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**FAREWELL TO CONSCRIPTION?**

THE CASE OF DENMARK

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## Abstract

This contribution probes the essence of Denmark as a political project by using conscription as an inroad and employing it as a lens that provides insight into the way some of the key constitutive relationships underpinning Denmark have been unfolding over time.

Conscription is approached by focusing on its discursive features, those furnishing it with – or depriving it of – ideational power.

The core question to be explored consists of whether conscription has resided as an integral part of Danishness thereby contributing to the tight links between the state, nation and people (folk) or if it has rather been depicted as something quite non-Danish but accepted as a kind of military necessity, a system imposed upon Denmark due to harsh external conditions. Is it there as an expression of some inner characteristics of Denmark as a political project and important for reasons of identity or rather stand out as a kind of ‘foreign’ and imposed element to be tolerated as a practical necessity and, in the latter case, to be dismissed once the opportunity occurs?

Finally, the paper explores the current essence of Denmark against the background of the security-related discourse and conscription in particular. Three possible ways of depicting what the decisive dynamics have basically been about are staked out. It is claimed that rather than resonating with various traditionalist or transitionalist accounts with the past as a core departure, Denmark is increasingly anchored in stories that stress dangers inherent in possible futures with the project thus being redefined both as to its temporal anchorage and spatial underpinnings.

# Farewell to Conscription?

## The Case of Denmark

Pertti Joenniemi

### THE STANDING OF CONSCRIPTION

Denmark does not denote a typical European country in ideational terms. As outlined by Uffe Østergård (1999: 37), it has for a considerable period of time been marked by the presence of a peasant ideological hegemony, this pointing to strong bottom-up type of features in the construction of Denmark as a political project. Such a state of affairs established itself through internal repercussions brought about by a series of foreign policy catastrophes in struggles during the Napoleonic wars and against an increasingly unified Germany. Having taken hold and later largely shared by the labor movement, the hegemony quite forcefully (with a relative weak bourgeoisie and late industrialization) brought about a rather homogeneous and ‘folkish’ political culture in the remaining Danish state. The rather strong feelings of togetherness shared by the population at large have been culturally permeated by libertarian as well as solidaristic attitudes. On a more general level, the Danish nation-state is there as in most other European countries, albeit within that nexus the emphasis lies primarily on the side of the nation.

The aim of this contribution is to explore the role and meaning of conscription within such a constellation. The question is whether conscription has been firmly anchored in the project as something part and parcel of its bottom-up features or do the relatively strong ‘folkish’ traits instead imply that it has not really been able to take root in the Danish case. Does conscription resonate with the Danish specificity or is it rather to be seen as a factor that has contributed - by being there in the form of statist, top-down of policies, i.e. by depriving the bottom-up endeavors of a key channel of influence - to a kind of normalization of Denmark? More broadly, the effort here is one of probing the essence of Denmark as a political project by using conscription as an inroad. The aim is thus not one of focusing on conscription *per se* as a form of military manpower recruitment; rather it is one of using it as a lens that provides insight into the way some of the key constitutive relationships underpinning Denmark have unfolded over time. Conscription is hence not viewed as an institution to be defined in some categorical manner and, instead, the approach is one of outlining its discursive features, those furnishing it with (or depriving it of) ideational power. In order to avoid too much historical

patina the aim is also one of exploring the more recent constitutive dynamics pertaining to the post-Cold War Denmark and the post 9/11 one in particular - with conscription showing signs of disappearing from the scene in its traditional tapping.

Initially, two principal ways of locating the constitutive meaning of conscription are staked out. Conscription could for the first - as a key a modern invention - stand out as an integral part of the 'script' underlying Denmark. It could be deeply engrained in what has been comprehended as the mental and cultural core of Danishness, and remain in this way highly central to the way the story of Denmark is being told. In enabling solidarity to unfold and in functioning as an expression of the trust that the nation feels vis-à-vis its own state, conscription could enjoy an almost unquestioned legitimacy. It would be regarded, if this outlining holds true, to be of high value already in contributing to a guarding of the nation-state in view of the dangers represented by the external, security-related sphere that pertains to relations between states but also seen as harboring important functions internally in contributing, within this latter domain, to a molding of the sometimes rather diverse key departures that have to fall in place in order for a coherent nation-state to be formed and sustained.

The various military and political arguments would converge and consequently, conscription as a form of military manpower recruitment could figure as an unquestioned given, one residing at the very core of Denmark. It could have the same crucial standing as it appears to have in a number of other countries. The break-through and introduction of conscription ought - if this line of thinking holds true - to have been there already at an early stage with Denmark having moved towards a modern identity relatively early on. Moreover, the system of recruitment could also be expected to have considerable durability with little talk about abandoning it as the Danish notions of state and nation remain - as testified by Lene Hansen (2002: 60) - closely knit together. She concludes that they are so interwoven and coterminous that it appears impossible to think of the nation without the state. Denmark has been, and still remains, allergic (as is evidenced most starkly by the country's EU-policies) to anything that threatens to loosen up the almost organic state-nation bond. Conscription could, in such a context, be part of shielding the inner nexus. It could figure as an unquestioned given, or conversely, with conscription removed, contribute to Denmark turning into something very different from its typical self. The country would not, void of conscription as a core constitutive element, remain its old self, one premised on a tight fusion between the key categories of political space, i.e. those of state, nation and *Folk* (people).

However, there are also reasons to think that the opposite could be true. Danish peculiarity could also impact the way the military sphere unfolds and relates to other aspects of the overall Danish 'we'. Conscription, as a key part of the military endeavor, may be depicted as something basically non-Danish with the political and military arguments pointing to quite different conclusions. It might, for reasons such as military efficiency and grave external dangers, be high in demand but yet remain purported as alien to the Danish 'soul'. The standing enjoyed by conscription on the political scene would hence be relatively superficial and weak. It would be there as one form of drafting, albeit in essence ousted from the core of Danishness. It would be seen as a practical necessity dictated by harsh external conditions, one amounting perhaps even to a burden rather than constituting a core pillar carrying Denmark's identity. It would enjoy limited popularity, be met with opposition and, on occasions, even outright resistance and, in all, it would be easy to dismiss once the external conditions granted for such an option.

In addition to an outlining of these two principal and opposite departures, one might also approach the issues at stake in a somewhat less bifurcated manner by perceiving Denmark as a layered construction and locating the posture of conscription in that context. The core question to address thus reads whether conscription has stood out as something relatively superficial, a theme that has not succeeded in penetrating the deeper layers underpinning Denmark, or if it stands out as a firm and integral part of such layers. A crucial issue to be laid out consists of how the relationship between the concepts of state, nation and people gets worked out in the first place, that is with Denmark seen as having the potential to change even rapidly and decisively. Yet, the most basic layers formed in such a context are, in general, assumed to be highly resilient to change, not least because there is a historical trajectory which tends to furnish the established understandings and the consequent constructions with a 'taken for granted' quality (Wæver, 2002: 33). If part of these layers, conscription would be quite path-dependent displaying considerable permanence also in the Danish case and if not, it would be conducive to change and rejection. The key issue to explore thus consists of whether conscription has historically succeeded in locating itself in a manner that anchors it firmly at the core of Denmark and establishes it as an integral part of the basic layers underpinning the story or if it rather remains aloof and void of a posture providing it with shelter and a firm anchorage.

