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Was something rotten in the State of Denmark?
Three narratives of the active internationalism in Danish foreign policy

Rasmus Brun Pedersen
Associate Professor, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science
Aarhus University
brun@ps.au.dk

Abstract

The Danish decision to enter US-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq significantly consolidated and strengthened the Atlantic dimension in Danish foreign policy in the period 2001–09. The period has attracted considerable academic interest, but there seems to be a lack of consensus about how to interpret the Danish decision, which has been characterised as everything from an indication of adaptation, to continuation of the Danish acquiescence to great powers, to path-breaking change in Danish foreign policy to an expression of small state independence. Part of the confusion in the literature is due to the lack of clear conceptual awareness regarding the concepts in use. This article identifies three frames in the literature and contributes to our understanding of the question of change and continuity in small state foreign and security policy by identifying the analytical implications of adopting a clearer understanding of analytical concepts such as adaptation, determinism, activism and internationalism in the Scandinavian context in general and the Danish context more specifically.

Introduction

How do we interpret the ideational roots for change and continuity in small states' foreign policy traditions – and what impact does our understanding of the relationship between different ideational traits have on our conclusions about the direction and magnitude of such changes? The small-state literature has traditionally favored domestic level factors or focused on the interplay between structural factors and domestic level variables in order to study and analyse policy choices (Rosenau 1970; Gvalia 2014). One strand in this literature has in particular focused on the role of ideational factors and argued that certain foreign policy 'discourses', 'ideas' and 'lessons of the past' seem to have segmented over time and have helped to guide and structure small states' foreign policy choices (Wivel 2014; Mouritzen & Olesen 2012; Noreen, Sjöstedt & Ångström 2017). Implicitly, the question whether contemporary events constitute changes is often assessed in relation to the foreign policy tradition of the particular country, especially in terms of whether changes can be understood as deviations from established ideational traits in the country's foreign policy history. Such traditions are often argued to be structured around opposite and competing ideological positions that often range from 'internationalist' to more 'isolationist' poles but the literature is often less explicit about how their relationships are analytically interpreted and with what consequences for our interpretation of continuity and change (Brandt 1998; Monten 2005). This article argues that it makes a difference whether we understand the relationship between ideational drivers as either 'singular' or 'dualistic'. Singular refers to an assumption that there exists one dominant ideological position at the time that suppresses other ideational drivers. The latter refers to an interpretation where both traits are expected to be present at the time and can co-exist even though they might be competitive (e.g. Branner 2000). The lack of reflection affects interpretation of change and continuity in a country's foreign policy tradition, where a singular understanding will lead to interpretations that tend to emphasize 'pendulum-like swings' in foreign policy decisions.

These expected changes will for instance relate to shifts in governments while dualistic interpretations often lead to explanations that emphasize continuity or incremental adjustments in a foreign policy tradition despite the color of the government. So far, the analytical implications of adopting different understandings of the nature of the foreign policy tradition have remained understudied, especially in the small state literature (see however Rasmussen 2005; 2017; Branner 2000; 2013).

The recent debate about the status of the militarized Danish Activism from 2001-2009 in the War on Terror can, however, shed light over these questions. During this period, the country went from being a traditional peacekeeping small state to a 'warmonger' (Wivel 2013) and actively engaged in direct warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq, and later engaged itself in various US led interventions in Libya and later again in Iraq and Syria against Islamic State. The decisions to enter Afghanistan and Iraq attracted a lot of public and academic attention, since it was the first time since 1864 that the country went to war. There is however no consensus in the literature about the status of this 'change'. The period has been interpreted as everything ranging from a path-breaking new form of independent small-state activism to an expression of acquiescent adaptation to the USA and has been seen as *both* a break *and* continuity in the country's foreign and security policy (Lidegaard 2010; Rynning 2003; Mouritzen 2007; Pedersen 2012). An example is that in the Scandinavian foreign policy literature the Danish decision to enter US-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq is seen as a departure from the peaceful Nordic internationalism and an embrace of the 'muscular humanitarianism' promoted by the US and the United Kingdom (Kuisma 2007). This has raised the question whether something was '*rotten in the state of Denmark*' during the period, since militarized activism was perceived as a fundamental break with the internationalist tendency, which was assumed to be the dominant ideational factor steering the country's foreign policy (Lawler, 2007: 110, 118).

Besides triggering a heated debate about the legality, durability and strategic implications of the doctrine (Knudsen, 2004; Rynning, 2003; Wivel, 2013), the Danish case and the debate about the status of the period are academically relevant for a wider small-state audience since it improves our understanding of the relation between ‘segmented ideas’ and ideational drivers for states’ foreign and security policy and how we evaluate change and continuity based on our understanding of these underlying ideational factors in a small states foreign policy tradition (Mouritzen & Olesen 2010). The Danish interpretation debate has an interesting current parallel in a dawning wave of literature on the increased ‘militarization’ in Swedish security policy that has followed the country’s participation in NATO’s ISAF operation in Afghanistan since 2003 and in the Olyssius Dawn in Libya. In the Swedish debate we see a somewhat similar interpretation debate on whether the involvement can be interpreted as a continuation with the country’s internationalist tradition for international peacekeeping (see also Nilsson & Zetterlund 2016) or whether its country’s participating in NATO operated operations represent a change, where Sweden – partly caused by the rise of Russia’s more aggressive neighbor policies – has adopted a more Atlantic oriented security line partly in order to seek shelter and cultivate closer ties to NATO and the USA (Doeser 2014; Alyson et al 2015). Interestingly most of the literature has also sought domestic level explanations focusing on the decision to join these types of operations (e.g. Doeser 2014; 2016) where Noreen et al. for example have suggested that one relevant explanation for increased militarization can be found in the dominance of certain domestic discourses that have created an ‘interpretative dominance’ that helped explain the Swedish decision to participate in the ISAF-operation (Noreen et al 2017).

