



**Size and Influence**  
**How small states influence policy making**  
**in multilateral arenas**

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DIIS Working Paper 2013:11

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**DIIS WORKING PAPER 2013:11**

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Cover Design: Carsten Schiøler

Layout: Ellen-Marie Bentsen

Printed in Denmark by Vesterkopi AS

ISBN: 978-87-7605-590-5 (print)

ISBN: 978-87-7605-591-2 (pdf)

Price: DKK 25.00 (VAT included)

DIIS publications can be downloaded

free of charge from www.diis.dk

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## **ABSTRACT**

In an increasingly interconnected world multilateral cooperation becomes more important as countries are forced to work together to address new global challenges. Traditionally, multilateral fora have provided a stage for small countries to exercise influence and act internationally. The authors argue that small countries have a set of assets at their disposal compared to larger countries that give them a comparative advantage in a multilateral world order. To make that argument, the paper highlights a number of examples based on the authors' first-hand experience from the Danish Foreign Service and the United Nations and summarises the toolbox of small countries that seek to pursue political influence in multilateral organisations. In order to capitalize on those opportunities, the authors encourage Denmark and indeed every small country with ambitions to play a role internationally to carefully consider the following questions when investing resources in the multilateral arena:

- How have developments in the international architecture changed the game – is there a new role for small and smart players?
- What are the particular assets that small countries have at their disposal compared to larger countries – i.e. what constitutes the comparative advantages of small countries'?
- How can these assets be used in a 'smart' way to compensate for smallness and lack of 'hard' means of pursuing policies, and thus allow small states to punch above their weight?

## PREFACE

This working paper is based on the experience in UN policy making that the authors have gained through several years of working on United Nations issues.

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The authors wish to thank the following persons for sharing their invaluable insight and knowledge with us as we wrote this article and for reviewing and providing comments and advice:

- Mr. Carsten Staur, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations;
- Mr. Tomas Anker Christensen, Ambassador and Senior Advisor on Partnerships to the UN Secretary-General;
- Mr. Bruce Jenks, Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University and former director of the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships of the United Nations Development Programme;
- Mr. Richard Gowan, Associate Director for Crisis Diplomacy and Peace Operations at Center for International Cooperation, NYU;
- Mr. Kristoffer Nilaus Tarp, independent consultant, researcher and formerly Program Officer at the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office

This article does not in any way reflect the view of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Danish Institute for International Studies or the opinions of any of the contributors mentioned above. Any factual inaccuracies or mistakes are solely the responsibility of the authors as well as are all positions and opinions in this paper.

## A CHANGING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE AND THE 'MULTILATERALISATION' OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

The most recent Danish development policy strategy *The Right to a Better Life from 2012* holds that “multilateral cooperation, not least in the UN and the international financial institutions, is key to promoting development, human rights, peace, security, counter-terrorism, a stable global economy and global health, and in order to manage global environmental and climate problems”. Multilateral cooperation is thus identified as a main vehicle for advancing key Danish foreign policy interests. At the same time, the strategy testifies to a belief that the multilateral organisations and the international system are able to capitalise on their comparative advantages to address global challenges. This belief has characterised Danish foreign policy since the end of World War II. In this sense, multilateralism has been a choice by default for Denmark as for many other small countries, which have tended to see the established multilateral system as their primary channel of influence on major global issues. At the current juncture, this belief is more valid and timely than ever. As the global landscape of power and economy is changing, it is clear that the conditions for multilateralism are changing with it, and this – we posit – provides small states with a much stronger position from which to influence the global agenda.

Drawing on our practical experience from multilateral cooperation, including in particular the UN, we argue that in order to capitalise on these new opportunities, Denmark and indeed every small country with ambitions to play a role internationally should carefully consider the following questions when investing resources in the multilateral arena:

- How have developments in the international architecture changed the game – is there a new role for small and smart players?
- What are the particular assets that small countries have at their disposal compared to larger countries – i.e. what constitutes the comparative advantages of small countries’?
- How can these assets be used in a ‘smart’ way to compensate for smallness and lack of ‘hard’ means of pursuing policies, and thus allow small states to punch above their weight?

The balance of power in the world has changed immensely during the last 25 years from bi-polarity during the Cold War, to uni-polarity in the nineties when US/Western dominance led Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 1992) to declare the “end of history” and into the multi-polar 21<sup>st</sup> century when the BRICS countries<sup>1</sup> entered the scene and changed the international landscape. In addition, a number of middle-income and ‘emerging’ economies such as Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey, Egypt, South Korea, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia have through their membership of the G20 gained confidence and influence. In particular for the members of the European Union, the European External Action Service (The EU’s Foreign Service) is slowly but increasingly beginning to play its intended role. This allows small EU countries such as Denmark to benefit from their membership by focussing on fewer countries and issues with which they engage on the global scene as some can be left to the EU to manage on their behalf.

<sup>1</sup> BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

This increase in the number of relevant players on the international arena does not change the fact that the world remains largely uni-polar when it comes to military might. However, military power is oftentimes not the most effective asset when navigating in the new complex environment of international power relations. Due to the increasing global interdependence and an increasing number of global challenges without military solutions, the meaning of power has changed and power itself is to a high degree diffused among stakeholders of specific issues on the global agenda. Many emerging global issues are thus negotiated in what seems to be an increasingly multi- or non-polar world.

In the non-governmental arena, global media outlets, global civil society organisations, multinational companies and global social media networks rise as important actors on the international scene. The Arab Spring, one of the most significant regional political changes in recent times, was partly brought about by a disgruntled, disenfranchised and globalized youth empowered by the possibilities that followed from this democratisation of the international scene.

Multi-polarity and 'the fragmentation of authority' in global politics have consolidated as new global issues and challenges, such as climate change, terrorism, green energy, state building in contexts of fragility and transnational crime, have gained prominence. In this context, old and new actors seek to find their feet, roles and responsibilities in handling the common challenges of our time. Because these issues are global in nature (and have significant positive or negative spill-over effects), they do objectively require solutions that are global in span. For that reason, non-involvement and non-action are becoming increasingly unappealing or untenable options to states regardless of their size, political structure and geographical context.

One consequence of this development is that, by necessity, the global agenda is becoming increasingly *multilateral*. We see a much broader group of stakeholders, which *actually matter* in global decision making. And we see how western countries have to cede some of their historical dominance in international organisations and therefore also have to become more constructive and strategic multilateral actors. At the same time, new and emerging – internal as well as external – actors have to get used to being at the table with an actual stake – and to accept and embrace the responsibility attached to influence.