## **THE EARLY FORMATIVE YEARS**

Obviously, there is no single and generally approved answer on offer as conscription, as a narrative, has been furnished with quite a number of meanings also in the Danish debate. It

does not, in having been struggled over in a variety of ways since the formative years, form a linear, uninterrupted and consensual story. It seems to come, instead, in plural. It may be purported, as is done by Hans Christian Bjerg (1996: 9) as having “stood out for 150 years as the link between the Danish people and their defense”. Conscription has been there, he argues, in order to provide an outlet for a will to defend oneself, thereby constituting “a natural part of the Danish society”. Hans Engell (1999: 97) views, for his part, conscription as “a piece of Danish people’s culture and an expression of the determination to pursue a defense as embedded in the people”. Yet another voice depicting conscription as integral to Danishness consists of Thomas Thaulow (1946: 217) who perceives the conscription-based forces and the people as a unified entity.

Yet, on balance, there appears to be much speaking against such moves of fixation. The history of Danish conscription seems to confirm that the concept should not be taken for granted in the first place (cf. Damsholt, 2000). It also appears - instead of testifying to that there has been a close link - to point to that the symbolic prominence of the system of recruitment has been modest. Rather than having acquired an uncontested and sedimentary status, it has been a source of debate, bitter discord and sometimes even revolt. Already at the very outset, conscription turned out to be a cumbersome system to introduce and install as experienced by A. F. Tscherning, a visionary artillery officer and a key initiator of the system in the Danish case. He put in place, in the context of a multiperspectival Denmark, an alternative horizon in proposing the introduction of a kind of people’s defense and then also conscription in a series of booklets published since 1831, these being written in order to explore the reasons for why the Danish people distrusted and had little appreciation of the army (Thomsen, 1949: 27). By broadening the obligation to serve - as collective and compulsory, that is enforced service, initially applied only to the peasant part of the population - he hoped to introduce and bring about discussions on a more effective, personal and democratic system of drafting with more equal burden-sharing.

It became clear, however, at the very outset that the idea of introducing general and compulsory conscription was far from consensual in character. In fact, it was met with considerable resistance in most corners of Danish political life. It did so above all in resonating with tensions between the Danish state and the Danish nation. For one, king, Fredrik VI was part of the opposition in being rather ‘displeased’ with the officer’s views. Placing general conscription on the political agenda raised rather problematic issues as to bordering and de-bordering in the context of citizenship and the formation of a Danish nation. It was not in the king’s interest to contribute to a strengthening of a national ideology and awareness of the Danes as a nation in the proposed manner. Hence, instead of getting



rewarded for coining fresh and constructive ideas in tune with the needs of the country, Tscherning was sent abroad. He was actually expelled to carry out a rather involuntary five-year study tour (Thomsen, 1949: 3, 32). The king (due to his absolutist rule leaning to a considerable degree on the right of ordering drafting) was a formidable opponent as such, but the concept of 'citizens in arms' was not only resisted by him. It was also more broadly opposed by the upper echelons (particularly by the land-owners who had been in the position to capitalize on the peasants being recruited for military service in a forced manner) of Denmark, then a dynastic and multinational construction consisting of Danes, Schleswig-Holsteiners and previously also Norwegians. In addition, the coalescing around conscription, a move bound to strengthen conceptualizations of popular sovereignty and views of the state as the nation's state, was also problematic if seen from a 'bottom-up' type of perspective once the question emerged who were to be considered as the nation's citizens and what sort of attachment should the citizens bestow on the state, with the state then still largely personalized by the king. It was well comprehended that the introduction of general conscription would call for a definition of who are the ones eligible for being Danes and therewith part of the Danish nation, with conscription not only reflecting Danishness but perhaps also being constitutive in view of such a core political category, that is a category to be formed in order to balance against and function as a negation of the then power political state. Overall, neither the political nor the military arguments spoke for conscription within the dynastic discursive frame.

It may be noted in this context that different notions pertaining to society and the people were taken to have priority over the concept of a nation (at least in the military field) and hence various more pluralistic, people-oriented ('folkelig') ways of organizing the military endeavor enjoyed considerable popularity in the debate. Importantly, even N.F.S. Grundtvig, the founding 'father' of the Danish nation-state, was hesitant about the introduction of a system of general conscription. It would, in his reading, have implied a strengthening of the state-nation nexus (on conditions favoring the state) in the sphere of military affairs. He thus opposed - for political reasons - the idea of a tight coupling. The various categories constitutive of the whole should, in his opinion, be thought of independently. This is so as he favored conceptualizations of a Herderian type of *Kulturnation*. In order to stay away from Denmark evolving into a Hegelian type of power-political state, Danish state-building should according to him not primarily unfold in the military sphere with the state positioned as a core constitutive actor. He seems to have feared that the mentality of 'folkelighet' could, in such a case, stand to suffer. It would not be transplanted, he thought, into the evolving configuration, one prevented from being a reflection of 'bottom-up nationalism'.

While articulating a rather clear difference between the state, nation and people, Grundtvig tended to side with the people. This applied to the construction of a nation-state in general, and was taken to be particularly crucial in the designing of a military system. The system should, in his view, be premised on the personal will of the people. This looked mandatory if one was to safeguard that the system remained defensive ('an arming of the people') in character rather than turned into an offensive ('a standing army') one with power political inclinations. In opposing a standing army he acclaimed: "no general conscription equal with serfdom, but an arming of the people with freedom" (Bjerg, 1999: 17, my translation).

It hence appears that for Grundtvig the people stood out as a clearly different category also in a security-related context, and his aversion against state-based patriotism (as opposed to a nation-based one) became similarly apparent in the debates concerning recruitment of military manpower. With the people seen as the key entity to be protected, a Swiss type of militia-based system premised on the idea furnishing the 'people' with abilities and equipment allowing them to defend themselves enjoyed considerable support in the debates that took place towards the end-1840s and even later on. In order to deliver the requested protection, it was thought that military recruitment should proceed on a voluntary basis, thereby providing the individual the right to enlist rather than allowing the chosen system to turn collective and obligatory in character. And in line with this, there was considerable support for various arrangements pertaining to the establishment of a home-guard, i.e. a voluntary system geared towards the internal rather than the external sphere, less power-political in essence and based on local and regional instead of national departures (with the latter implying that conscripts are uprooted and called to serve at locations previously unfamiliar to them in order to integrate the country and create new as well as broader loyalties). A system leaning on locally based drafting in the form of the homeguard was seen to invite for more diversity than a nationally-based departure premised on aspirations of increasing homogeneity and collectivity in terms of a nation closely attached to the Danish state (i.e. a kind of *Staatsnation*) could bring about.

