

A black and white photograph of a chess king piece in sharp focus, standing on a reflective surface. The background is blurred, showing other chess pieces. A dark red horizontal bar is overlaid at the bottom, containing the title and subtitle.

A SMALL STATE ADDRESSING BIG PROBLEMS

**Perspectives on recent Danish foreign
and security strategy**

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DENMARK IN THE WORLD

For two decades Denmark has conducted what is often termed an 'activist' foreign policy (Kristensen 2013). Denmark has collaborated with the United States and the United Kingdom in Iraq and Afghanistan, participated in US-led and later NATO-led operations in Libya, and contributed to French interventions in the Sahel region. Denmark, furthermore, plays a role in promoting a rules-based international order, working through multilateral institutions on issues such as providing maritime security in international waters, and promoting the Sustainable Development Goals, not least human rights and climate change.

But Denmark is also a small state in terms of its GDP, population, diplomatic and defence capabilities. It must therefore prioritise resources wisely. And yet it was only in 2017 that the then liberal government first began the process of formulating an actual foreign and security policy strategy (FSPS) to guide Danish 'activism'. Until 2017, changing Danish governments relied on regional and thematic strategies, as well as more ad hoc discussions in parliamentary committees, which lack systematic overview and remain on a more operational level.

The FSPS was introduced at a time of increased uncertainty and change. Seen from a Western perspective, there is a sense that the international security landscape is becoming more volatile and alliances unpredictable; in many respects, the liberal world order itself seems at stake. This highlights the importance of thinking carefully about how strategic engagement with such an environment can be effective and not just rhetoric. A clear sense of direction seems necessary to navigate this uncertainty and change.

However, the continuation of the FSPS is not a given. With the change of government in 2019 to a Social Democratic leadership, the future of Danish foreign and security strategy is up for debate – not only its substance, but also whether a new version of the FSPS should be produced at all. To inform this debate, the present report asks what role the FSPS has played as guidance to the Danish state apparatus dealing with foreign and security policy. The aim is to assess whether the practice of formulating foreign and security strategies under the current conditions defining the international security landscape have benefitted the ministries' work and supported the political level and in which way, if at all, there is reason for it to continue. Thus, the report does not attempt the perhaps impossible task of evaluating to what extent the FSPS has been adhered to in the process of implementation, nor how it has allowed Danish impact abroad. It rather documents how the FSPS has been used by ministries and discusses what value it offer as a policy tool, when a small state addresses big problems.

BACKGROUND

Strategy in its basic form is the ways, ends and means with which a given policy is implemented (Gray 2010). In foreign policy studies, 'grand strategy' is used to describe the framework within which a country's political elite forms its long-term objectives concerning its overseas activities, often with military implications (Brands 2014). It lays out a roadmap providing the approach and resources to carry out its objectives. As such, it is authoritative and definite, decided at the highest level and intended to permeate the entire organisation to guide the substance of its activities.

Small state literature has conventionally held that strategising on a large scale is the preserve of big states and superpowers. It sees small states like Denmark as not only limited in size and capacity but also in power and influence (Bueger & Wivel 2018). In this view, small states follow and support the grand strategies of larger, friendly states. However, recent studies have modified shelter theory through empirical studies exemplifying a range of ways in which small states seek and successfully gain significant influence in international settings through their foreign policies, for instance in the UN Security Council, through means such as diplomacy, knowledge and leadership (Thorhallsson 2012), and by setting the agenda, as happened in international counter-piracy efforts in the Indian Ocean (Wivel & Smed 2017).

As such, it seems both relevant and necessary for small states such as Denmark to strategise on a general if not 'grand' level, putting its limited foreign policy means to carefully calibrated ends. But as mentioned, a common foreign and security strategy is a recent phenomenon in Danish politics. Running for two-year terms (2017–2018 and 2019–2020), the FSPS 1 and 2 have addressed central policy issues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, the two main ministries dealing with foreign and security policy. Although not addressing all politically delicate issues in detail, FSPS 1 and 2 have set out the government's overall priorities. With minor differences, both strategies covered security threats from Russia and the Middle East, European policy, migration, development, trade and the Arctic – all to be dealt with through a rules-based order. As such, the FSPS 1 and 2 were the first collective and forward-looking documents to define Danish foreign policy priorities. They were also the first shared documents to place the existing practice of inter-ministerial, whole-of-government efforts on foreign and security policy matters into an overall strategic framework.




Small state literature has conventionally held that strategising on a large scale is the preserve of big states and superpowers.

While the practice of formulating foreign and security strategies is still new, this report documents recent experiences and assesses to what extent, and in which ways, the FSPS 1 and 2 have added value to Denmark's state apparatus in dealing with its foreign and security policy. Providing a meta-analysis of the role of the FSPSes rather than a critical assessment of their content, the report examines the value of these strategies in the everyday work of officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. These insights are premised on the context of a small state with limited resources facing an unpredictable international environment, not only in terms of erratic and flaring conflicts but also in terms of the current volatility of collaborations and partnerships upon which Denmark has conventionally relied. In addition to the two FSPSes, the report draws on policy analysis of other relevant government strategic and policy documents. The analysis is supported by interviews conducted in August and September of 2019 with Danish ministry representatives involved in the drafting process of the strategies and their implementation.

MAIN FINDINGS

The report argues that a regularly updated foreign and security strategy may provide useful. This is so for several reasons: Denmark conducts an activist foreign policy. Denmark is a small state dependent upon international partners to help address challenges to its interests and values. Denmark operates in a geopolitically contested environment and Denmark is, furthermore, an Arctic state, which has increasing security stakes.



The report finds that the format of the FSPS in particular holds potential value for a small state such as Denmark.

For these reasons, a common document placing Danish foreign and security policy matters into an overall strategic framework may support ministries, policymakers – and foreign powers – in bringing clarity to Denmark’s priorities in its overseas activities and in ensuring a robust prioritisation of its resources.