The experience so far is mixed. There is a considerable mistrust and lack of understanding across the table, which has materialised across negotiations on a variety of issues, from climate change over Iran's nuclear programme to the engagement with fragile states. On the normative side, advances on issues such as sexual and reproductive health and women's rights are increasingly under pressure as some of the new actors have teamed up with countries that have traditionally fought against the progressive agenda on these issues.

Often the role of small states in the multilateral system is ignored due to a focus on hard security. Our argument is that in the current world order, small states are able to exercise influence that far exceeds what their size would normally allow them to. As no single state has the 'power' to handle alone the global challenges, power has been diffused and now also lies with those who are able to foster a climate of cooperation and convince others that addressing particular issues is a shared interest and not a zero-sum game. Traditionally, smaller countries have relied on rule-based multilateral institutions, forged alliances and advanced their agendas through negotiations and compromise. They also tend to enjoy a level of legitimacy as brokers that the main actors often do not, due to their colonial history and/or 'great

power interests'. At the present juncture, global politics has become much more about smart power than hard power. Therefore, multilateral cooperation in particular provides a niche for small states to build on their comparative advantage and use their new-gained influence actively.

This working paper examines distinct strategies for pursuing the comparative advantages of small states in a multilateral world order. It focuses on the Danish experiences with 'punching above its weight', with which the authors are most familiar, but many of the observations are applicable to other cases and countries. To do so, it presents a number of cases in which influence has been pursued through utilising the assets available to Denmark as a small country with particular qualities. In subsequent sections, observations from across these cases will be aggregated into an analysis of the specific opportunities, tools and strategies available to Denmark in the pursuit of policy influence in the multilateral arena. Limited in scope, the paper will zoom in on the United Nations System, i.e. the UN's intergovernmental bodies and Secretariat and the UN's Agencies, Funds and Programs (AFPs) and leave aside other multilateral settings that also play a key role in Danish foreign policy, such as the European Union, NATO, the OECD and the Bretton Woods institutions.

## **DANISH ASSETS FOR INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING IN A MULTILATERAL CONTEXT**

### **Structural assets and constraints**

Countries apply significantly different approaches to their international engagement in terms of the level of priority placed on foreign affairs; the explicit or implicit pursuit of self-interest; the capacity of national foreign affairs institutions; the clarity of foreign policy

objectives and the strategy and tools by which these are pursued. Without attempting to dissect the variety of global groupings along these variables, Denmark can be said to belong to a group of countries that share a number of characteristics:

- Foreign policy objectives that reflect a strong commitment to multilateralism and an international rule-based system;
- Strong public and political support for international engagement and development cooperation
- A highly internationalized, globally integrated and export-dependent economy (roughly half of the Danish GDP is generated through exports) that relies on a stable and rule-based global system;
- The absence of any inherent dominating strategic interests within the peace and security area and a limited number of clearly defined agendas of interest;
- Reliance, in many instances, on multilateral institutions as significant vehicles for policy influence and delivery of aid and humanitarian assistance.

In addition hereto the EU's common foreign policy is an important channel of influence that has considerably increased the policy reach for small EU member states. This is due to the high level of coordination among member states at both Brussels-level and in partner countries as well as the international organisations where the EU is represented and, at least at times, speaks with a unified and hence stronger voice. Together these elements shape the opportunities and constraints for countries like Denmark to influence global affairs in a multilateral world order. In particular the UN context presents a range of possibilities for putting these elements at use across the three pillars of the work of the United Nations – international peace and security, human rights



and development and humanitarian affairs. These possibilities exist within the main bodies of the United Nations<sup>2</sup> but even more so in the specialised agencies and funds and programmes. The argument is that both in spite of and thanks to the rules of procedures of the UN and the informal rules and traditions governing the UN system, the assets listed above allow small states to assert an influence significantly greater than the voting power and right to take the floor at the General Assembly and to exercise the ordinary responsibilities as member of boards across UN institutions. The following sections will present a number of cases to prove this argument.

## THE ROLE OF SMALL STATES IN POLICY-MAKING AT THE UN

### Advancing security-related agendas outside of the Security Council

The UN's political bodies – e.g. the Security Council, the General Assembly and the variety of committees, councils, working groups and forums – are each subject to their own unique memberships, processes and dynamics. The traditional peace and security agenda, originally focused on international peace and security among states, rests primarily with the Security Council. However, as the understanding of international peace and security has been increasingly broadened since the end of the Cold War, the Security Council has lost its monopoly on dealing with security-related issues.

While the Security Council, as defined in the UN Charter, remains the only body with the power to mandate military action and binding resolutions, longer-term and normative policy development also takes place in other forums. As an example, the increasing embrace of the emerging norm of *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) – the international community's obligation to intervene in the internal affairs of countries when certain criteria are met – has been driven largely by a sustained, cross-institutional campaign led by Canada and a group of aligned countries outside of the Security Council<sup>3</sup>. Recent resolutions by the Security Council, including the 2011 enforcement of a no-fly zone over Libya, have been seen as the very tangible and significant application of the largely normative R2P campaign<sup>4</sup>. Subsequent disagreement among member states on NATO's interpretation of the mandate from the Security Council and the current stalemate over Syria could be viewed as a step in a different direction.

Other examples of security related agendas being pushed outside the Security Council are the successful campaigns against anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions of the 1990s and more recently the Arms Trade Treaty. The convention against anti-personnel landmines, the Arms Trade Treaty and the convention banning cluster munitions were all adopted despite the fact that several of the veto-holding members of the Security Council are or were among the world's most prolific producers and users of such weapons. The campaign against

<sup>2</sup> The Charter established six principal organs of the United Nations: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. The United Nations family, however, is much larger, encompassing 15 agencies and several programmes and bodies. For more information on the structure and organisation of the United Nations: <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/index.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> To read more about Canada's role in the R2P <http://www.embassynews.ca/news/2009/04/22/has-canadas-r2p-about-face-come-too-late/37531?absolute=1>

<sup>4</sup> As an example see Ramesh Thakur, 'The UN Breathes life into "Responsibility to Protect"', <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/957664--un-breathes-life-into-responsibility-to-protect>

the use of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions was so successful that the negative headlines had a considerable impact on policy makers. As a testimony to the changing global landscape, the campaign was largely attributed to the efforts of civil society organisations.