It seems, more broadly, that there was only limited trust to be discerned in the early Danish debate in general conscription. The suspiciousness was there, it seems, for functional, performance-related as well as ideational reasons, although in the end (Norway had already reached a similar decision some decades ago, and in Prussia - conceived as a core source of danger through exclusionary practices - it was introduced in 1809) conscription turned out to be the winning ticket also in the case of Denmark. The change of mood (and discursive frame) pertained largely to the efforts of the German-speaking parts of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein to break out, this threatening the Whole-state construction but also spurring

nationalist feelings. In preparing for war, a larger amount of military manpower was needed than could be provided by the old, coercion-based system. Hence a system of conscription was introduced with service being now linked increasingly to a national calling. The 'sons' of the nation were invited to defend that Fatherland (Jørgensen, 2004: 32). This approach turned out to be rather successful with thousands of men not only listing because of duty but also volunteering in having the right to join the ranks of the military. Altogether some 35.000 were recruited to serve during the three years of war and importantly, the war between the years 1848-50 ended in victory with the revolting regions (revolting also against military service) remaining part of Denmark. This was in part due to major power policies as Austria and Russia forced Prussia to accept that Holstein was to be returned to the Danish king, thereby restoring the Danish Whole-state with several national groups in one state.

The decision to introduce conscription was then also written into the constitution in 1849: "Each man eligible is personally committed to contribute to the defense of the Fatherland along lines as laid down in the law in a more detailed manner". In addition to the secessionist war that Schleswig-Holstein waged against Denmark, the positive outcome also pertained to that there a new king, Frederic VII, who harbored a more favorable attitude towards conscription. In sum, Denmark was found to be in need of a more effective and general (priests and teachers still remained exempted from conscription) form of drafting, albeit the system got features of one being imposed upon Denmark due to harsh internal and external conditions rather than seen as a choice that genuinely reflected the rather 'folkelig' and libertarian essence of the country. This is to say that the military arguments turned to be more compelling than the political ones. Conscription did not, even if being there and with war as an institution becoming far more embedded into the nation-state relationship, figure as a key channel in inculcating the men of the nation with a citizenship and national identity. Moreover, the system put in place was far from general as it was decided that the military forces should consist of a standing as well as conscripted force, with the system of conscription being selective in the sense of having the task of filling in what was required for a full-fledged force once a target set for the standing force had been reached.

## **A TEMPORAL LEAP**

It seems, in a broader perspective, that the disastrous war fought in 1864 - a catastrophe that unfolded due to false political choices as well as major power politics no longer playing into the hands of Denmark - had a formative meaning for the country's understanding of itself and the way it projected itself into the future. Once again the discursive frame changed impacting conscription. A temporal detachment occurred, through self-reflection, in the sense that

Denmark now wanted to sever itself from its own (largely power political) past. The effort was to break away and become something different from the old self. The military needs and broader political trends no longer converged as there was no more the inclination to play the role of a small major power on the European scene. The (historical) Danish self hence stood to some extent out as its other, the non-we that Denmark did not any more want to be. No longer stuck in history, Denmark aspired to stay aloof from the external environment seen as one permeated by power political aspirations and major power balancing. The new temporal as well as spatial comprehension implied that Denmark, as a political project, had to be constrained and became confined to very little (a cozy 'small' power) in territorial terms. The temporal and spatial leaps had the consequence that the country increasingly conceived itself in terms of an anti-power political entity located in an environment qualitative different from itself. The mindset was that of a forerunner, one harboring a standing of its own accompanied only by the other Scandinavian countries which also tended to articulate themselves in terms of folkish peacefulness (called 'isolationist idealism' by those who did not share the outlook). Elevating military affairs into a core constitutive position in a manner impacting also the assumedly peaceful nature of the people and their nation through the unfolding of a tight state-nation nexus would, under such conditions, have opened the door for elements seen as 'foreign' to influence the very essence of Danishness. The preconditions for an equally extensive mobilization as in the context of the 1848-50 war were no longer there.

Consequently, 'defense' gained a far less prominent standing in the new vocabularies. The move of reverting to extensive military preparations, one reflecting the temporal and spatial underpinnings of power political persuasions, was seen as inviting for a breaking down of the borders between the internal and the external spheres, i.e. borders that furnished Denmark with a character of its own. Military necessity became a very weak argument. Resorting to military-prone policies would have endangered a self-understanding premised on views of Danish peacefulness, that is conceptualizations of a small country largely detached in a category of its own and in opposition to an external, power-political world. More specifically, there was the fear that the state could, with too much stress on military matters and a resort to the ordinary power political means, have escaped and slipped out of the hands of the nation. The state could potentially have gained undue independence. It could, by sliding outside the control of the inherently peaceful Danish people - these coming together as a nation - have (again) amounted to an apparatus of power and ambition. The state would have become 'foreign' rather than remaining an integral part of Denmark. Surely, the argument that the spirit of the people should be strengthened precisely via the military was also present in the debate (cf. Bagge, 1992: 446). The state and nation were fused into a coherent entity with conscription standing out as a right and a natural choice that provided those recruited with

true citizenship. However, the voices advocating the latter stand gained less prominence in Denmark than in many other countries as they could be subdued - at least in part - by worries pertaining to a too strong, independent and military-prone state. It can also be observed that the figure of the Danish state did neither emerge and gain legitimacy through the usage of various constitutive stories pertaining to heroic resistance, nor could it be purported as having come into being in terms of suffocating internal rebellion (with the 1848-50 war as an exception) or via the conduct of successful external wars. Instead, the historical landmarks that enforced and allowed for certain lines of thinking consisted of the defeat in the war fought in 1864, with Denmark shrinking into a much smaller (but culturally and linguistically quite unified) entity. Later, the pursuance of such a cautious line and staying neutral during the First World War was crowned with the reacquisition of Jutland.

It is not surprising, against this background, that the narrative of conscription initially pertained in the Danish case to a *duty* more than any *right*. It may also be observed that there was little room for stories about conscription as a system bringing about an integrated nation as the nation was, in the Danish case, quite homogeneous to start with (after the demise of the Whole-state). In a similar vein, the resorting to such a system of drafting was not purported as being central and integral to the institution of citizenship but rather seen as a mandatory choice. In fact, it was primarily regarded as a system taken onboard basically for functional, i.e. non-ideational reasons. The limited legitimacy has also been reflected in the way conscription has been fused with Danishness over time. Instead of being furnished with considerable immanence and projected as having been there for almost since the dawn of Denmark (as the stories on the origins of conscription go in quite a number of countries), it has been delineated in a strictly time-bound fashion. The origins of the system have not been stretched out in order for it to run as something parallel to Denmark as an overall political project. The two narratives are largely kept apart with each of them being furnished with constitutive grounds of its own. Denmark thus gets portrayed as something age-old (with the “flag tumbling down from heaven in 1219” (cf. Østergård, 1994: 37) or reaching even back to the Viking period (cf. Ulriksen, 2002: 13) whereas conscription stands out as something relatively recent in origin. In other words, there is stress on discontinuity rather than continuity. The two stories overlap only partially as Denmark has over a long period of time stood on its own feet without having to lean (or been allowed to do so) on conscription. The two are not seen as being coterminous and could, one may argue, follow trajectories of their own even in the future. They could be detached from each other without the Danish self-understanding suffering a decisive blow. As a matter of fact, the constitutive stories appear to support the claim that Denmark, as a political project, would actually gain from such a separation. This is the inevitable conclusion if one rides on some of the stories already there in which conscription, as a military manpower

system, has been purported as being essentially non-Danish in character. It unavoidably stands out, in being imbued by a power political ideology, as a burden for Denmark (e.g. Berg, 1830; Sars, 1912; Wergeland, 1816: see also Thaulow, 1946 for a contrary approach) and getting rid of conscription would, against the background of these stories, allow for the ‘real’ Denmark to surface.