The report furthermore finds that the format of the FSPS in particular holds potential value for a small state such as Denmark. Aside from any assessment of the impact that the strategies may or may not have had on actual international politics and security, and of the extent to which the strategies have been implemented, the FSPS format may – in principle – play a positive role for Denmark in several ways, namely that it can:

- sharpen Denmark’s international identity by acting as a coherent and collective document that communicates Denmark’s position and priorities as a partner state
- allow Denmark, as a small state, to be agenda-setting internationally by serving as a government-sanctioned platform to steer international attention towards policy issues of Danish interest
- refine the Danish whole-of-government approach by regularly having a strategy-drafting process that facilitates inter-ministerial coordination and political alignment
- cultivate democratic dialogue by making the FSPS subject to electoral and political scrutiny through regular public debate

Examining FSPS 1 and 2, however, the report uncovers that they have only delivered partially on such promises. Through analysis and discussion of data from interviews with ministry officials, a range of imbalances are identified. They revolve around the following thematic complexes:

- Coherence, in other words the extent to which the FSPSes have served to align and harmonise differences between ministries' focus and interests
- Time, in other words the extent to which the FSPSes have been able to balance short-term interests and long-term planning
- Money, in other words the extent to which the FSPSes actually financed actions or merely communicated a range of general intentions
- Change, in other words the extent to which the FSPSes are considered appropriate to navigate the fast-paced shifts in international politics

The report concludes that the strategic format of the FSPS needs improvement concerning aspects that relate to its form, drafting process and substance. The final section briefly describes which concrete steps need to be taken, if the FSPS is to be continued.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is divided into five sections. The next section presents the Danish approach to foreign and security policy and gives the background to the introduction of the FSPSes before turning to the actual FSPS 1 and 2, and the process of formulating them. The third section takes a step back to reflect on the principle ways in which the FSPS format may benefit Denmark as a small state conducting an activist foreign policy in a volatile strategic environment. The fourth section draws on insights from interviews conducted with ministry officials to discuss what the actual functions of FSPS 1 and 2 have been. Finding a gap between the principle benefits and the practical function, the final section reflects on how the FSPS format may be improved in terms of its strategic form, the drafting process and criteria for its substance to deliver more fully on its potential.

DENMARK'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

This section provides the context for the assessment of the FSPSes by presenting the Danish approach to foreign and security policy and mapping what guided Denmark's recent overseas activities up until their introduction. It then gives some background to the becoming of the FSPS and presents the two versions that have been published so far.

THE DANISH APPROACH

In recent history, Danish foreign engagement across policy areas of diplomacy, development and defence has rested on the four pillars of NATO, the UN, the EU and Nordic cooperation in what has been termed 'active internationalism' (Pedersen 2012). Yet, especially since 2001 with the new liberal government under Anders Fogh Rasmussen, a shift has taken place towards a more militarily-directed Danish engagement abroad and a primary focus on two multilateral pillars, namely NATO and the EU (Andersen 2018: 218), in what has been described as 'international activism' (Pedersen 2012). While not a politically uncontested shift (e.g. Lidegaard 2018), subsequent Social Democratic-led governments have also, in practice, continued a similar line of activism (Andersen 2018: 219–20).

Thus, while differences certainly exist across the spectrum of political parties, Danish foreign and security policy is generally considered an area with a relatively high level of consensus. This includes broad political agreements in Parliament, and also relatively high consistency in foreign policies between changing governments compared to, for instance, questions of social or economic policy. As one interviewed ministry official explained regarding the relative consistency, it is 'nothing compared

to going from Obama to Trump'.¹ The Danish political consensus is also an aspiration, reflected in the way parliamentary committees and councils dealing with Danish foreign and security policy are used (*Udenrigsudvalget*, *Forsvarsudvalget*, *Udenrigspolitisk Nævn*). All parties in Parliament are represented and their central purpose is to discuss government policies and bills, as well as to provide parliamentary oversight and counsel to the government.²


While differences certainly exist across the spectrum of political parties, Danish foreign and security policy is generally considered an area with a relatively high level of consensus.

In 2013 the Danish government published a policy spelling out the Danish comprehensive approach to its stabilisation efforts, in particular including the remits of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence.³ It acknowledged the complexity of modern conflicts and need to approach them through a range of policy instruments. In effect, the policy summarised an already existing inter-ministerial practice in Danish foreign policy – on the one hand to its crisis management, foremost exemplified by the Peace and Stabilisation Fund, which addresses conflict-affected areas of particular Danish interest.⁴ On the other hand, also outside of stabilisation efforts does shifting Danish governments work inter-ministerially. This includes issues such as maritime security,⁵ trade⁶ and the Arctic,⁷ just as it also applies the comprehensive approach to other types of threats, such as cybersecurity.⁸

But where do we 'find' the strategic direction of Danish foreign and security policy as such? The overall policy line on Denmark's overseas activities has in recent decades been embedded in coalition governments' negotiated intention statements (*regeringsgrundlag*), which project the government's main priorities.⁹ While this has been practice since the early 1990s, the single-party Social Democratic government, which came into office in June 2019, opted for a different approach. It wrote a so-called 'paper of understanding' (*forståelsespapir*) together with supporting parties. Searching for pointers on Danish overseas engagement, the global challenge of climate change figured prominently in the paper, albeit anchored in a Danish context. Danish support to international law and multilateral cooperation were also stated as priorities.¹⁰ But foreign and security policy was otherwise absent from the paper.

Apart from intention statements and papers of understanding, another place to look for Denmark's strategic engagement with foreign and security issues is in the yearly

reports to Parliament, which recent Ministers of Foreign Affairs have presented every January on the government's foreign and security activities of the past year. However, these presentations are essentially backward-looking and therefore have no direct bearing on the shape of Danish foreign and security policy. But they do allow political scrutiny, as well as informed discussions about possible new directions. In fact, one major contribution of the parliamentary debate has been to initiate discussion of the very idea of a foreign and security strategy, to which we shall return below.



But where do we 'find' the strategic direction of Danish foreign and security policy as such?

Short of an overall strategic guide to Danish foreign and security policy, the two principal ministries dealing with Danish foreign and security policy have their own documents. They work in different ways (see box 1. and 2.).

Box 1. Guidance within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on development, diplomacy and trade is guided by a combination of strategies and policy papers, which are unevenly distributed. Of the three areas, development is the most thoroughly 'documented' or 'strategised' policy area, through regional and thematic papers:

On development, Danida's work has followed government-issued strategies, which in 2017 were transformed into a politically-established agreement, thus binding changing ministers and governments alike and allowing the ministry a greater sense of coherence in its work – if not freeing it from political interference, as the strategy is not accompanied by a financial framework. The current development strategy from 2017 addresses peace and security; migration; sustainable growth; and democracy and human rights.¹¹ The strategy is complemented by the government's yearly priority paper established in the finance bills.¹² In parallel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs develops four to five-year policy papers setting out the Danish activities regarding each country in which it is active.¹³

On diplomacy, the ministry practices classic foreign policy in numerous areas, where strategic direction for the work of ministry officials is as diverse as the policy issues are. Some areas have dedicated strategies, such as the Arctic.¹⁴ Other parts of its portfolio are guided by Denmark's participation in international fora, such as taking on rotating chairmanships as members of the EU, engagement in the UN, or are driven by Denmark's role in established interstate cooperation with for instance the Baltic countries and in the Arctic Council.¹⁵

On trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formulated a range of strategies, for instance the Strategy for Economic Cooperation and sector-specific export strategies.¹⁶ The Danish Trade Council facilitates Danish companies wishing to export or expand abroad (as well as foreign companies entering the Danish market). The Foreign Ministry's trade policy includes bilateral agreements, WTO negotiations, but generally declares to follow EU policy on trade.¹⁷ Commercial interests are also embedded in some foreign policy strategies as an element of, for instance, Denmark's already-mentioned strategic engagement in the Arctic, and with development cooperation countries such as Kenya.¹⁸

Box 2. Guidance within the Ministry of Defence

Contrary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence does not have dedicated (if unevenly distributed) strategies to guide its activities, except from stabilisation programmes in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as previously explained. While the Danish Constitution and Defence Law comprise the main regulatory framework, Parliament decides on the mandates of the military services. But the policy line of the Ministry of Defence is defined in five to six year Defence Agreements. These are supplemented by implementation plans.¹⁹ Defence Agreements and implementation plans are, not least, influenced by NATO planning.