This article belongs in the realm of meta-studies and aims to ‘clear the brush’ about the debate on the status of the Danish activism in the 00’s, arguing that the lack of conceptual reflection about the relation between the underlying ideational factors and our used analytical concepts causes different

conclusions about change and continuity in Danish foreign policy. The argument is that three different framings can be identified in the academic treatment of the status of the Danish foreign policy in the period: (i) one sees the doctrine of International activism as a form acquiescent *adaptation* to the great powers, emphasizing that the period represented continuity in the adaptation patterns seen in the Cold War; (ii) a second frame sees the period as a *path-breaking* small-state approach to security. This frame includes two variants: One viewing it as a *break with the internationalist tradition* and another seeing Denmark as having evolved into a *strategic actor*; and finally (iii) a frame that sees the militarized activism as a *new, independent form of small-state institutionalism* that breaks with the adaptation from the Cold War but represents continuity in the internationalist tendency in Danish foreign policy after the Cold War.

Analyzing change and continuity in Danish Strategic culture

Before the analysis of the different frames, their understanding of the relation between different underlying ideational drivers and its analytical implications, three general characteristics about the structure and nature of the Danish debate should be highlighted.

Single case studies and the problem of truncation

Methodologically, most of the publications focusing on the Danish International activism seem to focus on activism in the *security policy area* – the participation in the Iraq War in particular – and seem to utilize single-case designs to study ‘activism’ in the country’s general *foreign policy* and evaluate the degree of change and continuity in a more general sense. When reviewing the literature, few studies appear to have actually tried to expand their analysis of the activism within the field of security policy to the wider foreign policy in the period 2001–09 (See however Wivel 2005; Larsen 2009).

The literature has tended to generalize (or extrapolate) the dynamics from the security area to the rest of the country's foreign policy, thereby seriously overestimating the degree of activism and 'change' that the period represented. Pedersen & Ringsmose (2017) therefore argues that the debate about the rise in Danish activism should be more nuanced. It seems that the degree of activism within the EU, UN and the Nordic arena is either constant or even declining in the period after the Cold War, and activism is only increasing in the Atlantic dimension (Ringsmose & Rynning 2017). This suggests that activism is closely related to one branch of the country's foreign policy, namely the use of militarized means in international interventions. Failure to recognize this implies that it is easy to overestimate the depth and broadness of the country's foreign policy activism. Pedersen & Ringsmose (2017) has therefore proposed to reintroduce the so-called compartmentalized model (Hækkerup 1965) when the degree of activism in the country's overall foreign policy is to be evaluated.

In line with this observation the participation in the Iraq War and the War on Terror is often treated as *a typical case* where the government's decisions in the security area are seen as representative for the broader foreign policy and for the priorities for the whole period, meaning that this literature has often overemphasized the Atlantic cornerstone in the country's foreign policy and neglected the UN, EU and the Nordic arenas since the security policy have been given the analytical primate (see however Larsen (2005) and Wivel (2009) for exceptions). The primacy of the security area therefore seems to define the period in the international literature that also leads to a certain blindness regarding the conduct of foreign policy in other areas where the strategies could be argued to be more restrained and less 'active'. One example is Knudsen (2004), who, based on a legal analysis of the Iraq War, claims that Denmark is '*Loosing sight of internationalism*' and that

the Danish participation in the Iraq War represented a significant break with the Danish foreign policy tradition. This problem relates to the ‘problem of truncation’ that has been described in the methods literature (Geddes, 1991) and relates to the warning from quantitative research about making inferences based only on a certain range of the variation on the dependent variable, the danger being over- or underestimating a certain tendency. The points are also relevant for qualitative case scholars and some of these tendencies about generalization from the security area are also visible in the wider Scandinavian literatures treatment of the period. The Scandinavian literature has often tried to set the Nordic foreign policy as a wider context of which the Danish foreign policy is a part. Danish foreign policy from 2001–09 is often treated as a *deviant case* since the militarisation of the period and the cuts to development assistance marked a clear break with what is perceived as ‘Nordic Internationalism’. This is partly caused by a particular ‘Nordic’ understanding of the concept of internationalism. This is often associated with Nordic exceptionalism, which emphasises multilateralism and the conduct of social power and mediation (Kuisma, 2007), the small Nordic states acting as norm entrepreneurs (Ingebritsen, 2002) or ‘good states’ (Neumann and de Cavalho, 2015) pursuing influence along a moral dimension. The Danish decision to emphasize militarized security policies and the decision to enter US-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq are seen as a departure from the peaceful Nordic internationalism and an embrace of the ‘muscular humanitarianism’ promoted by the US and the United Kingdom (Lawler, 2007: 110, 118). This brand of literature somewhat fails to address the more long termed trends in the Nordic countries foreign policy, where Denmark traditional have been considered as the ‘odd man out’ since the country newer fully embraced what is perceived as a coherent Nordic foreign identity (see also Olesen 2017; Pedersen 2012; Forsberg 2013).