## LESS THAN GENERAL

It seems clear, looking back, that although implemented, the system of conscription remained for quite some time less than general and compulsory. It experienced, as a defense policy theme, a rather bumpy ride and has been openly struggled over almost ever since. There was, as such, a unanimous opinion backing an equal burden-sharing during the formative years of the system but also some profound disagreement to be traced. The quarreling went hand in hand with other disputes such as those pertaining to the structuring and main orientation of the military effort more generally and the tasks to be accomplished in the military field. The government, consisting then of the political right, outlined some rather ambitious plans (and decided in this context to opt for conscription rather than a militia-type of system as advocated by the conservative-agrarian Venstre and the Social Democrats) to defend the Copenhagen area through a construction of an extensive system of fortifications. These plans were, however, quite controversial. The utility of such efforts was openly in doubt, or as asked (in) famously by the Venstre-politician Viggo Hørup in 1883: “What is the use of it?” Due to a belief broadly shared that Denmark was in any case at the mercy of major power policies, the construction of the system of fortifications came to a halt. The policies of defense sled radically down on the list of national priorities and consequently, the defense element that had still been there backing neutrality during the First World War gradually disappeared (the fact that Germany’s lost its great power status through the peace of Versailles further contributed to this). The Social Democrats proposed already in 1924, with some success and support from the Radical Venstre (a social liberal party), that the defense of the country should be terminated altogether. Yet, conscription as a system of drafting succeeded in standing its ground, although the backing enjoyed was quite modest. It turned also quite selective as, in average, only a fourth of the cohort annually available was conscripted to serve during the inter-war period.

Out of the key political parties Venstre and the Social Democrats favored a dismissal of the standing army and both argued for the introduction of a ‘people’s defense’. Some politicians articulated this line of thinking by claiming that the core of Danish defense should be located “in each man’s chest” (Bjerg, 1999: 18). Alsing Andersen, then Minister of Defense, refused

for his part to furnish issues pertaining to defense with a central standing (in 1937) as his conclusion was that “to base our security on arms is not possible” (quoted in Lidegaard, 1996: 119).

It may be further noted that for most of its history, Danish conscription has remained too selective for the claim to be credible that it is wholly representative of the nation. It has not been a duty for all, not even among the male citizen. In fact, with the exception of the years 1945-60, a considerable amount of those conscripted were altogether freed or at least relieved from the military forms of service. Such selectiveness has a long history as it may be observed, in this context, that a system of lottery was introduced already in 1869 to distinguish between those who really wanted to serve and the ones freed from such a duty (Bjerg, 1999: 18). Moreover, a special form of taxation was considered (and at some point approved but not implemented) to be paid by those who were to be spared the obligation to serve, and various substituting, civilian forms of service were invented already from the year 1917 onwards. Legislation then also provided for the option of refusing military service on moral grounds, then to be compensated by some 20 months of alternative, basically civil forms of service. The sway of the various military-related arguments in favor of general conscription thus remained rather modest.

One of the forms of substitution has later (since 1970) consisted of the option of serving abroad in the context of projects dealing with Danish foreign aid. A rather special invention prevails in the form of encouraged volunteerism, i.e. a system that allows those following this path to influence the timing of their entrance, choose their venue and to have the ordinary length of service reduced (cf. Engell, 1999: 82). All these deviations deduct from the general and compulsory character of the system making it in many ways selective and voluntary.

It thus seems that many of the aspirations underpinning drafting have been of a qualitative rather than quantitative nature. They have not amounted to the producing of a maximal amount of ‘able bodies’ to be spread out evenly throughout the country as for example in the Finnish case, nor has the policy pursued been one of defending each part of the country with equal determination with territory as a key concept articulating what the country is about. The overall legitimacy of the system of drafting has been relative low as indicated for example by that at some period in the 1920’s conscription - as part of doubts about the wisdom of national defense in general - was almost abolished (Lidegaard, 2003: 169).

## ONE STEP BACK, TWO FORWARDS

Germany's occupation of Denmark (1940-45) reconfirmed and further strengthened the belief that Denmark was at the mercy of major power policies. The country was, in this respect, seen to be highly vulnerable, although the occupation also demonstrated that Denmark (this went for the state but largely also for the nation) was unable to put up military resistance of any significance - even if the will of the people were in general seen as having sustained the Danish society (cf. Poulsen, 1997).

Although in some sense confirming the previous pessimistic beliefs about defense, the occupation nonetheless became formative in essence. The discursive frame changed due to the experienced humiliation, this then inviting for a new mindset and consequently a profound reversal of the policies pursued. The conclusion was clear: the previous jump of trying to move temporally as well as spatially beyond power politics had failed. The process was again one of negation. By having gained a certain understanding of itself, the country had arguably constructed quite erroneous views of its interests in relation to the external environment. Once again Denmark's other became defined as being embedded in the policies of the past, that is the policies pursued since 1864. It was thought that Denmark was now to represent a reversal of such a state of affairs: the new line to be pursued followed on from what used to be there but had to be quite different in content. Thus, what the post-occupation Denmark aspired for was in some sense the opposite of the policy that had been there since 1864. The move was again self-reflective but now critical in view of the previous, more pacifist self-reflection. The lesson drawn was that for Denmark as a political project to stand on durable ground, it had to be in tune with the temporal as well as the spatial co-ordinates provided by the predominantly power political environment. It was thought, in the context of the new mindset, that it would be futile to try to bypass the 'realities' laid out by such an environment. In order to succeed in anchoring Denmark properly, the approach to military preparedness (including the way of organizing the military effort) had to be rethought. The quite modest military preparations that had been there prior to the occupation thus stood out, in the light of the new constitutive logic, as having existentially endangered Denmark. It was hence time, as argued by Prime Minister Vilhelm Buhl, to push aside the previous quarreling concerning issues of defense. Consequently, military arguments and, in practice, defense gained a much more central standing, and equally the mood was there for conscription - thematised in military terms - to resonate far better than previously with "the Danish democratic national character" (Bjerg, 1999: 24). It was there above all for military reasons but constituted also a kind of 'school of the nation' as conscription was explicitly linked with general education between the years 1952-73.



