pre-existing* cooperation incentives, as well as the aforementioned stakeholder interests, have so far proven insufficient to offset the disruptive forces of politicisation

and securitisation. Indeed, the very same development trends are currently affecting other European countries in their relations with the PRC in a similar manner (see Esteban et al. 2020).

Even the present corona virus crisis – a pandemic that should be a liberal textbook example of how to foster international cooperation – has done little to place Danish-Chinese relations on a more constructive trajectory. Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeppe Kofod's offer to 'continue dialogue and cooperation with China in response to this global crisis' (Udenrigsministeriet 2020) has received little attention compared to *Jyllandsposten's* corona virus cartoon or Ambassador Feng's PR campaign about the 'biased Danish media'. In mid-April Mr Kofoed, having kept a low profile until then, joined many of his European colleagues in demanding an international investigation into the corona virus outbreak in China, an already highly sensitive and politically charged issue as seen from Beijing's perspective.³⁵

Notes

- 1 Ph.D. Andreas Bøje Forsby is a postdoc researcher at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen.
- 2 Chinese Embassy (2020). The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Denmark. <http://dk.china-embassy.org/eng/>
For access to the two commentaries from the Chinese embassy, see <http://dk.china-embassy.org/eng/zdgx/t1735628.htm>; <http://dk.china-embassy.org/eng/zdgx/t1736581.htm>
- 3 These observations are based on interviews with civil servants from the Danish MFA.
- 4 According to the Danish MFA, Mr Kofoed's Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, sent 'a message of sympathy and well wishes for the people of Denmark affected by COVID-19' (Udenrigsministeriet 2020).
- 5 Some observers even claim that Denmark is the only country to enjoy an unbroken record of diplomatic relations with China since 1908 (Petersen 2016: 69).
- 6 The extent to which the verbal note reaffirms, clarifies or even changes Denmark's existing position on Tibet and Denmark's 'One-China policy' has been a matter of some debate.
- 7 Damsgaard, Christian (2016). 'Kina vokser med middelklassens måde'. *Jyllands-Posten*. <http://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/international/ECE8351793/kina-vokser-med-middelklassens-maade>
- 8 Among the other Nordic countries, Finland has also been able to set up a Sino-Finnish centre, but it is not nearly as comprehensive the scope of its collaboration as the Sino-Danish Centre (Forsby 2019b: Introduction).
- 9 The six thematic research areas are water and environment, sustainable energy, nano-science, social sciences, life sciences and food and health. See also SDC, Sino-Danish Center: <https://sdc.university/about/about-sdc/>
- 10 There are currently two CIs in Denmark (at the Royal Danish Academy of Music and at the International Business Academy in Kolding) and five Confucius Classrooms (including an arrangement at Niels Brock Handelsgymnasium that in some ways resembles a CI).
- 11 The absence of any high-ranking Chinese officials for the inauguration could also be interpreted as an indicator of cooling relations between the two countries (Forsby 2019a).
- 12 In 2017, Danish *export* to its top trading partners was constituted as follows (in billions of DKK): Germany (153), United States (126), Sweden (124), the UK (91), Norway (71) and China (51) (Udenrigsministeriet 2019a).

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- 14 IMR (2020). Danish Institute for Human Rights. <https://menneskeret.dk/sted/kina>
- 15 Lauridsen, Jan Bjerre (2015). 'Kristian Jensen: "Jeg tror ikke på megafon-diplomati"'. *BT*. <http://www.bt.dk/politik/kristian-jensen-jeg-tror-ikke-paa-megafon-diplomati>
- 16 The procedures for conducting the bilateral dialogue on human rights were explained to the author during interviews conducted in the Danish MFA.
- 17 Central sources of evidence were unfortunately erased prior to the investigation, see Tynell, Jesper (2018). 'Politichefers mails blev slettet'. *DR Nyheder*. <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/politichefers-mails-blev-slettet-forud-tibet-kommissionens-undersoegelse>
- 18 E.g. Walker, Christopher (2019). 'Beijing bag international manipulation og censur: Kina undergraver verdens demokratiske standarder'. Interview with Christopher Walker by Anders Jerichow. *Politiken*. <https://politiken.dk/udland/art7476131/%C2%BBKina-undergraver-verdens-demokratiske-standarder%C2%AB>
- 19 On the scope of China's foreign policy assertiveness, see e.g. Johnston 2020; Zakaria 2020.
- 20 See also Zakaria, Fareed (2020). 'The New China Scare'. *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-12-06/new-china-scare>
- 21 Over the past four years (2016–19), the number of references made to China in the risk assessment reports has grown markedly (72, 86, 148, 176 respectively; see <https://fe-ddis.dk/eng/Products/Intelligence-Risk-Assessments/Pages/default.aspx>)
- 22 Similar trends are visible in the other Nordic countries, see Forsby (2019b: Introduction).
- 23 Whereas Denmark participated at ministerial level during the first Belt and Road Forum in 2017, the most recent forum was attended by a civil servant from the MFA (Forsby 2019a).
- 24 See also Lanteigne, Marc & Mingming Shi (2019). "China Steps up Its Mining Interests in Greenland." *The Diplomat*, February 12. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/china-steps-up-its-mining-interests-in-greenland/>
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The end of Arctic exceptionalism? A review of the academic debates and what the Arctic prospects mean for the Kingdom of Denmark

Mikkel Runge Olesen¹

According to a humorous comment from a senior Western Arctic military officer, if anyone was to mount an invasion in the Arctic, his first job would be to rescue them. This quip encapsulates the idea, long dominant in political and academic discourse, that as a region, the Arctic is somehow 'exceptional', detached from the power politics of other regions. Indeed, Arctic exceptionalism has been stressed and actively promoted by all the Arctic coastal states (the US, Russia, Canada, Norway and the Kingdom of Denmark) at least since the Ilulissat summit held in Greenland in 2008 (Konyshv & Sergunin 2014; Heininen 2012). In support of this claim, researchers often reference material factors such as the region's geographical remoteness, its harsh climate, the extreme distances and the lack of infrastructure, as well as the normative commitment of states in the Arctic to peace in the region. (Jacobsen & Strandsbjerg 2017; Young 2016; 2009; Heininen 2016; Byers 2013; also, see sections below). Further, in 2013 Scott Borgerson, the author of the most famous article predicting conflict in the Arctic 'Arctic meltdown' (2008), changed his mind and published an article saying he had been wrong about conflict potential in the Arctic (Borgerson 2013). As such, 'Arctic exceptionalism' was at its height in 2013.