A final general remark can be made about the relationship between the different analytical frames and their relation to the political debate about the Iraq decision in 2003 that raises the question of whether the frames themselves constitute or reflect some of the segmented ideas from the political debate. Some of the analytical concepts that have been developed to describe Danish foreign policy demonstrate a close resemblance with the concepts utilized in the public debate. This is analytically unfortunate since it blurs the limits between the concepts analytical potential and their political connotation. The concept activism is for example a concept that has been formulated by the politicians and then adopted by academia. This also applies for the academic interpretation debates over the Danish Iraq War in 2003, where the typology of adaptation vs. activism largely follows the same concepts used in the public debate. This ‘parallel use’ to some degree blurs the distinction between our content of our analytical concepts and their political connotations that were often associated with political cleavages and disagreements, which to some extent have led to a fierce and uncompromising debate over the Iraq War, where some of the connotations in the public debate might have slipped into the academic debate.

Conceptual pairs in the study of Danish foreign policy

The literature on Danish foreign policy traditionally uses two concept pairs to study the nature of the country’s foreign policy tradition that are either understood as analytical concepts or as ideational drivers. In the following I interpret determinism and Internationalism as ideational strands in the Danish foreign policy tradition whereas adaptation and activism is understood as analytical concepts or strategies (see also XXX 2). The point stressed above about the lack of analytical reflections of the relationship between the concepts are however valid both for the understanding of the concepts as both ideational factors or concepts since our understanding of their relationship can impact upon the interpretation of change and continuity.

Determinism vs. Internationalism

The formulation of the deterministic ideology in Danish foreign policy relates to the country's experience with the European order and the power politics that emerged out of the Conference of Vienna (1814–15) and the territorial reduction of the Danish territory (Norway in 1815 and Schleswig-Holstein in 1864) (Wivel, 2014). This loss reduced Denmark to a weak small state lacking the capacity to influence the European order, particularly in the period following the 1864 defeat to Prussia and Austria-Hungary (Petersen, 2009). Denmark had no room to implement an active order policy and instead sought to dissociate itself from the governing system by pursuing neutrality and non-involvement in the European power balance (Holbraad, 1991; Petersen, 2009). In this period, Denmark was firmly within the German sphere of interest, forcing the country to follow what can be labelled a policy of acquiescence; that is, the countries had to bandwagon with the strongest forces in their external environment or adopt a policy of acquiescence, signifying minimal external activity designed to steer the country free of potentially harmful contact with the external environment.

While determinism leads to a rather passive policy, internationalism leads to a more active and engaged one. The basis for this ideology is the conception that, in the long run, it is possible to change the conditions within the international system to the advantage of the small states. They may try to contribute hereto, primarily by working to substitute power with law in inter-state relations. So while Denmark sought to preserve its sovereignty by pursuing principal neutrality and withdrawing from the international power system, a tendency also began to develop in Danish foreign policy aimed at influencing and changing the existing power balance. Denmark sought to establish an international order politics de-emphasizing 'hard power' and, to some extent, balancing

the smaller and larger powers (Due-Nielsen & Petersen 1995). Danish politicians and diplomats thus became increasingly involved in attempts at safeguarding the country's international situation by introducing legal measures to regulate its relations with other states (Holbraad, 1991: 28). Ambitions to pursue such order politics were absent in practical politics until the 1890s, when the ideas of neutralisation and arbitration began to form part of the country's political and parliamentary agenda (Holbraad, 1991: 30).

It is often argued that the 20th century was characterized by pendulum-like shifts between these different ideologies, which suggest that Danish foreign policy either focused on 'opting out' (neutrality) or 'opting in' (internationalism). This means that in periods where Denmark has had strong relative powers or been exposed to less pressure, we can expect the internationalist ideology to dominate. In contrast, in periods with more pressure, determinism would be dominant. Branner (2000), building on Holbraad, has pointed out that these ideologies are not mutually exclusive. He has therefore suggested that the nature of Danish foreign policy identity is dualistic: the two ideologies can coexist and have an equal impact on the type of decisions made (see also Lidegaard, 2011). If the country is able to follow different competing strategies, interpreting the direction of Danish foreign policy becomes more complicated. For instance, it has been argued that both internationalist and determinist strategies can be used to secure neutrality; that is, even though a state tries to opt out in crisis situations, it can simultaneously be active in international organisations and arbitration courts in order to secure the legal framework for state sovereignty. Historians have therefore often used these concept pairs to analyse the long-term trends in Danish foreign and security policy, where they have argued that the Danish foreign policy tradition can be considered dualistic; the two strings co-exist but they each dominate at different times. The application of this dualism tends to emphasize a high degree of continuity in Danish foreign policy since temporary

shifts between internationalism and determinism are seen as shifts in the balance within an overall framework. This was further strengthened by the introduction of the so-called compartmentalisation logic whereby Danish foreign policy was interpreted in four different arenas or cornerstones, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 40).