It is political tradition that Defence Agreements are settled through negotiation by a broad range of political parties in Parliament (*forsvarsforligskredsen*). Acting as guidance, the Defence Agreement paints the current security situation and states the overall objectives of Danish defence policy by declaring its ambitions for years to come. The 2018–2023 Defence Agreement

lists as its main priorities to create a 'substantial lift' to Denmark's contribution to NATO; to Danish defence capacities in international operations and stabilisation; to the Danish defence force's contribution to national defence; to the protection of Denmark against cyberattacks; and to civil protection.²⁰ Six out of eight political parties signed the agreement.

Importantly, the Defence Agreement fixes the distribution of resources that are allocated within the framework of the Finance Law. The 2018–2023 agreement was followed up by an additional financial pledge (*tillægssaftale*) in January 2019.²¹ In this way the Defence Agreement is the central guiding document for Danish defence in everything from operations and administration to education and procurement.


Yet the Defence Agreement may still more accurately be described as a long-term management tool than as an actual strategy. Its development is a broad negotiation, first between bodies under the Ministry of Defence, and later among political parties in Parliament.

THE ADVENT OF THE FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY STRATEGY

Despite Danish activism and variously located foreign and security policy intentions, Denmark, as we have seen, had no common strategy to set the course of its overseas engagement until 2017. It was during one of the mentioned January parliamentary debates that member of parliament Søren Pind from the Liberal Party broached the idea of a foreign and security strategy.²² This was in 2014, and the debate persisted over the following years. The idea was supported by the parties from the political right, while the political left voiced reservations about the idea. For instance, in 2015 the Social Democrat John Dyrby Paulsen referred to international developments concerning Russian aggression, Islamic State and the war in Syria to argue that long-term strategising was too difficult at this point in history, and the Socialist Party's Holger K. Nielsen suggested instead that a foreign policy committee be formed to address issues on a rolling basis.²³

During this time, the idea of a strategy was simultaneously maturing in a major review of Danish foreign policy. Analysing overseas interests in the light of global trends, a team around Ambassador Peter Taksøe published a comprehensive set of

recommendations in 2016. It included the establishment of a Danish foreign policy forum to ensure better coordination, assemble all relevant ministers and contribute to the government's sound strategic decision-making.²⁴ Recommendations furthermore included the establishment of a strategy dedicated to Denmark's policy priorities regarding foreign, security, defence, trade and development matters.²⁵ This idea was also supported by researchers,²⁶ and was debated again the following year at the annual foreign and security presentation in Parliament.²⁷



Analysing overseas interests in the light of global trends, a team around Ambassador Peter Taksøe published a comprehensive set of recommendations in 2016.

Ambassador Taksøe and his team not only recommended the establishment of an overarching Danish foreign and security strategy, they also suggested the inclusion of the following five priority areas:²⁸

- Peaceful development in Denmark's immediate neighbourhood, the Arctic and Baltic Sea
- Work closely with the EU and NATO to promote European security
- Prevent irregular migration from the Middle East, North Africa and Afghanistan
- Strengthen Danish growth through economic diplomacy
- Promote global solutions to climate change

The five priority areas were based on an interest-driven analysis and rested on a whole-of-government principle. As the the following shows, they were largely adopted, when the government published its first FSPS.

DANISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY STRATEGY 1

The Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2017-2018 published in June 2017 covered the below five priority areas with a chapter dedicated to each:²⁹

Box 3. Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 1 (2017-2018)

1. Migration, instability and terrorism
2. Security in the neighbourhood region
3. Brexit and the future of the EU
4. Globalisation – economic and technological diplomacy
5. The Arctic

Box 3. shows that the five priority areas largely followed the 2015 Taksøe recommendations in substance. They were introduced by a chapter cementing the importance to Denmark of securing the 'Western model of society – democracy, an open, liberal market-based economy, and binding, rules-based international cooperation'.³⁰ In that sense, FSPS 1 carved out a foreign policy vision that remained on a path closely aligned with Danish interests. It followed general developments in international affairs with direct implications for Denmark rather than, for instance, launching a new agenda or establishing political messaging.

As with the previously held annual presentations in Parliament, the launch of the 2017-2018 strategy gave rise to discussions on a range of topics across political parties in the autumn of 2017. The debate lasted for almost three hours and covered principle questions about the effect of sanctions and concrete concerns over the nature of the mandate that Parliament had given Danish defence forces in Libya, to the role of the European Council and whether Denmark should support military operations as well as stabilisation efforts, and how Denmark should deal with migration.³¹

DANISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY STRATEGY 2

The second Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2019-2020 published in November 2018 premised Danish overseas engagement upon six priorities, each covered in separate chapters:³²

Box 4. The Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2 (2019-2020)

1. Rules-based international order
2. Security in Denmark's neighbourhood, terrorism and cyber security
3. Europe – a strong, streamlined and effective EU
4. Refugees, migration and development
5. Economic diplomacy, strategic partnerships and the new digital world order
6. The Arctic

The first chapter on a rules-based international order was a new addition. Whilst Trump, Brexit and the annexation of Crimea had already rocked the Western world by the time FSPS 1 was published, aberrations to a rules-based international order, multilateralism and the primacy of liberal internationalism on the global stage were only becoming the new normal rather than deviations by the time FSPS 2 was published.


In this light, a rules-based international order now received separate attention by way of a dedicated chapter, i.e. it became a priority in itself. It was even made the first chapter of FSPS 2, where it had been addressed in the introduction of the first strategy as a general, underlying premise guiding Danish engagement in general without making it an explicit goal. As with FSPS 1, FSPS 2 also remained focused on issues with direct implications for Danish interest. FSPS 2 thus arguably cemented that the format was no grand strategy vision but was folded into the general stream of world events as a relatively reactive rather than a proactive platform for Danish foreign and security policy.

The parliamentary debate around the launch of the second strategy in autumn 2018 lasted two and a half hours. It brought discussions about central policy issues, such

as the role of NATO and the EU as international security providers and Danish weapons sale.³³ The practice of an annual foreign and security policy debate thus seemed to be sustained with, rather than replaced by, the FSPS.

