



## **TWO DANISH ACTIVIST FOREIGN POLICIES?**

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT AND  
'ACTIVISM' IN DANISH FOREIGN POLICY  
1988–2011

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## **Abstract**

This report argues that when the Cold War ended, old Cold War lessons were slowly replaced not by one, but rather by at least two kinds of activist foreign policy lesson: a Liberal/Conservative hawkish activist lesson that relatively easily embraced military measures with or without broad international support, and a Social Democratic/Social Liberal dovish activist lesson that was comparatively more multilaterally inclined and had a stronger focus on humanitarian aid. Any seeming consensus during the 1990s or in recent years must not, therefore, be taken for general agreement about activist foreign policy. Instead, these should be seen merely as periods where the differences between lessons of activist foreign policy were masked by the fact that external circumstances, especially periodic American foreign policy restraint and preference for multilateralism, were not creating conditions for disagreement. For this reason the present Danish consensus on activist foreign policy is unlikely to survive any major American aggressive resurgence or big shifts away from multilateralism.

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## Key to party names

<i>Party name in English</i>	<i>Party name in Danish</i>	<i>Letter used for Danish general elections</i>
United List	Enhedslisten	Ø
Socialist People's Party	Socialistisk Folkeparti	F
The Social Democrats	Socialdemokraterne	S
The Social Liberals	Radikale Venstre	B
The Liberals	Venstre	V
The Conservatives	De Konservative	C
The Progress Party	Fremskridtspartiet	Z
The Danish People's Party	Dansk Folkeparti	O

## Two Danish activist foreign policies?

The period of Danish foreign policy following the end of the Cold War is often dubbed the 'era of activist foreign policy'. The grand foreign policy lines of the period have been marked by remarkable political consensus on activist foreign policy in the 1990s and equally remarkable political discord in 2000s – nowhere more pronounced than over the question of the 2003 Iraq War. The overall goal of this report is to explain that fluctuation in consensus.

The following report will argue that the recent ebb and flow in the Danish consensus on the main foreign and security policy line since the end of the Cold War can be explained by combining a focus on the one hand on the information coming in on the external circumstances to which Denmark had to react, most notably changes in the US foreign policy line with, on the other hand, a focus on the different foreign policy lessons that were used by the different Danish political factions to process those external circumstances. This is particularly clear when one investigates the Danish attitude to participate in military interventions after the Cold War. Consequently, it will show that the different lessons harboured by the Danish left (Socialist People's Party [F] and United List [Ø]), centre-left (Social Democrats [S] and Social Liberals [B]), centre-right (Liberals [V] and Conservatives [C]) and nationalist right (Progress Party [Z] and Danish People's Party [O])<sup>1</sup> led to a quite broad consensus on foreign policy during 1991–2001 and 2008–2011 when the US foreign policy line was relatively moderate. Conversely, it will also show that when the US foreign policy line was more uncompromising as in 2001–2008 it led to discord between the centre-left and centre-right over Danish foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, when the US foreign policy line was moderate a clear majority in the Danish parliament saw it as an opportunity to pursue multilateral humanitarian activism. At those times the broad majority in the Danish parliament have agreed to Danish participation in missions abroad as a way to further long-term Danish interests in creating a more favourable security environment. However, when the US foreign

<sup>1</sup> These letters following the names of the parties are those used to designate the party on the ballot papers at Danish elections.

<sup>2</sup> The Danish political parties Centre Democrats, Christian Democrats and Freedom 2000 are considered to be of too little importance to be included here. In general, the Centre Democrats and Christian Democrats probably should be placed quite close to the Conservative foreign policy line, though perhaps slightly to the left of them (especially the Christian Democrats). Freedom 2000 was the short-lived descendant of the Progress Party and had roughly the same foreign policy line as their predecessors.

policy line was more uncompromising, it split the consensus because it activated different lessons within the centre-left and centre-right concerning how multilateral and how humanitarian as opposed to unilateral and military-focused, foreign policy activism needed to be.



## What the existing literature lacks

Before we can get to the main analysis a few words are required on what this thing called ‘Danish activist foreign policy’ really is. The literature on Danish foreign policy activism has been split over a range of issues. Of most relevance to this report is, first, the split between whether activist foreign policy should be measured according to foreign policy goals (Rynning 2003; Petersen 2004) or if it should be measured according to foreign policy means, such as whether goals are pursued diplomatically or militarily (Heurlin 1993; Rasmussen 2005). Secondly, there is also a split over when exactly activist foreign policy took off and how much it has changed over the years. Thus, authors such as Heurlin (1993), Holm (2002) and Petersen (2004) stress that activist foreign policy must be seen as a fundamental break in Danish foreign policy made possible by the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, Petersen (2009) underlines this development as a primarily Liberal–Conservative development which was afterwards taken over by the Social Democrats and Social Liberals. In contrast Branner (2000), for example, and Rasmussen (2005) argue that activism has much deeper roots in Danish diplomatic history. A third approach, taken by Rynning (2003), puts greater emphasis on the year 2001 as the most important year for the development of a real Danish foreign policy activism by arguing that the activism of the 1990s might have been new, but that the shift in 2001 from peacekeeping to outright warfare was more substantial.<sup>3,4</sup> Finally, Pedersen (2012) agrees with Rynning that Danish activism changed markedly in 2001, but focuses more heavily on Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s liberal foreign policy project as the most important factor in the shift.

Most of these authors focus on Danish activism as one new kind of foreign policy. In contrast, this report will argue that there is not actually such a thing as *one* activist foreign policy. In this the report probably comes closest to agreeing with Branner (2000) and Rasmussen (2005), whose focus on traditions of foreign policy conduct throughout recent Danish diplomatic history is similar in many ways to the argument that will be presented in the report. However, Branner does not focus much on divisions along party lines and largely sees activism (or ‘active internationalism’ as he calls it) as one tendency that reaches across party lines.<sup>5</sup> Rasmussen (2005), on the other hand, does take party lines into account and their different preferences for

<sup>3</sup> Rynning 2003: 23–24

<sup>4</sup> This section draws on the more extensive literature review, done in Pedersen 2012: 111–116

<sup>5</sup> Branner 2000: 217–18

activism, but his strict focus on attitudes to the use of military force is, I will argue, too narrow to fully capture the differences between the two sides. This leads him to overemphasize that a consensus was in fact established after the Iraq rupture, when the Social Democrats and Social Liberals agreed to support Danish participation in the stabilisation force after the initial conventional war against the Iraq army was over.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, this report will argue that as the parties gradually adjusted to the end of the Cold War, the Danish centre-right and the centre-left drew quite different lessons about Danish security policies and, on the basis of this, of what an activist foreign policy was really all about, and that these lessons remain very different up until this day. Furthermore, compared to Rasmussen (2005) these lessons were different on a substantially broader range of issues – spanning from the use of force to the extent to which the two sides value multilateralism and international law. The differences, I will argue, were even more marked with the far-left and the far-right parties in the Danish parliament.

But how then to explain why serious discord on activist foreign policy did not occur before 2001? This report agrees to an extent with Pedersen (2012) that the activist foreign policy of governments ‘Anders Fogh Rasmussen I, II and III’ was probably more extreme in its focus on values than, for example, the activist foreign policy line of Liberals and Conservatives pursued in government in the late eighties, early nineties and, afterwards, advocated by the Liberal-Conservative opposition in the mid- and late nineties. However, it is difficult to know for sure just how much Anders Fogh Rasmussen represented a change in the Liberal-Conservative foreign policy line as his coming to power roughly coincided with two quite momentous events: externally it coincided with ‘September 11’ and the resulting new and uncompromising foreign policy line of the Bush administration as it embarked on its War on Terror. Internally, it coincided with the first time in 70 years that Denmark had a foreign policy majority that needed the support of *neither* the Social Democrats *nor* the Social Liberals.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, this report will argue that the change within the centre-right can be exaggerated and that, along the lines of Petersen (2009), it will tend to see it as much more limited than the shift that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s under the leadership of Uffe Ellemann-Jensen.<sup>8</sup> Contrary to Petersen (2009) and more along the same lines as Branner (2000), however, it will also argue that activism was not completely

<sup>6</sup> Rasmussen 2005: 82

<sup>7</sup> Petersen 2004: 573.

<sup>8</sup> Petersen 2009: 157–58

new to the Social Democrats or Social Liberals either, but rather drew on foreign policy lessons from earlier eras.

Consequently, the report will aim to show that the seeds of the Danish foreign policy discord, especially related to the war in Iraq, at least partially predated Anders Fogh Rasmussen. The main claim of the report is therefore that the centre-left and the centre-right never agreed fully on foreign policy activism, because they always held different lessons on how activism could best be used to produce indirect security – the centre-left prioritising multilateralism more than the centre-right and being generally less willing to use military force. The consensus of the 1990s, the report will argue, was primarily a result of their disagreements being masked by the absence of a clear centre-right majority in parliament and by the fact that the framework for Danish foreign policy, determined especially by the course of US foreign policy, did not present the Danish foreign policy elite with much to disagree on.

## Case selection and choice of historical sources

The report will seek to show the influence, development and stability of lessons, especially, but not exclusively for the centre-left and the centre-right since the end of the Cold War. It will seek to show that development in lessons about how foreign politics usually works was slow, and that the two main sides in the Danish parliament never completely reached a consensus about activism on a perceptual level. Instead, the periods of consensus must be attributed to shifting external circumstances that made their differences less important. This will be investigated across seven cases of Danish foreign policy activism chosen in an attempt to cover the most high-profile Danish activist projects since the end of the Cold War. Thus, the report will cover the Danish decisions to support Baltic independence in 1988–1991, to send the Danish ship *Olfert Fischer* to the Gulf in 1990, to send Danish peacekeepers to Bosnia in the mid 1990s, to participate in NATO's Kosovo campaign against Serbia in 1999, to participate in the occupation of Afghanistan in 2001, to participate in the war against Iraq of 2003 and, finally, to participate in the war against Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. The development in lessons with the passage of time between some of these cases will also be taken into account.

Due both to time constraints and to the quite restrictive Danish archival laws for material that is less than 20 years old, archival material has been employed only for the Baltic case. The examination of the rest of the cases is based primarily on publicly available, open source material – most importantly on debates in the Danish parliament from 1991 to 2011.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the analysis will draw on the three Danish defence commissions of 1988, 1997 and 2008, as well as on the Danish foreign policy commission of 1989. As open sources these must, of course, be treated with special caution and they present the analytical challenge of requiring that rhetoric be deciphered from genuine opinion. The treatment of the debates and the commissions aims at showing the significant developments in core foreign policy lessons within the different elites mostly at party/actor level (the debates), but also sometimes as the negotiated compromise of the majority (the commissions). The analysis of the material above will be supplemented and contextualised with scholarly work done on post-Cold War Danish foreign policy and, related to the Baltic case, also with a 2012 interview conducted with Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (which must, obviously, be

<sup>9</sup> A special thanks to the Parliamentary Library for helping me locate the relevant foreign and security policy debates from the vast number of parliamentary debates of the period.

considered with all the careful critical source analysis due to interviews conducted more than 20 years after events).

## Denmark's strategic situation 1991–2011

In order to understand Danish activism the stage must first be set. Thus, the situation after the end of the Cold War remained very favourable for Denmark in terms of external pressure throughout the period. The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the weakening of Russia itself, the Soviet core power centre and its most important successor state, meant that Denmark was left without a realistic adversary for a foreseeable future. This was not least the case since Denmark remained allied with the US through NATO, and since European integration did not give way to renewed rivalry between the European great powers.

Naturally, the external pressure on Denmark has not been constant for the last 20 years. September 11 2001 put the threat of terrorism on the agenda though it is probably imprecise to talk of a worsening position for Denmark in material terms *because* of September 11. Rather, it *revealed* the gradually improved conditions for terrorism in the globalised world and the growing strength of Al Qaeda. To this can be added the increased exposure of Denmark as a potential terrorist target following the Mohammed Cartoon crisis and the Danish participation in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, compared to the earlier threat against Denmark stemming from the Soviet Union, these shifts in threat level have so far been limited. Thus, barring nuclear terrorism, terrorism is unlikely to represent a threat to Denmark's national survival. The question that then moves to the forefront is the question of what states do when times are good? The two logical choices seem either to down-prioritise security policy and/or to try to actively use the good years to improve security in the long run. Denmark tried to do both by both slashing the military budget from a Cold War average of 2–3% of GDP to a new post-Cold War average of 1–2%,<sup>11</sup> and by initiating new, activist, foreign policies. However, that activism came in two forms.

The 1990s were, as mentioned, characterised not only by a period of remarkable lack of security threats against Denmark, but also by a cautious and moderate foreign policy course from the now unipolar American ally. Furthermore, the foreign policy projects that were initiated by the US or the UN were, in general,

<sup>10</sup> Petersen 2007: 48–49

<sup>11</sup> Wivel forthcoming: 20

characterised by a multilateral and often also humanitarian dimension which, we shall see, did not lead to any significant differences of opinion between the main parties in Denmark.

The period after 11 September 2001 and leading up to the 2008 presidential elections and the outbreak of the global financial crisis was, on the contrary, marked not only by a slight increase in threat against Denmark, but also, more importantly, by a marked change in the foreign policy course pursued by the US. Not only did the US now embark on military missions with less regard for the multilateralism they had favoured in the 1990s, with the Iraq War being the clearest example of this, but the missions themselves were generally marked by much higher combat intensity. If Denmark wanted to be a full participant in these operations it therefore meant accepting that Danish troops could be involved in military actions of a much more dangerous character than had been the case in the 1990s when Danish troops abroad had been primarily peacekeepers. This period, we shall see, presented Danish politicians with quite different dilemmas and created a situation where interpretation of the situation might vary, depending on which variant of the lesson about activist foreign policy was employed. In other words: there was suddenly something to disagree about.

Finally, the period from 2008–2011 was marked by a relaxation in American foreign policy with signs of an American return to a less aggressive, more multilateral foreign policy line. As we shall see, this softening of the American foreign policy line led to a situation where the two activist lessons again both began to recommend the same interpretations of which Danish foreign policy course would best serve Danish national interests.

## **The lessons of the Cold War and the new lessons of activism: hawkish and dovish variants**

What are foreign policy lessons? Here lessons are understood as pre-existing sets of ideas about how the world usually works. Drawing on such lessons, this report will argue, is a fundamental part of human behaviour without which we could not function. Thus, the report will argue, foreign policy decision makers will use lessons when faced with either too little, or too much, too complex information in order to make sense of a situation and be able to make decisions. Most importantly for the present report, lessons allow foreign policy makers to form beliefs about the future and about the expected consequences of different foreign policy decisions. Because of the nature of lessons as fundamental beliefs about how the world works, it also follows that people don't often abandon their core lessons about the world overnight. Thus, while the world sometimes changes rather rapidly, the mental processes of the brain work in such a way as to make it quite rare for decision-making to significantly change or for core lessons about the world to adjust unless faced with irrevocable proof of the error of those core lessons.<sup>12</sup> Lessons do occasionally change, however, and this report will attempt to show changes in the core lessons employed by politicians across the last 25 years of Danish foreign and security policy. This will be attempted by trying to analyse signs of general foreign policy lessons in the statements of the different political parties in the Danish parliament and elsewhere.

Lessons of foreign policy underwent a drastic change as the Cold War ended. This section will outline two pre-existing Cold War lessons and show how they were transformed into two variants of activist lesson (though, as we shall see, at different speeds). It will show how the activist lessons formed from the ashes of the Cold War lessons, but also how they incorporated something distinctively new into that mix.