But then in 2014 the Ukraine Crisis happened, turning Russian–Western relations upside down almost overnight. Since 2014, we have seen substantial Western, Ukraine-related sanctions being imposed on the Russian Arctic, as well as the scaling down of military cooperation between Russia and the West in the region (Huebert 2019; Wilhelmsen & Gjerde 2018; Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017; Käpylä & Mikkola 2015; also, see sections below). Similarly, we have

seen Russia itself putting a greater priority on the region and increasingly using the Arctic as the setting for grand publicity stunts, including relatively large-scale snap military exercises (Conley & Rohloff 2015; Melino & Conley 2020), while NATO has been conducting naval exercises as far north as Iceland.² Most recently, tough comments from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in May 2019 concerning not just Russian, but also Chinese, intentions and behaviour in the Arctic, combined with the failed attempt by Donald Trump to buy Greenland in August 2019, signal both increased US strategic interests in the region and an inclination to pursue them. The Pentagon's Arctic Strategy of June 2019 further cements this point by warning about the Arctic being used as a 'potential vector both for attacks on the homeland and for US power projection' (DoD 2019).

What we are witnessing these years is either the end of 'Arctic exceptionalism', or 'Arctic exceptionalism' persevering against the major upheavals of the Ukraine Crisis and the increased great power attention that has followed since. This has important implications for all Arctic states, but especially so for the smaller Arctic states like the Kingdom of Denmark. As such, a small state will usually have a greater interest in international order and in the reining in of power politics than a great power because a small power is ill equipped to succeed in power politics (Andersen 2019; Petersen 2010; Keohane 1969).

The purpose of this article is two-fold: first, through a review of the academic debates about cooperation and conflict in the Arctic from the Russian flag-planting up until the present (2020), the article discusses the factors working for and against stability in the Arctic throughout the period and formulates two possible scenarios for the future of 'Arctic exceptionalism'. Using the literature as point of departure allows the article to present competing and mutually exclusive explanations for Arctic security dynamics. Second, focusing on the Kingdom of Denmark, the article discusses how the changing state of affairs of cooperation and conflict in the Arctic in each of the two scenarios is likely to affect the Arctic policies of that small country in the years to come.

'The warners', 'the reassurers' and 'the worried'³

The media debate about cooperation or conflict in the Arctic has often favoured explanations predicting conflict.⁴ The academic debates also include such a faction but have traditionally also featured a significant portion of research focusing on the exceptional peacefulness of the Arctic. This article investigates the main ideas of both the relatively pessimistic approaches to Arctic security, which I will name here 'the warners',⁵ and the relatively optimistic approaches which I will name here 'the reassurers', as they have developed through time. The focus will be on how the main arguments have developed since 2007, with special emphasis on how they have developed following the Ukraine Crisis of 2014 and – to the relatively limited extent that it has of yet been incorporated into the literature – the US turn to the Arctic of 2018–2019.

The article argues that the key differences between these two camps can be organised, broadly, along two dividing lines: first, whether the authors implicitly or explicitly regard regional dynamics in the Arctic as either zero-sum or plus-sum.⁶ Secondly, closely connected to this, whether they implicitly or explicitly understand the Arctic as distinguished by special regional characteristics making it resilient to spillover conflicts from other parts of the world (Käpylä & Mikkola 2015, 2019 call this 'Arctic exceptionalism'; also see below). To these two groups must, of course, be added a third, relatively large, body of research, here named 'the worried', which falls in between, usually due to their conditional acceptance of points from each of the two camps. Lacking a unifying core, a formal review of these works is unfeasible, and focus here will therefore be limited to how some of these works can inform the debate on the question of spillover (see below).⁷ Now, let us consider each of the three positions in turn.

'The warners'

The semi-official Russian flag-planting at the North Pole in 2007 spurred a lot of very pessimistic assessments regarding the security situation in the Arctic. Scott G. Borgerson (2008), a former lieutenant commander in the US coast guard, argued in an oft-quoted article in *Foreign Affairs*, 2008 that provocative Russian actions required a clear American answer. Besides the flag-planting incident, Borgerson also pointed to provocative Russian bomber patrols. This

state of affairs was caused, according to Borgerson, by the lack of international norms and laws in the Arctic and by the regional military imbalance in the Arctic where the US and the West as a whole, are deeply inferior to Russia when it comes to Arctic-ready military capabilities. Finally, Borgerson (2008) sees the Arctic becoming an increasingly important region for economic reasons both because it represents a treasure trove in terms of resources and because of the potential for new shipping routes through the Arctic. In the absence of new American initiatives, this toxic combination might lead to the region erupting in a mad armed dash for resources (Borgerson 2008: 65).

Rob Huebert (2010) acknowledges the conciliatory dialogue between the Arctic countries. However, he questions their sincerity and sets out to explore what he sees as a mismatch between state rhetoric and investment in Arctic military capabilities (Huebert 2010: 2–5). Regarding Russia, Huebert points out that a Russian military recovery as a consequence of its economic recovery is to be expected, and that much of Russia's capabilities for strategic deterrence happen to be located in the Arctic. In contrast to Borgerson (2008), he does not attribute this to Russian scheming, and his 2010 article agrees with the reassurers (see below) that all Arctic states stand to lose from a confrontation (Huebert 2010: 22–23). Instead, the article focuses more on the dangers of a zero-sum security dilemma style arms rush in the Arctic, stemming from militarisation.