THE DRAFTING PROCESS

The drafting process illustrates the Danish approach to foreign and security policy well and, as will become evident below, plays an important role in the assessment of what value the FSPSes have had. According to ministry official interviewees, the development and writing process was largely similar in both iterations of the FSPS. The strategies were preceded by multiple closed stakeholder workshops including researchers, experts and civil society representatives. The extent to which these seminars helped shape FSPS 1 and 2 was not clear from interviews. What was very clear from all interviews was that each chapter went through multiple iterations through the institutional levels within each ministry and across various ministries, just as is practice with any inter-ministerial document.



Ministries involved included not only Defence and Foreign Affairs, but also Climate and Energy, Health, Trade, Justice, Education and Science.

Drafting began at the clerical level by key desk officers with input from office managers. Offices in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were the leading party but security-related passages were sent to the Ministry of Defence. This initial product was discussed in the government coordination committee (*K-udvalg*) to ensure early alignment across the ruling parties. In the further writing process, relevant passages were transmitted between the ministries and sent back to the desk officers with comments. One interviewee described the process as like making a tower cake (*kransekage*), a cone-shaped Scandinavian confection that is constructed from below starting with a broad circular base with gradually smaller rings layered on top of the base until it reaches a pointed peak.³⁴ Ministries involved included not only Defence and Foreign Affairs, but also Climate and Energy, Health, Trade, Justice, Education and Science. Coordination was undertaken by a secretariat located in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More advanced drafts were read and commented on by the prime minister's office and the Ministry of Finance.

The draft was discussed in the government coordination committee all of three times, and thus was regularly circulating among the prime minister and his chief of staff, as well as the ministers of finance, foreign affairs and justice. Through this exercise, ministers were able to adjust the FSPS language both to the domestic political situation, as well as to their institution's core interests. Some interviewees remarked that the coordination committee discussions were not about long-term analysis of the strategic environment and international politics, which the desk officers provided; it was rather about ensuring shorter-term that the strategic narrative reflected their specific interests.³⁵

The FSPS text was, in other words, a negotiated compromise, not only between ministers of foreign affairs and defence, who represented different government coalition parties, but also with the central administration who were able to reflect their wishes. It was clear from interviews that the respective ministries pored over each sentence, much like any inter-ministerial document. As such, the FSPS was politically sanctioned at the highest level following multiple iterations, which echoes the traditional consensus-driven Danish approach to its foreign policy but means perhaps that it was more focused on internal alignment than working external input into the strategies.

THE VALUE OF COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGISING


This section links the traits of Denmark's recent foreign and security strategising presented in the previous section to a general reflection on the broader question of the value that the FSPS format may hold: in which ways can a small state such as Denmark in principle benefit from the recently-introduced exercise of regularly developing this type of strategy document?

INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY: COMMUNICATING DENMARK'S POSITION AND PRIORITIES TO PARTNERS

It is practice among Western states, both small and large, to seek partners in their diplomatic, development and defence activities abroad. As one scholar recently commented: 'western democracies, including the United States, have proved remarkably reluctant to go to war without allies' (Strachan 2019: 175). Yet in a turbulent geopolitical time, preferred partnerships and conventional allies are not as obvious as they once were.

In a state conducting an activist foreign policy for the second decade running, a strategy to guide these activities seems a necessary exercise. A strategy like the FSPS can play an important role for Denmark in catering to partners and allies. As a politically-sanctioned document, the FSPS holds communicative value by offering a 'one-stop shop' presentation of the government's priorities internationally as a framework behind the patchwork of strategies uploaded on a range of ministry websites. Whether the language conveys actual visions or what drafters want to signal is another question. But in its English version, foreign powers can look for a

supporting partner, while other small states can look for inspiration to match and emulate Danish priorities.



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In fact, Denmark is promoted to ‘superpower’ status in the context of the Arctic by way of its colonial past, which not only gives Denmark control over Greenland’s foreign and security policy but also situates Denmark – and its kingdom – as an Arctic state. This is not only a privileged position. In the face of current geopolitical tensions, is also proving to be an increasing responsibility to drive developments in a sustainable and peaceful direction in accordance with the principle of exceptionalism, whereby the Arctic region remains a zone of peace and cooperation. While an updated strategy addressing Arctic issues comprehensively is important, thinking thematic and regional strategies into a larger framework of Danish foreign and security policy visions is necessary for a consistent policy approach and for communicating a clear position to international partners and in the domestic political arena. It speaks simultaneously to NATO allies, like-minded donors, NORDEFSCO and the Arctic states, actual or ‘near’. Clear strategic priorities show commitment and willingness to potential allies and set boundaries for adversaries – if addressed explicitly.

AGENDA-SETTING: PROVIDING DIRECTION TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER

Denmark’s preferred approach to international cooperation is through a multilateral framework. This is true for everything from diplomacy and development to defence, yet the past decades have shown a narrowing down of which frameworks are prioritised. As a small state with an open economy, stability and predictability of the world order is by far the most desirable strategic environment. The importance of this is illustrated in the way a rules-based international order went from a statement in the introduction of FSPS 1 to forming a separate priority area in FSPS 2.

Yet international organisations and institutional frameworks for cooperation are ailing. The transatlantic partnership is challenged in NATO, and Denmark still stands outside cooperation under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) due to its defence opt-out. Emerging powers are making claims to political and economic influence, and geopolitical dynamics are testing the ways in which policymakers understand and respond to international security.

If Denmark wishes to insist on and promote a rules-based international order to the extent, and in the shape, that is possible today, the formulation of an overarching, government-sanctioned strategy that reinforces, underlines and cultivates rules-based cooperation, is an important step. There is strength in numbers, be it in human or financial resources. Even as a small state with a limited impact in terms of the depth and reach of its foreign policy instruments, an FSPS can help play this role – not just in one chapter but by permeating all strategic thinking. It provides a first step in a prioritised response to world events that are disadvantageous to Danish interests, whether it be ensuring Danish security through NATO or scaling up engagement through the UN etc.



A strategy like the FSPS is potentially a way for Denmark to avoid marginalisation as a matter of urgency in an international context where great power politics is setting the agenda.


But developing a coherent strategy like the FSPS not only allows a principled and prioritised response to world events, such as rescuing an ailing international order. A strategy like the FSPS is potentially a way for Denmark to avoid marginalisation as a matter of urgency in an international context where great power politics is setting the agenda. It is a way of resisting that only certain world events become the centre of attention in foreign relations and dominate international headlines. International leadership is not only premised on being big, rich or powerful. While no grand strategy, an FSPS can allow Denmark to be agenda-setting by defining new international priorities according to Danish interests and in areas where Denmark has a competitive advantage. Using the current turbulence and reshuffling of conventional partners, and taking advantage of its small state privilege, Denmark can be more systematic in insisting on another set of priorities, shifting gear from reaction to action. Whether this is taking leadership in efforts to develop an international legal framework on cyberwar or making climate change a cross-cutting issue in the way that gender was 15 years ago is a political question. But the strategic

thinking that is entailed in the exercise of making an FSPS is in principle both a necessary and an efficient way for a small state to be agenda-setting and to counter disadvantageous dynamics.

INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION: BRIDGING POLICY AREAS AND SEEKING POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

The FSPS format bridged the policy areas of the two core ministries, as well as a range of additional ministries and government bodies. They have thereby been intended to provide a default roadmap at the highest political level at recurrent intervals. The inter-ministerial process reflects the approach on which Danish foreign and security policy rests.

To cultivate whole-of-government thinking more generally, the exercise of drafting an inter-ministerial FSPS is valuable to facilitate the continuous shaping of the government's priorities on a range of complex issues. A strategy like the FSPS holds reflexive value in a domestic context by regularly convening ministries and government bodies to formulate a strategic vision for its overseas activities. This is of relevance to creating alignment on the political level.



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Also, domestic political priorities in how to strike a balance between diplomacy, development and defence in Danish efforts are issues that need dedicated discussions within a government and across relevant ministries. A strategy like the FSPS can provide the backbone upon which sub-strategies and other policy documents can flesh out the more concrete intervention priorities. An FSPS can give ambassadors a strong mandate to speak with conviction on government-sanctioned policy areas, and it can provide desk officers with the clarity they need to develop policy.


Thus, an FSPS can have an important bridging function. This can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, an FSPS drafting process can facilitate dedicated negotiation and alignment on policy requirements that are brought to the table in

coalition governments or, as is currently the case, when a one-party government seeks political support from other parties. On the other hand, it can mend the gaps that emerge for government agencies, if and when new governments dedicate limited attention to foreign policy in their intention statements. Stating the obvious, it provides the general framework and the specific priorities, valuable guidance in the daily work of the ministries, something they lack at the time of writing, as we have seen above.

DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE: ENGAGING THE ELECTORATE THROUGH PUBLIC DEBATE

Foreign and security policy rarely enjoys sustained attention in the Danish public eye. Yet international events have increasing impact on local lives. Climate change, migration and trade are some of the issues with direct bearings on Danish citizens, as are threats of terror and energy security. But there are also more indirect issues that have an impact on the world and thus on Denmark and its citizens, such as how Denmark approaches international security issues and how it engages the international community.

As any government-sanctioned publication, a strategy such as the FSPS holds the possibility of being a catalyst for democratic dialogue through media attention, public debate and vocal political opposition. It can allow the non-specialist electorate the concise input they need to better assess Denmark's dispersed foreign and security policies in order to form a political opinion on how the government and parliament are managing their power in questions of Danish overseas activities. It requires deliberate and dedicated attention; the publication in itself will not be enough.



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In that sense, an FSPS can not only function as a way of making clear to the electorate how Denmark engages internationally through its foreign policy instruments. It also works to facilitate political transparency and enhance dialogue as a central principle on which the Danish democratic society rests. The need is becoming increasingly

urgent as global events take their toll on geopolitical equilibria and security dynamics across different regions of the world. To this end, the publication of regularly paced FSPP is one way of making Danish policy visible and of facilitating a continuous or recurring public debate.

FUNCTIONS OF RECENT DANISH FOREIGN AND SECURITY STRATEGIES


Having established some principle benefits that an FSPS format may hold for Denmark, this section draws on interviews with ministry officials to unpack in more detail the practical implications of actually having – and developing – the FSPS from the perspective of their everyday work. What role did the FSPS actually play? Four thematic complexes are used to reflect on key dimensions of the strategies' function in practice: coherence, time, money and change. Each is discussed separately below.

COHERENCE

The theme of coherence regards the extent to which the FSPSes served to align and harmonise differences between ministries' focus and interests. As a general observation, the drafting process of the strategies reflected the inter-ministerial policy approach of Danish engagement overseas, namely the whole-of-government approach. On the one hand, this seemed to ease the drafting process, because the ministries were already used to this method of working. On the other hand, it had a significant bearing on the extent to which the FSPSes were considered to have value.

As an inter-ministerial product, the FSPS 1 and 2 were highlighted by many interviewees as thorough and useful for those working with Danish foreign and security policy. Thorough because the drafting process had involved a wealth of desk officers, managers, offices, ministries and ministers – the 'tower cake'. Useful because the thoroughness of the drafting process – and broad ministerial involvement through, not least, the government coordination committee – meant that the FSPSes were politically sanctioned documents, which therefore offered a clear official line on the government's foreign and security policy.

Interviewees explained that the thoroughness helped their everyday work, from writing speeches to formulating policy.³⁶ With a politically sanctioned document, inter-ministerial disagreements could, to some extent, find a resolution by looking to the government's overall priorities as stated in the FSPSes. The strategies were thus described as a reference work by one interviewee,³⁷ while another explained that for the first time in recent history the ministries were clear on what the most important priorities are for Denmark.³⁸ Perhaps for this reason, one considered the actual drafting process around FSPS 1 the most useful insofar as it was the first time the ministries conducted the exercise. However, FSPS 2 was considered a more useful strategy, thanks to the inevitable learning process and improvements to which the process around FSPS 1 had given rise.³⁹



Some interviewees suggested that the drafting process was perhaps excessive for a two-year strategy, when considering the amount of human resources put into it and the number of ministries and ministers drawn into the process.


In that sense, it would seem that having a foreign and security strategy is valuable due to the internal discussions it entails in and across ministries. From the perspective of officials in the Ministry of Defence, the FSPSes were a useful supplement to the Defence Agreement based on the logic that war is the ultimate policy instrument and being supported by a politically sanctioned document gave certainty to their actions. From the perspective of officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, their portfolio is so broad that strategic thinking about the most important priorities is useful not only to their own work but also to guide their collaboration with other ministries.

That said, the thoroughness associated with the drafting was also considered to have certain drawbacks. Some interviewees suggested that the drafting process was perhaps excessive for a two-year strategy, when considering the amount of human resources put into it and the number of ministries and ministers drawn into the process. As one interviewee pointed out, drafting required immense internal effort, focusing on each word and comma, and also providing input, much of which was not even used in the end.⁴⁰ Added to that, the FSPS 2 was developed by a liberal government but covered a Social Democratic rule for the second half of its lifetime, in effect rendering it null and void – and a further waste of resources.

However, others referred to the fact that the drafting process resembled much other work on inter-ministerial documents.⁴¹ The process was therefore not considered cumbersome to all those involved in drafting, of course recognising that the nature of an overarching strategy as compared, for instance, to a narrower and more concrete one such as the Danish Afghanistan Strategy, necessarily involved a greater number of actors and government bodies.