### **The 'old' lessons: hawkish and dovish Cold War lessons**

The two Cold War lessons were, in essence, two schematic ways of thinking about the threat from the Soviet Union. Both of the Cold War lessons emphasised the need

<sup>12</sup> A focus on lessons is, furthermore, theoretically aligned with much work that has been done within political psychology. For psychological literature on this subject see: Fiske and Taylor (1984), Fiske (1986), Leyens, Yzerbyt & Schandron (1994), Macrae & Bodenhausen (2000) and Macrae & Bodenhausen (2001). For good examples of inclusion into IR theory see: Larson (1989), Khong (1992), Reiter (1996) and Bennett (1999). As will be shown in the report, the end of the Cold War could be seen as an example of an event that forced many Danish politicians to make such adjustments.



for a strong Danish military that would be able to deflect an attack from the Soviet Union in cooperation with the NATO allies. Furthermore, both lessons advocated that this was the primary objective of Danish security policy. The two lessons did not, however, dictate the same operationalisation of that policy but were, rather, divided along hawkish and dovish dividing lines, differing primarily over how effective confrontational foreign policy strategies were deemed to be, in comparison to more conciliatory foreign policies.

The hawkish Cold War lesson was primarily preoccupied with how to fight the Cold War and rested on the belief that aggressors could not be appeased, only deterred. The dovish Cold War lesson, however, also held another, conflicting, secondary element: the idea that war might also be avoided through *détente*.<sup>13</sup> This was in many ways a continuation of some of the thoughts contained within the classic pre-WWII Danish way of thinking about foreign policy and the possibilities for improving Danish security situation in the long run through the gradual dismantling of power politics.<sup>14</sup> Finally, connected to this, it also included a certain caution when dealing with hostile great powers – here the Soviet Union. Fused together, this produced a dovish Cold War lesson where the enemy, the Soviet Union, was primarily to be opposed but also, secondarily, not to be provoked if this could be avoided without compromising general opposition.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, using the terms ‘hawkish’ and ‘dovish’ here to describe the two versions of Cold War lessons is only *relative*. Thus, it is not meant to signal that either lived up to any hawkish or dovish archetypes that one might formulate. Rather, it is meant to capture the *relative* difference in belief about how far one could get with *détente* on the one hand and forceful opposition on the other.

The hawkish Cold War lesson lost ground with the centre-right around 1990, whereas the dovish Cold War lesson lasted somewhat longer with the centre-left, though it was definitively dead by 1992.<sup>16</sup> The weakening of the Cold War lessons did not mean that the Danish parties no longer cared about Danish territorial defence, but

<sup>13</sup> For a good analysis of *détente* in general and with the European Social Democrats in particular see Mariager (2012).

<sup>14</sup> Branner 2000: 205–06.

<sup>15</sup> Denmark was, in the words of historian Poul Villaume, “allied with reservation” (Villaume 1995: 867).

<sup>16</sup> Thus, Danish Social Democrat Svend Auken, for example, remarked in a debate about the future of Danish foreign policy that year that Denmark needed to focus on securing Danish interests in an open world marked by peace, freedom and democracy. This, he continued, was especially important to him after the presence of a direct threat to Denmark had disappeared (FT November 12 1992).

rather than those lessons had been naturally weakened by the end of the Cold War in the absence of a clear direct threat to Danish territorial integrity. From their ashes, however, developed hawkish and dovish 'activist' lessons of foreign policy.

### **The 'new' lessons: hawkish and dovish lessons about activism**

Both of the two main lessons about hawkish and dovish activism were centred on the idea of making use of immediate favourable security situations to bring about a higher future general level of security. The Liberals and the Conservatives, as we shall see, made the transition without too many complications, not least because the fall of their Cold War lessons was felt in those parties to be a victory for their Cold War line of securing as much support as domestically possible for their favoured US foreign policy line pursued by Reagan and later Bush the elder. The hawkish activist lesson that they had adopted in favour of their earlier hawkish Cold War lesson was something quite new in Danish foreign and security policy, even though there was also considerable continuity with the Cold War lessons. Like the Cold War lesson, alliance solidarity was an important element. However, whereas the rationale of the hawkish Cold War lesson had been that alliance solidarity was important because only the ideologically like-minded great powers (the US in particular) were thought able to save Denmark from the communist threat, the transformation of the hawkish Cold War lesson into an activist lesson made it much more outward looking and offensive than before. Thus, the hawkish activist lesson seems to be centred on the *spreading* of liberal ideas of democracy and human rights as much as on defending them. As such, it has taken over parts of the dovish Cold War lesson's focus on transforming the world in a favourable direction in the long run. In this way it also agreed on many counts with the dovish activist lesson. It was, however, less insistent on multilateralism and more accepting of hard military solutions when these ideals had to be pursued. This is not to say that the adherents of the hawkish Cold War lesson had not cared about values, but rather that during the Cold War much of such value promotion had been tied to showing alliance solidarity with the other Western powers in a Cold War struggle that was primarily seen as defensive in nature.

The Social Democrats, on the other hand, had invested much more in Gorbachev's new détente and had not, as we saw, fully established their new foreign policy line by the time of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Therefore, the transformation of their dovish Cold War lesson into a dovish activist lesson took longer than it did for the Liberals and the Conservatives. Their support for activism, however, was clear by the end of 1992.

The Social Democrats had by then transformed their dovish Cold War lesson into a dovish activist lesson – the most substantial change being that all those things that had been a secondary priority for the Social Democrats during the Cold War could now move to the forefront. What the party had needed time to digest was that this was in no small part due to the implosion of the only superpower from which a direct attack on Denmark was any kind of a realistic threat. In many respects the change in lessons was, when it happened, more limited for the adherents of the dovish activist lesson. One element in the dovish activist lessons was not particularly new in Danish security politics, but had been an integral part of the neutrality lesson and also, in fact, of the dovish Cold War lesson: that within the limits of first having to secure the short-term survival of the small Danish state one should pursue a strategy of support for international rules and regulations that might soften or dismantle great power politics and, thereby, benefit Danish security in the long run.<sup>17</sup> What made the activist variant of this lesson different from its Cold War and neutrality predecessors was that the absence of an immediate threat allowed it to take centre stage. In practice, it favoured pursuing indirect security through multilateralism and humanitarian efforts. When it came to the parliamentary parties, besides the Social Democrats it was also strong with the Social Liberals, but it was arguably even stronger with the far-left parties.<sup>18</sup>

Both versions of the activist lesson can be traced to the concept of indirect security sketched by the 1997 Defence Commission.<sup>19</sup> This is not surprising. Defence Commissions have most often been compromises in Denmark in recent years. The two different activist lessons differed, as mentioned, in how such indirect security was best produced.

### **A lesson of September 11?**

Finally it must be added that remnants of the hawkish variant of the Cold War lesson did survive for a time at the fringes of Danish political life. Thus, as we shall see, the idea that Danish military strength at home had to be prioritised remained strong with the Danish far-right parties, the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party, throughout the 1990s. The remnants of the hawkish Cold War lesson were eventually replaced, however, by the September 11 lesson, which was the lesson that terrorists

<sup>17</sup> Branner 2000: 203

<sup>18</sup> Again, it becomes difficult to spot when it stops being primarily an instrumental lesson about how to promote Danish indirect security and when it becomes a goal in itself as an idealist project.

<sup>19</sup> Forsvarskommissionen 1998: 65.

represented a *direct* security threat against Denmark which might not be the kind of threat that could be engaged conventionally at the Danish borders or even at the borders of NATO. Instead, Danish security had to be defended through the alliance with the US and participation in its War on Terror. As will be shown, the Danish People's Party was most deeply affected by this. It is, however, also hard to rule out some influence on the political middle of Danish politics – most importantly on the Liberals and the Conservatives – though, as will be argued, significantly less so than for the Danish People's Party.

## **Two foreign policy activisms? Danish foreign policy activism from the early 1990s and on**

Established and accepted in the early 1990s by the most important Danish foreign policy decision makers, Danish foreign policy activism was to be central in Danish foreign policy throughout the two decades that followed the Cold War. The following section will show how a powerful foreign policy consensus on foreign policy activism took hold in the 1990s. The next ones will show how it was subsequently shaken by September 11 and the war in Afghanistan and ultimately shattered by the war in Iraq before being restored once more leading up to the Libyan intervention.

### **The beginnings of the era of activism: the broad consensus about activist foreign policy of the 1990s**

The great consensus about activism in many ways started with the Danish decision to support the Baltic struggle for independence from the Soviet Union as well as the decision to send the Olfert Fischer to the Gulf in 1990 (cases 1 & 2). It came about relatively quickly and primarily stemmed from foreign policy circles rather than military circles.<sup>20</sup> Once established, this consensus survived throughout the 1990s and led Denmark to send out a large number of peacekeepers, especially to former Yugoslavia (cases 3 & 4). That consensus included most of the Danish political parties – with the sometime exception of the far-left or the far-right parties in the Danish parliament.

#### *Case 1: The rise and fruition of Denmark's Baltic State Project*

The Danish interest in the development in the Baltic area went from very low in 1987 and gradually rose throughout 1988 and 1989. Domestically, the Liberal–Conservative–Social Liberal government increasingly came under pressure from the Social Democrats who, informed by their dovish Cold War lesson, wanted Denmark to strengthen its contacts with the Balts as a part of their larger détente approach to the new developments within the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> However,

<sup>20</sup> See for instance (Forsvarskommissionen 1989) for a rather conservative view of Danish security policy and (Udenrigskommissionen 1990) for the beginnings of an activist approach to foreign policy.

<sup>21</sup> See for example Social Democrat Svend Aukens' remarks at the Nordic meeting between foreign ministers and aid ministers in Isafjörður 14–16 August 1989. On this occasion Aukens stressed that he did not find that the Danish Baltic policy was particularly active and that something had to be done about that – although he also stressed that one had to avoid supporting separatist elements (Nordisk udenrigs og bistandsministermøde i Isafjörður, Island, 14/8–16/8 1989, 5.K.82.a).

the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially resisted the pressure because such a move, interpreted through the hawkish Cold War lesson, was seen as a recognition of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic Countries and, thereby, as far too conciliatory a foreign policy course. However, the hawkish Cold War lesson was fast being invalidated by the information coming in from the Baltic countries: the local governments seeming more and more in tune with the popular majority within those countries. This also raised the new question of whether Moscow was really willing to accept the development, and it raised the dilemma of how far Denmark should go in support of the Balts if doing so risked the Danish–Soviet bilateral relationship – something to which both Cold War lessons attributed value.

In September 1989 the Danish strategy was casually moving towards activism, but the bilateral relationship with the Soviets was still a priority. At the time it was considered whether a visit from the, now independent minded, Estonian Soviets could be accepted in Denmark. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) memo that was subsequently sanctioned by foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, laid out how the issue revealed two dilemmas for the Danish foreign policy: first, accepting a visit would jeopardise official Danish policy on the subject, which preached stark non-recognition of Soviet authority in the Baltic States and therefore also demanded that the local Baltic Soviet authorities be treated as illegitimate. This was the classic Cold War position that Denmark had conformed to since the end of WWII and which, though increasingly out of sync with realities on the ground, Danish authorities dared not abandon until the relatively free elections in the Baltic States in early 1990. The second dilemma was a much more general one for Danish foreign policy. Thus, the memo stressed that

...on the other hand comes the consideration for our good bilateral relationship with the Soviet Union which, in the light of the rapid (and for Moscow unwelcome) developments in the Baltic republics, will hardly look with gentle eyes on a visit of the proposed type, which will clearly seem an official arrangement. Such a visit could be interpreted by the Soviet Union as direct, active support for the efforts for independence in the Baltic Republics. Even though we welcome the developments in the Baltic Area, we should proceed with caution.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> RA, UM, 5.K.82.a, Pakke 13, Memo (in the original Danish: "notits"), 1 September 1989. Unless otherwise noted all direct quotes are the author's translation from Danish.

The quote shows the somewhat ironic point that Denmark was thereby refusing the visit from the Estonian Soviet based both on the argument that it might allow the Soviet Union to use it as proof of Danish recognition of their rule in the Baltic *and* on the argument that it might make the Soviet Union angry with Denmark for supporting independence movements against the Soviet Union. Most importantly for the general development of Danish foreign policy activism, however, is the point that comes across in latter part of the quote: that Denmark should proceed with caution in order not to hurt bilateral relations with the Soviet Union. This remark shows that Denmark had at this point not adopted activism fully in its foreign policy and that a classic respect for relations with even non-allied great powers still took precedence. That quickly changed, however— at least as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. Thus in January 1990 a new memo for the Danish Baltic policy, specifically requested by foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, redefined the Danish Baltic policy. The dilemmas were the same, but the Danish responses to them were now clearly turned in a much more activist direction. The non-recognition problem was acknowledged, but reduced to mostly being a judicial legacy, and it was decided to make elections the essential confirmation of change in the Baltic States, if they proved to be free and fair. This represented the culmination of a growing impression in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Soviet Union, even before the elections, no longer had a puppet regime in place in the Baltic States. The Cold War lesson about the Soviet threat and about the not unrelated value of the bilateral Danish relationship with the Soviet Union, however, had undergone, perhaps, the greatest change since 3½ months earlier. Now the formulation was merely that:

...additionally, it is important that the initiatives, *as much as possible and for as long as possible* [my emphasis], can be taken without jeopardising the good relationship to the Soviet Union in any way.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the Soviet relationship was now clearly downgraded to that of a secondary interest when compared to the increasingly important Danish Baltic project. This begs the question of why this change had occurred? The fall of the Berlin Wall could provide an obvious answer, but it is not often given as a reason for the change in Danish foreign policy in the sources. In an interview conducted in April 2012, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen states that he himself gradually became convinced of a shift in circumstances for foreign policy. Thus, regarding the Soviet military intervention in Lithuania in January 1991, Ellemann-Jensen stated:

<sup>23</sup> RA, UM, 5.K.82.a, Pakke 15, Memo (in the original Danish: “notits”), 17 January 1990.

So, we could of course not have done anything, if what happened in January had developed into... a really massive military intervention. But then of course, it was the assessment at this time that the era of the Khrushchev and the Brezhnev doctrine[s] was over, and that it was all about making use of the 'window of opportunity' that had been established.<sup>24</sup>

This points towards a crucial change in threat perception by the Danish foreign minister. Bluntly put, one could put pressure on the Soviet Union because they no longer had the will to use the substantial military capabilities they still possessed. This served to undermine the reactive and defensively minded parts of the old hawkish Cold War lesson, and it helps explain why it was transformed into a hawkish activist lesson. There was simply not that much reason to be afraid of the Soviet Union anymore. Ellemann-Jensen also attributed much of the feeling of shifting circumstances to getting to know Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze:

But a lot was happening in the Soviet Union. And then, in [19]90, it so happened that I had developed a great relationship with Eduard Shevardnadze... He talked about his work in Georgia, his work with promoting cultural mobility in Georgia and to get a movie allowed through that just a few years earlier would never have been allowed. So, there was that sense of there being something moving. And therefore one did not support the positive tendencies by walling oneself off and being afraid to provoke [the Soviets].<sup>25</sup>

From Ellemann-Jensen's book *Din egen dag er kort* one can, most likely, get a more precise time for this meeting: it occurred in September 1988.<sup>26</sup> Such high-level meetings and personal rapprochements did not change policy overnight, nor did they change the perception of 'the enemy' in the Danish elite with one stroke. However, the fact that a crucial actor like Uffe Ellemann-Jensen would point to this meeting as an important moment for re-evaluation of the Soviet Union, suggests that at least a gradual readjustment of the lesson about threat was underway, at least with foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen himself, already in 1988. This had profound foreign policy implications for what policy Uffe Ellemann-Jensen thought Denmark could

<sup>24</sup> Interview with author, 17 April 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Author's interview with Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, April 17 2012. The presented extract was part of Uffe Ellemann-Jensen's answer to the question if anything had changed sometime late 1989–1990.