With the pre-war neglect profoundly discredited, policies of defense got features of a truly national cause, although also some remnants of the previous cautiousness kept lingering on. The latter amounted, as expressed in the title of a book authored by Paul Villaume (1995), to Denmark becoming “allied with reservations”. Yet the drastic temporal and spatial reversal, expressed by the slogan “never again 9<sup>th</sup> of April” (the date of the German occupation) implied that the country now aspired to project itself extensively into the international sphere, including the military one as evidenced by Denmark joining NATO in 1948 (and pursuing policies of *einbindung* vis-à-vis Germany instead of the previous one of staying detached and in general outside the sphere of power politics). Denmark was thus once again in reverse (except for the Nordic part where the established parameters of time and space were seen as having remained unchanged). The country was, along these lines, now bent on unfolding spatially in the broad sphere of westernness and the security politics of the country were no longer permeated to the same extent as before by any exceptionalist understandings as to Denmark’s temporal and spatial underpinnings.

## SIGNS OF DECLINE

The impact of such rethinking was also to be traced in the sphere of recruitment policies with conscription increasingly resonating with to the identity-related as well as the more functional military needs of the country but still conscription did not succeed in holding its ground for very long. Already in 1952 it was in dispute due to the occurrence of a couple of ‘revolts’ among the conscripts in southern Jutland and on Bornholm. In 1973 the length of service was reduced to such a degree that conscripts could no more be regarded as forming an integral part of the standing forces and conscription was hence relegated to a subsidiary role. In his account regarding the place of conscription in the context of the Danish defense effort, Hans Engell (1999: 82) took such a move to imply that “time had run out for the standing, conscription-based preparedness”. Already during the 1970s the portion of those serving out of the ones initially drafted dropped to a quarter and has remained rather low ever since (Sørensen, 2000: 321). Only one out of four originally drafted has ended up doing military service, and refusal to serve was rampant. There existed, for those drafted, a broad repertoire of choice as to whether they wanted to refuse conscription, accept being conscripted or instead enter in a contracted manner, this allowing Birte Hansen (1999: 14) to argue that Danish conscription had turned rather post-modern in character. The notions pertaining to an obligation and a duty were in 1988 further played down by conscription being seen as part of a right to enter service (i.e. interpreted as a political right rather than a military duty). This ideational reversal amounts in principle to an increased stress on ‘common’ conscription in undermining some of the traditional gender-related restrictions. It does so in providing also

women with such a right to draw upon, albeit this broadening has in practice remained rather insignificant as the increased voluntarism has at the same time reduced the number of those interested in making use of their right. The option is there but as it is optional, it is not being used. Among women, only a couple of hundreds have annually chosen to serve over the recent years.

Yet, despite having deviated quite far from its formal ideational underpinnings (or because of this), the system of conscription has remained “tolerable” (cf. Heurlin, 2003: 321). Overall, it has been furnished with modest legitimacy in military as well as in ideational terms. A further proof of that the ideational ground had turned quite thin consisted of the practice of paying the ‘compulsory’ conscripts a salary. The incentive to serve does thus, in the Danish case, not just consist of a duty and a right to serve. Clearly, there are also market incentives involved along the lines of employment on the ordinary labor market as conscription is underpinned, in one of its aspects (since 1977), by a considerable economic compensation. The line pursued also implies, in one of its aspects, that the time outside service is to be freely structured by the conscripts themselves. In sum, conscription has increasingly stood out as a voluntary choice and a privilege for those who chose that path as their ‘right’, this then amounting to what Jørgen Kromann Jørgensen (2004: 39) calls an “individualization” of conscription. Such a feature has, in his view, strengthened the support that conscription enjoys, albeit it also implies that the system has become less important from a purely military perspective and boils increasingly down to its ‘educational’ functions. Various military and political arguments in favor of conscription still meet, albeit in a relatively limited and shallow manner.

More recently, the impact of the market-oriented principles that amount to a formidable individualization has become even more noticeable. For example, over the recent years commercials seem to have turned into an often used vehicle for recruitment, this testifying rather clearly that the potential recruits are appealed to rather than drafted through an obligation to serve. It also points to that the channels and ways of recruitment are changing (some of it happens by recruiting people through the engagement of civil society related organizations without the usage of military channels in the first place and hence without calling those mobilized and trained ‘conscripts’). It may also be noted, as to the messages embedded in these commercials aiming at attracting young people to contract themselves for military service, that they do not stress the importance of rights, duties, citizenship, nor do they emphasize the guarding Denmark’s territorial sovereignty as a key task. There is no drawing, with the Danish forces purported as the ‘forces for good’, on the bond between a duty to serve and rights as a citizen. The underlying ideas are not the customary ones of “killing for the state and dying for the nation” as the core departures are articulated in the title

of a book by Mjøset and van Holde (2002). Such themes, previously quite central in the context of recruitment, seem largely to have vanished from the discourse. Instead, with stress on lives to be saved and individuals to be protected there are elements of Scandinavian cosmopolitanism to be traced (cf. Rasmussen, 2004), these then being mixed with appeals to a sense of adventure, the offering of options to experience the world and, in that context, facing danger while at the same time doing something right. The commercials treat their audience as individuals rather than depicting them as citizens, thereby neglecting a drawing on links to collectives such as 'the Danish people' or the 'nation'. In other words, the deep layers of Danishness in its traditional tapping are bypassed with the audience appealed to as civilians asked to enter military service in order to aid and protect fellow civilians in distress. The military arguments advanced seem to be detached from the political ones pertaining to Denmark as a nation-state and instead the political arguments seem to pertain to a cosmopolitan scenery, this pointing to a considerable change in the discourse underpinning recruitment.

Taken together, it is the military (and thereby the Danish state) offering young people as individuals (as an increasingly professional military system is kept distinct from nation-building) the option of becoming part of counteracting various evils in a globalised world. They are not just requested to feel loyal to their co-nationals, not to speak of exclusionary patriotism in the traditional manner. Instead, they are induced to broaden their visions beyond the Danish nation-state with compassion extended also to cover people that used to be figure as outsiders in the previous military-related discourse. It is thus not only the military institution itself that is cast in a new light as also important relations pertaining to Denmark as a political project are recast and reshuffled.

Obviously, these kinds of trends do not play into the hands of conscription in its established forms, and it is hence not surprising to find that the first signs of a more serious breach of the system appeared in a report by the defense committee that worked in 1996-7. The Radical Venstre stood, in that context, for an abandonment of conscription (to be substituted by a more general 'right to defend oneself', i.e. a switch to more individual departures as to the political grounding of recruitment). The system of conscription was, in other words, regarded as having turned quite unfair in essence and amounted to an intolerable expression of inequality. However, the "Danish model" of conscription - as it has been called by Heurlin (2003: 240) - was still able to stand its ground also in political and societal terms. Instead of de-bordering in order to remain general in essence, the system had in reality become one of bordering with a tiny fraction of the population being granted access to the military sphere through conscription. In military terms, the need for mobilization was still thought of as being

there and time was thus not yet ripe for an overhaul of the system of recruitment, although the committee undertook more generally a profound rewriting of both the temporal and spatial departures that underlay Denmark's security policies. Thus, Denmark itself was taken to enjoy "unprecedented security" and the threats to Danish and European security were seen as having turned "indirect". It was further concluded that the task of the Danish Armed Forces had changed in nature "from being an element in a reactive, deterrence-based guarantee of security to also being an active element and confidence building instrument of security policy" (Danish Defense Commission, 1998: 3, 7).

