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Past, Present, and Future: The Role of the Cold War in Legitimising Danish Foreign Policy Activism

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Introduction

The Cold War has continued to cast long shadows over Danish foreign policy discourse in the 2000s. Even though new security problems have emerged, the Liberal-led government that held power from 2001-2011 used the Cold War history to legitimize and justify Denmark's controversial participation in the war in Iraq in 2003. The government engaged in political use of history and claimed that the opposition parties and especially the Social Democrats (SD) failed morally, and that they sided with dictatorships against democracy by not supporting the invasion. The argumentation made a historical analogy between the present and what was perceived as historical examples of political failures and immoral decisions in Danish foreign policy history. The two examples were the contested Danish policy of collaboration with Nazi Germany under during the Second World War and the so-called Danish footnote politics in the 1980s during the Cold War. The ambition was to place the past in the contemporary game between the government and the opposition, and the strategy was to establish an uncritical, direct historical analogy between the present and the past in order to promote or legitimize the decision to join the American-led coalition war in Iraq and discredit political opponents.

The militarized activist turn in the security policy in the 00s and especially the Iraq War has attracted considerable research interest from historians as well as political scientists.¹

¹ See Rasmus Brun Pedersen, "Danish Foreign Policy Activism: A Case of Differences or Degree?," *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no. 3 (2012): 331–349; Sten Rynning: "Denmark as a strategic actor? Danish Security Policy after 11 September", Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2003, København: DIIS, s. 23-46; Kristian Sjøby Kristensen (red.) (2013) Danmark i krig: demokrati, politik og strategi i den militære aktivisme. København: Djøf / Jurist- og Økonomforbundet. For an oversight of the literature see Rasmus Brun Pedersen &

Much of the historical research literature either demonstrates how the political use of history was conducted by the Liberal government² or focuses on certain revisionist characteristics of the extended use of investigation commissions.³ Nikolaj Petersen has in broader analysis of the period identified what he labels a *right winged revisionist program* that was launched by liberal politicians in order to confront the SD and the Social Liberals.⁴ This article follows Petersens understanding where revisionism is defined as “the process by which historians have consistently reconsidered interpretations of past events, movements, and personalities. A number of factors ensure this process: new information acquired through research into recently accessioned documents; the posing of new questions; the utilization of new and at times more sophisticated methods...the relative detachment provided by chronological distance from the particular event under study; or new insights gained from the impact of seminal thinkers”.⁵

His analysis describes the anatomy of this program and how it was used strategically against the opposition. He points out how the Cold War past was reintroduced in contemporary Danish politics in the 00s as a political means to “discipline” the opposition. While the implications and results of the foreign policy revisionism is debated there seems to be a relatively well established position in the Danish foreign policy literature that have

Karen Gram-Skjoldager “Brud eller kontinuitet? International aktivisme i dansk udenrigspolitik 2001-2011. En tværfaglig forskningsstatus”. *Historisk tidsskrift* (forthcoming 2015 Volume 2).

² Rosanna Farbøl, “Kunsten at lægge historien til rette. AFR og opgøret med den danske udenrigspolitiske tradition,” *Temp – tidsskrift for historie*, no. 3 (2012): 65–89; and Rosanna Farbøl, “Irakkrigen og dens historiske legitimering,” *Slagmark*, no. 60 (2011): 73–87.

³ Thorsten Borring Olesen, “Truth on Demand: Denmark and the Cold War,” in *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2006*, eds. Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2006), 80–113.

⁴ Nikolaj Petersen, “Kampen om Den Kolde Krig i dansk politik og forskning,” *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 109, no. 1 (2009): 154–204.

⁵ “Revisionism”, *US Foreign Policy Encyclopedia*, The Gale Group

identified a network of scholars and promoted by pundits and politicians that based on a conservative / liberal foundation tried to reinterpret or critical evaluate the mainstream interpretation of the Danish Cold War history.⁶

While the literature so far primarily has focused on the *external* function of the political use of history by the government vis-à-vis the SD-led opposition as a disciplining tool, the *internal* role of the culture war in bridging the ideological differences and uniting the governing coalition between the Liberal and Conservative minority government and the Danish People's Party (DPP) has largely been ignored. The article contributes to the literature by pointing out that the political use of history in respect to the Iraq War became a vital instrument in creating a common ideological framework among the coalition partners and instrumentally helped the nationalistic DPP support an offensive Liberal-inspired variant of foreign policy activism. This variant was originally at odds with DPP's traditional emphasis on state sovereignty and the right to no interference, which had guided its opposition to central elements of the foreign policy activism of the 1990s. The article suggests that the former governments historical revisionism aimed at confronting the SD and the Social Liberals and their "cultural relativism" inspired the DPP to change position on foreign policy because supporting the government's version of foreign policy activism was considered part of the domestic value struggle. The article demonstrates how particular domestic factors shaped Danish foreign policy in the 00s and from a comparative perspective offers a domestic based explanation for why Danish foreign policy activism became so militarized during the 00s compared to similar small states, e.g. the other Scandinavian countries, that faced similar external demands.

⁶ The argument has been promoted by Petersen, Kampen: 154-155; Olesen "Thruth on Demand; Farbøl, Kunsten at ligge historien til rette; Hans Branner "Brug og misbrug af den udenrigspolitiske historie, 1 2004: 26-36; Rasmus Brun Pedersen " Revanchisme og revisionisme i dansk udenrigspolitik, Politica, 45:3 September 2013: 344-361; See also the work of Bent Jensen, Ulve, får og vogtere – Den Kolde Krig i Danmark 1945-1991 Bind 1 og 2 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2014) that has been seen as an example on this.

Politics of Memory and the Footnote Period

A insight in the “politics of memory” tradition is that interpretations of the historical past are never neutral, but always a product of a more or less reflected process of those who interpret history.⁷ “Memory” can here be defined as referring to what people remember – or what they think they remember – and to describe efforts by individuals, groups and states to foster or impose memory in the form of interpretations and commemorations of their past.⁸ According to this perspective, it is not a question of understanding an objective past, but rather why and how history is constructed in a given way.⁹ The “historical turn” in contemporary Danish foreign policy is therefore mainly driven by a desire to address this political use of history and often also to correct what is perceived as wrongful interpretations of the past and to counter how the past is politicized and used in a contemporary context.¹⁰ An argument in the “politics of memory” literature is that the construction of a collective memory of the past can be seen as a combination of selecting, promoting or neglecting certain events or time periods or individuals with the ambition to promote certain interests and to legitimize present political viewpoints and actions through a particular interpretation of the past.¹¹ Present political agendas can be projected backwards and are thereby channeled into already established

⁷ Farbøl, “Irakkrigen”; Bernard Eric Jensen, Carsten Tage Nielsen, and Torben Weinreich, *Erindringens og glemslens politik* (Copenhagen: Roskilde Universitetsforlag, 1996).