<sup>26</sup> Ellemann-Jensen 1996: 103. Ellemann-Jensen mentioned during the interview that he had made sure to write down notes concerning his political life. For this reason alone, it is much more likely that the date given in the book is the most correct one.



and should pursue vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Thus, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen continued, in a direct continuation of the above quote:

They [the Soviets] had to be pushed a little and helped a little. So that was clearly also the impression of the new tone that had come after Shevardnadze had taken over the foreign policy. Clearly, there was the impression that it was now that some options were open, now that they had to be used.<sup>27</sup>

This gradual change in lesson about the Soviet Leaders was to be crucial for the development of the Danish Baltic policy 1988–1991, signalling a new readiness for a more active foreign policy line in Danish relations with a great power than had normally been the case in Danish foreign policy during the Cold War years.

Uffe Ellemann-Jensen also mentions the footnote period as an important explanation for the sudden Danish activism. Thus he said in answer to the question of the background to the Danish Baltic policy that it must:

...be seen in context with the entire atmosphere in Danish foreign and security policy [circles] after the quite exhausting footnote years, where differences had been quite fierce, which was, of course, unbearable. And yes, then, suddenly, then things began to soften somewhat. I felt a constant need partly to talk about something else, partly of course to mark a few fundamental views. Partly, also, to try to find some issues where one [the Danish parliament] could come together a bit more broadly. And this there was also interest for among the Social Democrats – among some of them at least.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Ellemann-Jensen felt the need to do something tied to liberal values – if possible with broad support.

The Liberal and Conservative adoption of a hawkish activist lesson in place of the hawkish Cold War lesson turned the Danish domestic situation upside down. Thus, the Social Democrats who still adhered to the dovish Cold War lesson gradually began to harbour serious doubts about the Danish Baltic policy, as it became increasingly clear that it clashed with their détente foreign policy line towards the Soviet Union. Thus, Social Democratic member of parliament Erik B. Smith bluntly stated, in a

<sup>27</sup> Author's interview with Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, April 17 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

closed door Social Democratic group meeting on 18 April 1990, when the then ongoing Lithuanian crisis triggered by the Lithuanian declaration of independence had been a centre of attention in Danish foreign policy circles for over a month, that: “To the question about the development in the Baltic countries, I would like to caution restraint. *Lithuania is gambling with Europe’s security* [my italics]”.<sup>29</sup> In the minds of the Social Democrats the Baltic countries were to gain their independence as a part of the larger détente efforts – not simply by putting as much pressure on the Soviet Union as possible. However, at that point the Baltic cause had become too popular in the Danish population for them to question it openly. And in any event they did not command any kind of majority to back up an alternative Baltic strategy in Parliament. Therefore, the party grudgingly had to follow the Liberal lead in the Baltic.

In any event, the Danish Baltic policy only increased in intensity from this point on, despite ever-harsher protests from the Soviet Union throughout 1990 and especially 1991. In a yet another memo from in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 1991 it was explicitly mentioned that it had, among other things, been Soviet weakness that allowed for the very active Danish policy in the Baltic Area.<sup>30</sup> Denmark was not as concerned about the Soviet Union as earlier, though the memo also stressed that Denmark should be prepared for the Soviet Union to regain its power later. In this respect it should be noted that American support for the Danish policy was and remained crucial throughout the period. However, unlike international relations scholar Birthe Hansen who, in her 1996 take on the Danish Baltic Policy, styled it as, primarily, an exercise to please the American superpower,<sup>31</sup> this report will not attribute it to being merely a Danish service performed for the American superpower, but rather see it as a much more independent Danish foreign policy project, and therefore as the first clear example of activist foreign policy.

Thus, the February 1991 memo stresses the conditions for the Danish Baltic policy:

In the relationship between the Soviet Union and the West, Denmark, isolated, naturally plays no prominent role. Everything indicates that the only Western countries that Moscow takes seriously are the USA and Germany. But with our own policy towards the Soviet Union we can affect our Western partners

<sup>29</sup> Social Democratic Parliamentary group meeting, 18 April 1990, the Parliamentary Archives.

<sup>30</sup> RA, UM, 5.K.82.a, Pakke 30, Memo (in the original Danish: “notits”), 4 February 1991.

<sup>31</sup> Hansen 1996: 63–64.

and thereby – at least marginally – be part of increasing the influence of the West on Soviet policy. Thus, there is reason to believe that our consistent Baltic policy has gained an ever-increasing following in the West in the last weeks, which has had the effect that the cumulative Western pressure on the Soviet leadership has increased.<sup>32</sup>

Danish policy was, therefore, not so much about doing the US a favour as it was about constantly making sure that vital US (and German to an extent) support for the Danish course was in place.

The Baltic project, however, did not, initially, involve the Danish military.<sup>33</sup> Instead, the Danish support for Baltic independence had been directed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The military's first role in the dawning Danish foreign policy activism therefore came not in the Baltic, but rather in the Gulf connected to the US lead in the 1990–91 war against Iraq.

#### *Case 2: The Gulf War and the deployment of the Olfert Fischer*

One other crucial case also had great impact on the Danish adoption of activism: the sending of the naval corvette Olfert Fischer to the Persian Gulf in 1990. It was the subject of much political debate, but in the end the government struck a compromise with the Social Democrats. The ship was sent, but serious limitations were placed on what the ship was allowed to do in the Gulf. Thus, it was not allowed to take part in any outbreak of actual hostilities beyond blockading the Iraqi ports.

The differences between the government line and the Social Democrats were marked by the differences between the hawkish activist lesson and the dovish Cold War lesson as they had been on the Baltic question. Thus, Conservative Per Stig Møller stressed the need to support the UN *and* the need to support the US in its conflict with Iraq. Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen made the same point about the UN and proceeded, perhaps due to the need to keep unity between the government and the Social Democrats, to only hint that he would have preferred something more.<sup>34</sup> The Social Democrats accepted the Olfert Fischer mission because it was a UN mission, but only on the condition that it was not to be a NATO operation. Furthermore,

<sup>32</sup> RA, UM, 5.K.82.a, Pakke 30, Memo (in the original Danish: "notits"), 4 February 1991

<sup>33</sup> The Danish military later came to play a role in the subsequent Danish sponsoring of the developing Baltic armies throughout the 1990s and the 2000s.

<sup>34</sup> FT 13 August 1990

they refused to let the ship take part in the actual war beyond blockade duty.<sup>35</sup> For the Social Democrats the decision was a mix of old policies and dawning new ones. Like for the Baltic question the party was slowly beginning to reappraise its foreign policy. The party itself was not unaware of this. Thus, Hans Hækkerup started out, when stating the Social Democratic position:

Any line of thought going towards Denmark promoting itself through military means far away from our own neighbourhood goes against deep-rooted Social Democratic instincts. For that reason we have also said clearly 'no' to all suggestions from the centre-right politicians about letting NATO act outside the North Atlantic area, as stipulated in the Atlantic Treaty.<sup>36</sup>

That the party saw more continuity than explicitly new thinking in the operation, at least at a conceptual level, becomes clear from how he continued, however:

For many years the UN Security Council has been blocked by disagreements between East and West, and it is the first time that the UN is allowed to work as intended. If this development continues, it means that no one else will be able to take on the role of policeman in the future. For this reason, it is important that Denmark supports [the UN mission].<sup>37</sup>

Thus, it is interesting to note that the Social Democrats largely saw the conflict as tied to the *détente* policy that they had themselves pursued as their preferred Cold War strategy. It was *détente* that had made it possible to use the UN, which the Social Democrats had always wanted to play a larger role. As such, the compromise regarding the Gulf war was really the compromise between adherents of the hawkish activist lesson on the one side and of the dovish Cold War lesson on the other. The Social Liberals largely agreed with the Social Democratic line and also stressed their great difficulty with the proposal and how it was only due to the UN involvement that the party could support it.<sup>38</sup>

The far-left and the far-right wings of Danish politics disagreed with the compromise line though for vastly different reasons. Thus, the Socialist People's Party took the centre-left interpretation of the situation even further. For them, Gert Petersen

<sup>35</sup> See also Jacobsen 2006: 86

<sup>36</sup> FT 13 August 1990

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

stressed, the greater unity in the world community in opposing aggression was due to the Soviet Union changing its policies. The Soviet Union, he stated, was apologising for its past aggression and the Americans should do the same instead of starting a new war in the Gulf. Saddam Hussein should therefore instead be met with peaceful means such as sanctions.<sup>39</sup> The Progress Party, on the other hand, marked the clearest example of continued adherence to the hawkish Cold War lesson. They fully supported the original proposal of sending Olfert Fischer to the Gulf with a broader mandate. Annette Just, thus, stressed that:

There is no doubt that terrorism is and remains enemy number 1 for the Progress Party and that there was no doubt that we will do anything to prevent such terrorism from approaching NATO's southern flank.<sup>40</sup>

They actually stressed the importance of this to such an extent that they ended up voting against the compromise proposal on the grounds that the Social Democrats had managed to make it too weak and limited. Thus, for the Progress Party the Gulf war was about defending NATO interests against outside enemies – here against Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait. The only great difference to their standard support of NATO against the Soviet Union was that the enemy had changed.

This development, thus, set the stage for the first Danish military mission in the, still only dawning, post-Cold War world. The compromise that was struck led the Liberal–Conservative government to give up its plans for a more militarily active Danish participation in the Gulf war that eventually broke out,<sup>41</sup> but it did not change the fact that the sending of the ship still marked an important change to Danish foreign policy, as it placed Denmark very close to being at war with Iraq. For the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals, it was vital that it was the UN that must be strengthened after the Cold War, not NATO. This source of conflict quickly diminished, however, as the Gulf crisis affected the Social Democratic and Social Liberal view of the UN. On the one hand, they remained hopeful and these parties stressed in a June 1991 report about institutions in a new security agreement, that “With the end of the Cold War there was now the possibility that the UN could come to play the role that the organisation was intended to play.”<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, however,

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Petersen 2004: 456

<sup>42</sup> FT 1990–91, (2. samling, tillæg B, p. 1827ff, Report to Danish Parliament 24 June 1991, “Beretning afgivet af Udvalget vedrørende Dansk Sikkerhedspolitik den 24. juni 1991”).

they now also accepted the lesson from the Gulf Crisis that, “The Gulf Crisis has shown that the UN can be used for making sanctions, but is militarily weak and dependent on the member states.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, the first Gulf war seemed to have shaken Social Democratic and Social Liberal faith in the strength of the UN somewhat, and thereby brought them closer to the Conservative–Liberal government line in this matter. Conceptually, their dovish activist lesson, thus, turned a bit ‘harder’. This is not too surprising as the lesson of especially the Social Democrats throughout the Cold War had been that the UN was ‘good’ but, exactly, too weak. Therefore, it was not a deeply internalised lesson of the world that was shaken here but rather the hope of a stronger UN that was disappointed.

### *Case 3: Denmark in the midst of the civil war in Bosnia*

Both the Baltic Project and the sending of the Olfert Fisher to the Gulf had marked a change in Danish foreign policy. However, the main approach for both was political rather than military – Denmark never contemplated supporting the Baltic Countries with military force, and Olfert Fischer was not intended to be committed to a sector where combat was particularly likely. The Danish participation in the UN missions in the Balkans signalled more of a change in this regard, by adding a strong military element to the Danish activism. This was perhaps not so much the case with the first troops Denmark sent to the former Yugoslavia in the spring of 1992. They went to Croatia, and their mandate was strictly peacekeeping in the traditional meaning of the term, and they were only authorised to fire in self-defence. In September 1992, however, the Danish parliament was debating sending troops to Bosnia–Herzegovina – a much more dangerous region at the time. The mandate was also considerably broader. The UN appeal was for troops to protect aid transports, but it authorised the peacekeepers to use force to see the deliveries through – not just to fire in self-defence.

Whereas the Croatia decision had been taken in the Danish Foreign Relations committee, the Bosnia decision was debated in the Danish Parliament. Apart from an extended debate over whether Danish soldiers should only be sent on a voluntary basis, the main parties: Liberals, Conservatives, Social Democrats and Social Liberals, largely agreed that Denmark should contribute to the mission. Their reasoning was not all that similar, however, and in this small difference the seeds were sown for future discord. The Social Democrats supported the mission, but with some reluctance. As spokesperson Jan Trøjborg put it:

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Let it be said from the beginning: In the Social Democratic Party we don't believe that the conflicts in Bosnia–Herzegovina can be solved with a military effort. A military engagement using military means of power against the warring factions is no acceptable solution and it will be against the role that the UN plays in the world community. The actions of the UN in Bosnia–Herzegovina are and must be peacekeeping and humanitarian.<sup>44</sup>

The party was not blind to the fact that the mission represented a more aggressive approach to peacekeeping than had been the case earlier. This had, in fact, split the Social Democratic party into two camps on the issue. It was the view of the majority, however, to give it “...decisive weight that the UN is allowed to help the victims of the war”.<sup>45</sup> The Social Liberals largely shared the Social Democratic perspective and supported the mission “...for obvious humanitarian reasons...”<sup>46</sup> The Social Democrats were trying to adjust to the now definitive end of the Cold War and we can see in these quotes the beginnings of a very dovish activist lesson.

The Liberals and the Conservatives shared the humanitarian concerns of the centre-left. However, their rhetoric also suggested a clearer, more offensive, value-promoting element beyond strengthening the UN. Thus, Liberal foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen reasoned that:

What we experience in the Balkans at present and which can be experienced elsewhere as well, is exactly that it is our ideals of freedom, our way of life, our vision for how the world should be constructed, that are under attack, and if we do not participate in their defence then we are neglecting our own defence... Therefore it is so important that we stand united to provide this humanitarian support, because the new world that we had hoped to see after the fall of communism does not exist in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>47</sup>

This need to contribute to the promotion of liberal values was also very present in Liberal spokesperson Peder Søndersby's speech where he quoted some words of the Danish poet Jeppe Aakjær (though in a manner quite far removed from context and almost certainly unintended by the poet):

<sup>44</sup> FT: 17 September 1992.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

You baby country, which enjoys itself hidden away, while the entire world burns around your crib...<sup>48</sup>

Largely agreeing with the Liberal stand, Conservative spokesperson Helge Adam Møller echoed the foreign minister's value-based argument by stating that:

If we do nothing, one must consider this a clear signal to other dictators, other generals, other minorities throughout this world that if one violates the moral concepts of the world community, kills people and commits genocide, the UN will protest and Denmark will protest but, in reality, we will do nothing to prevent the disaster.<sup>49</sup>

Both the Danish far-left and far-right parties were united in being against the operation. There was no unity in the reasoning behind their views, however. The view of the Progress Party was quite simple: the war was a civil war in a country with which Denmark was not allied, far away from Danish borders. Furthermore, without a clear aggressor the party feared that the Danish involvement would become unpredictable. On these terms the party was simply not willing to pay the price in possible Danish casualties. They were not blind to the Liberal and Conservative attempt to promote values, however, and responded quite harshly to this. Thus, as the Progress Party's Kim Behnke expressed it:

I hope that Mr Helge Adam Møller saves a copy of... [his] speech, especially the part about our moral obligations, as Mr Helge Adam Møller and with him probably others might very well need it when the first Danish men and women are dead because one wants, in Mr Helge Adam Møller's words, to order them to participate in a civil war in Yugoslavia.<sup>50</sup>

The Socialist People's Party, along with the dissident minority within the Social Democrats, were also against Danish participation in Bosnia–Herzegovina – but

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Author's translation from Danish. Thus Aakjær, who wrote the poem in 1916 during WWI, in all likelihood had social reforms on his mind, rather than actual Danish participation in WWI. In fact, Knud Peder Jensen's biography of Jeppe Aakjær Jensen (2002) points out that Aakjær instead lived in fear of WWI spreading to Denmark (Jensen 2002: 321–26). Furthermore, if one reads the directly following paragraphs of the poem, Aakjær goes on to praise the Danish 'baby country' with the words "...to you our hopes and manhood dreams go, when the village bell blesses your beaches, when the evening sun stands high in the sky and sets the cross mark of peace upon your forehead." (Aakjær 1916)

<sup>49</sup> FT: 17 September 1992.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



for widely different reasons. They stressed that the aid organisations did not want military support and that the UN military presence might only serve to escalate the conflict further. Instead other, more peaceful, attempts to negotiate peace in the region should be pursued with greater urgency.<sup>51</sup> In other words, it was not that they were unwilling to become involved in the former Yugoslavia, but rather that they felt that the more aggressive UN style would be counterproductive both for the concrete work to be done in the region, but also for the UN's reputation in general.