Huebert has expanded upon this line of thinking in newspaper articles following the Ukraine Crisis, stressing the dangers of spillover. In an opinion piece in *The Globe and the Mail* already in April 2014⁸, he argues that spillover from Ukraine is likely to have very negative implications for cooperation, even if Russia initially chose not to respond in the Arctic due to their special interest in a stable Arctic (a key argument often made by the reassurers, see below). In a 2019 article, he expands upon this line of argument based on the most recent increased Russian and American focus on the region arguing that what may have looked like 'Arctic exceptionalism' in the 1990s and 2000s was merely the consequence of temporary Russian weakness (Huebert 2019).

Indeed, most writings from a 'warners' perspective after the Ukraine Crisis naturally emphasise that crisis as a critical part of their argument. Unlike Huebert, Conley and Rohloff (2015: 1) stresses Russian behaviour in Ukraine as an example of Moscow's willingness to use military force in general, which

coupled with the gradual Russian military build-up in the Arctic should give reasons for worry in that region. A similar analysis can be found in Wilhelmsen and Gjerde (2018) that argues that Russia's behaviour in Ukraine fundamentally led to an othering of Western perceptions of Russia (2018: 391–393). However, though more recent, the US shift in policy is also afforded importance in much of the most recent work on the Arctic. Bertel Heurlin (2019: 12–13) argues that the region may have been peaceful but that, after Mike Pompeo's speech and the US shift, it changed almost overnight to a region based on conflict, while Conley⁹ criticises the US shift for being too insignificant in terms of committing capabilities to the Arctic.

Recently, the focus on China as a strategic rival to the US in the Arctic has also been gaining ground. Some initial work on China started out pointing to whether assertive tones from some Chinese academics and high-level officers might mean that China could adopt a more forceful Arctic strategy in the future (Blunden 2012: 126). In this regard, some researchers focused on China in the Arctic point out that there is currently a possible mismatch between official Chinese rhetoric and actual Arctic ambitions, and that Chinese investment interests and increased involvement in the region are arousing suspicion (Brady 2017)¹⁰. Even among those pessimistic about Arctic cooperation, significant differences exist as to the role of China. For example, Huebert (2019) sees China – referring to itself as a 'near-Arctic state' (a term vehemently rejected by the US) – as a growing peer competitor in the Arctic that will challenge both the US and Russia in the long run. On the other hand, others such as Heurlin (2019) argue that China's geographical remoteness and lack of will to make the region a top geopolitical priority will make it unlikely that the country will try to challenge the US 'in its own backyard'. Neither Huebert nor Heurlin spends much time on Sino-Russian alignment in the Arctic, with Huebert simply assuming that the Arctic will turn tripolar eventually. In contrast, Rebecca Pincus (2020) focuses on how US actions might contribute to driving Russia and China together. Thus, she argues, that US simultaneous counteraction against the two might push them closer together whereas treating them as separate challengers would leave more room to drive them apart.

These writers generally share the view that the Arctic has either never been particularly special, or at the very least is special no longer, and that regional dynamics of power are best understood by assuming zero-sum strategic thinking with the great powers. For some, this is tied to a loss of confidence in

the Russian and/or Chinese regimes (Borgerson 2008; Conley & Rohloff 2015; 2019; Wilhelmsen & Gjerde 2018; Pincus 2020)¹¹, while others assume the great powers have followed zero sum logic all along (Blunden 2012; Huebert 2010; 2019; Heurlin 2019)¹².

'The reassurers'

These views do not stand uncontested, however. One of the most important and long-term critics of 'the warners' is Professor Oran Young of UC Santa Barbara. In 2009 following the debates about the Russian flag-planting, he argued that the potential for conflict in the Arctic had at that point been largely exaggerated. In his 2009 article he notes, first, that the problems themselves are smaller than sometimes presented by 'the warners'. Navigation in the straits is unlikely to become economically vital for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the resources in the contested areas in the Arctic are very hard to access (Young 2009: 74–75).¹³ Taking this argument further, Kathrin Keil concludes in 2013 – based on a simple estimate of both the quantity of oil and gas to be found in the Russian sector, as well as on an analysis of the relative importance of the Arctic resources for the Russian economy – that Russia has, by far, the greatest intrinsic interest in the Arctic (Keil 2013: 166). Implicitly, this fact downplays the potency of the zero-sum games feared by 'the warners', simply on the grounds that the prize is much smaller than they sometimes assume. Furthermore, Young (2009) argues that while the governance mechanisms in the Arctic certainly could and should be improved, we have no reason at this point to believe that such a task would be unsurmountable (Young 2009: 75, 77, 79–81). Indeed, as Canadian researcher Michael Byers (2013) points out, the Arctic Council, the most important forum for dialogue in the Arctic region, has been gradually strengthening over the years (Byers 2013: 252–53). Along similar lines Heather Exner-Pirot (2013) argues that interdependence of environmental issues creates favourable conditions for cooperation in the Arctic, while Byers points to the climate itself as inhospitable to conflict (Byers 2013: 249).