>>Figure 1 here>>

This division indicated that Danish interests should be pursued in three different areas: 1) security policy, 2) foreign economic policy and 3) the ideational/norm political area. It was further assumed that these interests should be handled within the organisational framework of international society. The idea was that the cornerstones were distinct but nevertheless related in the sense that they reinforced and supplemented each other, providing the government with a number of opportunities in the implementation of foreign policy. If the NATO policy required some sort of adaptation, then the UN policy area could be used to pursue a more active foreign policy. In the same manner, the Nordic arena could be used in times of crisis or when problems arose in the EEC arena, supporting the Nordic cooperation as an alternative to the country's EEC membership or using it as a platform for the small Nordic countries to engage with Europe (Hækkerup, 1965). The framework was designed to allow for some flexibility in Denmark's adaptation to the bipolar conflict in the international system; the country could adopt more passive and reactive stands within the area of security or become more active in other areas, such as the UN, meaning that Denmark could pursue both internationalist foreign policy (understood as idealistic or norm-based) and at the same time more deterministic – adaptational – strategies. This suggested that Danish foreign policy could balance different levels of engagement and priorities in the different arenas. Adopting this perspective would traditionally lead to expectations of a high degree of continuity, since activism in

one cornerstone would often be combined with less activism in other areas, thereby leading to assumptions about shift in balance between the relative importance of the different areas.

Adaptation vs. activism

Newer analyses of Danish foreign policy often distinguish between adaptive and activist foreign policy (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995). The Danish foreign policy tradition has been inspired by the work of Rosenau and his so-called adaptation theory (Hansen, 1974; Petersen, 1977). Here, national leaders are seen as situated at the interface between their domestic and international environments and tasked with balancing the changes and demands emanating from these environments (Rosenau, 1970).

The perspective has allowed for a rough prediction of the most likely overall foreign policy strategies of Denmark and small states in general by pointing out how the relationship between a state's 'influence capacity' and 'sensitivity' to the external environment will determine which strategy to follow (Petersen, 1977). Small states like Denmark can thereby pursue different adaptation modes, depending on the constellation of/balance between its capabilities and external stress sensitivity (Petersen, 2000). The adaptation literature identifies four different modes of adaptation: An accommodating policy of *acquiescence*, i.e., bandwagon with the strongest forces in its external environment if stress sensitivity (SS) is high and influence capacity is low. On the other hand, if stress sensitivity and influence capability (IC) are low, the country would follow a less compromising policy of *quiescence*. In effect, this signifies a policy of minimal external activity designed to steer the country free of possible harmful contacts with the external environment. Countries with relatively high influence capability in the international system have other, more agreeable policy options. If combined with a low degree of SS, a high degree of IC makes possible a policy of *dominance* that attempts to mould the external environment according to domestically

generated values (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 16). Finally, with a combination of high-influence capacity and high-stress sensitivity, a policy of *balancing* based on a kind of give-and-take attitude towards international politics is likely to ensue. Accordingly, the defining aspect of Danish foreign policy during the Cold War was that Denmark followed a reactive adaptation pattern in its foreign policy leading to a kind of politics of adaptation characterised by adaptation to great powers, pacifistic positions and a strategy of non-commitment within the alliance structures (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 14–17; Petersen, 1977).

Danish foreign policy prior to the end of the Cold War has commonly been depicted as primarily pragmatic and reactive in contrast to the ‘active internationalism’ (Holm 2002) overtly pursued after 1989. ‘Activism’ must be seen against the background of the traditionally rather passive Danish foreign policy during the Cold War (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 50) and can be defined as a policy or strategy aimed at *creating, preserving* or *changing* a given international order according to the interests and values of the policymaker (Holm, 2002). It can be said to relate to the concept of order policy by outlining strategies for long-term goals, ambitions and guidelines for the conduct of a state’s foreign policy.

But when is a state’s foreign policy active? Holm (2002) has argued that all states like to claim that they are pursuing an active foreign policy rather than an inactive one. How might we then differentiate between rhetoric and genuine activism? Holm (2002: 22–23) has suggested that the concept of activism has three dimensions: 1) the degree of initiative. An active policy may be defined as the opposite of passive or reactive. Policy is not merely a reaction to events and other policies but rather a 2) strategically based use of available means in a continual pursuit of these goals. Policy is active when 3) resources are set aside and mobilized in a prioritized manner. Holm

further identifies that which defines activism as being the degree of external opposition to the policy. Policy is active when initiatives are taken even in the face of opposition from other important international actors. An active policy involves taking risks. It is active when based on a high public profile where policy is clearly manifested and spelled out even when it would be safer to be quiet (Elgström, 1982). Political science has often used these concept pairs and tends to treat the concepts as mutually exclusive¹, meaning that they often subscribe to a singularistic perception of Danish foreign and security policy. This suggests that, in this literature, Danish foreign policy tends to be portrayed as *either* activist or adaptational since the end of the Cold War, which tends to lead to arguments that we have witnessed significant changes in the country's foreign policy in recent years (see also Pedersen, 2015).