Such a transformation from a territorially premised army, one leaning on assumptions pertaining to power politics and deterrence, to a means of force projection was pursued further in the White Paper on Defense Policies published in August 2003 (SPCDD). The occurrence of a considerable temporal breach was confirmed with Denmark's security being now basically linked with threats emanating with globalization. The other to be counteracted no longer consists, as it largely used to do, of the power political dangers that defined Denmark in the past (with Denmark initially trying to eschew such a sphere or later, after the Second World War, locate itself within that context). Rather the country is seen as being embedded in various possible futures, these being quite existential in character and void of distinct spatial regularity with terrorism possibly also occurring on Danish ground, this then mandating a kind of 'total defense' calling for societal mobilisation.

This opening into the direction of the society being threatened (rather than the state or the nation) could, in principle, have important implications allowing also for conscription to be essentially redefined and consequently to boom. Yet it may be observed that these openings, part of the Commission's report, have not been utilized with any vigor (partly because of the threat itself has been taken to be somewhat diffuse). It seems that they would lead in the direction of emphasizing 'risks' rather than speaking for 'security', invite for concepts such as 'a societal duty to defend' (cf. Jørgensen, 2004: 81) and could amount to homeguard-type of arrangements with the society defending itself in a folkish' manner through societal and civil-based departures rather than the traditional statist and military approaches. They would presumably amount to debates like the ones that were there in passing in the 1840s between professional, conscripted and militia-type of military systems and again with the Danish identity as a core question. In any case, currently the relevant threats are seen as consisting of those encountered in an international context as well a societal one pertaining to Denmark itself. However, the formative impact of the previous one appears to be greater than that of the latter type of threat and above all, the premises are no longer those of Denmark itself facing explicit military threats inherent in the policies of states but pertained instead to

questions linked with the future of the international system at large. In other words, Denmark has gained much more political liberty in the choice of a military manpower system without power politics mandating the opting for a system of compulsory drafting and the usage of that system on a grand scale.

As a follow-up of the revisal of the doctrinal departures undertaken by the Commission, it has been felt that time is now ripe also to reform the system of military manpower recruitment. Unsurprisingly, a break-through occurred in the sense that the White Paper portrayed conscription as having lost a major part of its relevance. Yet some needs were thought to remain, although the value was taken to be indirect with conscription being depicted as having significance in serving as a pool enabling recruitment into the ranks of professional soldiers or providing access to various skills needed in the context of coping with the consequences of sabotage or various forms of catastrophes. The argumentation was permeated by a military logic with scant attention being paid to any of the potential implications that conscription may have in a broader social and political context and in relation to Denmark's self-understanding. Those aspects have mainly vanished, it seems, from the overt official discourse. Subsequently, the revisionist mood was then reflected in the national defense policy decision taken by the Danish Government in 2004, with far less emphasis placed on the importance of conscription. The considerably changed view on conscription was reflected in that the length of service was in the end reduced to four months. Such a short period of service allows those drafted (some 6.500 annually according to plans) to get acquainted with some aspects of soldiering but does not really turn them into soldiers in a military sense. One may speak, in the view of Defense Minister Svend Aage Jensby, about "a wholly new form of conscription void of the aim of training soldiers to fight" (Mandagmorgen, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2004). This points to that the crucial linkage that used to be there in the context of conscription, namely 'killing for the state and dying for the nation' has vanished. Conscription has thus radically changed its essence, albeit it now remains - instead of dying out - as a system providing various auxiliary services as well as existing as a societal duty, albeit very few are expected to heed to the call of such a duty. Conscription appears to have a kind of 'hang-round' function in view of 'real' military duties.

## TURNING LIGHT IN ESSENCE

In a broad perspective, there seems to be very little testifying to that conscription would have been comprehended as a kind of 'must' in the case of Denmark. It has not been seen as a system embedded with profound existential meaning, nor comprehended as anything 'sacrosanct' or perceived to stand out as a 'last bastion' to be preserved in the defense of a Danish identity, one based on a tight nexus between the nation and the state. Rather, being

relatively light in ideational terms or at times even comprehended as something quite non-Danish, conscription has been easy to contest as to its basic legitimacy. The various military arguments backing conscription have only on occasions been comprehended as a 'must' that either resonates with the political needs of the country or takes precedence for military reasons over the political arguments present in the discourse. Moreover, instead of harboring the appearance of a system set up in a strictly uniform and compulsory manner, there has all along been room for manoeuvre and deviations. There has, more generally, been continuity as well as considerable change and variation to be detected with Danish conscription more recently being on its way out. It has, in the end, showed itself to be rather conducive to an altered meaning in being primarily narrowed down to a pool of recruitment for persons to be contracted on individual basis to serve on international missions. It has also been defended as a system that preserves at least some link between the military and the broader Danish society. But this notwithstanding, there appears to be very little left of conscription in its traditional compulsory and general mode or, as expressed by Jørgen Estrup, an influential politician part of several core defense policy decisions: "time has betrayed conscription in its current tapping" (cited by Heurlin, 2003: 112, my translation). Polls indicate that also the public opinion is, in the Danish case, for a professionalisation of the military. The opinion does not seem to want to hang on to conscription for any ideational reason as only the local economic effects such as employment and those linked with preserving the garrisons seem to create some hesitation in regard to scrapping conscription altogether (Mandagmorgen, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2004).

The conclusion can thus be drawn that if conscription would form a core code and stand out as a crucial conceptual configuration furnished with the task of merging various aspects of Danishness into a coherent whole, Denmark as a political project would be on its way of unraveling. The 'natural', legitimate' and 'secure' link between the people and their defense is no longer there, argues for example Hans Christian Bjerg (1996: 15). There was, no doubt, consensus about the value of conscription during the immediate post-war period, albeit it started to show signs of erosion already during the end-1960s. It has, as a system, boomed during periods of high tension but declined in importance once security has been less of a concern. As the link provided by conscription has not been conceptualized as an unproblematic given but rather seen as something dictated and imposed upon the country bringing with it tensions already early on, a variety of crucial issues seen previously as closed and non-political in essence have over time turned increasingly political and debatable. This amounts to that there appears to be considerable openness present in a formative sense with traditions currently weighting far less in the debate than has usually been the case. There is more space for manoeuvre as the institution of war - for the part of the manpower element -

does not extend itself very deep into Denmark as a political project and discursive configuration.

It may be observed, as to the current trends, that since the mid-1990s Denmark has actively engaged itself in international military operations and has successfully taken part - with Danish soldier engaging themselves in fighting - in operations in former Yugoslavia such as the 'Bøllebank' in April 1994. This kind of engagement has markedly boosted, it seems, the popularity of the military, although this time it has not played into the hands of conscription as the military to be recruited have been professionals or contracted soldiers. In other words, the variety of political arguments present in the discourse seem to favor the hands of the military, albeit not conscription as a system of recruitment.