The Danish participation in the UN mission to Bosnia–Herzegovina was crucial for the development of Danish foreign policy activism – both as cause and effect. As ‘effect’ it showed how far, already in 1992, the Danish foreign policy lessons had moved away from the cautious Cold War lessons that had previously dominated Danish foreign policy thinking.

The situation in the Balkans continued to escalate as 1992 moved on into 1993. Soon, therefore, the new Social Democratic–Social Liberal government that had taken power in 1993 was presented with yet another UN request for more troops to Bosnia. This time, however, they had to decide whether to send additional troops under a UN mandate that was so broad compared to the earlier ones that the government had judged it sufficient to activate the constitution's paragraph 19. 2 about authorising warfare against foreign powers. Compared to earlier the new Danish defence minister, Hans Hækkerup, furthermore wanted to send a more heavily armed Danish unit. Thus, the soldiers were to be equipped with, among other things, the most heavily armed tanks in the Danish army.

The parliamentary debates suggested that there might have been an element of hesitation within the Social Democratic party towards these steps and that the party remained internally divided on the issue, as were the Social Liberals. Regarding the other parties in parliament, the Progress Party remained against getting involved in a conflict on the grounds that it took attention away from NATO's core areas, but they were isolated in holding this opinion.

The Socialist People's Party were against the proposal on the grounds that the authorisation of airstrikes in defence of the UN forces, in particular, carried a risk of involving Danish forces directly in the war and, thereby, risked escalating the

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

conflict further.<sup>52</sup> The Liberals and Conservatives were in favour of supporting the UN and also of supporting NATO, which had agreed to supply forces to the UN, in the name of the support of the defence of democracy, freedom, rights and human rights.<sup>53</sup> These two views exemplified, for Social Democratic member of the Foreign Relations Committee Ritt Bjerregaard, "...the dilemma that it has been for many of us that have had to make up our minds about the suggestion from the government that we are discussing today".<sup>54</sup> In all likelihood speaking for the wing of the Social Democratic party that was sceptical about intervention,<sup>55</sup> she continued that the decision invalidated the standard Social Democratic reflexes in such situations that usually went against heavy military engagements. Furthermore, she continued, the UN had many weaknesses. But she also stated that:

When I, in spite of this, say 'yes' to the proposal at hand, it is because of a very strong feeling that we might not really have anything left [to do] if we do not back the UN. What options are there then in a world where we can all see that the number of conflicts is going up and where there are no established solutions?<sup>56</sup>

Her statement did not seem to lie far from the official party line, which was expressed by Social Democratic spokesperson Ove Fish, who also stressed the need to strengthen the UN as a vital reason for why the Social Democrats backed the proposal.<sup>57</sup>

The risk entailed by sending Danish forces to Bosnia might also have included a fear for the Danish public opinion. Thus Hækkerup concludes in the section of his memoirs dealing with the Danish tank engagement in Bosnian in 1994 that:

One can of course also grimly wonder what the reaction [in Danish public opinion] would have been had we been hit [during Operation Bøllebank (see below)], but as the events later showed in Croatia, the Danes reacted differently to how the opponents of our active engagement had expected!<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> FT 16 August 1993

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Hækkerup 2002: 112

<sup>56</sup> FT 16 August 1993

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Hækkerup 2002: 114

Precisely which opponents he is gunning for here is not certain, but given that the opponents on the Danish left wing and, not least, within the Social Liberal and the Social Democratic parties themselves, represented a much greater threat to Hækkerup's political line than the far-right opponents in the Progress Party did, it seems likely that the Socialist People's Party, and especially the left wing within the government parties themselves were the targets here. That the Social Liberals most likely faced a similar dilemma is evident from Social Liberal foreign minister Niels Helveg Petersen's reasoning for wanting the operation to go ahead. The operation was needed for humanitarian reasons and because:

Secondly, the Serbs have run out on their promises so many times that the international community is simply in a situation where military steps must be considered. It is the credibility of the UN that is at stake with potentially vast and uncertain consequences for the ability of the world community to stop future conflicts.<sup>59</sup>

Again, we see that it went to the very core of the dovish activist lesson. Long-term peace and stability for Denmark (and for the world) was deemed to be at stake.

The involvement in Bosnia came to have significant influence on the future development of Danish foreign policy activism. This was not least due to the success of the Danish soldiers in the field: in 1994 Danish soldiers engaged Bosnian–Serb forces in what was the, until then, biggest Danish military engagement since WWII. The operation, which was named 'Operation Bøllebank', ended in a resounding Danish military victory that brought much international prestige to the Danish armed forces.<sup>60</sup> This positive experience served to reinforce both the new-found Danish activist lessons and to propel them in a more militarised direction.<sup>61</sup> Even though both lessons and most of the political spectrum were likely affected by the Danish successes, it did not change the fact that the difference remained in lessons across the traditional left–right scale. Thus, the left, even as it was moving in a more accommodating direction vis-à-vis incorporating a more aggressive use of the military into their dovish understanding of activism, still had less faith in military solutions in general when compared to the right end of the political spectrum. Finally, the Progress Party largely remained the outsider, mostly rejecting activism altogether.

<sup>59</sup> FT 16 August 1993

<sup>60</sup> Petersen 2004: 461

<sup>61</sup> Wivel forthcoming: 13–14

*New government – similar activism, but founded on different reasoning*

As already indicated, the change of government in 1993 from Conservative–Liberal–Social Liberal to Social Democratic–Social Liberal changed very little in Danish foreign policy activism, except perhaps to strengthen the multilateral focus somewhat.<sup>62</sup> In a proposal for the establishment of a Danish International Brigade on 6 October 1993 the Social Democratic defence minister Hans Hækkerup argued that:

The lapsed East–West conflict has created new political realities and possibilities in international politics. The changed security situation has brought about increased possibilities to strengthen the instruments that, for instance, the UN has at its disposal concerning the settlement of conflicts and for strengthening international peace and security. The political will to use those new possibilities has led to a marked increase in the number of traditional peacekeeping missions and to the development of new, related types of operations, for instance pre-emptive deployment... Military risks must, therefore, increasingly be seen in connection with other [risks] – and more unpredictable risks such as, for example, the risk for the spread of local conflicts, refugee streams, weapons proliferation, overpopulation, international crime and – not least – ecological threats.<sup>63</sup>

The Liberals and Conservatives, now in opposition, supported the proposal, though they argued for restraint in cutting down on defence capabilities regarding territorial defence, with a reference to the uncertain nature of the future.<sup>64</sup> Thus, what seemed to divide the centre-left and the centre-right remained a difference in optimism/pessimism for the future and a stronger belief among Liberals and the Conservatives in military means and ‘tough’ diplomacy as indispensable foreign policy tools. However, without the possibility of a more militarily inclined majority and without any clear threat on the horizon and, above all, in the general absence of outside demands for Denmark to take on a more militarised foreign policy line, they were largely content to support the Social Democratic and Social Liberal line. It was also along these lines that the centre-left and the centre-right could agree on the concept of indirect security in 1998.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Petersen 2004: 445

<sup>63</sup> FT 6 October 1993: (“Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om etablering af en dansk international brigade”, proposal to Parliament from Defence Minister Hans Hækkerup, 6 October 1993)

<sup>64</sup> FT 12 October 1993

<sup>65</sup> Forsvarskommissionen 1998: 65

In other words: in the absence of direct threats the Danish military could set out to protect Denmark from lesser threats and threats that were only threats in the long run. Danish foreign policy activism was not necessarily the opposite pole vis-à-vis more traditional power politics. Rather, an important aspect of activist foreign policy was, thus, exactly that it was thought to further Danish security interests in the long run. Thus the end of the Cold War and the removal of the immediate Soviet security threat allowed for the luxury of focusing, primarily, on 'the long run' in a way that had not been possible earlier. In principle even the Socialist People's Party bought into this kind of thinking, leaving only the Danish right in the form of the dying Progress Party and their heirs, the Danish People's Party, to disagree on the basis that it would be detrimental to more classic 'direct security'.<sup>66</sup> The new, far left left-wing party, the United List, and at times also the Socialist People's Party were sceptical about foreign interventions but for quite other reasons: for them it was a dilemma where they were often torn between distrust of the true motives behind the missions on the one hand – especially where there was no clear UN mandate – and their support for humanitarian intervention on the other.<sup>67</sup> This meant that support from the far-left and the far-right of government for the Danish involvement in, not least, the Balkan wars continued to be unsteady and shifting.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, for the broad centre of Danish politics the combination of multilateralism, humanitarian intervention, defence of democracy and the idea that Danish security benefited from these interventions in an indirect way, made it possible to keep a quite stable foreign policy consensus on activist foreign policy throughout the 1990s. Thus, the call for peacekeepers to Bosnia in 1995 went through quite smoothly, even though it was to be a NATO and not a UN mission, because it was at least sanctioned by the UN.<sup>69</sup> The same was true for Danish participation in the coalition of the willing that, under Italian leadership, went to stabilise Albania in 1997. It showed, however, that the UN was increasingly becoming dependent on outsourcing the actual soldiering to other institutions.

<sup>66</sup> The Progress Party did, however, proclaim itself willing to participate in limited peacekeeping, but drew the line when it came to 'peace creating' missions (Forsvarskommissionen 1998: 412). The Danish People's Party made no minority statement in the 1997 Commission but it had already, in 1996, argued against the need for more troops to Bosnia on the grounds that it took away resources from Danish defence (FT 11 December 1996).

<sup>67</sup> For an example of direct mistrust voiced by the United List see, for example, their minority statement in the parliamentary defence committee report of 13 April 1999 (FT: 1998–99, Tillæg B, bind 1, 494ff, "Betænkning over Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk deltagelse i en NATO-ledet multinational styrke i Albanien")

<sup>68</sup> Petersen (2004): 458–65

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 461

The next dilemma regarding what activism was and should be, however, arose when the Social Democratic Social Liberal government wanted to intervene in Kosovo in 1998-99 even without a UN mandate.

*Case 4: Denmark and the Kosovo intervention – without UN mandate*

The Social Democratic and Social Liberal official reasoning for the proposal for Parliament to support a NATO effort in Kosovo was based on the humanitarian situation in Kosovo, the repeated Serbian refusal to listen to the pleas from the international community and the risk to regional stability that the conflict represented. Furthermore, it stressed that the effort enjoyed widespread international support.<sup>70</sup> The Social Democrats added to this that they wanted Denmark to support intervention in Kosovo based on humanitarian concerns and the determination to repel what they saw as Serbian aggression against the Kosovo-Albanians. This was on the surface very much in line with their dovish activist lesson of foreign policy. However, the lack of a Security Council mandate made the situation more difficult. The Social Democratic spokesperson Ingrid Rasmussen acknowledged this when the situation was discussed in the Danish parliament on the 7 and 8 of October 1998. However, she stressed that:

On the other hand I would like to say: I don't think that we can keep living with other interests being at play – and here I, of course, am thinking [...] of Russia's internal situation....<sup>71</sup>

Thus she implied that it was Russia that abused the UN rules and that the International Community should therefore not go along with it. The Social Liberal foreign minister Niels Helveg Petersen did not expand much on this line of reasoning right away in parliament. And in the Foreign Relations Committee on 13 October 1998 he again stressed regional instability and Serbian defiance as primary reasons.<sup>72,73</sup>

Later on, in 1999, when the crisis had already led to war and NATO intervention without a UN mandate, foreign minister Niels Helveg Petersen expanded on his

<sup>70</sup> FT B4 7 October 1998

<sup>71</sup> FT 7 October 1998

<sup>72</sup> Petersen 2004: 464

<sup>73</sup> The parliamentary backing from the centre-right and the centre-left remained stable throughout the war while the far-left and the far-right would occasionally support certain changes to the Danish involvement in Kosovo, especially those they deemed to be humanitarian in nature. Furthermore, the general consensus on the sending of UN-sanctioned peacekeepers to Kosovo was significantly broader than the initial Kosovo intervention. For a detailed walk-through of the development of the crisis see Jakobsen 2000.

reasoning in an article in *Politiken* on 25 June 1999. He acknowledged that the intervention broke UN rules regarding the Security Council, but argued that it had to be done because the Security Council had failed in Kosovo as well as in Rwanda, to live up to its responsibility to ensure humanitarian concerns. The analogy to Rwanda was undoubtedly meant to stress what he believed would have happened had NATO not intervened, and thereby, the Danish foreign minister joined a larger international group that might have been influenced in their Kosovo decision-making by the analogy of the Rwandan genocide.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps more importantly, however, it led him to conclude that humanitarian concerns had to “...weigh heavier in the concrete situation than the concern for the word and letter of the UN pact that was written 1945”.<sup>75</sup> Finally, it is interesting to note that as part of the argumentation leading up to this conclusion he also implied that the circumventing of the Security Council veto in particular was more acceptable because the origins of that specific veto right was purely *realpolitik*-based and tied to the concern that a resolution that went against the vital interests of one of the five great powers was more likely to cause war than to prevent it.<sup>76</sup> Thus the fact that the intervention in Kosovo had not led to a major war seemed to justify that the Security Council had been circumvented.

Thus the activist dovish lesson had undergone some changes since its inception in the early 1990s. Compared to earlier it had become more willing to use military force as an instrument and it had become less insistent on full UN support. This was, perhaps, because of the UN failures in Rwanda and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia. In that respect the lesson had drifted towards the hawkish activist lesson. It did not mean, however, that the main differences between the two activist lessons had been erased. This is evident from the fact that although the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals were willing to depart from their usual demands for a UN mandate,<sup>77</sup> they did not do so lightly and, therefore, felt the need to justify their departure at great length. This was not the case to anywhere near the same extent for the Conservatives and, especially, the Liberals.

The Conservatives primarily stressed their belief in a tough course on dictators. In parliament Conservative spokesman Helge Adam Møller stated that:

<sup>74</sup> See Hehir 2006 for a comprehensive study of the international use of the Rwandan analogy in Kosovo.

<sup>75</sup> *Politiken* 25 June 1999

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> It should be noted that this had happened before: earlier in 1998, the Social Democrats and Social Liberals had declared themselves willing to support the British American military operations against Iraq also without a UN mandate (Jakobsen 2000: 64–65).