A related point on the overall topic of coherence is the fact that the FSPSes provided a necessary backing across the involved ministry officials' work, either as a supplement to government intention statements (*regeringsgrundlag*) or – as is the case at time of writing – instead of an intention statement. Recalling that the one-party government formed by the Social Democrats in June 2019 replaced the traditional intention statement with a paper of understanding (*forståelsespapir*) that was virtually silent on foreign policy, interviewees explained that FSPS 2 provided a reference document for the policy work of ministry officials in the extended transition period, even if it had been written by the previous government.⁴²

Yet here the next challenge arises. Because the FSPS is a government document, a change of government necessarily demands a reformulation of foreign and security strategy. Political emphasis changes, and the need for guidance on the government's foreign and security policy is arguably ever greater, considering the change and unpredictability characterising the current strategic environment in international security. When asked about this aspect, most interviewees expressed concern that their work was taking place in a bit of a vacuum in this regard. They speculated about how long policy work could continue to rely on already existing tracks and plans within the ministries formulated by the former government. From that perspective, the FSPS 2 was useful yet did not reflect the current government's vision and thus became a point of contestation.



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In sum, the actual drafting process of the FSPS facilitated an important inter- and intra-ministerial dialogue in the already existing whole-of-government tradition. Firstly, the dialogue provided an opportunity to discuss and settle a common stance on key issues of Danish interest, which is crucial not least on the political level. Secondly, it resulted in a product with foreign and security policy priorities that was

a useful policy instrument for the everyday work of ministry officials. The drafting exercise was generally lauded for compelling the whole system to think strategically about Denmark in the world on the highest level of national policy. On the other hand, the process was also highlighted as rather cumbersome by some interviewees, sparking questions about the overall added value or, as discussed below, the interval at which strategies are developed.

TIME


The theme of time regards the extent to which the FSPSes were able to balance short-term interests and long-term planning. On the one hand, the life of the strategies was only two years. This is a very brief period of time to unfold matters of both foreign and security policy. On the other hand, the strategic environment may not allow for a much greater longevity to be pertinent.

While some of the above-mentioned interviewees considered the FSPS drafting process cumbersome in comparison to the lifespan of the strategies, there was still a sense among interviewees that the lifespan itself was appropriate given the current strategic environment characterising international security. As one interviewee put it 'tweets can change the world', referring of course to US President Trump's announcement of many of his administration's actions via social media, often even before his advisors have been consulted.⁴³ Thus, strategies must strive to be agile in order to have an impact, in other words to adapt to high levels of uncertainty.

However, the relatively short duration of the FSPS lifespan does have further limitations, apart from the resource-heavy drafting process. When asked, interviewees generally agreed that the content of recent Danish policy fundamentally remains the same over time, in line with the Danish tradition in recent political history of relative consensus in foreign and security policy across the political spectrum. The wording, emphasis and approaches may change with different ministers but, put squarely, the key priorities revolve around NATO for security, Europe for cooperation, development for world peace, the Arctic by virtue of Denmark being an Arctic state – with multilateralism as the crank.

In this light, drafting a new strategy every second year arguably neither leaves enough time for content nor for the strategic environment to change significantly enough to require a strategic reformulation. One interviewee held that if one were to put five two-year FSPSes next to one another, they would look much the same as one ten-year FSPS.⁴⁴ However, the interviewee also added that a ten-year strategy would be too long to account for changes in the strategic environment to be a

relevant policy tool. Another interviewee similarly pointed to the Danish ten-year Arctic strategy as outdated and used it as an example of how shorter strategies were preferable, if they were to have a real impact on the direction of Danish foreign and security policy in the current strategic environment.⁴⁵



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Thus, the issue of time is associated with some ambiguity. On the one hand a two-year lifespan of the FSPS may be a tactically useful instrument. It possesses greater agility and thus reflects better the strategic environment (but it was also considered a resource-heavy investment from an organisational and administrative standpoint). On the other hand, a ten-year lifespan would allow greater – if not exactly ‘grand’ – strategic thinking and long-term planning (but it is also quickly off-target in a changing world and thus less useful as a policy tool).

MONEY

The theme of money regards the financial structures of the FSPSes and the question of whether the strategies actually financed (already planned) actions or merely communicated general intentions. As demonstrated in the previous section, there is a high degree of consistency between the substance of the priority areas of the FSPSes. But one key feature sets FSPS 1 and 2 apart: the priority areas in the FSPS 1 were accompanied by earmarked funding. This for instance allowed the upgrading of diplomatic presence in key embassies (Beijing, Moscow, Washington DC and, in Europe, Berlin, London and Paris) and the creation of a new diplomatic position for so-called ‘tech ambassadors’.


In comparison, FSPS 2 was cost neutral. The preface to FSPS 2 explained: ‘The Government’s Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2019-2020 does not propose a change of course, but instead comprises a series of concrete initiatives and focus areas that align with the guiding principles and aims of the Government’s Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2017-2018’.⁴⁶ In other words, FSPS 2 intended to be an extension of FSPS 1. But according to some interviewees, the fact that FSPS 2 was cost neutral limited the creativity of initiatives and eliminated any concrete action points beyond what had already been planned.⁴⁷

Thus, the lack of money in FSPS 2 was said, in some interviews, to be a pity – if not consistently a problem. By requiring so-called ‘expense neutral action bullets’, FSPS 2 left little room to think creatively about new solutions to the challenges that the strategy had set out to address.⁴⁸ In that sense, priorities in FSPS 2 may be received less as actions and more as intentions. One interviewee suggested that this circumstance risked giving an impression that FSPS 2 sat on empty words and was somewhat abstract. However, the interviewee further remarked that the strategy should not be ‘a Christmas tree’.⁴⁹ As such, FSPS 2 would in fact seem more appropriate than FSPS 1, in that it was more ‘strategic’ and less programmatic, compared to the first strategy.

However, FSPS 2 was not without financial implications. For instance, the chapter on security, which emphasises NATO as the cornerstone of Danish security, specifically mentions the importance of the transatlantic relationship.⁵⁰ The publication of the strategy in November 2018 followed closely on the heels of the dramatic 2018 NATO summit, at which President Trump in more direct ways than his predecessors had, demanded the proverbial two per cent contribution from NATO allies. Certain formulations in the chapter appear to seek to reassure the US by stressing Denmark’s ‘substantial lift’ of a 20 per cent increase in spending in the just-published Defence Agreement and indirectly suggest that Denmark may need to spend more on defence: ‘like-minded countries, whose spending has been similar to Danish levels, will increase their defence spending. Therefore, we should expect that pressure to increase our defence spending will continue’.⁵¹ Indeed, an additional pledge to the Danish Defence Agreement came, as already mentioned, in January 2019. In a sense, FSPS 2 laid the grounds for an extra contribution.

And, in contrast, while FSPS 1 ‘came with money’, an interviewee underlined that most of the action points were already planned activities with already earmarked funding.⁵² On the surface, it would seem that the drafting of the strategy gave rise to concrete prioritisations, which were taken seriously politically by putting money towards the initiatives described in the strategy. Generally, however, interviewees remarked that the FSPSes did not fundamentally change the flow of work and planned activities, because they did not bring new money. Added to this, another scenario can be envisioned for the portfolios of certain ministry officials and offices, namely that policy areas outside those prioritised in the FSPS were downgraded – for instance classic diplomacy, which is the core of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but does not feature prominently in the FSPSes.