Overall, it appears that the core question to be addressed in the case of Danish conscription - unlike countries such as Finland, Norway and Sweden - pertains to the relative ease of change. There seems, in the light of the recent reforms, to exist a lack of sedimentation in the state-nation context. The core bonds that have market conscription are taken to be conducive to change rather than speaking for durability and calling for resistance as to alterations of the existing system of military manpower recruitment.

Conscription has, no doubt, been seen as being of some value in standing out also in the case of Denmark as one of the high-policy related vehicles that contributes to the way 'Denmark' has projected itself into the future during different periods. However, there are also signs indicating that the position of conscription has remained somewhat shallow. Despite some importance, the system has in essence failed to gain an uncontested standing. It has not managed, it seems, in establishing an integral relationship to the key conceptual departures underpinning Denmark and form a platform supported by political as well as military arguments. The system of conscription is hence far from immune to changes. Instead of being carved in stone, there appears to be space for re-articulation as conscription, in terms of a narrative, has remained somewhat detached in view of some of the core articulations at the core of Denmark as a political project. The system undoubtedly enjoys certain endurance - as indicated by that the very term has so far been preserved - but the underlying constellations also allow for different policy outcomes. The fact that conscription now appears to be on its way of being linked to the underlying constitutive concepts in a manner different from the one that used to be there (and therefore of declining value for the self-realization of 'Denmark' either cast in the traditional, anti-power political manner or the post-occupation one with power politics as a core constitutive departure) seems to enable conclusions that reach well beyond the military system. They pertain above all to Denmark at large and the

formation of a Danish 'we' as a changing configuration, perhaps with Denmark having increased options of projecting itself into the external sphere as an exponent of non-power political policies and peaceful relations. This could imply, in one of its consequences, that the military sphere gains in importance as a sphere of national (read: statist) self-articulation, albeit with conscription resonating even less than previously with core articulations embedded in the Danish national lexicon.

## NOT PART OF THE PACKAGE

It appears that the idea of bringing together conceptual history, discourse analysis and constructivism allows for an exploring of the basic aspects pertaining to Denmark as a political project. As a matter of fact, a similar approach has been successfully employed by Lene Hansen (2002) in the form of an effort to trace the way that the departures of state, nation and the people have, in the case of Denmark, been tied together into conceptual constellations influencing the outcome of particular policy process. The manners in which these three concepts (which appear to catch rather succinctly the way the core struggles pertaining to the Danish 'we' have unfolded over time) are thought, articulated and fought over, then to be tied into distinct pattern, is taken to be constitutive for the conduct of particular policies. Her historically informed analysis offers, in fact, a rather profound understanding as to the unfolding of the deeper layers of Danishness. It captures well the way in which the core concepts applied in such a context have been conceived, articulated and related to each other in either enabling or constraining various conceptualization of 'Europe'. Through a usage of the resultant 'lenses of identity' (premised on how the respective concepts come together) in a manner that resists too much conceptual closure, she is able to reveal the existence of a rather strong structuring logic and depict even in detail the way it plays out in the context of a specific issue-area. Her findings do not only help to describe the minimalist and sometimes oppositional features discernible over a considerable period in Danish EU-policies; it also seems that an exploring of these layers accounts, more generally, for essential dynamics characteristic to the political unfolding of Denmark.

What is of importance here is that Hansen's approach - as well as some of her findings - appears to be quite relevant also in view of Danish defense policies and conscription. This is so as these two spheres could, in principle, stand out as equally conducive to the projection of a particular 'Denmark' into the future. As pointed out above, on occasions there has been efforts of positioning conscription at the very heart of Danishness, although for the most part the narrative has failed to turn into a dominant story. The constitutive impact has remained modest as conscription has more often than not been kept apart from deeper layers



underpinning Denmark. More particularly, abiding to a specific Danish combination of a French nation-state (with the nation thought in terms of a state) and a German conception of the nation (with the nation being defined according to descent) has, as outlined by Hansen (2002: 52), situated the construction of 'Europe' within the logic of states. In other words, 'Europe' does not figure as a sphere that reflects 'Denmark' (but stands, instead, out as a kind of anti-Denmark). 'Europe' does not figure, in calling for the formation of a sphere of specifically statist policies for these then to be pursued vis-à-vis the external world, as a platform into which Denmark can project itself to any major degree yet keeping the state-nation relation intact. In consequence, the relationship to 'Europe' and European politics has to appear as a rather detached one (implying, among other things, that Denmark has positioned itself outside European integration in the sphere of defense). Going too far into 'Europe' would imply that the state and the nation are in danger of getting divorced. If so, Denmark - understood as being underpinned by a tight coupling between the state and the nation - would no longer be its old self. Being drawn too deep into 'Europe' and getting engaged with European integration to such a degree that it turns into a sphere impacting self-constitution would imply, the argument goes, that Denmark (as a distinct way of articulating the relationships between the core concepts tied to the deeper layers of the structuring logic) collapses.

The logic revealed and explored by Hansen appears to be equally applicable in the military sphere with conscription as a case in point. One may well claim that conscription abides to a corresponding logic: it too has predominantly landed in the sphere of statist policies. The Danish tight state-nation nexus has, in essence, been constructed in spheres such as the one consisting of mandatory elementary schools (called 'Folke-skolen' in Danish, i.e. the people's schools), educational policies more generally, welfare policies or later development aid. Conscription, in turn, has primarily stood out as an arrangement and institution comprehended as having the ring of a predominantly statist arrangement (whereas the Danish home-guard based on voluntary recruitment does not suffer from this to a similar degree). Conscription has, rather than representing the true essence of Denmark and Danishness, been related - as part of parcel of the military endeavor - to lost wars and foreign ideologies such as those of power politics. It has prevailed in the form of a (functional) statist practice needed in encountering the external sphere of the non-Danish. It has remained at the fringes of Danishness instead of having turned predominantly into an integral part of the internal sphere, one that allows the Danish people to come together and coalesce as a nation, for this nation then to devise an organic and 'folkish' relationship vis-à-vis its own state. The military manpower system does not start - as it should in order to gain unquestioned political acceptance, legitimacy and thereby also certain permanence - with the 'Folk' coming together

as a nation but resides rather with the state as the state's tool needed in meeting the 'foreign', the 'non-we'.

It is to be noted in this context that the external identity of the Danish state has largely been that of an anti-power state. It has been comprehended as something quantitatively different compelling Denmark to stand in a category of its own. Elevating military affairs into a core constitutive position in a manner impacting also the assumedly peaceful nature of the nation through a tight state-nation nexus would, under such conditions, have opened the door for elements seen as 'foreign' to influence the very essence of Danishness. This is not what 'defense' has been expected to perform according to a quite influential discourse. Such a move and a breaking down of crucial borders between the internal and the external spheres would potentially have blurred and hence endangered a self-understanding premised on views of Danish peacefulness, i.e. conceptualizations of a small and inherently peaceful country that stands largely detached in a category of its own purporting itself as standing in opposition against an external, power-political world. The state could, in following Hansen's (2002: 61) remarks, be presented in a somewhat different context. It could, more particularly, have escaped and slipped out of the hands of the nation. There has, in other words, been tensions present in the sense that the state could potentially have gained undue independence and, by sliding outside the control of the rather peaceful Danish people who come together as a nation, turned into an apparatus of power and ambition.