⁸ Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁹ Farbøl, “Kunsten”: 68.

¹⁰ Olesen, “Truth on Demand”; Thorsten Borring Olesen, “Under the National Paradigm: Cold War Studies and Cold War Politics in Post-Cold War Norden,” *Cold War History*, 8:2 (2008): 189–211; Farbøl, “Irakkrigen”; and Farbøl, “Kunsten”.

¹¹ Klas-Göran Karlsson, “Historiedidaktikk:begrepp, teori och analys,” in *Historien är nu. En introduktion till historiedidaktiken*, eds. Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 25–71).

political agendas in an attempt to achieve political and ideological legitimacy behind contemporary political decisions. Emphasis is often on what the interpreter perceives as morally right or wrong. The selective analysis of the past thus contains a strong normative and political-moral aspect where present norms and standards are used to interpret or judge past actions and events. The gist of the analysis is to create an uncritical, direct historical analogy between the present and the past in order to promote or legitimize contemporary political agendas or viewpoints. Similarly, the reinterpretation of the past can be used to discredit political opponents by creating a narrative in which the past can be used as a negative counterexample to the current political situation.¹² The basic constructivist point is that history is not an objective phenomenon, but is constantly constructed through interpretation and revisionist reinterpretations. Therefore, historical interpretations can be seen as potential contemporary platforms from which political actors can fight and challenge others about how to interpret the past and who will have the power to create dominant narratives that can be used to promote and legitimize certain contemporary political agendas, changes or decisions.

In some respects, Danish foreign policy is an unlikely area for memory politics and political use of history. Given the Danish small state status there is traditionally (despite political differences) broad consensus on the overall ambitions and directions of Danish foreign policy. This means that the area has traditionally levitated above everyday politics in the Folketing.¹³ However, the footnote period from 1982-1988 demonstrated that if the opportunity arose, foreign policy held considerable conflict potential between the government and the opposition. During this period, an alternative majority consisting of the SD, the Social

¹² See Niels Kayser Nielsen, *Historiens forvandlinger – historiebrug fra monumenter til oplevelsesøkonomi* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010); Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Historia som vapen: historiebruk och Sovjetunionens upplösning 1985-1995* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1999).

¹³ Domestic polarization in Danish foreign policy is not unprecedented. See Thorsten Borring Olesen and Poul Villaume, *I blokopdelings tegn 1945-1972. Dansk udenrigspolitik historie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2005).

Liberals (a party that usually backed the government's economic austerity policies during the same period) and the left-wing parties imposed their positions on the conservative/center-right minority government. More specifically, the government was forced to attach critical or dissenting comments to official NATO documents in order to protect what was officially conceived as "Danish" positions or, more accurately, Social Democratic positions, since this party was the prime mover behind mobilizing the opposition parties. These positions were often critical of official NATO decisions and raised reservations regarding Danish support.¹⁴ Thus, the 1980s witnessed a split in the traditional majority consisting of the SD, the Liberals, and the Conservative Party, which had backed Danish security and NATO policies since the beginning of the Cold War.¹⁵ One reason the period continued to play a central role in the memory of Liberal and Conservative politicians is that it gave rise to a great deal of bitterness due to the many parliamentary humiliations where a majority opposed the government in matters of foreign and security policy. From 1982-1988, the alternative majority was able to get 23 parliamentary resolutions adopted on the security area. This resulted in the formulation of nine footnotes, ten opt-outs and three annotations in NATO communiqués.¹⁶ Another reason was that Denmark, in the eyes of Liberals and Conservatives, lost international credibility among their allies due to the ratification of these resolutions. This bitterness continued to play a role among leading liberal and conservative politicians after the

¹⁴ The alternative majority also tabled other far-reaching proposals that the government considered detrimental to Danish security interests and NATO solidarity. This situation was allowed to continue for six years because the government refused to step down when it suffered parliamentary defeats in the Folketing.

¹⁵ Nikolaj Petersen (2012) 'Footnoting' as a political instrument: Denmark's NATO policy in the 1980s, *Cold War History*, 12:2, 295-317; Rasmus Brun Pedersen (2013) 'Footnote Policy' and the Social Democratic Party's Role in Shaping Danish EEC Positions, 1982–1986, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 38:5, 636-657

¹⁶ DIIS 2005. *Danmark under den kolde krig* volume 3: 233 fn1.

alternative majority's electoral defeat in 1988 and has continued to spark discussion and strife in memoirs and newspaper debates.¹⁷

Digging in the Past – Bringing the Cold War to Life

A central figure behind the initial desire to dig into the past and to continue to debate the footnote period was the former chairman of the Liberal party, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, who bore the brunt of footnoting as minister for foreign affairs 1982-1993¹⁸ and on many occasions criticized the SD's behavior during the footnote period for being shortsighted and driven by electoral motivations. One might add that Ellemann-Jensen seemed more focused on revanchism rather than actual revisionism in his writings about the period and later became one of the most ardent critics of the new revisionist agenda encouraged by former Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (AFR).¹⁹ Another leading force was the Liberal Bertel Haarder, who also raised concerns about whether Denmark had lost international prestige and political capital among NATO allies and claimed that Denmark had failed its commitments to its allies.²⁰ Most of the accusations from the Liberals and Conservatives were

¹⁷ Lasse Budtz, *Her stod vi af. Fodnoterne, der skabte historie*, 1998; Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, *Fodfejl*, 2004; Hans Engell, *På Slotsholmen*, 1997, 118-80; Bent Jensen, *Tryk og Tilpasning. Sovjetunionen og Danmark siden 2. verdenskrig*, 1987; Niels Jæger, *. Socialdemokratiet Det Historiske Svigt og venstrefløjen i den kolde krig*, 1999; Kjeld Olesen, "Det var et spørgsmål om balance", *Information*, 29. januar 2000; Erling Olsen, "En note om fodnoter", *På sporet af europæisk sikkerhed*, Atlantsammenslutningen, 1999; Robert Pedersen, *Gør Din Pligt Kræv Din Ret. Erindringer*, 1994, s. 158- 217; Gert Petersen, *Inden for systemet og udenfor. Erindringer*, 1998:274-87, 298-9 and 307-34; Poul Schlüter, *Sikken Et Liv*, 1999, s. 140-53;220-5; Pelle Voigt, *Sejre og fodfejl set i mit bakspejl*, 1999.

¹⁸ Petersen, "Footnoting": 296.

¹⁹ See also Rasmus Brun Pedersen, "Revanchisme og revisionisme i dansk udenrigs- og sikkerhedspolitik?," *Politica*, no. 3 (September 2013): 344–361.