If we do not intervene now, it is a signal to Milosevic and the others that the West can condemn; that we can write resolutions and we can appear on TV screens and in parliaments and in this way distance ourselves from the horrors in Kosovo and other places, but that we do not have the courage nor the will to put the necessary power behind those words.<sup>78</sup>

The Liberal speaker Svend Aage Jensby even more clearly outlined the difference between his party and the government when criticising the Social Democratic attempts to defend their foreign policy line against United List member Søren Søndergaard:

...and then I would like to say to Mr Søndergaard and also to the Social Democratic speaker: do say, instead of spending all your time on the problem regarding mandates [in the UN] again and again, what you want to do to help the thousands of people down there that are dying because of a dictator who only respects one thing: military power or the credible threat that it will be used. That is, after all, *more relevant* [my emphasis].<sup>79</sup>

The 'more relevant' in this last sentence goes a long way towards showing that great differences still existed between the Social Liberals and Social Democrats on the one hand and the Liberals and, to a somewhat lesser degree, also the Conservatives on the other. For the Social Liberals and Social Democrats the decision to move without a mandate from the Security Council was a very hard decision for them to make and one that they felt they needed to justify quite rigorously. For the Liberals, at least, the UN mandate was nice to have, but ultimately of secondary importance.

Finally, a few words on the Danish political far-left and far-right wings are in order. The left-wing parties were against Danish participation in an intervention in Kosovo because they questioned the motives of the other NATO countries. Søvndal from Socialist People's Party questioned if it was really clever to give up Pax FN for a Pax Americana and Søren Søndergaard from the United List asked, rhetorically, why Kosovo merited an intervention when there were so many other places in the world where people were dying at the hands of dictators.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> FT October 7 1998

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



On the far-right of Danish politics the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party shared the concern about interfering in a civil war. This differed in nuance, however. Thus, while Progress Party's Thorkild B. Frandsgaard might have considered intervening if there had been a UN mandate, the Danish People's Party speaker Peter Skaarup was more adamant in his resistance. UN mandate or no UN mandate, it made little difference to him. In fact, he even reserved the right to speak *for* interventions without UN mandates in the future.<sup>81</sup> Instead, the fact of the matter for him was that it was outside NATO's jurisdiction in all measures and "...a war far from the place where we belong."<sup>82</sup> This was much in accordance with the hawkish Cold War lesson. Furthermore, there was no difference on the two sides. It was a "...question of religion, Christians against Muslims – so we have a hard time solving the problems and there is no one of those groups that are better than the others; it is unfortunately equally bad from both sides."<sup>83</sup> There were no 'good guys', and for that reason it was not worth dead Danish soldiers. They were willing to take political steps to counter Milosevic, whom they acknowledged was the most aggressive player in the conflict at that moment, but refused to go further than that.<sup>84</sup> The quote should of course be read in the context that most of the other parties in parliament saw the Christian Serbs as the bad guys and the Muslim Bosnians as the victims and mostly underlines that the Danish People's Party was probably the party least interested in the conflict and in intervening. Their reservation that they might someday want to hold onto the right to act without the UN, however, hints that the party was not unaware that this might change in the future.

### **Paradise lost? The shock of 9/11 and the split in foreign policy activism**

The consensus within the broad centre of Danish politics was to last till 2001 when two events would trigger the beginning of the end of that consensus and signal a split in Danish activist foreign policy. These two events were the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the decisive Liberal–Conservative victory in the Danish November 2001 parliamentary elections.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> FT 8 October 1998

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> FT 7 October 1998

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> (Holm 2002: 19) argues that the Danish activist foreign policy died with the Danish 'no' to the Euro in 2000. I do not agree on this point. It is true that the Danish opt-outs continued to block Denmark from participating in EU missions abroad. However, the EU was, after all, only one pillar out of the traditional four Danish foreign policy pillars, and activist foreign policy continues to be important in the other three (The North, the UN and NATO). If anything, the disagreements between the Liberals and the Conservatives on the one side and the Social

The shock of 9/11 hit hard across the Danish political spectrum. It did not, however, hit with the same intensity everywhere. The initial Social Democratic reaction was thus quite forceful. In the opening debate in the Danish parliament the Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen stressed that:

The attack in New York and Washington is not only yet another terrorist action. It is not merely an attack on cities in the USA. It is a ruthless attack on everything we stand for: individual freedom, security of the many, our collective security; everything that gives meaning to the word democracy.<sup>86</sup>

Such clear and unambiguous support for the US found clear resonance with both the Liberals and the Conservatives and the Danish far right. However, his speech did contain elements that were of a moderating nature that marked continued reliance on the soft dovish activist lesson. This was, not least, the case when it came to how to deal with terrorism:

In the coming years it is absolutely central to remove the core foundation for terrorism. We know that there are a great many complex reasons for it, and that they often differ from region to region. We do not suggest that poverty and the large and ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor worlds are the only explanation for terrorism, but this is a central part.<sup>87</sup>

This seemed to imply battling terrorism not only with military means but also with development aid.

Poul Nyrup's general threat assessment was also quite mixed. Thus he said that: "Some ask: 'is Denmark threatened?' The answer is 'no'. But we must not be naïve. It *is* a different world we now live in."<sup>88</sup> Poul Nyrup evidently also felt that the situation held a potentially dangerous domestic dimension, and he stressed that "It is not a fight of religion... we must not lead the conflicts to the streets of Denmark."<sup>89</sup>

Democrats and the Social Liberals on the other could be seen as a difference of opinion on whether to prioritise activist foreign policy through the UN or through a close partnership with the strongest country in the NATO alliance – the US. Alternatively, one might even argue that the great emphasis of Anders Fogh Rasmussen on supporting the US and on strengthening the bilateral bond between the US and Denmark momentarily created a fifth pillar in Danish foreign policy centred on that bond.

<sup>86</sup> FT 2 October 2001

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Finally he expressed his own hopes for the multilateralism that he hoped the 9/11 attacks might bring about:

None of us will ever forget 11 September 2001. As tragic as the terrible terrorist attack was, it also holds the potential for a new world order where old enemies come together and help one another. A hope for a new world order which we did not fully get after the fall of the Berlin Wall – perhaps the attack, in the midst of tragedy, holds the hope of a new global collective where everyone who wants peace and tolerance is invited.”<sup>90</sup>

Though the Liberals and the Conservatives mostly expressed support, there were already at this point signs of the beginnings of discord in the broad Danish political centre. Thus, while Liberal chairman and prime ministerial candidate, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, was quick to issue support, he also stressed that he thought that the Danish government was only echoing what the Liberals had been saying for years. Furthermore, he proceeded to launch criticism at the government’s larger plan for combating terrorism. Thus, Anders Fogh continued that:

There is greater joy in Heaven over one converted sinner than over a hundred in no need of conversion. But I can say this to the government: we will hold the two governing parties to their promises. And then I also agree with the Prime Minister that we shall remove the foundation for terrorism. But it [the world] is not so simple that one can equate poverty with terrorism. Terrorism is caused, first and foremost, by religious and political fanaticism.<sup>91</sup>

While not completely denying a link between poverty and terrorism, he then goes on to say, “Freedom and transparency create progress and wealth. That’s the way it is.”<sup>92</sup> There were thus, already at this point, indicators of quite marked differences between the Social Democrats and the Liberals in how activist foreign policy was to be formulated, especially when it came to means. This issue will be taken up again below when dealing with the discussion about the Danish involvement in Afghanistan which took place shortly after the opposition and the government had exchanged places.

The Danish left wing seemed least affected by September 11. Holger K. Nielsen from the Socialist People’s Party was ready to commit more money to the intelligence

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> FT 4 October 2001

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

services provided that it was accompanied by sufficient democratic control, but he also stated, “some have asked if the new situation after September 11 has changed our priorities. The answer is: ‘no it has not’”.<sup>93</sup> With regard to the causes for terrorism he stressed, like the government, that poverty had to bear a large part of the blame but also the Middle Eastern dictatorships. Keld Albrechtsen from the more radical United List went even further:

Many have said that after the tragedy of September 11 that now everything in the world has changed. Yes, we will never forget the tragedy that happened. But we must also realistically ask ourselves what it is, precisely, that has changed?<sup>94</sup>

Keld Albrechtsen then continued to say that the world would not have truly changed until the Western world had proven that it would care just as much about a terrorist attack killing thousands in Africa. He evidently doubted that was yet the case. Such views might have roots in some sort of ‘world security’ identity within part of the United List overshadowing, or at least being equated with, the national security of Denmark and its allies.

The question then remains why it changed so little for the more moderate Socialist People’s Party. Here one has to consider the basic lesson on activism and response to threat that had been embedded in their foreign policy views since the Cold War: that even though they agreed with the government on the point about poverty as a cause for terrorism, they differed by attributing very little chance of successfully countering terrorism to warfare. Thus, Holger K. Nielsen’s Socialist People’s Party stated that:

We are open for a discussion, we are open for the good arguments, but we do not think that it is a good argument when one tries to create the impression that one can, through Rambo-like initiatives, by mimicking Dirty Harry and general Patton, thus remove the foundations for terrorism. It is other things that are required.<sup>95</sup>

All in all, thus, the Socialist People’s Party seems to have been in strict adherence to the dovish activist lesson.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

The Danish People's Party was the party that was most affected by September 11 on the psychological as well as on the political level. The shock that the Danish People's Party experienced from September 11 meant that the party shifted from a cautious attitude to foreign engagements in missions outside NATO's traditional sphere of interest to, as we shall see, firm support for US interventions. The Danish People's Party made a point of both denying that any significant shift had taken place, especially concerning its attitude to Danish involvement in the Balkans,<sup>96</sup> and admitting, even underlining, that:

September 11, also for the Danish People's Party, will influence the policy we shall pursue in the future in defence matters. I hope, for that matter, that it will influence every party's attitudes in one way or another.<sup>97</sup>

The reasons for why the Danish People's Party was particularly affected by September 11 can be found in the party's choice of rhetoric just after September 11. Thus, Pia Kjærsgaard stated in her opening remarks, in what seemed to be a version of Samuel Huntington's (in)famous 'Clash of Civilizations' with a twist, that:

It has been mentioned that September 11 was the beginning of a clash of civilisations. In that, I do not agree, for a clash of civilisations would require that there was talk of two civilisations, and that is not the case. There is only one civilisation and that is ours. Our opponents cannot invoke belonging to a civilisation, for a civilised world would never be able to go through with an attack that holds so much hatred, so much wildness, so much devilry.<sup>98</sup>

For the Danish People's Party the threat was real: both as an international threat and as a domestic one. A substantial part of the party's identity was as an anti-immigration party. This grounding was easily amplified by September 11. Thus, on the domestic threat, Pia Kjærsgaard remarked:

This evil is not as we saw it earlier in, for example, the Third Reich – easily recognisable and thereby easy to relate to. It is not uniformed with SS-signs and skulls, it is not limited to a single country, it is everywhere in our midst. And the evil is not necessarily equipped with a black headscarf and a patriarch's

<sup>96</sup> FT 5 October 2001

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

beard. No, the people that were doing the murdering in New York were not poor or impoverished third world revolutionaries. They were well educated, pleasant and seemingly well-integrated Muslims with clean criminal records. Some were fathers of a family. Some are described as ideal immigrants. But each one turned out to be a demon on commissioned work.<sup>99</sup>

The Nazi analogy, along with the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ reference, indicates that the Danish People’s Party saw in the War on Terror a conflict that was dangerous at a level comparable to the old threats from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union – though this analogy was not used directly.

The boundaries for who the Danish People’s Party saw as a threat were quite fluid. Multiculturalism was condemned as the naivety that might have allowed the terrorist attacks to succeed. On Muslim minorities she continued, later in the debate:

And one has to combat it also here in Denmark, when one sees Palestinian young people cheering and swinging the Palestinian flag and mocking the Danish population, then one has to combat that as well. They are probably not exactly terrorists, but they are Muslims. And as I heard one of them, a young girl, say: “does it matter that I am Pakistani [sic] but live in Denmark?” She is a Danish citizen but merely lives in Denmark; but she is still a Pakistani[sic] and she is still a Muslim.<sup>100</sup>

This linking of the domestic and the foreign policy was also clear in the statement from the Danish People’s Party’s yearly meeting in Vejle just four days after the terrorist attacks. Here, the party concluded, “...the defining divide of our time is between the free, civilised, democratic world – and the world that is repressed by Islamic fundamentalism”.<sup>101</sup> The meeting therefore encouraged the government to, “...map and combat *fifth column activity within Denmark* [my italics] with all means”.<sup>102</sup>

The reason why the Danish People’s Party was most affected by September 11 might, thus, be connected to the party’s domestic political identity as a party for a strict immigration policy. It is therefore quite possible that because September 11 found resonance in their domestic political program, it could change their foreign policy attitude far

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 58

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

more dramatically than was the case for any of the other parties by convincing them that the terrorist threat was a direct threat to Denmark's national survival.

Now, how did these differences in developments in lessons among the parties play themselves out? The first foreign policy issue came when the Americans requested a larger Danish involvement in Macedonia in order to free up American and British troops to go to Afghanistan. It found unanimous support from the Danish parliament. From the far-left support was given almost in spite of it meaning helping the Americans. Thus, both the Socialist People's Party and the United List stressed quite clearly that they were voting 'yes' only because the job in the Macedonia was worth doing.<sup>103</sup> For the broad middle it was a particularly easy decision. Denmark could both help to stabilise Europe and thereby prove its sympathies for the US after September 11. From the debate recordings one can sense slight differences in how those two meshing priorities weighed with the Liberal party stressing the aspect of supporting of the Americans a little more forcefully than the Social Democratic and Social Liberal government.<sup>104</sup> However, the most substantial change can be noted with the Danish People's Party. They had been against much earlier Danish involvement in the Balkans and were now asked by Social Democrat Per Kaarlund to explain why they had changed their mind. The answer to this from Peter Skaarup of the Danish People's Party was clear: "What we base our decision on is that it is a relief for the American and British forces".<sup>105</sup> Proving alliance loyalty and supporting the US was thus the most important priority for the Danish People's Party.

#### *Case 5: The war in Afghanistan and the stretching of parliamentary consensus*

The debate about whether or not to go to war in Afghanistan only came after the Danish election of November 2001. That election meant a dramatic change in the parliamentary balance regarding Danish foreign policy (and most other Danish political issues) because it established a majority to the right of *both* the Social Democratic Party and the Social Liberal Party, something that had not been seen since the Stauning–Munch government of 1929.<sup>106</sup> For Danish foreign policy this was crucial as all former centre-right governments in the 72 year period from 1929–2001 had, until then, been dependent on the support of at least either the Social Liberals or the Social Democrats. This was, furthermore, a goodbye to the parliamentary dynamics that had allowed for the hotly disputed Danish 'footnote

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Petersen 2004: 573

policy' of the 1980s where the Danish Social Democrats used their security policy majority with the Social Liberals to force the Danish government to adopt a much more NATO-critical foreign policy line than the government preferred. The change therefore meant that the Liberals and the Conservatives no longer explicitly *needed* the support of one of the parties, but had the option of relying merely on the votes of their far-right parliamentary backing – the Danish People's Party. And since the leading politicians in the Danish People's Party were recent converts to out of area military missions with the US it was, furthermore, an actual working majority that could and would be used in practice.