Perhaps the most surprising inclusion among 'the reassurers' are the more recent writings of Scott Borgerson. Interestingly, it seems that Borgerson has changed his 2008 view regarding the Arctic in recent years. Thus, in a 2013 article, 'The coming Arctic boom', Borgerson argues that his own 2008 predictions regarding rising tensions have not come true. Borgerson argues

that this is due to the fact that the crisis mood of the late 2000s spurred actors into taking positive steps to resolve difficulties and disagreements in the Arctic. Ultimately, '...a shared interest in profit has trumped the instinct to compete over territory' (Borgerson 2013). Borgerson also sees the 2008 Ilulissat summit as a turning point in this regard. At this summit, the five Arctic states with Arctic coastlines, including the US and Russia, managed to reach an understanding with each other to solve their Arctic disputes using international law including UNCLOS. Furthermore, Borgerson argues, some of the thorniest issues among the Arctic states, such as the longstanding Norwegian–Russia disagreements in the Barents Sea, were resolved in 2010 and, in 2011, the Arctic nations managed to use the auspices of the Arctic Council to sign a legally binding treaty for the first time since its inception: namely the 2011 search and rescue agreement (later agreements on how to combat oil spills and on research cooperation followed in 2013 and 2017). This shift in Borgerson's analysis indicates a transformation in his views on the Arctic at a very basic level. Whereas Borgerson's 2008 line of reasoning was based on zero-sum thinking, his newer line of thought suggests that the events of 2008–2013 have led him to gain confidence in 2013 in plus-sum dynamics being possible in the Arctic.

The Ukraine Crisis and the American shift in focus on the Arctic in 2018–2019 have raised important questions regarding the longevity of the analyses of the pre-Ukraine reassurers, mostly concerned with how spillover from great power competition outside the Arctic affects the region. Concerning the role of resources, Keil (2015) largely sticks to her line of argument, also after the onset of the crisis. The Ukraine conflict certainly represents a blow to Arctic stability primarily through the Western sanctions on Russian oil and gas that it has provoked, but Keil remains convinced that Russian oil and gas extraction in the Arctic will pick up speed again in the medium to long term (Keil 2015: 86). This line of argument suggests that Keil remains relatively optimistic about plus-sum thinking on the Russian side regarding the Arctic. Young (2016) also remains fairly optimistic about the future political development in the region. Thus, while he points to the crisis as challenge to regional stability, Young (2016) argues that flexible mechanisms of governance, not least the Arctic Council, and specifically on territorial disputes, UNCLOS's rules for applying for extended continental shelf have, thus far, proved remarkably effective (Young 2016: 234–237). Byers (2017) acknowledges some setbacks in Arctic cooperation after Ukraine, but contends that it demonstrates the resilience of

Arctic governance that many areas of cooperation, for example within search and rescue, fisheries, continental shelves, navigation and in the Arctic Council, persisted (Byers 2017: 376). Also, while not excusing Russian military build-up, Byers argues that it might also be at least partly explained by, first, the Russian need to rebuild military facilities allowed to fall into disrepair with the fall of the Soviet Union, second, as protection for the Russian strategic deterrent – especially its nuclear armed submarines – which happen to be located in the Arctic and, third, by the general Russian need for more operational capability in the Arctic as the region opens up due to global warming (Byers 2017: 385–386). Similarly, Heather Exner-Pirot (2020) argues that the Ukraine Crisis represented the greatest threat yet to Arctic stability, but that the region managed to compartmentalise most of the conflict between Russia and the West and keep any effect on Arctic affairs to a minimum (Exner-Pirot 2020: 316–17). More optimistically, Lassi Heininen (2019) sums up his continued analysis of the Arctic as an exceptionally peaceful region by attributing this to special interests in cooperation on, among other things, environmental issues, and on that basis that ‘the high geopolitical stability of the Arctic, is conscious, manmade and resilient.’ (Heininen 2019: 231).

Common to these writers is the assumption of a plus-sum dynamics in the Arctic. Central is the assertion that the limited goods to be had in the Arctic, primarily natural resources and undivided continental shelves, are not all that significant in value compared to the common interests the Arctic states share in taking care of common problems in the Arctic related to safeguarding and governing a still harsh environment. In terms of conflict potential, spillover, for example from Ukraine, is a serious worry in this line of thought, but one that can be managed by strengthening the institutions of the Arctic region.

‘The worried’

Naturally, when attempting to divide a research field into two differing camps, one usually ends up with a considerable portion of research that falls in between, and which tries to transcend and move beyond the two poles of the debate by incorporating views from both camps. Taking up such middle positions almost always entails making some sort of trade-off, usually in the form of giving up some degree of theoretical parsimony and ontological clarity for increased explanatory power. International relations in the Arctic is no exception, and the field has a considerable number of scholars, whose

rather moderate conclusions inevitably fall between the two camps outlined above, primarily because they recognise most of the basic assumptions from both camps as valid under certain circumstances. As such, lacking a clear unifying core, a broad review of this group makes little sense. Here we will focus instead only on works dealing with spillover conflict and its importance for 'Arctic exceptionalism' and/or the state of affairs of cooperation or conflict in the Arctic.

Finnish researchers Juha Käpylä and Harri Mikkola (2015) also look at the negative impacts of recent events on Arctic cooperation. They focus on the Arctic Sunrise crisis over the arrest of Greenpeace protesters in Russian Arctic waters as well as on the spillover from the Ukraine Crisis, and they suggest that these events have damaged 'Arctic exceptionalism'. In this regard, the Sunrise crisis exposed Russian willingness to ignore UNCLOS regulations (Käpylä & Mikkola 2015: 11). Even worse, however, they argue that the Ukraine Crisis has damaged Arctic cooperation in several ways: it has created distrust of Russian intentions, damaged established practices of cooperation and undermined regional organisations committed to Arctic stability. Updating their position in 2019, they add that a substantial US policy change could intensify the situation (Käpylä & Mikkola 2019: 162–163). Overall, this leads them to argue that the Arctic remains an exceptional region in some respects, and conditions for plus-sum cooperation do still remain, but less so than they used to and they are also, arguably, vulnerable to the kind of US initiatives that we have seen in 2019.