²⁰ For instance Bertel Haarder, *Hvem holdt de med?* (Copenhagen: Peter la Cours Forlag, 1999).

highly charged, and accordingly the footnote period is described as a period in which Denmark “failed” as a NATO ally and as a trustworthy member of the Western security architecture. Some even suggested that by insisting on nuclear-free zones and a critical position towards the USA, Denmark acted as a “useful idiot” for the Warsaw Pact countries. The prime driver behind the revisionism in the late 1990s was however AFR, who became leader of the Liberal party in 1998. A main argument among liberals and conservatives during this period was that it was important for Denmark to emphasize the Atlantic dimension in its foreign and security policy and to prove that Denmark was on the same side as its Alliance partners. They also harbored a deep-felt need to settle old accounts with political opponents from the Cold War period. In a newspaper article, AFR thus wrote that it was

... incredible that the people who committed intellectual and moral betrayal [during the Cold War] have not been held accountable for their words and deeds ... [The] treason was committed by leading members of our society [who] acted as if there was no difference between friend and enemy ... in reality it was a common viewpoint on the political left, in cultural circles and among so-called intellectuals²¹

Later, he gave a more detailed motivation for the need for a general confrontation and reckoning about the period:

... the left-wing representatives simply have to realize that many people of conservative and liberal conviction are still bitter about what they experienced during the Cold War years ... the hour of reckoning draws near. We will settle the account with the forces that served as errand boys for the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. A reckoning with the people who were unable to understand that there is a difference between friends and foes²²

²¹ AFR, “Opgør med medløberne,” *Berlingske Tidende*, February 27, 1997.

²² AFR, “Et opgør med fortiden trænger sig på,” in *Hvem holdt de med?* ed. Bertel Haarder (Copenhagen: Peter la Cours Forlag, 1999), 8.

Among leading Conservative and Liberal politicians, the desire to confront the SD and to hold leading Social Democrats accountable for their actions and viewpoints during the Cold War became manifest by the idea to establish historical commissions to focus on the “internal threats” to Danish security during the Cold War to find out what ‘really’ happened during those years. In 1995, the SD-led government decided to commission the newly established Danish Institute of International Affairs to investigate Danish and American policies concerning the stationing of nuclear weapons in Greenland during the Cold War²³ and Uffe Ellemann-Jensen soon used the occasion to demand a follow-up when the original commission’s report was delivered in 1997. This follow-up report was to focus on the Warsaw Pact’s nuclear plans against Denmark and on its contacts with Danish politicians.²⁴

A more specific demand for a historical investigation that would also focus on the “internal threat” against Danish security was raised by AFR in 1998–1999 when the Social Democratic government decided to establish a new commission to investigate the activities of the Danish Security Intelligence Service (PET) during the Cold War.²⁵ This request was only partially met since the primary task of the PET commission became to investigate whether left-wing activists and politicians had unrightfully been placed under secret surveillance during the Cold War years.²⁶ The Commission was asked to consider both the judicial and the historical dimension of this question. The former aimed at verifying whether PET surveillance of the left wing had been carried out in accordance with the regulations stipulated by the

²³ The purpose was to analyze whether nuclear weapons had been deployed in Greenland during the early years of the Cold War, contrary to the official Danish policy, and whether Danish governments sanctioned it.

²⁴ Petersen “Kampen”: 180.

²⁵ The commission was charged with two major tasks: to examine PET and to describe the outcome of the investigation conducted by PET (see *PET kommissionens beretning* bind 1, 2009: 10-26).

²⁶ *Politiets efterretningsvirksomhed på det politiske område 1945-1989* (Copenhagen: Justitsministeriet Schultz Forlag, 2009).

government and parliament, the latter aimed at establishing the historical background by analyzing activities of political parties, trade union conflicts and radical political-ideological movements throughout the Cold War period.²⁷ The historical dimension was primarily included to persuade the center-right parties to support the investigation, but the main political purpose seemed to be an investigation of PET's surveillance activities.

The Liberals and Conservatives were generally very critical of the PET investigation. They claimed that the commission was "*putting the telescope to its blind eye*" by drawing attention to those who had tried to protect Denmark against Cold War threats rather than to the left-wing groups which, in their view, had threatened it.²⁸ During the spring of 2000, the opposition began to lobby for an additional investigation of the whole conflict and threat scenario facing Denmark during the Cold War. A central element would be an analysis of the internal threat scenario originating in the suspected cooperation between communist regimes and left-wing parties, organizations and individuals.

The effort was partially successful. In 2001, the Social Democratic government gave in and commissioned another (historical) investigation of the Cold War period. AFR argued that the two investigations would supplement each other and offer an adequate picture of Denmark during the Cold War.²⁹ The opposition however remained critical of the remit and wanted to expand the scope of the investigation since they still doubted whether the PET Commission would really bring the activities of left-wing politicians and pundits to light. It was therefore hardly surprising that this question surfaced again in 2001 when the Liberals and the Conservatives formed a minority government with the support of the DPP. Due to the parliamentary situation, the new government was able to mobilize its own majority in the

²⁷ See Olesen, "Truth on Demand".

²⁸ Quoted in Olesen, "Truth on Demand", 83.

²⁹ Olesen, "Truth on Demand": 86

foreign policy area. This meant that an expanded mandate was approved and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) was asked to broaden and shift its focus.³⁰

The increased political pressure meant that the DIIS report was commissioned to concentrate on the footnote period and the “internal threat” from party and organization contacts with Warsaw Pact authorities.³¹ When the four-volume report was published in 2005, it failed to live up to the political (revisionist) expectations, as it took a rather balanced view of the footnote period and failed to disclose foul play with the enemy on the part of the opposition parties. Consequently, the report was denounced as only “preliminary” by the Liberal and Conservative government parties and their ally, the DPP. The DPP was generally skeptical of the DIIS report and the PET commission. As Jesper Langballe of the DPP argued: “Both the PET and the DUPI commissions were politically appointed as an evasive action to prevent the truth from surfacing”.³²

This later led to the establishment of the temporary Centre for Cold War Research, which was set up to write an alternative report. The report was due in March 2014 and was entrusted to Professor Bent Jensen, a long-time advocate of a “right-revisionist” interpretation of foreign policy and a leading critic of the DIIS report as well as the PET report. The reactions indicate that the report did not disappoint since it pointed out that several politicians had had

³⁰ The report had a rather broad focus and was commissioned with five tasks: 1) to describe military threats towards Denmark, 2) to describe salient aspects of Danish security policies, 3) to describe Soviet and East Bloc active measures directed towards Denmark and East Bloc contacts in Denmark, 4) to describe the public debate in Denmark on Danish security policies and 5) to describe Eastern and Western perceptions of Danish security policies.