Framing Danish activism

The article applies a variant of frame analysis that can be considered as a research method used to analyse how people understand situations and activities (Goffman 1974). Frames can be understood as rhetorical entities that "induce us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways, essentially making some aspects of our multi-dimensional reality more noticeable than other aspects" (Kuypers, 2009: 181). It is possible to identify three frames that cut across different theoretical IR perspectives that utilize the concepts pairs as either singular or dualistic, which in turns create different interpretations of change and continuity.

Framing 1: Activism as the continuation of the traditional adaptation politics

One of the dominant frames in both the public and academic debates has been to position Danish activism in the 2000s in a long-term adaptive framework with roots in the Danish NATO

¹ See however Rasmussen 2005; 2017 for an exception.

membership in 1949 and the general adaptation dynamics that guided small states during the Cold War (Pedersen and Gram-Skjoldager, 2015). Over the last 30 years, most of the research into Danish Cold War history has focused on uncovering adaptive patterns. This position has primarily been driven by Danish historians, who – drawing inspiration from the wider adaptation literature – have portrayed Danish foreign policy as characterized by a (re)active adaptation to the great powers that has been combined with certain balancing and at times neutralist elements. This became particularly visible in the Danish skepticism and opposition towards full, committed membership in international organisations such as NATO in the 1980s (the so-called footnote period) and the acceptance of further committed institutional and political integration in the EEC framework (Due-Nielsen and Petersen 1995; Holbraad, 1991; Pedersen, 2013). The shift in Danish foreign policy after the end of the Cold War is partially explained within the adaptation framework that builds on a small state logic with emphasis on active rather than reactive adaptation (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995). This interpretation lives on in a number of analyses of the foreign policy of the period (Villaume, 1995; 2008ab; 2012). Accordingly, the active Danish participation in the war coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq should not be seen as an expression of an independent activism but rather as active adaptation to American demands to take ‘a stance in the Fight Against Terror’. Proponents of this perspective recognize that the great changes in the international system after the end of the Cold War meant that the external pressure on Denmark waned, allowing for a more active and unconstrained Danish foreign policy, but they maintained that the foreign and security policy continued to be adaptive in nature (Pedersen and Gram-Skjoldager, 2015).

Hans Branner argues that The End of the Cold War represents such a profound change, and, for a country like Denmark, many of the subsequent steps taken, including those apparently signaling a very new course, should be seen rather as a way of accommodating to the external change on the

basis of the prevailing policy rather than the pursuit of an entirely new policy (Branner, 2013: 139). Others argue that what we have witnessed since the end of the Cold War can be understood as the emergence of a ‘complex pattern of adaptation’. In the words of Due-Nielsen and Petersen, Denmark moved from reactive to active adaptation, from ‘foot-dragging’ to initiation, from a defensive protection of goals only partially in accordance with the international trends that Denmark felt obliged to accept’ (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 50)

This overall perspective emphasizes a high degree of continuity in Danish foreign policy, both in the transition from the Cold War to the 1990s and from the 1990s to the period thereafter. Following the adaptation logic, Denmark reacted to the changes in the international system with increased engagement or activism, partly due to the new dynamics. The US domination of world affairs meant that small states like Denmark had to adjust and ‘get in line’, adapting to the new style of American engagement. Following the Bush Senior and later the Clinton doctrine, the US became more engaged in peace-making and peacekeeping operations around the globe. In order to avoid being seen as foot-dragging or as a resilient laggard, many small states felt forced to increase their level of engagement in order to avoid marginalization. This logic is illustrated in Figure 2, illustrating the level of international activity, where S symbolizes the small state and G symbolizes the US as the great power.

<<Figure 2 here>>

When the US became more active and engaging after the end of the Cold War, the small states had to adjust, and become more active themselves in order to avoid marginalization. They had to reduce

the distance between themselves and the great power, meaning that a higher level of international activism was required if they wanted to at least maintain the status quo (SQ) in their relation to their alliance partner and the sponsor of Western security. Some states were satisfied with maintaining the SQ, as illustrated by the movement from S_{SQ1} (which illustrates the situation during the Cold War) to S_{SQ2} (illustrating the situation after the Cold War), which follows the same spatial distance as the movement from G_{SQ1} to G_{SQ2} (which marks the changes in US foreign and security policy after the end of the Cold War). Other small states became more active which is illustrated by the move from S_{SQ1} to S_{SQ3} , where the small states shifted even closer to the US position than previously. The figure also illustrates a central line of conflict in the debate about Danish activism. The question is, however, whether this move can be interpreted as adaptation or as an active foreign policy choice. The central argument is that the changes in the external factors (changes in the overall structure of the international system or in the behavior of the hegemon in the system) induced an activist shift in the international engagement of small states in peacekeeping (Bosnia and Croatia), over peace-making (Kosovo) to actual warfare in the 2000s (Afghanistan, Iraq). Nikolaj Petersen has pointed out how a central element in the Liberal-led government's support to the Bush administrations (2000–08) was the conviction that it was in Denmark's permanent interest to be on the side of the US and that; ultimately, the US alone could guarantee Denmark's security (Petersen, 2010). This has often led to the impression of Denmark and other small states as tragic Sancho Panza figures following the US lead (Lidegaard, 2010). From a different perspective Hans Mouritzen has also addressed some of these tendencies, where he argues that the active Danish alignment with the USA can be seen as 'super-Atlanticism' in the sense that Denmark had been too willing to give, and accommodate the American demands in the period (Mouritzen 2007).