The concept of spillover is treated in detail by Rahbek-Clemmensen (2017), who finds that the first 18 months of the Ukraine Crisis were characterised by spillover to the Arctic, but less so than to other regions, and that the West was generally more assertive than Russia in the Arctic (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017: 9–10). The newer US initiatives are treated in Olesen & Sørensen (2019), who see them as a significant escalation of special importance to the small states in the Arctic with security ties to the US, who will now have to manage the expectations of their great power ally regarding their Arctic policies (Olesen & Sørensen 2019: 39). They are also briefly treated by Wilson Rowe et al. (2020), who see Pompeo's Rovaniemi speech of May 2019 as an indicator that the Arctic might not be immune to the general great power rivalry between the US and China in particular.

The academic debates 2007-2020 and the way ahead

Academic debates are seldom conclusive. The debates about Arctic conflict potential are no exception. However, it is possible to map rough contours of the debates since 2007. As such, the Russian flag-planting of 2007 may have triggered a sudden surge in attention on the Arctic, but, as also argued by Käpylä and Mikkola (2019: 155), the Ilulissat declaration of 2008 and the ongoing continuation of Arctic cooperation 2009–2014 gave much credence to the points of ‘the reassurers’ in the period. Much of this has to do with the fact that plus-sum thinking was promoted by relatively concrete and tangible benefits from cooperating and the relatively little at stake in terms of resources.

The Ukraine Crisis, however, did much to complicate Arctic security. On the one hand, most of the field acknowledge the point that the Ukraine Crisis has shown that the Arctic was not completely isolated from the rest of the world, most significantly since it proved the willingness of the West to impose sanctions on Russian oil and gas in the Arctic and to suspend military cooperation with Russia in the Arctic as punishment for the Ukraine Crisis. The question then is simply how serious such setbacks are seen to be compared to other factors such as continued Russian restraint and continued commitment to Arctic institutions.

To this comes the question of how to evaluate the more gradual build-up of Russian military capabilities in the Arctic over the past decade, or how seriously to evaluate the gradual rise in Chinese interest in investment possibilities in the Arctic as a ‘near-Arctic’ state. Regarding Russia, the key challenges consist in whether or not to accept the arguments offered by ‘the reassurers’ that Russia’s motives are primarily defensively orientated and that Russian behaviour in the Arctic may stand apart from its behaviour elsewhere. Similarly, with China, the challenge lies in determining whether China might attempt to use presence in the Arctic, beginning with mining or research, as a lever for exerting further political influence.¹⁴ Finally, the consequences of the recent rise in US interest in the Arctic are as of yet unknown, both when it comes to what it might mean for the overall security situation in the Arctic, but also, with regards to what the small Arctic states can expect from their great power ally. However, recent US hardening of rhetoric in strategy papers as well as public statements suggests that a reaction of some sort is building up. The Trump administration’s recent

attempt to buy Greenland suggests the potentially unpredictable nature of that response. The small Arctic states seemingly must be prepared for anything.

So, what can be expected in the Arctic in the coming years? Based on the main positions in the literature it is possible to formulate two different scenarios for Arctic security.¹⁵

Scenarios for future Arctic cooperation or conflict

Scenario one: the return of geopolitics

Following ‘the warners’, we would expect to see the end of the period of ‘Arctic exceptionalism’. The US will continue and strengthen its focus on the Arctic and begin to invest additional resources into new Arctic bases and Arctic-capable military equipment. Whether the US has a republican or democratic president is unlikely to change the general US approach to great power competition in the region. A democratic departure from ‘America First’ might make the US pressure on its smaller Arctic allies more refined and less bombastic, but it is unlikely to make it disappear. Furthermore, in *scenario 1*, Russia will continue and accelerate its military build-up in the Arctic, while China – in an uneasy alignment with Russia – will seek more long-term influence in the Arctic through increased foreign investments. This does not equate to actual military conflict in the Arctic, which even ‘the warners’ do not predict as a likely outcome. But it means that the great powers will begin to prepare for conflict by increased militarisation of the Arctic, and it means that competition between the great powers, based on zero-sum logic, rather than cooperation will be the dominating dynamics in the Arctic. Furthermore, with competition and militarisation will inevitably come the risk of unintended conflict situations. Arctic cooperation may continue to function in niche areas where common interests are strong enough, but ‘Arctic exceptionalism’ as such, will no longer characterise the Arctic.

Scenario two: the perseverance of 'Arctic exceptionalism'

Following 'the reassurers', this scenario sees 'Arctic exceptionalism' pulling through. 'Arctic exceptionalism' will not be able to muster quite the same strength that it had before great power tensions between the US, Russia and China broke out, but following a plus-sum logic, the Arctic states will opt for insulating the Arctic region from their conflicts elsewhere. The West will avoid further targeted sanctions against Russia in the Arctic for non-Arctic reasons, and Russia will limit its more demonstrative exercises in the Arctic and limit its military build-up to match its defensive needs. New initiatives – much like the 2008 Ilulissat summit and declaration – might be launched to strengthen the institutional setup for handling security in the Arctic. Existing cooperation on search and rescue, research and environmental matters will continue and be expanded and will increase trust among Arctic states.

The Kingdom of Denmark in the Arctic

In the following, we shift focus on to how to manage the scenarios presented above as a small state. Focusing on the Kingdom of Denmark, this section outlines likely responses to the scenarios based on the assumptions that, first, the Danish Government wants to maximise gains and minimise losses in the Arctic connected with new external developments in the region – i.e. a rise in great power rivalry – and, second, that the Danish Government wants to keep the Kingdom together.¹⁶ The section concludes on what the Kingdom can do to try to steer the process in a favourable direction.