³¹ I will not go deeper into the treatment of the DIIS report. For an excellent overview see for instance Olesen, “Truth on Demand”, “Under the National Paradigm”; and Petersen, *Kampen*. See also Erik Beukel, *DIIS’ udredning om Danmark under den kolde krig og den efterfølgende mediedebat*, Politologiske skrifter, Vol. 14 (Odense: University of Southern Denmark, 2005).

³² Jesper Langballe, quoted from “Venstrefløjen skal undersøges”, *Politiken*, August 31, 2002.

strong and close contacts with the communist regimes.³³

The Culture War and Revisionism

There were thus many attempts to bring the frontiers from the Cold War back to life in Danish politics. It should be noted that the initial considerations about digging up the past were not coupled to a direct contemporary political agenda but rather seen as a related element in the culture war promoted by liberal politicians as a part of the overall strategy to regain the political power. The Liberal party's ambition was to formulate a dual strategy in which the party moved to the center of the political spectrum on redistributive policies and a more conservative, rightwing position on value politics and immigration policies.³⁴ The short-term goal was to transform the old agricultural party into a modern welfare state-friendly party, which would be able to attract SD voters by conquering new electoral territory. In the short term, the goal was to formulate an electoral strategy that could ensure parliamentary support for a future Liberal-led government and a dominant position,³⁵ which could be ensured through the so-called contract policy.³⁶ The contract policy was seen as a means to reassure the median voters that the party would not launch major Liberal welfare reforms after an election.

From this new platform, the strategy was to launch a "war of values", which would gradually turn the voters in a more liberal direction and thereby, in the long run, secure

³³ Bent Jensen, *Ulve, får og vogtere*.

³⁴ Petersen, "Kampen": 157; Hans Mortensen, *Tid til forandring. Venstres vej til magten*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008): 125-137.

³⁵ Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard, "Kontraktpolitik, kulturkamp og ideologi," *Økonomi og Politik*, 84 (september 2011): 47-62.

³⁶ This strategy was inspired by the 1994 Republican campaign, "Contract with America".

support for more far-reaching liberal reforms of Danish society.³⁷ Already in 1993, as vice-chairman of the Liberal Party AFR wrote about the necessity of a war of political values

... and this struggle must not be fought with economic arguments. Instead, we must launch and win a cultural struggle ... We do not cast off the slave mentality simply by dismantling the social state. It is the very spirit of the people that has to change. I certainly doubt that we can stop the expanding welfare state without a fundamental change of attitude throughout society. Actually there is a need for a cultural war ... I use the term cultural war to emphasize the comprehensive nature of the change in attitude that is necessary³⁸

Some of these arguments were repeated again in 2003 when AFR argued for the need of a decisive culture war against the social democrats, that would decide the future of Denmark.³⁹ He argued that one of the main ambitions for the liberal governments was to transform the Danish society in a more liberal direction by changing the perception of the Danish voters by rewriting the traditional mainstream understanding of the Danish society and its history. The ambition was to promote a fundamental change in public attitudes in a more liberal direction and one means was to confront and change the voters' perception of the SD and its role in Danish foreign policy. The revisionism and the investigation commissions played a role in this respect because their findings could be used to confront and discredit the political opponents. Foreign policy revisionism therefore soon became associated with the concepts of cultural struggle and value policy.

The Politicization of the Past – the Role of the Culture War

³⁷ Kurrild-Klitgaard, "Kontraktpolitik".

³⁸ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *Fra Socialstat til minimalstat*. Samlerens Forlag. pp. 34, 226.

³⁹ Arne Hardis og Hans Mortensen *Kulturkamp Interview: Anders Fogh Rasmussen*, Weekendavisen 17.01.2003 Sektion 1 page 5

An element in the culture war was, as mentioned, to use the results of the different commissions to confront the opposition with decisions and policies from their historical past. However, many of these aspirations did not include a contemporary political purpose before 2002-2003, when it became clear that the government wanted to support the American invasion of Iraq even though the UN-mandate was more than dubious. While Danish participation in Afghanistan had mobilized a broad majority in the Danish parliament, proposed Danish participation in the war in Iraq could only mobilize a narrow parliamentary majority since the SD and Social Liberals refused to support the war. Danish participation thus lacked political legitimization in the Danish public.

Shortly before the outbreak of the war, the government therefore tried to justify participation in the Iraq War in the light of “alliance solidarity” and “historical indebtedness” to the USA. In August 2003, the rhetoric entered a new phase, and the decision to join the war coalition was now seen in a historical light as a “confrontation with the passive neutrality policy” which “for generations has dominated Danish foreign and security policy”.⁴⁰ Legitimization of war participation was now a part of the overall culture war, and the investigation commissions and the Cold War period served a more contemporary purpose, namely to secure and legitimize a parliamentary majority behind the Iraq War.

AFR now promoted the Iraq War as a re-orientation of Danish foreign policy; Denmark would abolish its small state status, it would become a middle power and pursue a more offensive foreign policy in order to spread western values.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Atlantic alliance and participation in flexible ad hoc coalitions were seen as a means to promote Danish

⁴⁰ AFR, “Hvad kan det nytte?,” *Berlingske Tidende*, March 26, 2003.

⁴¹ Anders Fogh Rasmussen: “Danmark må gøre op med småstatsmentaliteten”, *Ugebrevet Mandag Morgen*, September 11, 2006.

interests.⁴² This was an opportunity to end SD/Social Liberals dominance in Danish foreign policy. Concretely, this would be done by discrediting SD's war opposition by adopting a political use of history, where the contemporary agenda was projected backwards and used to create an uncritical parallel between past and present. According to AFR, the decision to enter the Iraq War would put "an end to the damaging and disloyal footnote policy" and force Denmark to "take a stand. We must take responsibility. We must not travel under a flag of convenience".⁴³ Ole Wæver has argued that AFR tried to create an effective narrative of the SD's treachery during the 1980s and couple it with the party's current war opposition.⁴⁴ Thus, the Iraq War became the political event that directly connected the domain of foreign policy with the cultural war, which was officially also launched in 2003. This meant that foreign policy – and the Social Democratic/Social Liberal war opposition – was used as an opportunity to launch a full-blown attack on what was labeled the "Danish foreign policy tradition", which had been associated with the SD and the Social Liberals due to their historical dominance of the area.

Later in August 2003, AFR's arguments became more refined and placed SD's opposition to the war in a broader historical framework that transcended the alleged social democratic failure during the Cold War. In a much quoted speech on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of abandoning the collaboration policy with the German occupation forces during the Second World War, AFR publicly distanced himself from the policy of collaboration, which he called

⁴² Pedersen, *Danish Foreign Policy Activism*

⁴³ Statsminister AFR's tale ved Forsvarsakademiets årsdag fredag den 31. oktober 2003, "Danmark i verden" (speech, Royal Danish Defence College, October 31, 2003), downloaded from www.stm.dk.