The war in Afghanistan showed a bit more clearly than had been the case with the debates around September 11, the beginnings of a rift in the Danish activist foreign policy consensus in the broad middle of Danish politics. The new government comprised of the Liberals and the Conservatives spearheaded by Anders Fogh Rasmussen had sharpened its tone considerably when discussing Afghanistan in December 2001 compared to their statements in October. In October the focus had been on a mix of acknowledging the humanitarian need for the increased Danish activity in Macedonia and of showing support for the US in the wake of 9/11. Leading up to the Afghanistan war the new Conservative Danish foreign minister Per Stig Møller still expressed it as a Danish opportunity for helping the US but he now found it just as important that: "The terrorist threat towards the international peace and security must be met with all necessary means, including military contributions".<sup>107</sup>

Liberal Ulrik Kragh expanded on the Liberal reasoning on the subject:

We will not accept limitation to the right to live freely in a democracy without fear for when the next bomb hits our society. Bin Laden and al Qaida threaten and deny our right to be able to live freely and securely. The attack on the USA was an attack on all in the NATO alliance".<sup>108</sup>

This paragraph, together with the foreign minister's statement, shows the increase in perceived danger through the curious use of the word 'next'. Even though Denmark

<sup>107</sup> FT 13 December 2001 (Proposal from Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller for Parliamentary decision B 37: "Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk deltagelse i den internationale indsats mod terrornetværket i Afghanistan", [http://webarkiv.fi.dk/?/samling/20012/beslutningsforslag\\_oversigtsformat/b37.htm](http://webarkiv.fi.dk/?/samling/20012/beslutningsforslag_oversigtsformat/b37.htm) [accessed 21 December 2011])

<sup>108</sup> FT 13 December 2001



had and has not been hit by a terrorist attack yet, it shows the degree to which at least the Liberals identified with the US.

Had the Liberals and the Conservatives changed their basic foreign policy lesson as a consequence of September 11? Not fundamentally so, I will argue. Their perception of an immediate threat was a bit more present in their line of argument, but not to a point where it blocked out the hawkish activist foreign policy lesson and its focus on longterm security. The value-based arguments about defending liberal virtues had been strengthened, but were not fundamentally different from what the Liberals and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the Conservatives had promoted during the 90s. What had changed was the fact that the US War on Terror suddenly offered opportunities for a partnership with the US superpower (as a junior partner, of course, but as a partner nevertheless) that would enable them to pursue their version of Danish activism to the fullest. This also meant the prospect of using much 'harder' Danish military capabilities than had otherwise been the norm in that endeavour. Specifically, they wanted to send almost all existing Danish Special Forces to Afghanistan (divided between the 'jæger' [similar to army 'rangers'] and the 'frømand' [similar to navy 'seals']). What was especially curious about this plan was the fact that the US was not all that interested in this contribution.<sup>109</sup> The plan was therefore more a consequence of the Danish wish to establish itself as an important worthy junior partner to the US, than any kind of appeasement of US demands.

Why did Fogh so vehemently wish to establish such a bond? Many have attempted to answer that question and most seem to agree on the fact that Fogh felt he shared values with the Americans – especially the recently elected American President George W. Bush.<sup>110</sup> This is also the view adopted in this report as outlined above: that the US shift in foreign policy created opportunities for hawkish Danish foreign policy. These opportunities were willingly embraced by the centre-right. For Fogh and the centre-right, following the US was both the right thing to do *and* in Denmark's best interests because it would improve Danish security in the long run by spreading Western values.

<sup>109</sup> Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 55, 79, furthermore, outline a process where Denmark was not formally asked by the US to contribute with special forces until after Anders Fogh Rasmussen had expressed to Blair that Denmark was eager to contribute. They do not prove this hypothesis beyond reasonable doubt, but nevertheless this makes it probable that Denmark had in fact been very eager to be asked by the Americans to make a very 'hard' contribution. The Social Democrats also thought so and expressed their regret about this strategy to the government when the proposal to send Danish special forces to fight Al Qaida in Afghanistan was discussed in Parliament on 13 December 2001 (FT 13 December 2001).

<sup>110</sup> See, for instance, Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 77 and Petersen 2004: 575

In the theoretical terms offered in this report, the American War on Terror, combined with the first parliamentary majority in 72 years to the right of both the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats, allowed for the perfect opportunity for the Liberals and the Conservatives to fully pursue *their* version of Danish foreign policy activism – with or without the Social Liberals and Social Democrats. This tendency was to become even more apparent as the question of possible Danish participation in the Iraq War in 2003 was to be decided.

Naturally, it was not that the Social Democrats or the Social Liberals outright disagreed with the Liberal and Conservative support for the US. Support needed to be given to the US in Afghanistan – that was not in question – and the Social Democrats had concluded as much already when they were in government. Thus, chief of staff in the Danish Defence Command, Jesper Halsø, wrote in his summary of a meeting he and the defence chief had with then prime minister Nyrup and defence minister Trøjborg, that Nyrup had said directly: “Real politik says that we are positive about participating [in Afghanistan]. The government supports it, including the foreign minister [Lykketoft]”.<sup>111</sup> This quote shows that the Social Democrats also perceived the bond to the US to be vital for Danish interests. Furthermore, the last part of the quote also hints at a conflict within the Social Democratic Party between Foreign Minister Mogens Lykketoft on the one hand and Prime Minister Nyrup and Defence Minister Trøjborg on the other. This conflict was tied to the activist lessons. Where the left wing in the party under Lykketoft held on to the existing dovish lesson of activism, the right wing in the party under Nyrup, Trøjborg and Hækkerup had long been drifting towards seeing the world through a more hawkish activist lesson. In 2001 the right wing within the party was strong enough to force through Social Democratic support for even the very aggressive proposal of sending Special Forces. It also mattered quite a bit in this regard that the Social Democrats as a whole felt bound by the early Nyrup declaration of support to the Americans immediately after 9/11 (see Lykketoft’s statements in Parliament below).

There was still a marked difference, however, between the Social Democratic foreign policy line and the Liberal and Conservative one. After all, Poul Nyrup had, as mentioned earlier, stated specifically after 9/11 that Denmark was *not* directly threatened. Thus Social Democratic foreign policy spokesman and chairman of the party Mogens Lykketoft answered, after the Danish People’s party had just accused

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 57

him of sliding back towards the old footnote policy position because he did not support the war with enthusiasm, that:

There was no talk of a new [foreign policy] line but of a situation that continually develops and where we, the NATO country Denmark, like all the other NATO countries, should use, reasonably, our sovereign right to find out where we think that we can be most useful, in the realisation that we do not have unlimited resources to use; this I think everybody agrees on... we support this proposal. We support it in extension of the solidarity that we have expressed to the United States. But as I have explained a few times we would have preferred it to be handled in a different way.<sup>112</sup>

Instead of supporting the US with primarily military means, Lykketoft would have preferred to prioritise the humanitarian aspects of the intervention.<sup>113</sup>

While the Social Democrats and also the Social Liberals hesitantly supported the proposal, the Danish far left broke away due to the limited UN involvement and due to distrust of both the Danish and the US governments' intentions with the war.<sup>114</sup> On the far right of Danish politics, the Danish People's Party's Peter Skaarup himself admitted to how September 11 had changed the party's views:

September 11, this year, was a seminal date for many of us. Most people probably remember where they were. It was a day that made a large impression, and which has also since had a strong impact on the everyday life of many.<sup>115</sup>

And a little later he continued

Now, let us acknowledge that everything the USA does in this situation is not necessarily the right thing to do but that it is, after all, the USA that must help us get out of this terror situation, that must help us here in the West with ensuring that these things will be dealt with.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

Thus, the Afghanistan war debates showed that the consensus was cracking because of a combination of the lesson of September 11 with its adjustment to threat perception, mostly among the Danish People's Party and, in a more limited way, among the Liberals and the Conservatives and because of the nature of the belief ingrained in the hard-line hawkish activist lesson of how the terrorist threat was best met. Thus the Liberals and the Conservatives saw the threat as more serious and more as a military threat in classical terms that could be met with military means and through the strengthening of ties to the strongest military power – the US. The change within the Danish People's Party meant that the new foreign policy majority they had gained in November 2001 rested on a quite firm foundation. Therefore they could do without the Social Democratic and the Social Liberal support if need be.

The question now becomes one of how great a challenge to lessons of activist foreign policy did September 11 represent? This report argues that the Afghanistan debates show a change within the Liberals and Conservatives but only to a degree. Furthermore, the change did not initiate a clash between 'old' thinking and 'new' within the Danish centre-right. Thus, simultaneous developments in both the increasingly global nature of terrorism *and* the way in which the Danish military envisioned wars had to be fought lessened the degree to which these two elements clashed.<sup>117</sup> Thus, with the very nature of threat becoming global, it became easier to fuse more classical national security arguments with activist foreign policy arguments, albeit in a somewhat militarised version. In contrast, the far left still saw it as near impossible to alleviate terrorism through military means. The centre-left was more ambiguous. Thus it was finding it increasingly difficult to accept that a centre-right foreign policy majority that no longer needed their votes was increasingly ignoring their suggestions. Nevertheless, they felt obliged to support the majority on Afghanistan, not least since they themselves had promised the Americans aid while they were in power and because the right wing within the Social Democratic Party was toying with the idea that the centre-right, hawkish, activist lesson and its corresponding foreign policy course might not be so far off their own position after all. Therefore the consensus on the activist foreign policy survived that war, but only just. The next American war, however, would shatter it.

<sup>117</sup> The defence report analysis of seven years later (Forsvarskommissionen 2009: 108)

*Case 6: Iraq, the rupture of the Danish foreign policy consensus and the centre-right version of foreign policy activism*

The debates about the Iraq War were uncharacteristically lengthy and marked a clear break with the broad Danish consensus about activist foreign policy. It is not easy to decipher exactly which lessons the Liberal and Conservative government might have put most stock in, regarding their threat perception of Iraq. In the proposal for action presented to Parliament on 18 March 2003 for debate on 19–21 March 2003, the government expressed that it found, “...that a Danish military contribution to a multinational effort will contribute to the removal of the threat to international peace and security in the region”.<sup>118</sup>

However, this explanation for Danish participation based on a direct threat to the region is somewhat out of sync with Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s reasoning behind closed doors, as related by Mogens Lykkesøft in an interview with the authors of the book *Vejen til Irak*. In this interview Lykkesøft stated that he had had a private meeting with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen two days prior to the discussions in the Danish parliament, and this conversation provides a crucial additional piece of the puzzle of the Danish decision-making on Iraq. Mogens Lykkesøft related that he expressed resistance towards Danish involvement in the Iraq War, even after Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen had suggested making the Danish participation less ‘hard’ than initially planned. To this Anders Fogh Rasmussen is said to have replied with surprise over the Social Democratic resistance, something along the lines of “...from his point of view it would always in a long-term analysis be in Denmark’s interest to back the US”.<sup>119</sup>

The Conservatives seemed to share this sentiment. Thus, Pia Christmas Møller remarked, “I did not say what I have been quoted as saying: that the question is whether one is for or against the USA. But I actually don’t mind being quoted for saying that.”<sup>120</sup>. The question that remains, then, is *why* Denmark always needed to side with the US? From a ‘hard’ security/influence perspective one might argue that it was a main priority for Denmark to keep the relationship with the US good in order to keep Denmark on favourable terms with the strongest military power. However, one might also argue that it was moreover due to Denmark and the US

<sup>118</sup> FT 18 March 2003 (Proposal from Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller for Parliament decision B 118: “Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational indsats i Irak”, [http://webarkiv.ft.dk/?/samling/20021/beslutningsforslag\\_oversigtsformat/b118.htm](http://webarkiv.ft.dk/?/samling/20021/beslutningsforslag_oversigtsformat/b118.htm) [accessed December 21 2011])

<sup>119</sup> Kaare & Nissen 2008: 210

<sup>120</sup> FT 19 March 2003

(and especially Bush and Fogh) sharing common values. This report will tend to put greater emphasis on the latter.

Perception of a direct threat, perhaps interpreted through the September 11 lesson, rooted either directly in Saddam's alleged weapons of mass destruction or more indirectly from international terrorism in general, probably influenced Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the Conservatives' foreign policy. This would also correspond nicely with the thinking of their parliamentary backing in the Danish People's Party, who still seemed very much affected by September 11 and the perception of threat that followed from it: Thus, as mentioned above and as we shall see again below, the Danish People's Party prioritised supporting the US not so much because of the virtue of the specific US operations in themselves, but because the alliance with the US was seen as their only protection against Islamic terrorism. However, while this was probably an important element in the Liberal and Conservative foreign policy thinking, it was not the only element. In fact, when one goes through the arguments presented by the Liberals and the Conservatives in the Danish Parliament, the arguments offered seem to be a mix of the hawkish activist lesson at work with only limited traces of the new September 11 lesson – and that mostly related to the weapons of mass destruction line of reasoning. Thus, Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller stressed that it was about "...taking responsibility and leading an activist foreign policy".<sup>121</sup> The government itself stated in its justification for the proposal that, beside the previous reference to regional peace and stability, a Danish military contribution would also "...be a natural extension of the traditional Danish effort for strengthening the international legal order".<sup>122</sup> But Per Stig Møller stressed that since it would be easy for Saddam to prove that he had destroyed the weapons of mass destruction if he had done so, he could conclude that:

Those weapons are, thus, there, one must assume, and that will make the region, Kuwait and eventually greater and greater portions of the world more dangerous places to live.<sup>123</sup>

Jens Rohde from the Liberals expanded on this in an answer to the question of what the exact goal of the operation was similarly dualistic:

<sup>121</sup> FT 19 March 2003

<sup>122</sup> FT 18 March 2003 (Proposal from Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller for Parliamentary decision B 118: "Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational indsats i Irak", [http://webarkiv.ft.dk/?/samling/20021/beslutningsforslag\\_oversigtsformat/b118.htm](http://webarkiv.ft.dk/?/samling/20021/beslutningsforslag_oversigtsformat/b118.htm) [accessed 21 December 2011])

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

The goal is still disarmament. I hold then a personal opinion that it would be quite good if Saddam Hussein were, at the same time, removed from power and a new regime is established, but the goal and what serves as the foundation for the resolutions is still the disarmament of Iraq.<sup>124</sup>

Thus while the weapons of mass destruction always played a key role in the argument, there was clearly value-promotion at stake as well. Which, if any, of these arguments was only rhetorical, this report cannot answer. The question will probably not be answered with any kind of certainty until the closed archival files on the inner decision-making process open, many years from now, as the question has become intensely politicised.

To the question of why the time had come for the invasion now, when UN inspectors were finally reporting progress and were asking for more time, Jens Rohde replied that it was time because a group of countries had decided that ‘...enough was enough.’<sup>125</sup> This sentence was repeated both by Liberal Ulrik Kragh and the Conservatives’ Pia Christmas Møller in the debates.<sup>126</sup> ‘Enough is enough’ might, apart from serving as a rhetorical phrase, also help expand a bit on exactly what the Liberals and the Conservatives meant by strengthening the international legal order: that other countries listened to the Western powers and respected the deals they made with them. The UN did not seem to matter much in this regard. To be sure, both Jens Rohde and foreign minister Per Stig Møller were quick to point out that 1990 and 1991 UN resolutions against Iraq still gave the US and its allies the right to attack Iraq. They even presented a, somewhat controversial, legal analysis made by the foreign ministry’s legal office to back up that legal manoeuvre. Yet at the same time foreign minister Per Stig Møller stated that:

We had to note on Monday that the UN trail [for a solution to deal with the alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction] led to a dead end, because the different UN parties had checkmated each other and could not come to a new decision – which the government had never demanded; we had not asked for a new resolution, we had supported the Security Council if it could reach a decision.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> FT 19 March 2003

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

It should be noted that it is a debated subject whether or not the foreign minister actually believed in this foreign policy line himself, as his views in the debates of March 19 and 21 stood in stark contrast to his earlier statements about Iraq in the crisis leading up to the debates, where he had been significantly more in favour of following the UN trail, even in the face of difficulties.<sup>128</sup> For the purposes of this report, however, it changes little for explaining the Iraq decision as he should, if that be the case, rather be seen as speaking for Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who kept silent throughout the debates. That being said, the quote shows that although insisting that a new UN resolution was not legally necessary, he still admitted that the UN trail had failed. One is therefore left with the impression of a government that claimed to save the UN from its own inefficiency. The UN might be nice to have aboard when it agreed with the US-led line but this was, ultimately, of secondary importance.