The Kingdom of Denmark's most recent Arctic policy was formulated in 2011 when the idea of 'Arctic exceptionalism' was arguably at its highest. This is reflected in the wording, which underlines the need to work for maintaining the principals of international law in the Arctic and 'to *ensure* [my emphasis] a peaceful, secure and collaborative Arctic.' (Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands 2011). This should come to no surprise to students of international politics. It is widely accepted in the literature that – all things being equal – small states have a particularly strong interest in peace and stability in their regions for the simple reason that they are ill-suited for handling conflict, least of all with neighbouring great powers (Andersen 2019; Petersen 2010; Keohane 1969).

For the Kingdom of Denmark, this interest is further reinforced by the fact that the Kingdom is vulnerable to internal dispute over the foreign and security policy line between the three parts of the Kingdom of Denmark, i.e. Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. As such, while popular in all three parts of the Kingdom, the idea of a stable peaceful Arctic, shielded from the antagonisms the great powers might harbour against each other elsewhere, has been especially popular in Greenland and the Faroe Islands (Olesen et al. 2020; Jacobsen & Gad 2017). Furthermore, both Greenland and the Faroe Islands have economic interests in foreign trade, above all with regard to fish and fish-related products, and in securing foreign investments, in particular in infrastructure and in the extractive industries. Much of such trade and investments comes from Russia and China, and economic considerations for Greenland and the Faroe Islands in this regard could come to increasingly clash with the Kingdom's security interests as great power rivalry in the Arctic intensifies (Olesen et al. 2020).¹⁷ Securing a common Kingdom approach to the Arctic would therefore be more challenging in a *scenario 1* than in a *scenario 2* situation.

As such, in *scenario 2*, the situation would be relatively simple for the Kingdom of Denmark and much in line with the 2011 Arctic strategy. Since 'Arctic exceptionalism' and cooperation in the Arctic are key Danish interests to safeguard, it follows that the Kingdom should do whatever it can to keep the Arctic exceptional. This was the main reason behind why the Kingdom of Denmark chose to arrange the Ilulussat summit of 2008, which had the primary purpose of finding a solution for handling the continental shelf claims between the five Arctic coastal states peacefully and in accordance with UNCLOS.¹⁸ Other options would be to strengthen Danish involvement in cooperation on low politics issues such as search and rescue, environmental protection and research, and to focus on the peaceful economic and societal development of the Arctic parts of the Kingdom. Such initiatives would likely need to take place in close cooperation between the three parts of the Kingdom – Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. In *scenario 2*, increasing the energy put into such efforts can help safeguard 'Arctic exceptionalism' in a time of crisis. Prioritising them furthermore serves the purpose of strengthening the internal cohesion of the Kingdom since 'Arctic exceptionalism' is widely popular in Greenland (Jacobsen & Gad 2017), and since increased investments in a higher service level in the Faroe Islands and Greenland are likely to be well received by the populations there (FMN 2016).

In *scenario 1*, the Kingdom would need to consider other interests beyond working to salvage as much of the Arctic cooperative order as possible. This means preparing to deal with a resurgent Russia and the increased maritime and flight activity this may bring near or within the Kingdom's borders. And it would mean preparing for increased Chinese economic activity within the Kingdom, especially in Greenland and the Faroe Islands, that may at times be politically rather than commercially motivated. That could risk opening up these countries for later Chinese economic pressure.¹⁹ Of most direct importance for the Kingdom, however, would be US reactions to the new situation. This is connected to wider alliance dynamics theory concerning alliance commitment and freeriding. According to this line of reasoning, small states cannot hope to affect the outcome of great power conflict. Therefore, the primary concern of the small state becomes not to counter the threat from a hostile great power – seen to be impossible for the small state to do – but instead to do enough to satisfy those alliance partners that guarantee its fundamental security interests (Olson & Zeckhauser 1966; Ringsmose 2009).

For the Kingdom of Denmark that means doing enough to satisfy the expectations of the US because Danish security ultimately rests on the US security guarantee through NATO. This is true, even as Danish politicians and foreign policy officials are worried about the willingness of President Trump to honour alliances, for the simple reason that no other power exists at the moment that would be capable of replacing the US as security guarantor for the Kingdom of Denmark. In *scenario 1*, US expectations are likely to be connected with, first, ensuring domain awareness of the Kingdom's territory, primarily concerning Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Indeed, the US has already expressed its wish for Denmark to deal with this problem (Cammarata & Lippman 2020; Sands 2019).²⁰ Secondly, the US might want to obtain new bases in Greenland and/or to expand and upgrade its existing base in Thule. Historically, such requests have been difficult for the Kingdom to turn down, and in *scenario 1*, it will likely be very hard for the Kingdom not to comply with such requests.²¹ For those reasons, such development will likely put pressure on Danish, Greenlandic and Faroe politicians to come together and agree internally within the Kingdom on proactive steps to handle US concerns, in order to maximise Kingdom influence on concrete measures taken on the ground (see also Olesen et al. 2020).

On the flip side, increased geographical importance of territory can also lower the risk of abandonment and potentially heighten the small power's bargaining power vis-à-vis the great power ally (see Mouritzen 1991: 220; Ringsmose 2009: 85–86). In the Danish foreign policy literature, this kind of dynamics – especially concerning the Cold War period – has been summed up with a reference to a so-called Greenland card, and to a lesser extent a Faroe card (On Greenland, see DUPI 1997; DIIS 2005; Henriksen & Rahbek-Clemmensen 2017. On the Faroe Islands, see Johansen 1999; 2011: 295–298; Olesen & Villaume 2005: 318–321; Olesen et al. 2020). A small indicator of this can be seen in the April 2020 decision by the US to announce a US\$12.1 million aid package to Greenland.²² Nevertheless, the gains to be had from these dynamics are unlikely to be significant enough to balance the increased insecurity and increased defence expenditures for the Kingdom of Denmark caused by great power rivalry in the Arctic.