In conclusion, this perspective underlines a high degree of continuity before and after the end of the Cold War. It points out how the underlying structural conditions changed and sparked a new

activism, an activism which is interpreted as part of a broader tendency among small states whereby they become conditioned to adapt to the great powers in order to avoid marginalisation. The main conclusion seems to be that Denmark moved from reactive to active adaptation in response to the changes in the international trends, where we have seen an increase in the activity level of international organisations coupled with an even more active role of the US in militarised conflicts.

Framing II: Activism as a path-breaking small-state security approach

Another frame does not interpret the foreign policy as a continuation but rather as a clear break with the traditional Danish Cold War foreign policy. This argument exists in two variants (Pedersen and Gram-Skjoldager, 2015). The first claims that the development after 2001 marked a sharp departure from the adaptive mode of Danish foreign policy, both from the foreign policy that was typical during the Cold War but also from the foreign policy that dominated the 1990s (Heurlin, 1993; Rynning, 2003; 2006; Wæver, 1995). Rynning has argued that Denmark chose a fundamentally different role after 2001. From assuming the role as international broker during the Cold War, Denmark gradually developed into a 'strategic actor' during the 1990s, culminating in 2001 and 2003 with participation in the War on Terror and the invasion of Iraq (Rynning, 2003; 2006). Rynning argues that activism and the increased Danish activity level throughout the 1990s was something new compared to the balancing adaptation during the Cold War but that it *did not depart* from it fundamentally, since it was still somewhat in line with the Danish tradition for peacekeeping during the Cold War. The Danish transformation into a 'strategic actor' was something completely new, since Denmark was now participating in international wars as an active part, the ambition being not to play the 'broker' or keep the peace but rather to get into wars in order to win them alongside our 'brothers-in-arms' (Rynning 2003). Another group of Danish and international scholars has focused on the foreign policy of the period as a departure from what they see as the

internationalist tradition in Danish foreign policy (Holm, 2002; Knudsen, 2004) and in the broader Scandinavian context (Lawler, 2007). Knudsen (2004) has argued that we saw tendencies towards what he considered to be path-breaking Danish policy in relation to the Danish participation in the Iraq War, which led him to ask whether Denmark was now ‘losing sight of the internationalism’ that has otherwise guided Danish foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Even though the two interpretations are very different and have stood in stark contrast to one another, they do share the assumption that the governments led by former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen marked a significant shift in Danish foreign policy. They also share the view that what characterized Danish foreign policy in the period 2001–09 was a new type of militarized power politics previously unseen in modern Danish foreign policy. The Scandinavian literature has argued that the Nordic countries have had a unique collective identity in world politics that allowed them to remain aloof from international engagement. These states have often favored neutrality and non-alignment, which has distinguished them from other larger European states. Instead of adopting a passive role, however, Sweden and Finland, despite their lengthy traditions for neutrality, have tried to broker negotiations between East and West and participated in the creation of a new security organisation, which has led to the argument that these states act as ‘norm entrepreneurs’ in world politics (Ingebritsen, 2002: 13). Kuisma has argued that the Nordic model constitutes a particular form of foreign policy based on multilateralism, ‘solidaristic internationalism’ and international ‘justice’. Accordingly, the Danish decision to join a US-led ad hoc coalition that went to war in Afghanistan and later – without a UN mandate – into Iraq obviously represents a major break with what they perceived as the ‘Nordic model’. This part of the Scandinavian small state literature often associate internationalism with Nordic exceptionalism, which emphasizes multilateralism and the conduct of social power and mediation (Kuisma, 2007), the small Nordic states acting as norm entrepreneurs (Ingebritsen, 2002) or ‘good states’ (Neumann and de Cavalho, 2015) pursuing influence along a

moral dimension due to their lacking military capabilities, which has led to emphasis on development assistance and the primacy of the UN framework. The Danish decision to emphasize militarized security policies and the decision to enter US-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq are seen as a departure from the peaceful Nordic internationalism and an embrace of the ‘muscular humanitarianism’ promoted by the US and the United Kingdom, thereby marking ‘*Denmark out from the other Nordic States*’, (Lawler, 2007: 110, 118). He argues that the Danish participation in the Iraq War clearly signaled an affinity for what he perceives to be a ‘muscular humanitarianism’ promoted by the US and the UK, which distinguishes Denmark from the other Nordic states. He is more hesitant to suggest that Denmark has completely broken with the Nordic Internationalist tradition because the intervention was framed in the language of human rights and democratization (Lawler, 2007: 118). Interestingly, this literature assumes that the Danish strategic culture have followed a longstanding internationalist tradition reaching back to the period during the Cold War. In this respect, the activism of the 2000s is seen as something completely different from this longstanding tradition, while the activism of the 1990s might be considered more in line with the internationalist tradition. This helps explain why 2001 seems all the more to represent a major turning point in Danish foreign policy.