It is tempting to dismiss values and talk of international legal order as mere rhetoric, but it might be to take it too far. Rather, it might be seen as an indicator of the government trying to promote a certain type of values that was not always identical to those of the UN. That the Liberals, at least, were acting upon a set of ‘competing’ values when compared to the UN’s values, was also evident from Liberal Ulrik Kragh’s contribution to the debate. Thus, after having applauded the discussion for “...finally moving out of the legal mumbo jumbo and to the substance...” he concluded about the Iraq decision that, “it is not an easy conclusion to make that we must go to war. But sometimes values must come before hypocrisy.”<sup>129</sup> It is not hard to decipher which category he thought the botched UN resolution fell into, and such an attitude might well be explained by the hawkish activist lesson.

The Danish People’s Party’s attitude was unchanged since the decision to participate in Afghanistan and it still centred around the core belief that the US was the only nation that could protect Denmark against terrorism. In Pia Kjærsgaard’s words: “...I and the Danish People’s Party feel clearly that it is much better to put our weight behind the US in connection with this mission, than France or Germany.”<sup>130</sup> The far left, on the other hand, was as deeply committed against with arguments spanning from mistrust of the US and anger over the, as they saw it, bypassing of the UN.

<sup>128</sup> Kaae & Nissen 2008: 208

<sup>129</sup> FT 19 March 2003

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.



This leaves out only the centre-left of Danish politics – primarily the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals. The Social Democrats and the Social Liberals had grudgingly supported the Afghanistan war but concerning Iraq, they refused to follow the Liberal–Conservative lead. This was not least due to the fact that the internal Social Democratic leadership had changed in 2002 and the right wing within the party had lost power due to the rise of former Foreign Minister Mogens Lykketoft to party chairman.<sup>131</sup>

First and foremost, the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats refused to accept the threat perception expressed by the Liberals and Conservatives as well as their definition of Danish interests. Social Liberal speaker and former foreign minister Niels Helveg Petersen stressed outright that:

The problem in this case is not the military [aspect] that Iraq today represents an immediate threat, least of all against the USA. America has a defence budget of 400 billion dollars a year; Iraq's is 1.4 billion dollars. It is therefore not the case that if one does not attack now then one risks being overrun by Iraq. There is time and [room for the] possibility to give peace another chance".<sup>132</sup>

The Social Democratic speaker Frank Jensen stressed the Danish choice of allies as especially important:

We must stick to [the fact] that the transatlantic pact is important but also consider where our most vital interests lie. They lie in Europe, and we should stop letting ourselves be dragged around by the present American president, who has a fundamentally different foundation to judge Europe from, than we should have, if we are to take care of our own narrow Danish interests for our own citizens.<sup>133</sup>

Closely connected to this were the Social Democratic regrets that the attack was underway without a UN mandate, focused on military and not humanitarian efforts, and was, as they saw it, expressly against the wishes of the UN and the UN weapons inspectors.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, even though neither the Social Liberals nor the Social Demo-

<sup>131</sup> Petersen 2004: 592

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

crats were against the principle of using military force against Saddam Hussein, they refused it, because they felt that there was time and reason for continuing diplomatic pressure on Saddam Hussein, not least, to make sure that Denmark did not isolate herself from her most important allies. Thus, for the Social Democrats, it was above all the Liberal and Conservative disregard for multilateralism that drove them away, marking one of the chief differences between the hawkish and the dovish activist lessons. Frank Jensen hammered this point home by stating that:

The core view after September 11 for us Social Democrats has been from the start to collect broad international support and seek alliance when the world community must react to terror and to dictators. That was how it was after September 11; that was how it was in the campaign against the Taliban government in Afghanistan. We regret that the American president and the American administration has shifted course'.<sup>135</sup>

Thus for the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals it was possible to see the invasion of Iraq as a potential place for Danish foreign policy activism as the two parties declared themselves willing to participate if the multilateral element was present, and all peaceful options had been pursued. It was because these factors were missing that they were against the war in Iraq.

The Social Democrats, furthermore, accused the Liberals and Conservatives of suddenly changing their views on Iraq away from their early preference for waiting for a UN mandate.<sup>136</sup> Whether there was a shift in attitude or not this report cannot answer fully, but the final decision to go ahead without a UN mandate certainly meant that the means for pursuing activist foreign policy had changed markedly since the 1990s. Denmark had participated in missions abroad without a UN mandate before, for example in Kosovo in 1999, but in that war the Danish foreign minister had been able to 'excuse' the missing UN mandate by attributing it to a veto-paralysed Security Council.<sup>137</sup> In the case of Iraq the US in all likelihood dropped their pursuit of the UN resolution not just because they expected one or more of the veto members to block it, but also because they doubted that they could even get a majority.<sup>138</sup> The multilateral element in Danish activism was therefore under pressure. This development goes a long way to explaining the deepened split between the Liberal-Conserva-

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Petersen 2004: 465

<sup>138</sup> Petersen 2004: 587

tive government and the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals. Thus, it fused two old differences in the Liberal and Conservative foreign policy activism and the Social Democratic and Social Liberal activism: the split over the effectiveness of raw military power and a foreign policy line based on strength as a tool in foreign policy and the split over the value and importance of multilateralism as an integral part of Danish activist foreign policy.

Finally, one other element in the Fogh Rasmussen foreign policy line should be treated, not least given the focus of this report on uncovering the role of learning from the past in foreign policy decision making: the question of whether Fogh Rasmussen was driven by the more direct arguments rooted in history which he sometimes used in public. Thus, in an interview to the Newspaper *Mandagmorgen* in 2006, on the five-year anniversary of September 11, Fogh Rasmussen outlined the following characteristics of the Danish foreign policy tradition and future:

If you look at the foreign policy of the last century it was filled with double standards and hypocrisy. The times were marked by typical small power thinking about living quietly and unnoticed, pretending to be neutral and not angering anyone. That line of thought must be changed.<sup>139</sup>

Now, is it worth considering if this should be seen as an example of learning from the past? Not, I must conclude, in the way learning is understood elsewhere in the report in the sense that Fogh Rasmussen used a preconception of the past to cognitively simplify present day politics and help him make a decision. If one can talk of any kind of lesson here it would be of a *moral* lesson of the past comparable to the German war guilt from WWII. However, even that might be taking the quote too far, as it should be remembered that as a public statement by a prime minister engaged in a break with the Danish tradition of broad foreign policy consensus on security matters, the possibility of this being mostly rhetorical should not be ruled out. As with cognitive lessons, however, it is extremely difficult to know for sure how committed Anders Fogh Rasmussen really was to this moral lesson. As when trying to determine cognitive lessons from rhetoric, we can ask: “did he also use this argument behind closed doors?” However, as most of the relevant closed door meeting protocols are still classified, we are unlikely to get anywhere nearer an answer to this question for some time to come. Nevertheless, even if I tend to judge the possibility that Danish WWII ‘war guilt’ should be the driving causal factor behind the Fogh

<sup>139</sup> *Mandagmorgen*, 11 September 2006

Rasmussen foreign policy line as being rather slim, it does fit well into the picture presented earlier of a Fogh Rasmussen value-based foreign policy guided by the hawkish activist lesson.

*After Iraq: a new consensus on activist foreign policy?*

In the years that followed there was a brief and partial reconciliation of the consensus as the Social Democrats decided to be part of the May 2003 agreement for stabilisation because, in the words of Social Democratic spokesman Per Kaalund: “It is Denmark that has gone to war in Iraq and therefore we have, according to the humanitarian part of the law of nations, also got obligations afterwards as an occupying power”.<sup>140</sup> They later regretted this, as it became clear that the US-led occupation seriously lacked a comprehensive plan for how to rebuild and stabilise Iraq.<sup>141</sup> In any event the consensus was never as deep founded as it had been in the 1990s. The Social Democrats were not convinced by the Liberal and the Conservative line that had led Denmark into the Iraq War, but merely attempted to come to terms with the new situation on the ground. However, trends in recent years have showed the beginning of a revival of the consensus. Thus the 2008 defence commission was able to reach a common conclusion with only one minority note: from the United List.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, Denmark’s next desert war, the (compared to Iraq and Afghanistan limited) air war in Libya in 2011, had the support of all parties in the Danish parliament – though the United List withdrew their support a little over a week after the Danish decision to join.<sup>143</sup> The question now remains of why this seeming reestablishment of the consensus took place? It is to this last question that we will now turn.

The 2008 defence commission report largely repeats the main points of the 1997 report when it comes to perception of the Danish threat level. Thus, the report states that:

Since the end of the Cold War Denmark has not been confronted with direct, conventional military threats and therefore enjoys a favourable geographic security position without historical precedent.<sup>144</sup>

It continues shortly thereafter by concluding that:

<sup>140</sup> FT 8 May 2003

<sup>141</sup> FT 11 March 2008

<sup>142</sup> Forsvarskommissionen 2009: 328–29

<sup>143</sup> Information 30 March 2011, <http://www.information.dk/telegram/264104> (accessed 21 December 2011)

<sup>144</sup> Forsvarskommissionen 2009: 36

The international development has on the one hand given smaller countries like Denmark the space to conduct activist foreign and security policies and thereby greater possibilities to participate in the formation of the future international order. On the other hand the same complexity represents a challenge when it comes to formulating the policy that will give Denmark the best space for action in the period leading up to 2025.<sup>145</sup>

Like the conclusions of the 1997 commission report, it was therefore still the situation characterised by a relatively low threat level that made it possible for Denmark to prioritise activist foreign policy and influence on the development of the world order. Furthermore, the report stated that the Danish military had embraced the idea of an activist foreign policy in combination with its shift from territorial defence to a more flexible defence.<sup>146</sup> This would seem to indicate that the Danish consensus about foreign policy activism was fully re-established by 2009. However, this report argues that, like in the 1990s, this was only the case on the surface.

Revealing in this respect were the discussions in the Danish parliament on 31 March 2009 related to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO. Conservative Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller then said the following about his perception of threat:

New threats have shown themselves that we did not know during the Cold War. Therefore, we must realise that the security/political conditions and challenges have changed considerably during the last decade. New threats from terrorist networks, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the risk from failed states require a new type of handling from the old ones.<sup>147</sup>

The Liberal Minister of Defence Søren Gade continued along the same lines and stated, after having defended the Danish involvement in Afghanistan, that:

September 11 2001 meant a paradigm shift and a new understanding [of the fact] that the threat against the freedom of the West now no longer only came from states, and that the magnitude and the seriousness cannot only be measured in numbers of warheads and tanks. Terror flows here from without and within and uses methods that are recognisable by their cowardice and

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Forsvarskommissionen 2009: 108–09 & 285–86

<sup>147</sup> FT 31 March 2009

complete disrespect for human life and human rights. So, while the threat from terrorism is diffuse and unclear, NATO's promise to the West is as concrete and clear as always: freedom and security".<sup>148</sup>

These two quotes stand in stark opposition to the, then just published, conclusions about threat in the defence commission. For, while the defence commission clearly stated that Denmark (still) enjoyed unprecedented levels of security, their quotes indirectly imply that the security threats from terrorism were comparable to the threat to Danish security in the late Cold War years. This gives the Liberal and Conservative version of activist foreign policy a direct security element, with clear links to the September 11 lesson that mark it as different from the Social Democratic and Social Liberal version in two respects: it incorporated a threat element that was higher than was the case with the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats. Secondly, the rhetoric that the threat was against not just Western security but also against Western freedom indicates that the September 11 lesson had simply been incorporated into the more value-focused, hard-line and hawkish activist lesson. Value promotion and security went hand in hand.

Why the mismatch between the commission's report and the Liberal and Conservative views in Parliament? It must be remembered that the commission report was a compromise with the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats whom the government had, evidently, prioritised to get on board. The statements at the NATO anniversary debates, however, indicate that the Conservatives and Liberals might have largely maintained their lesson about hawkish activist foreign policy, with elements of the September 11 lesson's message about a direct security threat against Denmark from international terrorism incorporated into the mix, even after the war in Iraq.

In contrast to the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister, Social Democrat Mogens Lykketoft spoke only of:

...the new insecurities [which]...are the new challenges, and that is where we can use NATO as a forum for the necessary transatlantic dialogue about how to meet those challenges.<sup>149</sup>

Likewise, when praising the new plans for expanding NATO, Niels Helveg Petersen chose to stress how:

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

NATO quickly became an instrument for healing the wounds after the Cold War...for the first time in its history as an independent kingdom Denmark today is in the situation of not being threatened territorially from any corner.<sup>150</sup>

While Mogens Lykketoft declared himself in agreement with much of what the Liberal and Conservative ministers said, and while neither of these quotes puts the two speakers in direct opposition to the two ministers, the choice of words nevertheless marks a difference of focus. Where the centre-right ministers stressed the new threats, the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals stressed merely challenges and insecurities. Where, especially, the Liberal Defence Minister Søren Gade came close to pledging that NATO would ‘bear any burden’ in the fight against terrorism, the Social Democrats and Social Liberals focused more on multilateral dialogue and cooperation. Again, the two things did not necessarily exclude each other, but the focus was markedly different.

#### *Case 7: The ‘easy’ war in Libya of 2011*

Libya was what one might call a ‘low hanging fruit’ for Danish activism in general and for the centre-left and centre-right parties’ understanding of that activism in particular. It was a best-case scenario.<sup>151</sup> It did not entail ground forces. It had a very broad UN mandate. It was supported by regional actors. The Libyan army and, especially, air force were deemed quite weak and had, in fact, come close to losing to the Libyan rebels without need for Western intervention. It was tied to the Arab Spring that almost all Danish politicians embraced as positive at that time. The most important NATO allies, not least the US, supported the plan and unlike the controversial Iraq War, the US under the Obama administration insisted on a multilateral approach. To this might also be added that there was widespread support in the Danish population and that the Danish air force, which had not been used in combat since 2003, was very eager to prove its worth to its primary customer – the Danish government.<sup>152</sup>

These conditions were of such a character as to activate both activist lessons which also interpreted the situation in the same manner: going in was clearly deemed to be

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> In this characterisation of the war, I widely agree with (Jakobsen & Møller 2012: 119-120), though I will focus more on exclusively what was known to Danish policymakers *before* they decided to intervene, instead of analysing, like Jakobsen & Møller does (and in my view correctly), on why Danish policymakers tended to evaluate the Libyan war very favourably *after* it had been conducted.