The Kingdom of Denmark is as of 2020 in the process of updating its Arctic strategy. In this regard, a core priority for the Kingdom going forward will likely remain to keep trying to push developments in a *scenario 2* direction. At the same time, however, the Kingdom will have to prepare to be able to handle the great power pressures that it will likely face in a *scenario 1* situation. In practice, of course, the situation might well develop into a hybrid between the two scenarios. Therefore, even if the 'Arctic exceptionalism' of *scenario 2* cannot be fully maintained, it is still in the interest of the Kingdom to support and to maintain as many elements of it as possible. Conversely, even the possibility of a *scenario 1* – or of developments encompassing elements of a *scenario 1* – means that dealing with this will also be a core priority for the new strategy. Most urgent in this regard is likely to be the need to come up with a way to manage American pressure and influence in Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

The Kingdom is not alone, however, in dealing with these dilemmas in the Arctic. Indeed, the other small and medium sized states in the Arctic – Canada, Norway, Iceland, Finland and Sweden – face similar challenges, and the Kingdom might be able to benefit from working together with these countries (Olesen & Sørensen 2019; Olesen et al. 2020).

Concluding thoughts

When determining conflict potential in the Arctic, much depends on basic assumptions about zero-sum vs. plus-sum competition, and on whether the Arctic is conceptualised as a region (mostly) set apart from the troubles of the rest of the world. Because developments in the Arctic have been relatively multifaceted in recent years, clear conclusions are hard to draw. However, it seems clear from the works reviewed here that ‘reassurer’ ideas about ‘Arctic exceptionalism’ and potential for plus-sum cooperation have generally weakened in recent years. The primary reasons are twofold. Firstly, spillover from the Ukraine Crisis from 2014 and onwards. In this regard, Western sanctions on Russian oil and gas and the general downscaling of cooperation in some Arctic fora for cooperation stand out as the most problematic challenges to regional stability. Secondly, the weakening can also be attributed to the gradual Russian military build-up in the Arctic, as well as the increasing Chinese interest in the region, and, most importantly, to the recent US response to these developments in 2018–2019.

On the other hand, however, the resource craze that some of the early ‘warners’ and much of mainstream media predicted back in 2007–2008 has largely failed to materialise. In fact, even if we assume the Russian strategy in the Arctic to be zero-sum, such an assumption should not, in itself, lead us to conclude that Russia cannot be trusted in the Arctic. Instead, Russia may actually have the most to gain from a stable Arctic due to the significant resource potential of the Russian Arctic. This means that even zero-sum thinking on the Russian side could lead to robust Russian support for a stable Arctic, and it means that Russian zero-sum behaviour in Ukraine cannot necessarily be used to draw inferences about Russian behaviour in the Arctic. Indeed, zero-sum thinking or not, this would largely seem to correspond with Russia’s continued commitment to UNCLOS and the Arctic Council. Naturally, should the UNCLOS Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) turn out to rule against Russian interests in the Arctic, this dynamic will be challenged. However, even if this was to be the case, such a setback for Russia concerning the delimitation of the continental shelf under the Polar Sea would still have to be seen relative to Russia’s interest in stability for exploiting the far more valuable uncontested parts of the Russian Arctic.

That means that spillover from great power rivalry elsewhere in the world should be considered the number one threat to Arctic peaceful 'exceptionalism'. Conflict in the Arctic, if it should come, is therefore not likely to be about the Arctic. Furthermore, 'the reassurers' can rightly point out that many of the cooperative structures of the Arctic, above all within the Arctic Council, have largely managed to continue their work. That means that mechanisms remain in place in the Arctic that can contribute to lessen the impact of great power rivalry on the region, and it means that the region should enjoy good prospects for renewed exceptionalism if and when the great powers were to resolve their differences elsewhere.

So where does this leave the Kingdom of Denmark? If 'Arctic exceptionalism' is salvageable (*scenario 2*) then this is vastly preferable for the Kingdom. It has nothing to gain and much to lose from a more conflictual Arctic region. If not, however, the Kingdom will need to deal with a more difficult international environment in the Arctic (*scenario 1*). Of course, developments characterised by elements from both scenarios are likely. However, for the moment, there are many signs that we may be moving towards some version of *scenario 1*. Furthermore, since the Kingdom of Denmark is much more susceptible to pressure from its US ally, than it is to threatening behaviour from either Russia or China, the country will likely have to deal with many of the challenges of *scenario 1* based on US policies rather than based on any holistic view of the security situation itself. Therefore, based on the US change of policy 2018–2019, it is likely that the Kingdom will have to begin to deal with at least some aspects of *scenario 1* relatively soon. 'Arctic exceptionalism' might not yet be dead, but it is definitely under pressure.