An example closer to the Danish context was the establishment of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture in 2006. In the first half of the 00s, Denmark took lead in bringing up the issue of peacebuilding and the existing political and bureaucratic institutions' inadequate capacity and mandate to deal with post-conflict peacebuilding. The proposal for a Peacebuilding Commission was inspired by a workshop in Copenhagen in June 2004 organized by the Danish Government<sup>5</sup>. During Denmark's membership of the Security Council in 2005-2006 the agenda had been advanced to a degree where Denmark, as an elected and non-veto holding member, together with Tanzania was instrumental in giving birth to a brand new intergovernmental body, the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as an accompanying Peacebuilding Fund, and a UN office dedicated to advancing the peacebuilding agenda, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). Following up on the success, Denmark decided to support the new structure with Danish secondments to PBSO and relatively large contributions to the Fund. Because of its prominent agenda-setting role in the initial phase, Denmark has since enjoyed a certain legitimacy and leverage within questions relating to peacebuilding, even in the years when Denmark has not been a member of the Peacebuilding Commission<sup>6</sup> and despite the fact that Denmark now contributes less to the Peacebuilding Fund than the other Nordic countries.

While the permanent members of the Security Council habitually *do* exercise a significant degree of control over areas relating to peace

and security, areas outside of this traditionally contested field offer completely different possibilities of influencing policy making. Within 'softer', though increasingly important, areas such as energy, the environment, fragile states, organised crime etc., smaller countries have significantly better possibilities for setting an agenda and pursuing policy objectives also in the traditional intergovernmental bodies of the UN. While the historically defined composition of the Security Council combined with military capabilities do continue to matter in the security arena, other capabilities can be brought to bear in other arenas. Perceived impartiality, policy leadership, funding, strategic secondments and intellectual investments can yield significant results within the softer and more multilaterally dependent questions. Often, these are areas, where smaller states with less obvious e.g. geopolitical interests have a comparative advantage. A good example of another small state – or micro state – that was successful in advancing an agenda in such a context is Liechtenstein's successful attempt to amend the Rome Statute to include an article on the crime of aggression. Liechtenstein chaired the Assembly of States Parties and used this as a platform to promote its initiative.

### **Influencing institutional structures and policy processes outside of the hard security arena**

Most processes at the UN require a long-term perspective. More often than not, the results of efforts put into co-facilitating a meeting or participating in a policy development process cannot immediately be measured or observed. It is an incremental process where legitimacy, capacity, know-how and relationships are slowly established and developed. However, if efforts are invested in areas that are strategically selected, it will pay off to have an established foundation that can provide a head start for contributing later on as processes intensify.

<sup>5</sup> On Denmark and the UN see <http://fnnewyork.um.dk/en/denmark-and-the-un/>

<sup>6</sup> Denmark is again a member of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2013-2014.

This will enable a smaller player to maximise its influence.

One such process in which Denmark has invested resources was the co-facilitation of the negotiations of an outcome document of the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law, the most prominent high-level thematic debate in the context of the 2012 General Assembly. The other co-chair was Mexico, hence forging a strong alliance with a nation with a high level of perceived impartiality and a high standing among non-western nations as a country which has undergone a significant socio-economic transformation while still struggling with widespread criminality. The UN as an institution has recently focussed on moving the Rule of Law agenda forward and the Danish/Mexican co-chairs found a dynamic ally in the then newly appointed Deputy Secretary-General who was in the process of establishing his own distinctive profile and agenda for his initial term. For Denmark, co-chairing the high-level meeting presented a unique opportunity to identify opportunities to promote the often-contested rule of law agenda through an alliance with a wide reach and a historically defined 'neutral'. Denmark has long regarded Rule of Law as a cornerstone of transparent, democratic and well-governed states and therefore seen the agenda as a necessary tool for development.

Another example is the ongoing formulation of the post-2015 agenda. The field is crowded when it comes to providing input to new global goals to replace the Millennium Development Goals after 2015, and its formulation is still in its early stages, yet Denmark has together with a number of other countries actively sought to contribute to the process, including through the global consultations that took place over the winter and spring of 2012-2013. To that end, Denmark provided substantial funding to UNDP's MDG task force that organised the consultations and also host-

ed a thematic debate on 'inequalities', which is one of the main focus areas of the post-2015 agenda. The consultations were co-organised with UN-Women and UNICEF and Ghana and thus built on partners with whom Denmark has long-standing relationships.

Another recent example is the process leading up to the 2012 Rio+20 Summit on green economy, environmental protection and sustainable development and energy. Given e.g. the Danish leadership and chairmanship and the investments made in the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in 2009 (COP15), Denmark continued to invest heavily in influencing the policy processes, primarily through co-leading the coordination in New York and Rio among the 27 EU members as a member of the EU-team of negotiators along with the European External Action Service and the EU Commission, during the Danish EU presidency. At the same time Denmark was bilaterally active in reaching out to non-European countries, including emerging powers and countries affected by environmental challenges and climate change in order to build the necessary momentum for reaching an agreement. Denmark leveraged its historical profile as an environmental front-runner and its impartial status as an industrialized yet responsible country with significant investments in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the green agenda in some of the least developed countries to advance a collective understanding of the challenges at hand. While this, somewhat rosy, starting point quickly faced the harsh reality of a global green agenda challenged by commercial and (socio) economic issues, Denmark has continued to build on the momentum of the Rio-preparations and their outcome. Denmark has leveraged its goodwill to fund strategic secondments within key policy-making bodies, proposed the establishment of Copenhagen-based knowledge institutions and has consolidated its status as a player on

the ‘green’ arena across environmental protection, sustainable energy, climate change and green growth. It was hence an example of how a small country, when working strategically and through a whole of government approach was able to ‘punch above its weight’ – also in spite of the meagre result of the actual summit.

Traditionally discussions around policy formulation, priority-setting and operational strategies across the UN System have to a large extent followed a logic of specific groupings of countries such as donors vs. developing countries, Western vs. Southern countries or human rights proponents vs. non-interventionist countries. In recent years, these lines have become more blurred and increasingly moved from issue to issue.

One notable example is the way in which a group of self-defined “fragile and conflict-affected states”, the so-called G7+ Group, has defined a “New Deal” of principles for the international engagement with members of this very group<sup>7</sup>. These principles include the concept of binding compacts<sup>8</sup> between recipient countries and development partners also within traditionally contentious areas such as political inclusiveness and human rights. Most G7+ countries are among the group of Least Developed Countries and most also belong to the large group of developing countries called G77. Traditionally these groups have been vocally opposed to the type of conditionality en-

visioned in the concept of compacts. The G7+ Group has nonetheless parted with this traditional stance and embraced the idea that development in contexts of conflict and fragility is an inherently political process, which requires explicit political commitments from governments. Conversely the G7+ countries expect donors to commit to increasingly using country systems and aligning aid and intervention closely with national priorities.