<sup>152</sup> Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 640–41, 647

in Denmark's interests because of humanitarian concerns and because Danish values could potentially be promulgated for a very low price. This was further reinforced by a more specific lesson about genocides linked to Rwanda in particular. Thus, in the report from the parliament's Defence Committee the Liberals, the Social Democrats, the Socialist People's Party, the Conservatives, the Danish People's Party and the Social Liberals all stressed that:

...the world community has learned from past events where they did not act in time to protect the civilian population. The principles from the World Summit in 2005 about the international community's 'responsibility to protect' have thereby shown their value.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, even though the United List was absent from the list of parties behind that statement they themselves stressed the need to avoid another Rwanda or Darfur in their reasoning to cautiously support the initiative.<sup>154</sup>

Other than that, all the centre-left to centre-right parties, including the Socialist People's Party who had fully adopted the dovish activist lesson and had incorporated themselves firmly within the centre-left at this point, supported the proposal largely on the grounds of protecting civilians and protecting the democratic aspirations of the Arab Spring.<sup>155</sup> In fact, if there was any difference between the centre-left and centre-right it was perhaps that the centre-left had been even *more* eager to intervene than the centre-right government and had attacked the government for being too passive in the days leading up to the debate in parliament. Thus, the Socialist People's Party had even gone so far as to talk about the possibility of Danish intervention *without* a UN mandate.<sup>156</sup>

Why this sudden seeming reversal in positions?<sup>157</sup> In all likelihood, this was due to the fact that the Libya 'package' was simply even more appealing when seen through the dovish activist lesson than when seen through the hawkish, because of the operation's focus on humanitarianism and on improving the world through the new 'Responsibil-

<sup>153</sup> FT March 18 2011 (Report from the Defence Committee)

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> FT March 18 2011. The journey of the Socialist People's Party had been long, but their drift towards the centre-left was probably also heavily influenced by the close political alliance they had formed with the Social Democrats for the purpose of being included in the next centre-left government.

<sup>156</sup> Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 644

<sup>157</sup> (Jakobsen & Møller 2012: 115) writes that the government as a whole would have gone in without a UN mandate. While this is probably true, the puzzle remains that it was the previously adamant UN supporters the Socialist People's Party that spearheaded that determination.



ity to Protect' doctrine. If so, this development within the Socialist People's Party was probably not unlike the one that had taken place within the Social Democratic Party and, especially, within the Social Liberal Party leading up to the Kosovo intervention in 1998–99: the belief in the UN Security Council, and especially the veto right system, had lost prestige with the Danish far-left and centre-left. This was tied, in the case of Libya, to their devaluing of the concept of respect for the sovereignty of foreign states. In the words of Social Democrat Jeppe Kofod, the Libyan war was:

...a victory for the principle of putting people's rights to live free of fear and assault before state sovereignty in a situation as serious as that we see in Libya.<sup>158</sup>

This, the Socialist People's Party not only agreed with but also, as the only party in the debates in parliament, hinted:

It is possible that there will be need for further initiatives *on the ground* [my emphasis]. Here I would like to say that if that is the case we will not reject it.<sup>159</sup>

The Liberal–Conservative government agreed in principle on all points – though the possibility of a ground initiative was rejected. Therefore, it was not surprising that they moved quickly in order to enable the Danish fighter planes to participate in the war as soon as possible.

To sum up, the broad centre in Danish politics, which now included the Socialist People's Party, was so eager to go to war in Libya that whatever disagreements they might have had, if the situation had been more ambiguous for them than it was, were never allowed to materialise in the form of anything except differences over nuances. Most of them paid lip service to the statement that sending Danish soldiers to war was always difficult, but Helge Adam Møller probably spoke most frankly, when he stated that the Liberal statement that it was never an easy decision to go to war was "...both right and wrong".<sup>160</sup> Thus, he continued, since there were simply so many good reasons to go to war in Libya the decision was *also* easy.<sup>161</sup>

Not everyone found it easy to go to war, however. We shall, therefore, now shift focus to the far-left and the far-right. Of these the Danish far-right, the Danish People's Party,

<sup>158</sup> FT 18 March 2011

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

were in doubt because of the fear of "...getting involved in a civil war on the African continent".<sup>162</sup> It was the same fear, the Party speaker Søren Espersen admitted, that the party had had in Kosovo: in a civil war context, it could be very hard to know who to support. In response to this an analyst might point out that one might, in principle, have said the same about Afghanistan (or Iraq, though there was plainly no-one local to support there). However, the big difference for the Danish People's Party between Afghanistan and Iraq on the one hand and Libya on the other was probably that there was no clear, perceptible threat from Gaddafi to Denmark. The difference between Kosovo and Libya, Espersen claimed, was that in Libya genocide was about to happen. However, it also weighed heavily for them that it was a NATO operation. Thus for the Danish People's Party "It was not the norm to go against NATO".<sup>163</sup> The Kosovo intervention, however, had also been a NATO operation, but Kosovo had also been pre-9/11. While NATO had always been important for the Danish far-right (in recent times at least),<sup>164</sup> it was considerably more so after September 11. Thus, since the hawkish Cold War lesson had been replaced by the September 11 lesson, the importance of maintaining good relations with NATO in general and the US in particular had become extremely important. For these reasons the party, hesitantly, decided to support the proposal.

The United List also harboured serious doubts about Libya, though on quite different grounds than the Danish People's Party. United List speaker Frank Aen, as mentioned earlier, specifically stated that the disaster in Darfur had transformed how the United List saw military interventions. Thus, though the party was still deeply sceptical about the use of military force in itself, they had now decided that "...if it is about stopping a genocide, one cannot simply stand by and watch".<sup>165</sup> The United List's line of reasoning was not unconnected to the same appreciation for democracy and the Arab Spring that most of the other parties harboured. But their belief in the potentially positive results for democracy of intervening in other countries was much weaker than that of the other parties (on this count especially compared to the centre-right). For the United List, Aen said:

It is not our job to install democracy in Libya with bombs, but we would like to stop those who try to stop democracy in Libya with bombs".<sup>166</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Progress Party founder Mogens Glistrup did attract quite a bit of attention in 1972 by stating that the Danish defence should be reduced to an answering machine that simply answered 'we surrender' in Russian.

<sup>165</sup> FT 18 March 2011

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, there were important factors in the foreign policy deliberations of the United List that spoke against intervention. Most importantly, the party had grave doubts about its 'comrades in arms'. These reservations were made explicit in three questions that United List directed at the other parties: firstly regarding whether they could guarantee to do their utmost to avoid civilian targets; secondly whether they would accept a ceasefire when the Gaddafi government were willing to pursue it in earnest and lastly whether they would guarantee that Libya's oil wealth would not be exploited. When these questions were answered in the affirmative by the other parties through reference to the UN resolution and through references to international law, the United List politicians did not feel they could go against the proposal, though their deep mistrust of the other parties was evident in the fact that they underlined that they would withdraw their support the minute one of their three conditions was violated.

The result of the deliberations was to produce a first in Denmark; for the first time in Danish history the parliament agreed *unanimously* on sending Danish soldiers to war.<sup>167</sup> It is argued (in Jakobsen & Møller 2012) that this was due to the fact that the government went to great pains to draft a proposal that everyone in the Danish parliament could live with.<sup>168</sup> However, this should be weighed against the fact that the government did not feel that it was necessary to present Parliament with all three of the operational plans that the air force had prepared, but rather just presented the most far-reaching of the three.<sup>169</sup> The explanation can therefore more likely be found in the following two facts: firstly, that many of the actors had gradually drifted closer to each other. Hawkish and dovish activists were closer to each other than they had been in the early 1990s, and even the United List was beginning to flirt with a dovish activist lesson that allowed (very) limited military intervention. Secondly, and even more importantly, however, was the fact, also mentioned by Jakobsen and Møller, that the Libyan war was a best-case scenario for Danish activism. At no point since the Cold War had Danish politicians been presented with the request to participate in a war which fitted as well with so many of the foreign policy lessons entertained by the Danish foreign policy decision-makers as this one did. This second fact means that one should be very careful before taking the Libyan war as an indicator for any kind of stable foreign policy consensus among the Danish foreign policy elite. Almost everybody liked the Libyan war because it was a best-case scenario for Danish activism. Future wars or interventions might not be so clear-cut.

<sup>167</sup> FT 18–19 March 2011 (debate passed midnight)

<sup>168</sup> Jakobsen & Møller 2012: 116

<sup>169</sup> Halskov & Svendsen 2012: 649–50

The way lessons concerning activism changed over time and how they affected foreign policy preferences with the different party groups can now be roughly summed up:<sup>170</sup>

	<i>Post Cold War period till 11 September 2001 (Cases 1, 2, 3 and 4)</i>	<i>After 11 September 2001 (Cases 5, 6 and 7)</i>
<i>Far-left (Socialist People's Party until 2011 and United List)</i>	Dovish activist lesson present and seen as the best way to meet long-term uncertain threat. Serious doubts about idealistic sincerity of the other parties and of external allies.	Dovish activist lesson present and seen as the best way to meet long-term uncertain threat and the very low-level threat from Islamic fundamentalists. Lingering doubts about idealistic sincerity of the other parties and of external allies. <sup>171</sup>
<i>Centre-left (Social Liberals and Social Democrats, after 2011 also the Socialist People's Party)</i>	Dovish activist lesson present and seen as the best way to meet long-term uncertain threat	Dovish activist lesson and seen as the best way to meet long-term uncertain threats and to deal with the, low-level, short and medium-term threat from Islamic fundamentalists.
<i>Centre-right (Liberals and Conservatives)</i>	Hawkish activist lesson present and seen as the best way to meet long-term uncertain threat	Hawkish activist lesson present, but the September 11 lesson had also been partly incorporated. Made a very hard-line activist foreign policy seem the best way to meet both uncertain long-term threats of the future and the moderate level, short and medium-term threat from Islamic fundamentalists.
<i>Far right (Progress Party and Danish People's Party in first column and Danish People's Party in the second)</i>	Hawkish Cold War lesson and, consequently, little belief in activist foreign policy.	September 11 lesson replaces the hawkish Cold War lesson and made activist foreign policy with the US seem crucial to counter Islamic fundamentalism.

<sup>170</sup> Although the party groups presented here did not always have perfect group homogeneity, especially on the political extremes, their differences, when they had them, were mostly a matter of degrees of strength of belief.

<sup>171</sup> Regarding doubts concerning faith in the other parties and in the external allies, this softening was primarily taking place with the Socialist People's Party and not so much with the United List.

The results presented in this table are tentative in nature, not least due to the fact that only a little non-public material was available to the study.<sup>172</sup> Besides that, however, there is an aspect that must be further expanded on here: the conclusion that the lessons of most Danish parties were only moderately affected by 11 September 2001 should not be misconstrued as a claim that the event was not judged important by those parties. It only reflects that, on the basis of the materials covered, the report finds little evidence in favour of a dramatic shift comparable with the shift that came with the end of the Cold War in terms of change in perceptions of threat level except for, perhaps, the Danish People's Party. Among the main parties the Liberals and the Conservatives were most affected, but the increased perceived threat level that September 11 aroused in them was incorporated into their existing hawkish activist lesson rather than being adopted as a replacement lesson. Among the Social Liberals and the Social Democrats the effect was even less. They acknowledged that the world had changed with September 11, but still held to the belief that the Danish threat level had not risen significantly. Thus, the somewhat uncertain threat from unstable states might have been somewhat replaced by the more tangible Islamic fundamentalist terrorist threat, but dovish activist foreign policy was still thought to be the appropriate tool for meeting both those threats.

The changes in the levels of consensus about Danish foreign policy in recent years were therefore more due to changes in US foreign policy after 2008 than due to dramatic changes in Danish foreign policy lessons – at least not with the centre-left and the centre-right.

<sup>172</sup> Such materials would be especially valuable in digging deeper into the Liberal and Conservative lessons, which are the least clear in the materials analysed here.

## **Concluding remarks: a status report on Danish foreign policy activism and its future prospects**

The end of the Cold War brought about the birth of activist foreign policy – with greater speed for some of Denmark’s political parties than for others – as the old Cold War foreign policy and mindset grew increasingly out of touch with the situation on the ground. But what kind of activist foreign policy developed back then? Does it even make sense to talk of ‘one’ such policy or should we talk of *two* different types of Danish foreign policy activism? This report argues for the latter. The two broad factions in Danish foreign policy, Liberals and Conservatives versus Social Liberals and Social Democrats, agreed on the overall goals behind Danish activist foreign policy throughout the period analysed here: to export Danish values when the security situation for Denmark allowed it as an integral part of a strategy constructed to improve Denmark’s long-term security situation. However, they differed in their conception of which means to use and when. Thus, the Liberals and the Conservatives put significantly more stock in the importance of ‘hard’ military power and a firm foreign policy line as the right tools for spreading Danish values and were significantly more willing to act without support in the UN. This understanding of foreign policy has been conceptualised as the hawkish activist lesson presented in this report. September 11 affected them in a limited fashion by raising their perception of threat a bit more than was the case for the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals, but they were able to incorporate it into their hawkish activist lesson without too much trouble. On the centre-left side of the Danish parliament the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals have moved in a somewhat hawkish direction since the end of the Cold War, but their dovish activist lesson still remains fundamentally different from the Liberal-Conservative hawkish activist lesson. For them, threats from terrorists and elsewhere should still preferably be met with humanitarianism and, if possible, through the UN.

In sum the Danish political parties have, in reality, only updated their lessons in a limited fashion since adjusting to the end of the Cold War. In fact, only one party, the Danish People’s Party, made a clear and definitive adjustment of their primary foreign policy lesson in response to September 11 by radically reevaluating their perception of threat and by fully embracing a foreign policy line built on supporting the US. For the Liberals and the Conservatives, September 11 might have pushed them towards a certain militarisation of their foreign policy activism as a consequence of a rising perception of threat and its incorporation into the foreign policy activism, but it was

no true eye-opener for them – they even scolded the Social Democrats for taking too long to recognise the threat from terrorism. Rather, the Liberals and the Conservatives were simply more inclined to see increases in the threat against Denmark and against the Danish and Western way of life than were the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals. The Social Democrats and the Social Liberals saw some threat increase as well, but did not see it as significant enough to make them abandon their dovish activist approach built on humanitarianism and multilateralism. This point becomes even more significant the further one moves out on the Danish far-left.

The war in Iraq, also, seems to have changed very little for anyone's lessons. As is evident from the NATO anniversary discussions, the Liberals and Conservatives maintained their hawkish approach, and the Social Democrats and Social Liberals maintained their more dovish version. If anything, the war might have made the Social Democratic Party less willing to take responsibility for foreign policy decisions taken by the centre-right, but that remains to be seen.

This lack of 'updating' is not to be understood in a normative fashion. Updating is not always 'good' or 'more correct'. However, the still enduring fundamental difference in lesson with the centre-left and with the centre-right is the reason why the current reestablishment of the security consensus that we saw in the 2008 Commission Report and during the war in Libya is *unlikely to last*.

Thus, there seems to be at least some correlation between the beginning of disagreements between the Liberals and the Conservatives on the one side and the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals on the other, with changes in external circumstances – most importantly, when the Republican president George W. Bush initiated his wars against terrorism. Also, there seems to be a correlation between the beginnings of a reestablishment of the activist foreign policy consensus in Danish foreign policy with the time the Obama administration gained office. Naturally, not everything can be reduced to stemming from the change in presidency in the US. It was also crucial that the US had experienced a significant loss of material capabilities (mostly economical), as a consequence of the financial crisis and the expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Together, however, these facts played a pivotal role in American foreign policy becoming more cautious and more multilateral.

In this sense any apparent re-emerging Danish consensus on the activist foreign policy, which Libya might be seen as an example of, should therefore not be mistaken for a stable consensus. Rather it should simply be seen as the result of a change in the

impulses coming from the outside world – with the American foreign policy change being the most significant factor. Thus, right now the two activist lessons mesh largely because the US and the rest of NATO have changed their policies in a more multilateral, UN-friendly direction. But there is no guarantee that this is going to last. Should the UN sanction a NATO-led war in Syria the Danish parliament will probably be able to find common ground, as was the case in Libya. However, should a new republican American president be elected in 2017 or should a flare-up of the strained US–Iranian relationship cause a reversion of US foreign policy towards its pre-2008 line, Denmark might soon again find itself presented with greater foreign policy dilemmas than the Libyan war proved to be. The consensus will then, most likely, break down once more and leave Denmark with two different kinds of activist foreign policy.



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