Notes

- 1 Ph.D. Mikkel Runge Olesen is a senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). The author would like to thank the editors and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments and suggestions. The author would also like to thank Jakub Godzimirski, Mikkola Harri and Käpylä Juha for comments and suggestions on earlier drafts. The author remains solely responsible for any errors or omissions. Research for this article was supported by DIIS as part of its 'Defence and Security Studies'.
- 2 Staalesen, Atle (2017). 'NATO trains anti-submarine warfare in northern waters', *The Barents Observer*.
<https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/06/nato-trains-anti-submarine-warfare-northern-waters>
- 3 The idea for the names, as well as some early paragraphs, was tried out in an earlier working paper by the author (Olesen 2014) while a few other paragraphs were also used in a grant proposal by the author. In the working paper, however, 'the worried' were called 'the inbetweeners'.
- 4 See also Brosnan et al. 2011, p. 174 for a table of google hits on Arctic cooperation and conflict respectively, showing a varied picture with conflict hits overtaking cooperation hits for most of the 2000s. Also, see Wilson Rowe 2013 for an analysis of cooperation and conflict narratives in media and state discourses.
- 5 This group includes the group of researchers that has sometimes been referred to as 'alarmist' – see for instance Young 2009, p. 81. I avoid the term in this paper, as I find it too politically loaded for the purpose of giving an objective overview of the literature on conflict potential in the Arctic.
- 6 This distinction is well-known within IR playing a key role in IR debates between zero-sum focused realists and plus-sum focused liberalists (Moravcsik 2010, 4).
- 7 It lays no claim to being exhaustive, but does attempt to lay out some of the main lines of argument found in the literature. The Arctic literature written in English has been selected for reason of focus, as well as for linguistic reasons, acknowledging that the debates may well play out differently in Russian or Chinese.
- 8 Huebert, Rob (2014). 'How Russia's move into Crimea upended Canada's Arctic strategy.' *The Globe and the Mail*.
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/how-russias-move-into-crimea-upended-canadas-arctic-strategy/article17766065/>
- 9 Conley, Heather (2019). 'The Arctic Spring: Washington is sleeping through changes at the top of the world', *Foreign Affairs*.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/commons/2019-09-24/arctic-spring>
- 10 See also Peng, Jingchao (2015). 'The inevitable dilemma of China's Arctic adventure'. *UoN Blogs/China Policy Institute Blog*, University of Nottingham.
<https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2015/03/19/the-inevitable-dilemma-of-chinas-arctic-adventure/>

- 11 See also Peng, Jingchao (2015). 'The inevitable dilemma of China's Arctic adventure'. *UoN Blogs/China Policy Institute Blog*, University of Nottingham.
<https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2015/03/19/the-inevitable-dilemma-of-chinas-arctic-adventure/>
- 12 See also Huebert, Rob (2014). 'How Russia's move into Crimea upended Canada's Arctic strategy'. *The Globe and the Mail*.
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/how-russias-move-into-crimea-upended-canadas-arctic-strategy/article17766065/>
- 13 Oran Young also mapped much of the earliest developments of the Arctic cooperative order in the early 1990s (Young 1992, 25–29).
- 14 The recent case of possible Chinese pressure applied to the Faroe Islands to choose Huawei for 5G could be an example of things to come, if the Chinese were to pursue an assertive strategy (see e.g. Ritzau 2019, 'Færøsk MFer: Valg af 5G-leverandør er kommerciel beslutning', *Berlingske*.
<https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/faeroesk-mfer-valg-af-5g-leverandoer-er-kommerciel-beslutning>).
- 15 The definitions of the Arctic employed in the literature reviewed above as well as in Arctic policy papers and journalistic articles is diverse and often implicit. For an overview of the most common definitions of the Arctic, see The Arctic Portlet (s.d.: <https://portlets.arcticportal.org/where-is-the-arctic>). For the purpose of the rest of this article, a clear definition needs to be adopted. As part of the objective of the second part of this paper is to discuss the implications of developments in Arctic security matters for the Kingdom of Denmark, it is most feasible to adopt an inclusive definition of the Arctic that encompasses all parts of the Kingdom of Denmark that might be considered Arctic, namely both the Faroe Islands and Greenland. On this basis, the definition used in the Arctic Human Development Report (AHDR) will be adopted (Young & Einarsson 2004, 17–18).
- 16 Other assumptions, such as a Danish perspective focused on getting rid of the Danish block grants to Greenland and the Faroe Islands, will lead to different results. Similarly, an analysis from the perspective of the Greenlandic or Faroe governments would be different, especially depending on how big a priority – and what timeframe – is assigned to seeking full independence from Denmark.
- 17 The dilemma is heightened by the need for stable conditions for business in Greenland. Indeed, a report by the Danish Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs and the Government of Greenland from 2015 points to this argument as a reason for the Greenlandic decision to formulate a five-year strategy for resource extraction (See Erhvervs- og Vækstministeriet & Naalakkersuisut (2015). *Fremme af kommercielt erhvervssamarbejde mellem Grønland og Danmark*.
<https://em.dk/media/9338/fremme-af-kommercielt-erhvervssamarbejde-mellem-gr-nland-og-danmark.pdf>).

- 18 As an added benefit, the five states managed to signal to the rest of the world that they had the situation under control, and that an Arctic treaty was unnecessary (see Rahbek-Clemmensen & Thomasen 2018).
- 19 This is already an existing worry for the Danish defence intelligence service (FE 2019, 16–17).
- 20 See Cammarata, Sarah & Daniel Lippman (2020). 'Trump's budget gives Greenland another try'. Politico, 19 February 2020.
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/02/19/trump-budget-greenland-115961>; Sands, Carla (2019). 'The US view on the Arctic' – As delivered at the Annual Security Policy Conference at Christiansborg, 15 November 2019.
<https://dk.usembassy.gov/the-us-view-on-the-arctic/>
- 21 During the Cold War the Kingdom did choose to say no to certain American/NATO requests. Danish defence spending was relatively low throughout the Cold War, and Denmark proved willing to withstand considerable American criticism when pursuing the so-called footnote policy of the 1980s (see DIIS 2005; Ringsmose 2009). However, on matters of crucial importance to the US, Denmark did not reject the US. The most famous example of this is the so-called H.C. Hansen note of 1957 (marked top secret and unknown to the public until the 1990s), whereby the Danish Prime Minister silently acquiesced to a US request for Danish leave to station nuclear weapons in Greenland (DUPI 1997). More recently, the Danish War Inquiry (Krigsudredningen) reached a similar result concerning Danish possibilities for rejecting the US when asked to participate in the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq (Mariager & Wivel 2019).
- 22 Krog, Andreas (2020). 'USA's svar på Danida involveret i hjælp til Grønland'. Altinget.
<https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/usas-svar-paa-danida-involveret-i-hjaelp-til-groenland>

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Chapter 4

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