This new openness to critical dialogue has been welcomed by donors who have traditionally tried to enforce policies through conditionality in funding and other types of political pressure. Denmark has attempted to seize the opportunities within this newly opened political space by assuming the co-chairmanship of the so-called International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding<sup>9</sup>. This is the forum where bilateral and multilateral donors engage with the G7+ countries. Further, the Danish minister for development cooperation has worked closely with the Timorese minister of finance, the dynamic co-chair on the G7+ side on advancing the New Deal agenda while continuously ensuring that the G7+ has been in the driver’s seat to avoid that the New Deal could be perceived as a donor-driven agenda. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has dedicated a senior staff member to support the minister in his co-chairmanship to prepare meetings, organise meetings and liaise with all involved counterparts. Recently, a number of prominent heads of state spoke at an event in

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.g7plus.org> and <http://www.g7plus.org/storage/New%20Deal%20English.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> A compact is here understood as a partnership between a fragile country and stakeholders including the international community. A compact may take different forms at different points in transition out of fragility. The purpose of a compact is to ensure harmonization and donor co-ordination, reduce duplication, fragmentation and programme proliferation and can provide a basis to determine the allocation of donor resources aligned to the country-led national priorities, in line with good aid effectiveness principles. More about g7+ and compacts at: <http://www.g7plus.org/new-deal-document/>

<sup>9</sup> The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding is the first forum for political dialogue to bring together conflict-affected and fragile countries, international partners and civil society to catalyse successful transitions from conflict and fragility. This forum drives political momentum for change through strong partnership, innovation and mutual accountability for results. It provides support to the global voice of fragile states – such as the G7+ group of fragile states – and promotes solutions based on country-ownership and a comprehensive approach to development and security issues. Please see <http://www.pbsdialogue.org>

the General Assembly organized by the G7+ including the President of Indonesia – a country that holds significant sway within the potentially sceptical group of G-77 countries. By actively participating in this process, Denmark is able to provide its input as the agenda on fragile states is shaped together with the concerned states and at the same time build relationships and gain a deeper understanding of the issue that can be fed into Denmark's own policy making and implementation. A positive side effect is that these assets make Denmark 'interesting' for other donor countries engaged in fragile states.

The Danish engagement in fragile states constitutes a good example of an agenda, where Denmark has been able to bring valuable bilateral experience, e.g. with regard to opportunities and challenges of civil-military cooperation, to the table based on the comprehensive civil and military engagement in Afghanistan. An engagement that was structurally supported in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen qua the establishment of the so-called Stabilization Unit, created to ensure a whole of government approach to the Danish engagement in fragile states bringing together the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ministry of Defence based on an inter-ministerial Global Framework for Integrated Stabilisation Efforts. The framework seeks to deepen integration between the areas of diplomacy, defence and development in order to enhance the impact of Danish stabilisation and reconstruction efforts. In addition this set-up has been supported by the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund<sup>10</sup>, which combines Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA financing

<sup>10</sup> <http://amg.um.dk/en/~media/amg/Documents/Policies%20and%20Strategies/Stability%20and%20Fragility/Peaceandstabilisation.ashx>

Hence, the impact of the Danish policy on fragile states in the UN has been strengthened by policy coherence between the multilateral and bilateral policies. The experience is that such an approach often has unintended synergetic effects, as all parts of the system are working towards the same aim. By sending the same messages across the bilateral and the multilateral engagement and actively seeking points of interaction between the multilateral and the bilateral efforts, the final outcome is often greater than the combined inputs. As mentioned below, Denmark also worked actively to influence the work of funds and programmes in fragile states, an effort that has paid off, as multilateral organisations are increasingly important partners for Denmark's bilateral development cooperation in post-conflict countries<sup>11</sup>, i.e. UN in Afghanistan post-2014, when the bilateral engagement with Afghanistan will be substantially decreased. Other examples are Somalia and South Sudan, countries where Denmark has little or no bilateral representation, but which nevertheless are 'priority countries' for Danish development aid and other bilateral interests (e.g. with regard to piracy, broader regional stabilization efforts etc.).

### **Influencing high-level policy processes and decision making through strategic alliances**

The cases presented above vary significantly in terms of policy area, political context, process and results. Yet a number of common characteristics can be identified. Most evidently, policy making never unfolds in a vacuum but always in an ecosystem of political interests, preferences and red lines. Policy makers

<sup>11</sup> According to the Danish development strategy "The Right to a Better Life", Denmark will "support and to a large extent work through relevant regional and multilateral organisations, especially at country level, and will increasingly channel our support through them. Accordingly, we will strengthen our co-operation and dialogue with multilateral and regional organizations, and ensure coherence between policy development and concrete interventions on the ground".

and negotiators in multilateral contexts enjoy varying degrees of freedom with regard to the flexibility of the mandates that headquarters in capitals expect them to pursue by. However, regardless of the domestic political structure most negotiators will be bound by a number of objectives (what political outcomes would we ideally seek to obtain), red lines (which outcomes are completely unacceptable to one part), space for compromises (what are the different outcomes one would be agreeable to even if they are imperfect if the right conditions are met) and then what could be called geopolitical dynamics. Unfolding the latter term will help us understand the very specific context of multilateral negotiations. In essence the geopolitical dynamics are a result of the fact that each country's negotiating team is merely one among a large number of negotiators. While the opinions of some negotiators evidently carry more weight than others, every single negotiator must take into account not only the domestically defined mandate but also how other countries perceive negotiation results. The perception of what could be called like-minded countries plays a significant role in this context, but also the perception of countries with opposing views is taken into account. Alienating any country through pursuing negotiation results that cross their red lines comes at a cost and expends political capital. At times, negotiators are willing to accept such sacrifices if the opportunity costs associated with a compromise are too great. Further, a few countries have made it their negotiation strategy to frequently state pre-defined red lines that may effectively prevent compromises or at least complicate negotiations.

This is particularly true amongst a number of states that question the very legitimacy of the multilateral system (which is, with regard to the composition of the Security Council, not an entirely unreasonable argument). It also holds true for the permanent members of the

Security Council implicitly or explicitly using their veto-power to set the very arena for negotiation. Some topics, such as the Israel-Palestine question, come with their own set of inherent red lines. While these structures impose limitations to what any negotiator can hope to achieve, the ecosystem of political preferences also offers opportunities to establish strategic alliances.

Thus, navigating and shaping the agenda in a body of 195 members (the 193 member states plus Palestine and the Holy See as observers) that have different interests, different perceptions and different capabilities and opportunities require diplomatic skill and capability. For small countries to be successful they must at the same time be strategic, resource aware, and time their efforts. As an example, Denmark – being a smaller state with a decent reputation amongst most UN member states – pursues the establishment of strategic alliances whenever possible. The political dynamics in the intergovernmental bodies of the UN mean that a proposal, no matter how uncontroversial, put forward by one country will almost always meet more resistance than one put forward by a coalition of countries spanning two or more geographical or 'political' groups at the UN. Creating strategic alliances with countries with shared interests is therefore crucial for successfully pushing an agenda.