Framing III: Activism as a new form of internationalism

The last frame analyses Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s foreign policy from an internationalist perspective. This perspective has in particular been represented in the recent work of Nikolaj Petersen and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. Compared with the understanding of institutionalism in international literature, they adopt a rather limited reference point in their classification of the concept of internationalism. Their reading primarily associates internationalism with the period after the end of the Cold War. In their view, the foreign policy in the 2000s is closely related to the

activism in the 1990s that has often been labelled ‘active internationalism’ (Pedersen, 2012; Petersen, 2009). Nikolaj Petersen has argued that we have witnessed the introduction of a coherent liberal paradigm in Danish foreign and security policy that has been visible in both the strategic thinking and practice from 1990 to 2009 (Petersen, 2006: 618; 2009). Building on this, Pedersen argues that we have seen a number of defining commonalities in how activism was performed before and after 2001. This is particularly related to the introduction of value-based arguments and concerns for human rights and an increased interest in participating in high-profile operations in order to improve relations with Washington (Pedersen, 2012). This emphasis has led to more offensive and independent Danish goals and ambitions, which have resulted in a more committed and militarised Danish participation in peace-making operations (and warfare) throughout the 1990s. In this view, the foreign policy of the Fogh Rasmussen governments represented the culmination of a gradually more independent and ambitious foreign policy, which marked a sharp departure from the adaptation policy that led to the argument that there have been different phases in Danish activism – one from 1989–2001 labelled *activist internationalism* and another from 2001–11 labelled *international activism* which seems to emphasise a high degree of continuity in *both* Danish activism and its internationalism *after* the end of the Cold war, since the closer alliance with the US is considered an alternative way to *opt into* the international alliance system. This has led to the argument that the emphasis on ad hoc coalitions rather than the permanent security institutions should not be considered as a *difference in kind* but rather a *difference in degree* within an overall internationalist Danish tradition (Pedersen, 2012). Accordingly, the period does not represent a significant departure from the modern Danish foreign policy tradition, even though he emphasized Atlanticism and ad hoc coalitions as platforms for the conduct of Danish foreign policy.

Conclusions

One of the purposes of this article has been to uncover some of the interpretation patterns that have evolved in the literature regarding the militarized activism in Danish foreign policy from 2001-09 and identified some of the basic arguments and premises in order to evaluate arguments about change and continuity in the period. The three frames identified in the Danish case clearly differ on how they conceptualize foreign policy and whether they interpret the period as a profound shift in Danish foreign and security policy or whether the period represents the continuation of Danish activism. While disagreements might be the most conspicuous feature of academia, debates usually also rest on more basic – but also sometimes (too) implicit – assumptions among the participants on what they are disagreeing about. My argument is that a part of this variation in the interpretation patterns relates to whether the different analytical concept pairs are treated as dualistic or singular, which reflects a general gap in the literature. The part of the literature that analyses Danish foreign policy as dualistic has often drawn comparisons to researchers who operate with a singular interpretation and often have difficulties handling changes since they usually talk about shifts in the balance between the two underlying ideologies that are assumed to navigate the country's foreign and security policies. Proponents of this position often tend to emphasize the continuity in foreign policy. This continuity position has often used to analyses long-term trends in the country's foreign policy. Most of the conceptual work that has analysed this question has therefore had a very different and long-range conceptual history compared to the concepts developed in political science, which often have a shorter history, since they are often designed to analyse short-term periods in which the often un-reflected utilization of case studies that are either treated as 'typical' or 'deviant' cases tends to underline 'dramatic changes' in the course of the small states' respective security policies, which is enforced by the utilization of terms such as activism vs. adaptation, which cannot logically co-exist. The confusion here becomes quite conspicuous in the Danish literature about the period, but also in the international small state literature that has been dealing with the period.

The range of the concepts is often even more ambiguous in the utilization of internationalism in the international literature, as the concepts are not only assumed to be able to travel over time within each case but are also expected to be able to travel across different countries. This is often problematic, since ‘internationalism’ in the Danish context might be very different from the Swedish or Norwegian context. It becomes even more complicated due to the loose treatment of the concept of internationalism in different disciplines and across different IR theoretical positions. Placing the Danish debate in a wider contextual context it is interesting to compare the tendencies in the Danish debate with the one in the other Nordic countries. While much of the post-Cold War debate in the Danish – and Norwegian – context has focused on the role of Atlanticism and which opportunities a closer alignment with the USA creates for the countries, the Swedish and Finnish debate seems to have centered on the utility of increased Nordic cooperation (Forsberg 2013; Brommeson 2016). Induced by the increased multipolar order, post-neutral Finnish and Swedish scholars have argued that the growing interest in Nordic security policy cooperation in Sweden and Finland is a result of the need for flexibility, precisely because the world today is more unpredictable and multifaceted. This approach does not seem to have had a major effect on the dominant frames in the debate on Danish security policy, even though the country has engaged in pragmatic cooperation with the other Nordic countries. The Nordic dimension has developed into a major competitor to the overall Atlantic focus in Danish foreign and security policy despite Denmark in principle supported the intentions in the Stoltenberg report (Olesen 2017). There is, however, an interesting observation to be made in this respect. Even though Finland and Sweden continue to be unaligned, and will not join NATO, both countries have developed closer cooperation with the Alliance, including joint military exercises, training activities, participation in the NATO Response Force, and ratification and implementation of the Host Nation Support agreement (Gotkowska and Szymański 2016). These arrangements seem to open for more political and