From the perspective of finance, interviewees downplayed, or moderated, the importance and the role of strategies within and across the ministries' work. As already discussed, there had also been a time before the FSPS when the ministries' work was guided by other policy instruments. Compared to the two-year inter-ministerial FSPS, the Defence Agreement and the Development Strategy in particular rule, if not overrule, initiatives in the FSPS insofar as they come with the actual financial means to be realised within their life term.



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The issue of money is tied to how the role of a strategy is defined. On the one hand, if a main function of a strategy is to express the overall ways, ends and means of a state's priorities, a strategy is only a strategy if the means are made explicit. Arguably, the strength and weight of a strategy as a guiding policy instrument would be to lay out the state's priorities and the financial framework, as for instance the Defence Agreement does. On the other hand, the opposite could also be argued; namely that earmarked funding in a strategy is not necessary as it is a political document, rather than a programme document – it is not a 'Christmas tree'. The intention of both FSPSes, but in particular FSPS 2, was to set out the priorities and approach of Danish overseas activities, not to focus on funding the government's concrete initiatives. But seeing that even the first strategy largely did not bring new money, the actual difference between the first and the second strategy seems negligible on the issue of money in actual fact.

The issue of money is interlaced with the issue of time in a manner that points to the role money could play in a future strategy. A longer, 'grand strategy' type document would make sense, if there was money behind it, because long-term planning necessitates careful commitment of the political, institutional and financial dimensions, if visions are to be sustained and carried out. Otherwise, a short-term strategy without financial commitments would make more sense, assuming the aim were to point to Denmark's more or less immediate, current and existing, key thematic areas of overseas activity. While not a black and white issue, if the government launches an overarching strategy for its foreign and security policy stating its priorities over a coming number of years, its importance and impact would, all things equal, be greater if specific resources were allocated to implementing it.

CHANGE

The issue of change regards the ability of the FSPS to navigate the fast-paced shifts characterising current international politics. Interviewees tended to agree on two overall principles regarding Denmark and its strategic environment. Firstly, they painted a common picture of Denmark as a small state with an open economy acting with ambitions but also modesty in response to world events. In other words, Denmark was seen as needing partnerships, having a supportive role, and being somewhat reactive rather than proactive. This should not be understood as lack of ambition but rather a sense of the humility of being a small state with limited impact, notwithstanding Denmark's activist foreign policy.

Secondly, the strategic environment was described by interviewees as a geopolitical landscape that was changing rapidly. World events and tweets emanating from Washington DC were named as main drivers of Danish foreign and security policy. The times were described and experienced as being turbulent. In this context, the role of the recent FSPSes was acknowledged as a tiller in stormy seas. In fact, one interviewee explained that Ireland, similarly a small state with an open economy, had looked to the Danish strategy for inspiration.⁵³



One interviewee explained that FSPS 1 provided a new direction upon which the ministry could rely as a bridge until the new Defence Agreement was decided.

In that sense, the FSPS seemed to come at an opportune time for officials in both ministries. For the Ministry of Defence, the existing Defence Agreement was nearing its final years and had been written before the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, an event that seemed to usher in a new geopolitical situation where existing partnerships and rules-based collaboration could no longer be taken for granted. The Defence Agreement was clearly out of sync with the current security developments. NATO was building up its capabilities in response to the new security situation, while the existing Defence Agreement dictated major expense cuts, about which allies must have wondered. One interviewee explained that FSPS 1 provided a new direction upon which the ministry could rely as a bridge until the new Defence Agreement was decided.⁵⁴

That said the FSPS still lacked what the Defence Agreement had: a long-term perspective and an actual resource foundation for action. Again, the more programmatic Defence Agreement ruled over the political strategy. Despite the strategy being more nimble and responding in a more real-time manner to the changing conditions and unpredictability of events unfolding in international politics, defence procurement and planning need stability and longevity that the strategy could not provide alone. Nor should it arguably. But it puts the practical value of the FSPS into perspective.

Discussions were similar among officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Being the home of diplomats, the issue was relayed in interviews as a question of how wording should be used about certain policy areas at a time when geopolitical changes made many policy issues contentious. One interviewee explained that when drafting a Danish position, they would generally look to the language communicated by NATO and the EU.⁵⁵ In other words, Denmark would use formulations in line with these organisations to acknowledge and promote a common line.



The FSPSes avoided stark messaging on politically delicate issues.

But reading the FSPSes, they were remarkably silent on issues of a more sensitive nature with implications for Danish foreign policy. They adopted the recommendations of Ambassador Taksøe and carved out a foreign policy vision that was narrowly aligned with Danish interests. The FSPSes avoided stark messaging on politically delicate issues. The questions of how to take a stance on China and of how to react to the doings of President Trump were two issues that arguably lacked clarity for officials to act upon and yet were of a consistent element in international politics to grant address in the FSPS.

For instance, economic diplomacy and strategic partnerships with China were promised,⁵⁶ but the balancing of security and economic interests vis-à-vis China was absent, found only briefly and softly mentioned, e.g. in the introduction to FSPS 2: 'China is stepping forward on the global scene with ever greater self-confidence, economic strength and demands for more influence'.⁵⁷ In principle, the FSPS held the potential for reaching political consensus and thus providing officials with the guidance they needed. But in interviews, some called for a more 'realistic' tone, while others advocated a softer approach.

Likewise, the FSPSes paid little attention to how to respond in relation to allies acting unpredictably or out of line with Danish interests and principles. While acknowledging that the US is a somewhat reluctant partner in international cooperation, FSPS 2 for instance generally emphasised the US as Denmark's 'most important security policy ally', stating that 'it is essential to maintain the American engagement' and that Denmark must 'reach out to the US'.⁵⁸ But US conduct vis-à-vis Iran was one example of a case where it was difficult for Denmark to choose.

The main take-away from the issue of change in the strategic environment connects with the issues of coherence and time. To the extent that the FSPS can provide a tool for officials navigating international politics in the current circumstances, its relevance lay, on the one hand, in its highly negotiated nature and thorough inter-ministerial drafting at so many levels of the state apparatus. On the other hand, the relatively short-lived term of the FSPS provided a realistic take on world events to be renegotiated at regular intervals, which makes it challenging to land on appropriate wording so long as the situations in question are constantly evolving. But as long as there is no political will or consensus to signal with clarity on contentious issues, the FSPS loses an important part of its value, leaving officials to seek guidance elsewhere and through other means, thus missing a great opportunity to set a clear agenda.

CONCLUSION: HOW TO STRATEGISE FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY?

While the FSPS format can provide certain benefits to Danish foreign and security policy, the interviews and analysis of FSPS functions show that the potential value of the FSPS has not been fully realised in all regards. Through the four thematic complexes in the previous section, a number of outstanding issues emerge that need to be addressed if the FSPS format is continued. This section summarises a way ahead by providing some reflections on how to address the outstanding issues. They regard the strategic form, the drafting process and some criteria for its substance.