Building alliances is a two-way engagement that is most often based on shared interests. However, strategic alliances can also be based on trade-offs or 'the enemy of my enemy is my best friend-approach', which is the case in the informal strategic alliance built around the 'Uniting for Consensus Group of countries' that are working together to prevent their regional foes from obtaining a permanent seat in the Security Council. A country that is broadly and pro-actively engaged in a number of issues and that is able to link policy engagement with global challenges and maybe even

national business interests makes itself relevant for others seeking to form strategic alliances. For instance, Denmark has successfully built a strategic alliance with South Korea to promote green growth. In the alliance Denmark was considered as having the enabling policy framework, a proven track record and the necessary know-how, while South Korea was considered to have the political and financial will and the necessary technology and technological skills. At the same time South Korea was also strategically interested in raw materials for its high-tech industry available in Greenland's underground. For both countries the attributes of the other were considered necessary and desirable for creating a synergetic effect. At the same time the two countries considered their partnership instrumental for establishing a green growth paradigm that could help shape a market for green growth technology and push forward international agreement on sustainable development. Jointly Denmark and South Korea pushed for the establishment and subsequent transformation into an International Organization of the Global Green Growth Institute and in parallel they set up with Mexico the Global Green Growth Forum to promote global public-private partnerships focused on accelerating the speed and scale of the transition to a global green economy.

On value-based issues such as women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), Denmark is working closely together with traditional like-minded countries in the Nordic region and Europe but is also actively seeking to forge alliances with progressive third world countries and emerging states. Denmark is supporting the High Level Task Force (HLTF) that groups 24 prominent persons from the North and the South and has as its purpose to defend and possibly advance SRHR and to counter the growing opposition from religious and conservative forces to the agenda. It is the (Nordic) hope that the HLTF

can counter the efforts made by religious and conservative forces to roll back the achievements of the International Conference on Population and Development, which took place in Cairo in 1994.

Denmark also had a very successful strategic alliance with Tanzania in creating the momentum for the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission mentioned above. As a part of the strategic alliance between Denmark and Tanzania, the two countries together chaired the informal consultations to create a consensus in the General Assembly. Following extensive negotiations, the Commission was formally established at the 2005 Millennium Summit. Since then, Denmark has also assumed the role as co-facilitator for negotiating the text ahead of the MDG summit in 2010 (together with Senegal) and as mentioned above for the Rule of Law meeting (together with Mexico) that took place during the 67th General Assembly in 2012. Assuming these roles is highly time-consuming, very intensive and the facilitators are not necessarily guaranteed a positive outcome. Therefore it is also a considerable investment by a small country and indeed by a small representation to the UN. On the other hand, it is a role that gives incomparable influence for a small country and it is a unique possibility for forging the extremely important relationships also outside of the normal sphere of cooperation, that are essential in a UN context. At different times, Denmark has been *facilitating* a number of other forums, committees and conferences<sup>12</sup>, which often offers a comparable edge to those who take the lead formal lead in the negoti-

12 Examples: Co-chairman of the preparatory committee for the Financing for Development Conference (1999-2001), Member of the UN Security Council (2005-2006), Chairman of the Counter-terrorism Committee (2006), Host of COP15 (2009), Co-chairmanship of the New Deal, Humanitarian Liaison Working Group (2013).

ations. In addition, by taking on these roles, and by playing a fair game, countries build up confidence and trust that is useful not only among like-minded countries but also among countries that are not traditional allies.

Through membership of the European Union member states already have powerful allies on many issues. If an EU-member state succeeds in making a specific priority the policy of the whole Union, then the EU and its member states will be able to promote it. Where non-EU-members will have to start forging alliances from scratch or through more loose forums if they want to promote specific issues, EU members can through already defined channels and formal forums gain the backing of 26 relatively powerful member states of the UN who then again have allies who often follow them in votes in the UN. As such the EU is also a powerful tool for small states in multilateral policy.

Not only by necessity but also by choice, Denmark has in recent years chosen to focus its efforts at the UN on those areas where the UN is considered to be playing a transformative role, be it in setting the agenda for the world's energy policy in the future or in responding to the needs of fragile states or advancing the rights of women. These are at the same time areas that Denmark considers as policy priorities and issues where Denmark can reasonably argue that it has valuable experience and knowledge to bring to the table. What more is, they are areas where the United Nations provides the best arena to move forward on an agenda. "Choose your battles carefully" has always been a useful advice, but for a small country in an organisation like the United Nations, it is a matter of prudence. As argued above, small countries may have an advantage in some areas. And Denmark together with other major donors may be even more influential in the multilateral aid system than their size and contributions would sug-

gest. However, it is only through a concerted and strategic effort that small countries are able to substantially contribute to setting the agenda. The "battles" chosen are most often issues that are considered as strategic national interests or prioritised areas and that enjoy national political consensus as this is almost a requirement for a small country to mobilise the resources necessary for pushing hard enough. On these prioritised issues, all other means of influence have to be put into play to build the necessary leverage to create change. As an example, Denmark picked up on the Secretary General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative – one of the five priorities of Ban ki Moon's second term (though already launched in 2009). Apart from being a timely initiative that addressed the climate, energy and poverty agendas, the initiative also played well into Denmark's comparative advantage within the sustainable energy field as well as Denmark's development strategy. Denmark therefore saw this as a strategically important issue, where the Secretary General through his efforts and influence could establish a platform for creating a consensus on common global goals on sustainable energy that, if adopted globally, would not only be good for the world's poor and the environment but also for Danish businesses.

### **Influencing institutional priorities and operational practises of the UN Funds, Agencies and Programs**

Another key arena for pursuing influence is the HQ-level decision making, agenda setting, prioritisation and institutional development of the UN's funds, agencies and programmes. This is particularly true for countries with substantial investments in these organisations as this provides them with both a real interest in how these organisations operate and consider-



able leverage to influence decision making due to their substantial financial contributions.