military-technological opportunities for NATO to use the land territory, airspace and territorial waters of Sweden and Finland. Alyson et al. (2016) have theoretically argued that this behavior can be understood in terms of that they label ‘shelter theory’. Here alliances like NATO can offer strategic protection, either in a political or a military manner. This suggests that a part of the Nordic literature resembles some of the recurrent themes in Danish foreign policy, where the question of the utility of Atlanticism has been dominant the academic (and public) debate. This is more specifically manifested in a debate about the nature of and explanation for small states’, like the Nordic countries’, involvement in international operations such as ISAF and Unified Protector, and whether participation can be interpreted as change or continuity in relation to the foreign policy traditions (e.g. Doeser 2014; 2016; Agrell 2013; Saideman & Auerswald 2011; Noreen et al 2017).²

One of the arguments in this article has been that the debate over the status of the Danish doctrine of International Activism reflects upon a broader tendency in the literature where the relationship between different assumed ideational drivers has been less reflected, which might ultimately lead to different interpretations of how we identify change and continuity due to the lack of conceptual clarity about we understand the relationship between ideational drivers as either complementary or non-complementary. It is often argued that changes in states’ grand strategies and foreign policy doctrines more generally can be explained by the predominance of certain domestic ideologies. For instance, studies of US grand strategies often point to the relevance of two central ideologies, ‘exceptionalism’ and ‘vindicationism’, that steer the conduct of US foreign policy (Monten 2005). Interestingly, much of this literature faces some of the same challenges that we have seen in the debate on the Danish foreign policy, since the relationship between these underlying ideological drivers are often unclear. Although these contending approaches have coexisted throughout US

² Another variant of this debate have been the focus on the prospects for more regionalized cooperation either in a Nordic framework such as the NORDEFECO (Doeser 2012) or through the EU that has been highlighted as the default mode in Swedish foreign policy (Brommesson 2016).

political history, they have also prevailed at different times, and they are often treated as being entangled in a battle for supremacy, which implies an expectation about pendulum swings in the conduct of states' foreign policy when the relative balance between them shifts. On the other hand, studies of grand strategies often assume a high degree of continuity in great powers' foreign policy but also suggest that certain ideologies might prevail at different times without really changing the overall direction of the foreign policy tradition. This resembles a more dualistic understanding, which has led to an emphasis on continuity interpretations of the country's foreign policy. Overall, the article's argument about the relevance of a more nuanced reflection of the analytical concepts that we use to study foreign policy changes and their relationships seems to matter for our interpretation of changes and continuity in states' foreign policy.

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EEC (Economy)	Nordic cooperation (Ideational)
UN (Ideational)	NATO (Security)

Figure 1 Compartmentalisation of Danish foreign policy

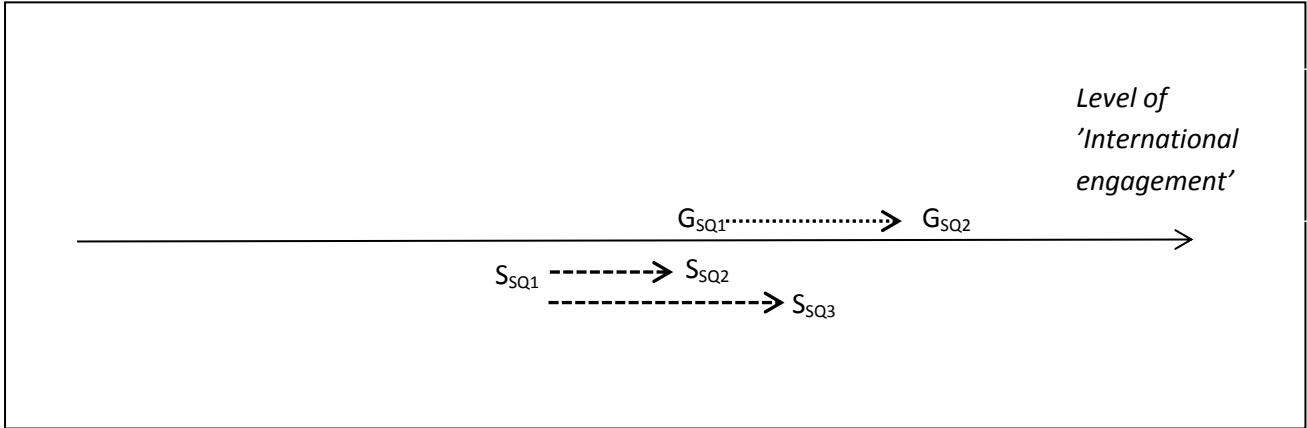


Figure 2. 'Complex adaptation' in small state security policy after the Cold War