FORM

While the two-year interval between the FSPSes seems appropriate in the current strategic environment, their length could correspond better with election periods to avoid foreign policy vacuums and situations such as at the time of writing, where a liberal strategy covers a year of Social Democratic rule. A **process and product which supports the planned life of a government** may be preferable. It would create ownership of the priorities and areas of interest. It would provide a platform for greater strategic thinking and planning while responding to geopolitical, economic and other relevant developments in international affairs. It would also avoid a situation such as the one at the time of writing, in which the ministries work without strategic direction from the government intention statement. A new government could have 90 days to work out and present their strategic vision and political narrative, which would apply throughout their period in government or, alternatively, the current two-year interval could be preserved, so long as they are replaced in a timely manner and follow election cycles.

A related consideration is **better aligning the foreign and security strategy with the life cycle of ministry policies and programmes**. This includes Foreign Ministry programmes and strategies as well as the Defence Agreements – necessarily displaced in time but with a regularity of intervals, such that the formulation processes and execution periods feed into one another and are more predictable.

If prolonging the life of the strategy, a reconsideration of the financial aspect would be required. Indeed, the issue of money remains an open question, namely to what extent should an FSPS also determine the overall funding of Danish activities abroad? It may seem unrealistic and arguably unnecessary to change existing funding structures to connect closely to the strategy. Funding needs and project cycles differ dependent on the ministries' intervention types, cf. the breadth of activities under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the costly and time-consuming procurement and operational expenses characteristic of the Ministry of Defence. However, **allocating actual resources to back the government's strategic priorities** seems necessary. If the FSPS can provide the principled and coordinated foundation on which interventions rest, the means should follow to give it effect as a strategy in conventional – and actual – terms.

Another option could be to **consider creating (broad) political agreements on security and foreign policy**, which are separated from any one government term, as is the case with the Danish Defence Agreement and the Development Strategy. This would provide clarity and consistency over time for the ministries' work. It would ensure coherence and political alignment in the Danish tradition of consensus on foreign policy. A political agreement would heighten the attention to Danish foreign and security strategy from the opposition. An added value of this would be the potential contribution of its entering the public domain, where presently it goes largely unremarked.

PROCESS

The drafting of the FSPSes has been a resource-heavy undertaking. If the practice of developing an FSPS continues, a discussion is needed on the value of the product versus the intended use. **Prescribing a formal drafting procedure** that reflects current practice but helps facilitate it through permanent institutional support may be a way of mitigating the demanding nature of the exercise. This would also consolidate the role of the strategy.

Apart from parliamentary debates and the expert workshops held with hand-picked civil society representatives during the drafting process, the strategies have mainly made it into the public arena indirectly, through speeches. Drawing in extra-ministerial expertise and ensuring public debate are necessary. As part of FSPS drafting, **external participation could be emphasised further**. This includes public seminars, round tables and other input from the academic community, civil society and the private sector – domestic as well as international – as a way of generating long-term analysis of the strategic environment and its impact on Danish priorities. It also entails bringing Danish foreign and security policy out of the shadows of the Foreign Policy Council and into the public arena.

Given the current strategic environment, it is difficult to predict world events and maintain collaborative partners. In the drafting process, it may be useful to **think about strategy as a set of continua defining a span between opposite poles** that captures the breadth of possible developments and thus potential issues that need addressing. External participation in the process of strategic development can support such spanning exercises, helping to define the scope of scenarios and identifying the agility of Danish strategic objectives. The point is not to address all scenarios but to define a field with a range of related objectives with which to engage, depending on determining factors such as resources, changing policies and geopolitical developments.

Consideration may also be given to **setting up a foreign and security policy committee**, as already recommended by politicians, diplomats and researchers. This would structurally enhance the Danish whole-of-government approach and provide a natural political home for the regular drafting process of a foreign and security strategy.

SUBSTANCE

Generally, FSPS 1 and 2 have catered to the range of issues of Danish interest and in which Denmark was already engaged. But they left ministry officials without guidance on certain crucial matters, as already discussed. This has challenged ministry officials but also limited the impact of the political messaging and thus the global footprint of the FSPS. Through a prescribed drafting procedure, **committing heightened political attention to reaching clarity on strategic positions of a contentious nature** is needed to take active leadership rather than be a reactive small state. Such discussions currently have no natural home but could, as mentioned, be located in a foreign and security policy committee.

While a Danish FSPS would always acknowledge NATO as the cornerstone of Danish security and stress the importance of multilateralism, it should focus not only on describing small state responses to ongoing challenges in international affairs. An **FSPS should be used as a tool to set a new agenda** and formulate priorities that reflect Denmark's competitive advantage. Climate change and cyber security as well as maritime security are examples of policy areas of Danish importance and with room for strong leadership, where Denmark has a competitive edge and years of experience. In this way, a strategy can allow a small state to effectively organise and prioritise its scarce resources to obtain strategically and normatively impactful goals that reach beyond the throes of current geopolitics.

This again leads to the question of financing. Consideration should be given to **activating an (actual) economic support structure under a foreign and security strategy**. Giving a strategy financial teeth may prove more effective than a merely stating intentions, especially if the strategy is longer-lived than the present two-year life span. Alternatively, a non-financed priority document may be preferred on a shorter-term basis with the more simple role of ensuring an inter-ministerial and politically sanctioned set of positions, which allow the state apparatus to conduct Danish foreign and security policy with clarity on the political line.

NOTES

- 1 Interview 2.
- 2 However, the democratic ideal of using committees and councils to discuss policy could be strengthened. A Danish study found an express lack of coordination across parliamentary committees and councils on security policy and a lack of emphasis on conducting in-depth debate, revealing a missed potential from both a political and a democratic perspective for shaping the strategic direction of Danish foreign and security policy (Tjalve & Henriksen 2008).
- 3 http://danida-publikationer.dk/upload/microsites/um/ebooks/stabiliseringspolitik_uk_web.pdf, accessed 25.09.2019.
- 4 <https://fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/Resultatnotits-samtaenkt-stabilisering-2013.PDF>, accessed 25.09.2019.
The Peace and Stabilisation Fund is a special instrument for inter-ministerial stabilisation programmes. It combines a priori the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence in developing and managing the programmes, whereas the implementation may be carried out by a wider range of line ministries, government services and international partners. In 2019 programmes covered Syria/Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, the Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea and the Horn of Africa, <https://fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/Denmarks-Integrated-Peace-and-Stabilisation-Engagements-2018.pdf>, accessed 25.09.2019.
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- 15 <https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/nordic-baltic-cooperation/>, accessed 25.09.2019.
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- 17 <https://um.dk/en/foreign-policy/international-trade-policy/>, accessed 25.09.2019.

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