Danish multilateral core contributions in 2011 amounted to almost 750 million USD, which is equal to almost 30 percent of the total Danish ODA. More than 1 billion USD or approximately 40 per cent of Danish development assistance is channelled through multilateral institutions including the UN system if bilateral aid delivered through multilateral channels is included. Denmark is among the top 10 donors to the four main UN funds and programmes in the development field in New York, UNDP, UNICEF, UNICEF and UN Women<sup>13</sup>. Due to the limited size of its foreign service, Denmark relies heavily on the multilateral organisations to absorb, strategize, program and deliver a substantial part of Denmark's engagement with the developing world. Consequently, the ability to leverage the necessary influence for shaping the policies and priorities of these organisations is in fact a key foreign policy issue<sup>14</sup>. Adding to this, a number of the current Danish foreign policy priorities such as the transition of fragile and conflict-affected states to sustainable peace and development; the climate change and green energy agenda; and women's political, legal, socioeconomic and reproductive rights are all areas where the UN funds and programmes exert significant influence at both HQ and country level in terms of normative developments as well as through programmatic interventions.

A recent example is the focus on fragile states at UNDP. While UNDP has operated in contexts of fragility for decades, it is only recently that the organisation has developed

unique organisational strategies for engaging in fragile states and has established an organisational structure reflecting the unique challenges involved with operating in post-conflict and fragile countries. While UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) was established in 2001, the process of re-orienting the work of the organisation towards the specific needs of working in fragile settings has been long and cumbersome. Denmark has played a key role in trying to help UNDP identify its comparative advantages and align its strategic priorities accordingly. To this end, Denmark funded a study in 2011 that looked at the role of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in a number of post-crisis countries. The study's aim was to identify, through an evidence-based approach, the areas within which these organisations were perceived to hold comparative advantages and as having delivered effective development/recovery outcomes. As a follow-up to the study Denmark linked up with the Centre for International Cooperation, a well-renowned think tank at New York University to organise an event on "The role of the UN's Funds, Agencies and Programmes in post-conflict recovery". Besides presenting the study, the event also took stock of two recent high-profile reports, the Civilian Capacity Review and the 2011 World Development Report, to contextualise the current strategic thinking and prioritisation across the UN System. The event, which was attended at senior level by the involved organisations, created a space where an actual stocktaking of outcomes at the country level formed the basis of an informed discussion about the strategic priorities of funds, agencies and programmes while taking into account global policy guidance and research. It was one example of how Denmark has been seeking to influence the agenda within funds, agencies and programmes as well as among fellow member states to re-orient agencies towards prioritizing post-crisis program-

<sup>13</sup> All figures from the Danish Multilateral Analysis 2013

<sup>14</sup> Already in the mid-nineties Denmark adopted a policy of "active multilateralism" that guided its multilateral engagement. It clearly defined how Denmark should seek to influence multilateral policy on different priority areas using a number of different tools.

ming and strengthen comparative advantages in these contexts. While it is difficult to isolate the driving factors, it is evident that funds, agencies and programs have placed renewed focus on post-conflict and fragile situations. Rather than pushing these agendas through the Executive Boards, which for several reasons<sup>15</sup> are not always ideal fora for pushing for institutional change, Denmark has tried to pull an appetite for reform through shaping an agenda and making an evidence-based case for change. In addition the Danish UN Mission has delegated authority to provide grants to UN agencies for non-core activities in support of Danish priorities. This has created an image of Denmark as a country that can 'put its money where its mouth is'. At the same time, Denmark is a strong advocate for securing adequate core funding to the UN agencies and is increasing its core contributions and at the same time ensuring that ear marked funding is used more strategically. The reasoning behind this approach is the need to enhance the system's advantages with core funding and simultaneously pull and push it in the right direction through earmarked contributions to specific programmes that are at the same time Danish priority areas and in line with the organisations' mandates and strategic plans.

### **Influencing institutional structures, priorities and operational practises**

The General Assembly's (GA) power as a norm-setting body has been examined comprehensively (Peterson, 2006). The challenges relating to the representational nature of

the GA is to some extent replicated in the Boards of the agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs). Every AFP has its own unique governance structure that is normally characterised by a desire to strike a balance between the countries that foot the bill (donors), the recipient countries and countries belonging to neither of these groups. The selection of members of the governing bodies and their chairmanships is normally underpinned by a complex set of formal and informal rules about geographical representation, size, linguistic heritage, previous membership, membership of other bodies etc. Assuming a chairmanship of an Executive Board for one of the funds, agencies or programs requires its own process of alliance building with other members of the board. Due to the composition of the boards, mingling with the traditional like-minded constituency is not enough. Also here alliances must be built across geographical and political groups. One strategy to this effect is building trust through collaborating on various issues and maintaining strong personal networks. While membership and chairmanship of the Executive Boards are based on somewhat inflexible and pre-determined criteria, Denmark can try, and has historically tried, to proactively obtain membership and assume the post of chairmanship within the constraints of the formal rules and procedures.

The Executive Boards play a key role in guiding the organisations and determine their priorities at the highest political level. Taking UNDP as an example, the Executive Board monitors the performance of the UNDP, approves programmes, decides on financial plans and budgets and ensures that the activities of the programme are consistent with the decisions of the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is, however, also important to understand the limitations of these bodies. Members of the Executive Board have to

<sup>15</sup>As an important purpose of the Executive Boards is to allow for the necessary technical and administrative decisions to be taken, it may be counterproductive to use the boards for more sensitive political discussions as it may be stalling for other in nature less sensitive administrative decisions to be taken.

navigate within the constraints of the sum of the political priorities explicitly or implicitly formulated by its members. All members have red lines, which they do not wish to see the organisations cross. This development is an example of a split within one of the ‘fronts’ in the policy-shaping and –making of the Executive Boards. Thus, other agendas are better being pursued outside the Executive Boards.

Apart from the constraints imposed by the political reality of the Executive Boards, Denmark is also constrained as well as empowered by the membership of certain groups of countries namely ‘the Nordics’, ‘the like-minded’ and the more formal EU structure. The Nordic cooperation at the UN is a strong brand and one that is extensively used by the five Nordic countries to advance their policies. Having the Nordic group behind an initiative is often considered to be a quality mark by the UN and its funds, programmes and agencies signifying seriousness and a commitment to multilateralism, not least with regard to providing substantial core contributions to the UN agencies granting the agencies a considerable amount of flexibility in their strategic planning.