⁴⁴ Ole Wæver quoted in Martin Kaae & Jesper Nissen, *Vejen til Irak – Hvorfor gik Danmark i krig?* (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2008), 224–225.

cowardly and unacceptable, and he coupled it with SD's opposition to the Iraq War.⁴⁵ The prime minister's statements were interpreted as a claim that Denmark had failed during the Second World War and that the time had come for a showdown with the adaptation and neutrality policy that apparently constituted a common theme in the SD-inspired foreign policy tradition.⁴⁶ The Danish decision to enter the war coalition was therefore seen as a remedy for some of the wrongdoings of the past, and as a way for Denmark to repay the USA for its help and assistance during the Second World War and compensate for the social democratic failures during the footnote period. This was further developed in a feature article in *Berlingske Tidende*, in which AFR argued that Denmark had failed its allies twice during history: the policy of collaboration during the Second World War and the footnote policy during the Cold War. If the SD and the Social Liberals had their way regarding the Iraq War, Denmark, he argued, would have failed its allies for the third time. Consequently, "the decision to participate in the international coalition was a showdown with the passive adaptation policy of the past".⁴⁷ Rosanna Farbøl has argued that in this speech, AFR wrote the Iraq War into a particular interpretation of Danish history and thereby tried to legitimize the war by coupling the present with the past.⁴⁸ In this interpretation, the construction of the memory of the occupation period and the coupling of the footnote period to the Iraq War were done by creating a strong narrative where the policy of collaboration during the occupation and the present opposition to the war were seen as an expression of neutrality which was deemed immoral and essentially wrong. In another speech, AFR argued that both were an expression of "active adaptation to the enemy" and represented a national betrayal both

⁴⁵ "AFRs tale ved 60-året for den 29. august 1943". Speech given on August 29, 2003. Downloaded from www.stm.dk.

⁴⁶ The activism and militarization of the Danish foreign and security policy of the 1990s under various Social Democratic governments was not mentioned in this respect.

⁴⁷ Rasmussen, "Hvad kan det nytte".

⁴⁸ Farbøl, "Irakkrigen", 73–85; and "Kunsten", 65–89.

politically and morally.⁴⁹ The PM thereby contextualized Danish participation in the war within the Danish foreign policy tradition and the country's history by presenting the government's policy as directly opposed to and a break with the neutrality tradition.⁵⁰ The connection between participation in the Iraq War and the past was made very explicit by AFR when he argued that

... the lessons from August 29, 1943 still count. One has to take a stand and have the courage to act – even if it is not the most pleasant situation. Denmark did this in the 1990s in the Balkans, and we did it against the terrorists in Afghanistan in 2002 and during the war against Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime in Iraq⁵¹

The historical interpretations thereby became a contemporary political platform from which political actors can fight and challenge others on how to interpret the past and who will have the power to create dominant narratives that can be used to promote and legitimize certain contemporary political agendas, changes or decisions.

The ambition was to replace the SD/Social Liberal understanding of history in which the small state identity played a central role with a new Liberal one.⁵² This was directly addressed in the foreign policy program of the Liberal Party drafted in the period 2003-05:

For several hundred years, the constant tension between the superpowers in the vicinity of Denmark meant that Denmark has been overshadowed by our powerful neighbors. For Denmark, the so-called "adaptation policy" was downright embarrassing. Just think of

⁴⁹ AFR, "Visioner om Danmarks aktive Europapolitik," speech given on September 23, 2003. Downloaded from www.stm.dk.

⁵⁰ See also Rasmussen, "60-året for 29. august 1943"; "Tale i Mindelunden," speech given on May 4, 2005; "Tale i anledning af 60-året for Danmarks befrielse," speech given on May 5, 2005; and "Tale i Mindelunden," speech given on August 29, 2008. All speeches downloaded from www.stm.dk.

⁵¹ Rasmussen quoted in Farbøl, "Irakkrigen", 77.

⁵² Ibid.

Denmark's unpreparedness on April 9, 1940 and the wretched policy of collaboration with the German occupiers. During the Cold War, the footnote policy stands as a monument of shame of Denmark's passive and ambiguous attitude to the Soviet threat.

The Liberal Party's proposal for a new foreign policy should be seen as

a showdown with the passive adaptation policy and the humble diplomacy that characterized Denmark during most of the 20th century. Denmark no longer wants to be a small state in the shadows of the great powers, but an "active state" that wants to exploit the international organizations as a platform for an active and progressive foreign policy⁵³

Nikolaj Petersen has pointed out that the liberal goals seemed to be a "farewell to the small-state period in Danish foreign policy" and a revival of the national liberal foreign policy from the early 1860s with its emphasis on democratic values and a basis of national self-determination.⁵⁴ In June 2003, the Liberal-led government launched its official program for its new foreign policy doctrine.⁵⁵ The program stressed traditional liberal values like emphasis on the individual, freedom, democracy and security as guidelines for Danish foreign policy. Three new dimensions (the European, the transatlantic and a global dimension, while the Nordic framework was left out) replaced the four pillars formulated by former Social Democratic minister for foreign affairs Per Hækkerup, which had been the guiding principles of the overall Danish foreign policy since the 1960s.⁵⁶ Moreover, the program expressed a

⁵³ Venstre (2006), *Udenrigspolitisk oplæg*. Downloaded from www.venstre.dk.

⁵⁴ Nikolaj Petersen, "Kampen". See also Claus Bjørn and Carsten Due-Nielsen, *Fra helstat til nationalstat 1814–1914. Dansk Udenrigspolitik historie 3* (Copenhagen: Danmarks Nationalleksikon, 2003).

⁵⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *En verden i forandring. Regeringens bud på nye prioriteter i Danmarks udenrigspolitik*. June 2003. Downloaded from www.um.dk.

⁵⁶ Per Hækkerup, *Danmarks Udenrigspolitik* (Copenhagen: AOF/Fremad, 1965).

clear adherence to foreign policy activism and an emphasis on the transatlantic ties as the main guidelines for Danish security policy. AFR had based the “new” foreign policy strategy on a need for Denmark to engage in a global value war between democracies and dictatorships. Denmark was obliged to take a stance, since no state could remain neutral in this struggle.⁵⁷ The logic was that globalization required Danish foreign activism and he declared that the time of neutrality was over.⁵⁸ The EU, UN and NATO were therefore seen as important platforms of the new activism based on a core of liberal values and a neo-conservative premise that democracies had an obligation to enforce these idea and principles.⁵⁹ Denmark had to abandon its self-image as a global “smart state” and instead utilize the alliance with the USA to “transform” itself from a small state to a middle power.⁶⁰ The alliance with the USA in Afghanistan and Iraq was regarded as helping Denmark realize these ambitions because Denmark needed the USA to be engaged in the Danish security neighborhood.⁶¹ In this respect, the cultural war and the attack on the SD/Social Liberal hegemony and the comparison with the Danish small state tradition had a far-reaching discursive goal in the transformation process from small state to middle power.⁶²

DPP and the Justifications of the Iraq War

⁵⁷ Heidi M. Rasmussen, “Fogh: Danmark må gøre op med småstatsmentaliteten,” *Mandag Morgen*, September 11, 2006.