For the same reason the Nordic countries are nourishing the Nordic brand and working closely together at capital and New York level to coordinate policies and positions on almost all matters, including on UN policy. The Nordic countries have also established cooperation on rotational candidacies for the main organs of the UN, including the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, ECOSOC etc. This scheme was quite successful for a number of years with each of the four ‘big’ Nordic countries (Iceland was never elected) representing the Nordics in the Security Council when elected approximately once every 20 years. In addition the Nordic Countries work closely together on issues related to peacebuilding. The Nordic Brand also has a very high profile on a number of issues including value-based and normative

issues such as gender, equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. These issues are hotly debated at the UN and increasingly divisive. During its candidacy to the Security Council in 2012, Finland had enthusiastically put forward the Nordic brand and Nordic support for its candidature, but some observers believe it may have backfired due to the strong opposition in some countries to the Equality and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights agenda that is being actively promoted by the Nordic countries. However, among the Nordic countries the assessment is rather that also when it comes to elections the rules are changing. Some emerging countries and in particular those who believe they should have a permanent seat in the Council present themselves for election more often, thus crowding out smaller contenders. As a consequence it takes more to get elected, meaning more expensive and longer campaigns and – for some countries – also less principled positions on controversial issues. As such the ‘problem’ is not the Nordic Brand, which continues to be strong, but that an increasing number of countries are fighting much harder for a seat in the Security Council – and the Human Rights Council – and that therefore it is more a question of resources, planning and strategy than of controversial positions on specific issues. While the recent unsuccessful attempts of Finland and Sweden to obtain membership of the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council, respectively, could be seen as non-like-minded member states’ attempt to put a stop to a progressive, right-based Nordic approach, it has merely become a wake-up call, reminding the Nordics, that they cannot take their place in the world for granted.

In addition to these formal alliances, Denmark also participates in a number of less formal groups of like-minded states where issues of common interest are discussed and positions aligned. The Nordic Plus countries (Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, the UK,

and the Netherlands) work together to discuss aid effectiveness and harmonization, while the Utstein Group of donor countries work to make the UN development system more efficient<sup>16</sup>. However, as noted above, the Nordic brand also comes with some constraints.

With the Lisbon Treaty, EU cooperation in foreign policy issues has increased considerably. The EU countries are working together at both Brussels and New York level to coordinate policies. Representative from donor Capitals meet once a month in the so-called CONUN-working group on UN affairs<sup>17</sup>, while permanent representatives meet weekly in New York where hundreds of other EU-coordination meetings are also held each year. The EU mission to the United Nations is undertaking the coordination of EU positions on a number of issues, primarily related to General Assembly resolutions (and not the work in AFPs). This cooperation has had a very positive impact on the possibility for small countries in the EU to rely on the EU for the hard work and chip in where and when necessary or desirable. For example, Denmark is obliged to prioritise its efforts on the different resolutions that are on the agenda of each General Assembly and that are often being negotiated word for word in a very presence- and work-intensive process. On the resolutions that are not high priority for Denmark, Denmark is relying on the EU. As the EU-representation is following all resolutions closely, EU member states are according-

ly briefed on the negotiations and alerted on issues that may be controversial or important.

However, the EU coordination can, in some instances, be challenging. In funds and programmes there is no EU coordination, due to the fact that the organisations are donor-driven, and the donors believe they should have a 'direct' say in how the organisation develops. Further, the donors are often eager to obtain national visibility in order to ensure domestic support. Furthermore, the European Union is not necessarily a desirable brand with regards to all policy areas/agendas. For example, when the EU tried to gain support for a resolution that was to formalize its role at the UN after the Lisbon Treaty, it was met with considerable resistance from a large number of countries. While finally adopted in May 2011 with only two abstentions after having been rejected a year earlier, the initial reluctance testified to a certain hesitancy to seeing the EU gain even more prominence in the UN at a time where power is increasingly shifting to emerging economies. Further, there are obviously issues, where consensus within the EU cannot be obtained. E.g. issues relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) where the line of thinking between more conservative, catholic member states and Northern European countries often call for an EU-split. These agendas are accordingly better pursued in non-EU-coordinated forums.

### **Summarizing the 'toolbox' of small states**

Besides seeking influence through the formal channels of membership of Executive Boards, Chairmanships and building political alliances and consensus, a number of other tools are available to pursue political influence across UN institutions. The table below provides a structure around some of these tools and methods.

<sup>16</sup> Known as the Utstein group because the founders of the group held their first meeting at Utstein abbey in western Norway. Current members are: Canada, Spain, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland.

<sup>17</sup> CONUN develops common EU policy on UN issues of common interest to EU Member States. CONUN provides recommendations and guidance on strategic EU policy objectives at the UN, as well as thematic issues, in order to contribute to the process of setting long-term policy goals.

A number of the tools in the ‘input’ category could be categorized as ‘thought leadership’ or ‘brand building’. Our research and experience shows that there is significant potential in focusing on a few select areas and within these try to build an adequate body of knowledge; effective networks of resource persons and institutions; a certain positive reputation; as well as long-term alliances across political constituencies. The input is defined as those activities aimed at influencing the way the organisation implements its mandate in terms of planning, prioritization and strategizing. This column essentially captures what Denmark can do to thematically ‘set the scene’ around the organi-

staffing. Denmark has traditionally attempted to strike a balance between not unnecessarily interfering in the organisations’ operational dispositions but on the other hand pressing organisations to change inefficient processes, rules and procedures. Another intervention in this context has been to second staff in key positions within the organisations. Strategic secondments enable Denmark to develop and maintain a network of staff in key positions within the UN. While seconded staffs do not work for Danish interests and priorities (which each staff member asserts contractually), sustaining a network of trusted staff within key UN entities in itself represents an enormous

Input	Operations	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding the drafting of concept notes and policy papers on thematic issues</li> <li>• Organizing thematic and “friends of” meetings including with the organisations</li> <li>• Supporting and financing academic studies</li> <li>• Defining priorities in relation to special events such as an EU Presidency</li> <li>• Establishing research/best practice centers</li> <li>• Chair or co-chair working and friends of groups</li> <li>• Different funding modalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation missions, processes and papers</li> <li>• Funding experts to assist the organisation with key processes</li> <li>• Strategic secondments of staff to strategic positions within the organisations</li> <li>• Rostering and deployment modalities for surge personnel</li> <li>• Building extensive and active network of key staff in the organisations</li> <li>• Dialogue on performance and priorities</li> <li>• Coherent and strategic use of earmarked funds and stable levels of core funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building alliances/networks with a broad and diverse group of member states</li> <li>• Possessing technical expertise to provide strategic feedback</li> <li>• Flexibility in budgeting to respond to opportunities and reward initiatives aligned to DK priorities</li> <li>• Link agendas across policy domains/arenas</li> <li>• Knowledge of performance frameworks, independent evaluations, budgetary dispositions etc.</li> <li>• Gain of influence at the policy level in UN HQs as well as in the field with regard to Danish priorities</li> </ul>

sation and thereby frame the discussions within and outside the organisation about its strategic opportunities and constraints. The column named ‘operations’ lists some of the activities and approaches that can be used to influence the organisation’s operations, such as budgeting, processing, recruitment, resourcing and

value for a small country trying to navigate the behemoth that is the UN System.