⁵⁸ It should be noted that the idea of Denmark promoting ideological values and “making a difference” was not a new invention in Danish foreign policy.

⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *En verden i forandring*; and Rasmussen, “Visioner”.

⁶⁰ Carsten Holbraad, *Middle Powers in International Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984); and Carsten Holbraad, *Danish Neutrality: A Study in the Foreign Policy of a Small State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *En verden i forandring*.

⁶² Rasmussen, “Fogh: Danmark må gøre op”.

The basic premise behind the AFR government's activist foreign policy and the decision to join the American-led invasion in Iraq ultimately depended on parliamentary support. In the period leading up to the outbreak of the Iraq War it became clear that the broad coalition that had existed in relation to the Afghanistan War could not be mobilized again. Rather the government had to rely on support from the DPP who was also a support party at the domestic politics.

The party's support to an activist foreign policy based on liberal values and human rights concerns was not uncontroversial in 2001-03, since the very core principles were far from the party's traditional emphasis on the preservation of state sovereignty and *Tidehverv* ideology of anti-liberalism, anti-humanism and its ethical-idealist stance. In 1999, the party thus argued strongly against Danish participation in the NATO-led operation in Kosovo because it violated Serbian sovereignty.⁶³ In the early 00s the DPP traditionally opposed central elements in the Nyrup Rasmussen government's activism in the 1990s, especially the spread of liberal ideas that came to emphasize human rights at the expense of state sovereignty and self-determination. On the surface, the neo-conservative agenda that guided the Bush administration regarding the spread of democracy and the right of Western democracies to intervene in non-democracies' internal affairs did not fit well into the DPP foreign policy agenda. For instance, the party opposed the NATO-led bombardment of the Serbian forces during the conflict in Kosovo with the argument that the air campaign violated Serbian sovereignty and interfered in internal Serbian affairs.⁶⁴ That the campaign violated the territorial integrity of Serbia became a leading argument in the years to come. The party's

⁶³ This position was repeated many times see for instance, DPP press release, "Dansk Folkeparti siger nej til, at regeringen anerkender Kosovo," December 9, 2007:

http://danskfolkeparti.dk/Dansk_Folkeparti_siger_nej_til_at_regeringen_anerkender_Kosovo.

⁶⁴ See for instance Folketingets forhandlinger 1998-99 - B 4 BEH1 onsdag 7 oktober 1998, Tale 46 (KORT BEM.)

later foreign affairs spokesman Søren Espersen argued that “*the UN charter stresses every member state’s territorial integrity ... it cannot be right that a state recognized by the world community is torn apart with force in this way. It is not fair that an ancient state and nation is subjected to such a punishment*”. He also called it a “reversed crusade” against an ancient Christian country and population.⁶⁵

Support from the DPP to the operation therefore required some justification since the underlying principles were at odds with the traditional party line. The fact that AFR designated the Social Democratic-Social Liberal axis as the main political and ideological opponent matched DPP’s general skepticism of cultural radicalism and its alleged value relativism, which are often associated with the Social Liberals. Here, AFR’s ideas about reducing and marginalizing the position of the two parties in Danish politics and history found allies in the DPP – in particular the religious Lutheran segments of the party, the Tide of Times (the *Tidehverv* movement) represented by Søren Krarup og Jesper Langballe.⁶⁶ Despite the obvious differences between the liberal ideas and the *Tidehverv* ideology, the common enemy in the Social Democratic ideology seemed to bridge the differences and strengthen the cooperation between the right-wing parties. The political function of the cultural war project therefore changed slightly after the election in 2001 and now became a tool to ensure that the (anti-liberal) DPP and the Conservatives could find a place within a common ideological framework that developed in the period 2001-2003. The value struggle came to include a number of (national) conservative elements, including elements that at the core were rather far from the original vision of the Liberal cultural war as expressed by AFR in 1993. Cultural war became associated with more restrictive immigration policy and legal practice (tough on

⁶⁵ Ravid Rehling DF: NATO bombede kristendommen. *Information*, September 21, 1999

<http://www.information.dk/34944>

⁶⁶ In the early 00s, Søren Krarup was very enthusiastic about AFR and the promises of this alleged cultural war. See for instance Søren Krarup, *Systemskiftet. I kulturkampens tegn* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2006).

crime) and a showdown with state-financed expert committees and the political correctness of the political elite. AFR's political use of history throughout 2003 and especially the entanglement of domestic and foreign policy in respect to the justification of the Iraq War therefore fitted well with DPP's agenda of finding a rationale for its support which was now interpreted as a part of the domestic battle against the social democrats. In the parliamentary debate on 18 marts 2003, the party's spokesman Peter Skaarup argued that it was important for Denmark to support the operation because of "alliance solidarity":

"We now face a situation where our most important allies, the USA and Great Britain, definitely are ready to take action [to invade] ... and I believe that there can be no doubt that we only have one place to stand and that is with our closest allies. One could do like the SD and lean back and say, well we are not in government anymore and therefore do not want to take responsibility. But I do not believe that it is responsible ... We cannot forget that the guarantee for our security and our safety after the Second World War was the USA. The guarantee for our security and safety in the future is also the USA, and therefore it would be completely wrong if the Danish Folketing ... did not support the operation. If we were closer to France and Germany ... then we could face severe problems because we couldn't be sure that we would enjoy the support and the strength it gives to stand with two important allies like the USA and Great Britain in this situation."⁶⁷

The initial support was based on a rationale of alliance solidarity but party leader Pia Kjaersgaard soon (after the AFR speeches in August 2003) gave a moral reason for the decision to support the invasion and for war participation. Here the launch of the culture war and the entanglement of domestic and foreign policy became useful because it allowed the

⁶⁷ Danish parliament, Folketingets forhandlinger March 18, 2003.

party to create a new narrative. The party actively engaged in a political use of history where the argument that Danish participation in the Iraq War was a way to repay the USA for the historical debt and to honor the Atlantic alliance. Further, the party engaged in political use of history by drawing parallels between the present political situation and the political past in order to promote certain interests and legitimize present political viewpoints and actions through a particular interpretation of the past. For instance:

*Peace is easy to achieve, it just requires that you bend your neck. We experienced this a couple of generations ago. From 9 April 1940 to 5 May 1945 there was peace at home... back then there were also peace politicians. Also back then it was important for politicians to secure peace. Erik Scavenius and Thorvald Stauning ... lived and breathed for peace and raged against what they called nationalistic and self-sufficient tendencies that would lead to war. Today we thank the hundreds of Danish freedom fighters and the hundreds of allied soldiers who wanted the war ... Because they did not want anything to do with peace if it was controlled by an evil dictator. The lesson for today is that we must be ready to do what needs to be done and that war can be both a duty and a necessity. That is why I support the coalition that the USA and Great Britain has built, that we by military means want to secure freedom for the Iraqi people.*⁶⁸

The party was trying to project contemporary in an attempt to achieve political and ideological legitimacy behind contemporary political decisions. Particular emphasis was put on what was perceived as morally right or wrong and the party thereby expressed a strong moral aspect where the reinterpretation of the past was used to discredit political opponents by creating a narrative in which the past can be used as a negative counterexample to the current political situation.

While the culture war and the government's political use of history was designed as a disciplinarian tool vis-à-vis the SD-led opposition, the culture war and the entanglement of foreign and domestic politics also played an internal function by bridging political and ideological differences among the Liberals, Conservatives and DPP and thereby helped to forge a stable parliamentary majority behind the offensive liberal-inspired foreign policy that

⁶⁸ Quoted from http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Når_krig_bliver_pligt_og_nødvendighed.

became a trademark of the Liberal-led government and in particular the participation in the Iraq war. In doing so it became a vital instrument in creating a common ideological framework that bridged differences and united the Liberal-Conservative minority government and the DPP as its support party from 2001-2011 by identifying and addressing a common oppositional enemy in the Danish parliament. It helped the DPP change its foreign-policy position in the area of security policy from being sovereignty based to an offensive liberal-inspired variant of foreign policy activism. The support from the DPP, which traditionally had emphasized respect for states' sovereignty, to an interventionist liberal foreign policy strategy which general de-emphasized state sovereignty was by no means guaranteed in the early 00s since the party had opposed central elements of the 1990s' foreign policy activism. The association between domestic revisionism aimed at confronting the SD and the Social Liberals and their "cultural relativism" inspired the DPP change positions on foreign policy because the support for the government's version of foreign policy activism was considered part of the domestic value struggle.

Looking Into the Future – Social Democratic Neo-Revisionism?

The analysis has primarily focused on the Liberal party's dominant role and the AFR government's memory politics during the 00s since the then opposition did not manage to establish an alternative narrative during the period that was able to compete with the liberal value and cultural war. One reason this historical analogy was effective was that especially the SD had difficulty responding to criticism because it was still deeply divided over the footnote period and whether the policy of the 1980s could be defended.⁶⁹ The opposition's

⁶⁹ See Robert Pedersen, *Gør din pligt – kræb din ret: erindringer* (Copenhagen: Holkenfeldt, 1994);

"Socialdemokrater i opgør om fodnoter," *Berlingske Tidende*, November 25, 2004; Hans Hækkerup,

counter arguments were primarily related to judicial and legalistic issues and more normative arguments against the close Atlantic alliance and against the AFR activism. The former Danish foreign minister Villy Søvndal did try to formulate a cautious attempt in his speech at Aarhus University, when the new government launched its new foreign policy strategy on 12 Marts 2012. He stressed the need for Denmark to leave behind what he described as the “decade of fear” under AFR. It was important for the left wing to break with the “psychology” the former government had inflicted on the Danish population. He stressed that the perception of the international security situation had affected the mentality of the Danes and made them more introvert and afraid of internationalism.⁷⁰ He further stressed that Danish foreign policy should be founded on respect for the rule of law and human rights. His analysis pointed to a series of objective concerns regarding the terror threat but underlined that the problem was primarily psychological and that the foreign policy in the future should be guided by “reason” and “trust”.

The speech was in line with the Danish government’s joint foreign policy strategy paper that the SD, The Social Liberals and Socialist People’s party presented in September 2011.⁷¹ It stated that in the future Denmark should only participate in military interventions in case of a clear and visible threat against Denmark or its allies, and future international interventions should be backed by a broad UN-founded coalition. A parliamentary situation like Iraq should be avoided in the future. The paper was interesting because it also suggested how Denmark could move beyond “the decade of fear”. For example, the SD-led government would

“Fodnotepolitikken gavtede ikke Danmark,” *Jyllands-Posten*, July 18, 2005, feature; and “Forsvar for fodnoterne,” *Jyllands-Posten*, October 13, 2007.

⁷⁰ Villy Søvndal *Speech at Aarhus Universitet* 15 Marts 2012 <http://um.dk/da/om-os/ministre/udenrigsministeren/taler-og-artikler/aarhus-universitet/> (visited 11 december 2013)

⁷¹ Socialdemokraterne, Socialistisk Folkeparti og Det Radikale Venstre *En aktiv og ansvarlig udenrigspolitik*. September 2011. www.socialdemokraterne.dk

establish a commission to examine the decision making procedures and the content of the decision to join the wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The commission would examine whether the Danish army respected international law as a war participant country particularly in the handling of prisoners of war and the transfer of prisoners of war to coalition members. The commission can therefore be seen as a means to discredit the Iraq war, the decision to enter the coalition war and the Danish war effort. Ultimately this would raise questions regarding the official narrative created by the AFR governments and the construction of a collective memory about the Danish war participation in 2003.

The ideas of an official examination of the basis for the Danish war participation were later found in the government program from October 2011.⁷² The Department of Justice presented a draft for a mandate on 10 April 2012 for an Investigation Commission. The commission would conduct a thorough and comprehensive (juridical) analysis of central cornerstones in the Liberal-led government's foreign policy from 2001-2011, among them the political and intelligence background for the decision making in 2002 and 2003; of Danish forces' handling of prisoners of war in both Afghanistan and Iraq in order to evaluate whether Denmark broke international conventions during the wars; and it would examine whether the then government gave correct and precise information to the Danish parliament and whether or not the responsible politicians should be held accountable for the decision and their actions.⁷³

The idea seems to contain an element of revisionism that goes beyond a judicial interpretation. For instance, the leftwing Red-Green Alliance hoped that the commission's work would help change the official history of the wars and the Danish activism of the 00s by

⁷² Danish Government *Et Danmark der står sammen*. Regeringsgrundlag oktober 2011. www.stm.dk

⁷³ Kommissorium for undersøgelseskommission om den danske krigsdeltagelse i Irak og Afghanistan. Ministry of Justice 11 April 2012.