UN institutions also respond to events in the countries in which they operate as well as internal institutional dynamics. In the former case, developments on the ground may mean that windows of opportunity open up or a cri-

sis emerges. In the latter case, an institution may have produced a new policy paper, is responding to a critical review or responds to budgetary changes. In all of these cases, member states have an opportunity to react to these responses. The better a country knows an organisation, the more targeted and effective the intervention can be.

The applicability of the toolbox described in this section obviously depends on the institutional structure of the organisation in question. In general, influential member states and Executive Boards members have more sway in influencing operational developments in AFPs, than in the UN Secretariat bodies, where a complex machinery of intergovernmental representation deal with operational issues through cumbersome processes mandated by the General Assembly.

The effectiveness and usefulness of the tools also depend on the user. They are unsurprisingly most effective if they are used by an effective, focused and coherent organisation. Here small size and limited resources may oddly enough be an advantage if this provides the necessary flexibility, short distance from decision to implementation and cross-organisational communication that is necessary for acting strategically and coherently. In the Danish case, the Foreign Ministry and DANIDA – its development arm – were merged in the beginning of the nineties creating a ‘unified’ ministry on the administrative side though with separate ministers (international trade and EU matters are also handled administratively by the unified ministry but currently with separate ministers). Besides having staff rotating between the different ‘pillars’ of the Ministry, having development experts, human rights experts, humanitarian experts and experts in security issues and conflict sharing offices with policy and decision makers appears to be an effective tool for pushing agendas and follow up with concerted messages, funding and policy initiatives. While small

states, including Denmark, can certainly not match larger states in manpower, they may be able to match them in creating effective organisations with a short distance from thinking to implementation – i.e. creating a certain degree of policy coherence and allowing for strategic synergies between the different policy interventions. Further, the fact that all civil servants are apolitical and thus are not replaced with the change of government ensures a certain amount of continuity, which can facilitate the creation of policy coherence.

Another valuable attribute for successful use of the toolbox is coherent funding. In this regard it is important to see core and earmarked funding as complimentary ways of ‘buying’ impact in different settings. Thus, Denmark has provided substantial core funding to a number of multilateral organisations through the years. This combined active and focused work in e.g. UN’s funds and programmes, has granted considerable influence on the agenda setting at policy level in UN HQs. At the same time, most earmarked contributions are within focus areas such as fragile states and sustainable development, at the same time have become focus areas for the AFPs supported by Denmark. By engaging and working strategically – e.g. ensuring coherence between core funding and efforts exercised in the AFP’s boards and the earmarked contributions and messages delivered at country level, funding will become an effective tool for development results and organisational change.

Finally, the decentralisation of responsibility for the day-to-day cooperation with multilateral organisations to the embassies and representations at the organisations’ HQ-level (e.g. New York and Geneva) as well as the fiscal delegation with regard to non-core grant making, has further contributed to making Denmark able to act effectively with limited resources. However, to take full advantage of the decentralized model, well connected, qual-

ified and all-round expertise as well as excellent leadership at the Danish representations is a must. In addition there is a need for a high level of confidence between headquarters and the missions as well as political backing for decisions taken at the decentralised level. It is also necessary to accept that decentralisation and limited capacity at HQ-level require a strict prioritisation of the multilateral engagement focused on strategic objectives. The confidence can be nurtured through a common understanding of priorities and possibilities in the multilateral arena and a high level of coherence in the policies pursued. Communication and information sharing at both the formal and informal level is also a prerequisite.

## CONCLUSION

The paper initially presented a number of multilateral processes in which Denmark had succeeded in ‘punching above its weight’. In the subsequent chapters the paper has tried to identify the tools and approaches applied to achieve this influence. In the previous chapter these tools and approaches were summarized in a table organizing them according to how they can influence agenda setting and strategizing; how the actual operations of an organisation may be influenced and how Denmark can provide constructive responses to institutional developments.

For a small country like Denmark, *focus* emerges as one of the key criteria for obtaining influence in the multilateral arena. The agendas are so plentiful and the arena so complex and crowded that if priorities and the tools to pursue them are spread too thinly, the chances of success are virtually non-existing. Other key criteria for success would seem to be investing in a truly comprehensive approach to each strategic objective. In the successful examples examined in this paper, Denmark has

applied its *soft* power – making use of tools and approaches, which extend beyond the formal influence, while acknowledging Denmark’s inability to muscle its way to achieving policy objectives.

In the examples, Denmark has made sustained investments to strategically shape the thinking around a particular theme, where Denmark felt it had a track-record, a brand and/or national expertise to bring to the table. As illustrated, thematic events, strategic meetings, commissioned research and ‘think pieces’, strategic alliances and official statements and speeches are all channels by which countries can seek to promote a specific policy objective. In the successful examples such efforts have been followed by a number of operationally oriented interventions such as the secondment of staff to key positions within the UN, aligning funding with strategic priorities and seeking to influence the way UN institutions operate to enable them to more effectively pursue specific strategic objective.

A capable leadership at the Danish UN Missions in New York and Geneva seems to be an important starting point. Understanding the convergence of bureaucratic and political arenas and processes is a prerequisite for successfully navigating towards policy objectives in the complex ecosystem of the UN. A certain level of autonomy for the UN Missions to flexibly adjust to political and bureaucratic realities by adjusting funding priorities, influencing the placement of secondments, swiftly responding to organisational developments also seems to be an important enabler for policy influence.

Opportunities for influencing global policy making and setting the agenda often emerge in an ad hoc manner. This places a premium on being prepared and able to respond rapidly and flexibly. Going forward, Denmark could work in optimizing its toolbox to seize the moment where soft power could be applied successfully to achieve a Danish policy

objective in the multilateral arena. This could involve augmenting plans for strategic agenda setting through hosting and organizing events, funding targeted research, establishing specialized institutions and think tanks, building long-term strategic alliances in specific areas. It could also involve further improving the strategic thinking and flexibility vis-à-vis secondments to key UN institutions and retaining enough budgetary flexibility to respond to ad hoc opportunities. Moreover, Denmark needs to improve the coordination of how policy objectives are pursued through the UN, the International Financial Institutions, from Copenhagen as well as at partner country level – i.e. obtaining coherence between multilateral and bilateral policies. At the same time, the possibilities emerging from strengthened EU cooperation as well as among Nordic states should be further explored. Charting a political space to promote a certain agenda is in most instances easier when the political and bureaucratic constituencies in New York, Brussels, Washington, Rome and Geneva can be convinced that the country promoting that agenda is indeed leading by example. Putting your money where your mouth is remains key to this effect. Danish funding should be clearly aligned to strategic priorities, as even soft power needs to be adequately bankrolled in terms of both earmarked and unearmarked funding.



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