“shedding light on the dark sides of the Danish participation in the war in Iraq”.⁷⁴ The President of the Danish Judge Association argued that the mandate was too political in its formulations and content.⁷⁵ The final report has not been submitted yet, but in a memory political perspective the commission’s work might be seen as an attempt to create a competing understanding of and narrative about Danish war participation and the very core of the Danish activism of the 00s. The official narrative emphasizes the Danish ambitions to spread democracy, remove dictators and promote fundamental freedom rights. The campaign in Afghanistan has in this respect been highlighted as the “good war”, where Denmark made a significant contribution to promote democracy, education and emancipation of Afghan women.

Conclusions

This article aims at making two contributions to the literature: 1) it aims at providing a comprehensive analysis of the ideological underpinnings of the activism of the AFR years, especially regarding the role of domestic factors in framing the content of the foreign and security policy of the period. 2) It argues that the politics-of-memory literature provides an overall framework for understanding a deeper revisionist tendency that runs through Danish foreign policy after the Cold War. This started with the Liberal’s experiences during the 1980s and culminated with the establishment of the Iraq Commission under the present Social Democratic government. Thus, the Cold War has had an extended life span in Danish foreign policy. It is hardly a new and revolutionary insight to suggest that the past, long after the

⁷⁴ Ritzaus Bureau “EL: Nu kommer Irak-løgneren frem i lyset”, Ritzaus Bureau den 11. april 2012.

⁷⁵ Ritzaus Bureau “Dommere: Irak-undersøgelse er for politisk”, Ritzaus Bureau den 12. april 2012.

passage of history, can be reactivated and mobilized in order to legitimize or de-legitimize later historical developments.⁷⁶ As such, it is a basic constructivist point that history is not an objective phenomenon, but is constantly constructed through a revisionist reinterpretation. The political use of history by the AFR governments thereby had a function in relation to upholding, changing or disrupting historical interpretations and memories in an attempt to promote certain contemporary political agendas, changes or decisions. So in this perspective, the power over the past becomes a way to gain control of the present and ultimately also of future political choices. Revisionism and control over historical (re)interpretations can be seen as political platforms where political actors can fight and challenge each other about how the past should be interpreted and who will have the power to create interpretations and construct the memories of the past. In this respect, political strife over the Cold War period has continued in the Danish debate during the last two decades. The debate has particularly revolved around the role of the Social Democrats during the so-called footnote period from 1982–88. No fewer than four successive official reports have been commissioned to examine Denmark's policies during the Cold War period and politicians have used a considerable amount of time and an effort during the 00s to discuss and debate the footnote period.⁷⁷ Much of the debate has had a strong conservative/centre-right revisionist bias and the overall ambition has been to rewrite the official history of the Cold War, and in particular, in a revanchist way to confront the actions and deeds of the Social Democrats of the period.⁷⁸ However, the revisionism of the Cold War period also played a more contemporary role in that the denunciation of the footnote period became a part of the ideological underpinning of Denmark's activist foreign policy in the 2000s and Denmark's strong adherence to the USA. Most notably in respect to the active Danish participation in the two coalition wars in Iraq and

⁷⁶ Olesen, "Truth on Demand".

⁷⁷ Ibid.; Thorsten Borring Olesen, "Noter og fodnoter. En diskussion af indenrigspolitikens primat i efterkrigstidens danske udenrigspolitik," in *Nye fronter i Den kolde Krig*, eds C. Due-Nielsen, R. Mariager, and R. Schmidt (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2010), 87–113.

⁷⁸ Olesen, "Truth on Demand".

Afghanistan and its close alliance with the USA.⁷⁹ The basic premise was that Denmark had to compensate for the ‘mistakes’ made by the Social Democrats during the Cold War years by demonstrating strong and committed alliance solidarity with the USA in the War on Terror. Given this rhetoric, it was not surprising that we witnessed an increased polarization of the foreign policy debate throughout the 00s in respect to the overall foundations of Danish foreign-policy activism and in particular to the question of the rationale for the Danish participation in the Iraq War coalition which also became linked to the overall cultural war which the Liberal-led government launched officially in 2003 against the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats. The official purpose was to turn Danish society in a more Liberal direction, with greater emphasis on individual responsibility and self-realization, which meant an eradication of the dominant Social Democratic dominance over the Danish welfare system. After June 2003, this ‘domestic war’ was also to be extended to the realm of foreign policy where Denmark was to assume more responsibility in world politics and actively defend and promote Western values which were seen as opposed to the passive foreign-policy tradition that the Liberal Party regarded as closely linked to the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals. Contemporary Danish foreign policy thereby became an arena in which the battles of the past could be (re)fought on a value-based platform with the official ambition to rewrite the official history of the Cold War and the role of the Social Democrats during this period. The goal was therefore to hold the Social Democrats ‘accountable’ for their deeds and actions during the Cold War. Thereby, this article has pointed to a new trend in Danish foreign policy where we have seen the introduction of a revisionist tendency during the AFR years rooted in the footnote period in the 1980s. Its main characteristic has been an increased domestication of the foreign-policy area whereby the foreign policy has been drawn into an ideological battle between the political wings of Danish politics. The means has been a political use of

⁷⁹ AFR, ”60 året for 29. august 1943. Speech at Holmen on August 29, 2003; and ”Visioner om Danmarks aktive Europapolitik”. Speech at the University of Copenhagen on September 23, 2003. Downloaded from www.stm.dk.

history and memory politics in which the historical past, the present and the future have been combined on the contemporary political agenda in order to confront and discredit political opponents. From a comparative perspective the adopted domestic perspective also helps to explain why Denmark by comparative standards chose a more militarized response to the Iraq war. In the IR-literature realists traditionally see a nation's foreign policy as an expression of the national interest primarily determined by the nation's position in the international system. However, the diverse reaction patterns in the case of the Iraq war among small states illustrate that systemic factors cannot alone account for this variation. The above analysis has primarily focused on the role of domestic factors behind the rationale for the Danish participation in the Iraq War and how it was used in an internal power struggle between the Danish parties.. Although Denmark may be the exception that proves the rule, the case can advance an understanding of the conditions under which standard explanations of small-state foreign policy behavior may miss their predictive mark and when incorporating the role of elite ideas can provide additional explanatory leverage. The article has further argued that the experiences during the 00s have sparked a Social Democratic counter reaction in an attempt to create another competing (revisionist) narrative of the warfare of Danish activism of the 00s. This became apparent with the establishment of the so-called Iraq Commission, which was to examine the political decision-making procedures leading up to the Iraq War, and further examine the legality of central parts of the Danish warfare and by proposals to alter the formal conditions for future Danish war participation. Despite the juridical nature of the commission, it has a remarkable, political purpose in formulating a political judgment of decisions and arguments leading up to the Iraq War and in evaluating central elements of the activist Danish warfare during the coalition wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.