In order to resonate with the deeper layers of Danishness premised on a tight nexus between the state and the nation, the construction of the external identity of the state had in general to be in tune with anti-power politics. If not, then the state could not have been seen as forming an integral part of Danishness. As observed by Hansen: "Denmark, it was believed, was to pursue a low foreign policy based on negotiations and patience towards great powers, a policy which, for example, manifested itself in the lack of resistance when German troops occupied Denmark in 1940" (Hansen, 2002:59; see also Branner, 2000). The military sector, including the preferred forms of drafting, does not stand out as something very central in this context, although over time the constellation has shown signs of change. As argued by Hansen (2002 59): "From the 1970s onwards this anti-power politics position turned increasingly in a more active direction with Denmark taking on a leading role in peacekeeping operations and development aid, which were presented as an antidote to the egoistic power politics of the superpowers" (see also Agersnap, 2000). With such a alteration in the discursive frame, the military effort became acceptable. Political and military arguments converged as the international context was argued to have changed.

## SIGNS OF RENEWAL

What remains to be accounted for consists of the current essence of Denmark and, in this context, probing why it has been so easy to downgrade the importance of conscription. The concluding reflections on this issue are presented by staking out three possible ways of depicting what the decisive dynamics have basically been about and exploring what kind of Denmark they point to. Denmark is in some ways no longer its old self, but where does the difference lie more precisely and how to tackle the changes that appear to be there?

For the first, one possible line of argument consists of claiming that Denmark is, in fact, on its way of regenerating and slipping back to age-old traditions. A variety of policies that previously stood out as exceptional and non-Danish in character have reappeared. There is a *traditionalist* (re)turn to be traced to what could be comprehended as power politics - and, in that context, professional soldiering. If true, such a state of affairs would imply that the Grundtvigian heritage that once tamed and quelled the power political inclinations visible at some early juncture of Danish history has now lost out. It has, more recently, disappeared from the internal scene to be taken over by the return of an even older ideology.

Consequently, the Danish state no longer remains - with more space for manoeuvre - paralyzed and prevented from engaging itself in military activities on the international scene. Political and military arguments converge with the return of traditional power politics.

Some recent scholarly observations could be interpreted as backing the claim of regeneration. Denmark has, as argued by Bertel Heurlin (2003: 269, my translation), over the recent years not restrained itself to mere peacekeeping as the country has, in fact, been part of altogether four wars. Heurlin lists, in this context, the one in Kosovo in 1999, the global wars against terrorism since 2001, the war in Afghanistan since 2001 and the Iraq-war since 2003. He adds, that "participation is not of a symbolic art: Denmark is concretely involved by the employment of fighting units". There has also been an active conduct of combat operations, and more generally, the military dimension has become an integral part of the policies pursued for example around the Baltic Rim. Arguably, instead of taking stock of the increased liberty of pursuing policies to its own liking by strengthening the various reservations in the military sphere through the pursuance of an anti-power policy, Denmark has in some sense opted for an opposite profile. It has done so in engaging itself and using the military component of its foreign policy in order to mark that the previous reservations no longer count. Denmark thus projects itself into the world in a new, more activist manner with the usage of the military field as a prominent aspect of self-constitution. The country no longer resides within the established and UN-based international normative order but positions itself on the borderline

between the inside and the outside (with participation in the Iraq war not being mandated by the UN).

It may also be observed - in spinning further along these lines - that the pursuance of these new policies occurs largely with the consent of the population (although then comprehended primarily in terms of conflict management, see *Mandagmorgen* 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2004). Actually, Denmark appears to rank rather high among the countries where public opinion sides with the new, more assertive policies of the state. Moreover, the change in relation to what could be comprehended as the traditional Danish stance of keeping a low profile in the military field does not seem to bring about any internal struggles pertaining to the essence of Denmark (Mouritzen and Hedegaard, 2004).

As observed by Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen (2004), the country no longer abstains from appearing on the international military scene but possesses both “voluntarism” and “activism”. There are clear traces, in his view, that Danish foreign policy has changed in character by becoming in some sense “militarised”. The various military arguments have gained in weight. Rasmussen further claims that Denmark has over the recent years come to regard the use of armed forces in a manner different from previous decades. The prevalent structural explanations of Danish foreign as well as defense policy have, in his view, become insufficient: “In Denmark the new focus on European integration and globalization meant that military power was understood in a new way leading to a practice of activism that transcended the cosmopolitan-defencist debate that restrained the Danish security discourse in the late 1970s and 1980s”. Jørgen Kromann Jørgensen (2004: 78) makes similar claims in the sense that the more recent policies appear, in his view, to stand out as an endeavor on behalf of the government to break with anti-power policies. Obviously, with the military arguments gaining in importance, the political scenery has undergone changes.

It may be remarked, however, that even if the observations made by Heurlin, Jørgensen as well as Rasmussen seem to hold true as such, the interpretation pertaining to the return of power politics appears to remain unsubstantiated. There does not seem to be anything backing up the argument that Denmark would be on its way of transforming itself into a distinct power political actor. The past does not stand out as Denmark’s future for example in the form of dreams pertaining to a return to the status of a small major power. No such temporal stunts and relapses into a historically quite remote past seem to have occurred, nor are any in sight. It hence appears that other explanations than those offered by an approach premised on the assumption of a return of some pre-Grundtvigian traditions have to be explored.

A second - and perhaps more plausible - account is offered by Lene Hansen (2002: 59), one premised on the idea that Denmark has internally stood by its distaste for power politics but it is the external conditions that have more recently undergone change and, importantly, these external changes are now increasingly conducive to the inner character of Denmark. The previous tension is no longer there and the country is thus free to plunge itself - without endangering its identity premised on peacefulness - into the sphere of international relations. Instead of Denmark changing in essence, the external conditions have turned very different in the form of the end of the Cold War and the vanishing of power politics that tended to amount to traditional wars between states. Denmark hence gets freed from a number of previous constraints and is increasingly at liberty to express itself also in a military manner on the current international scene. The story is one of continuity, albeit not in a power political sense. Military issues, as reflections of peaceful endeavors and general humanitarian aspirations (a kind of military humanism), may now be brought to bear with the essence of Denmark, and this can be done without immediately driving a wedge between the state and the nation or, to put it differently, upset the deeper layers on which Denmark is grounded.

In essence, the changing external conditions now seem to invite for fulfillment. Danish peacefulness no longer has to be delimited and constrained only to the internal sphere (or, for that matter, the Nordic scene). It may now be sustained for it to equally appear and unfold in the international domain. The new policies may be pursued with vigor and without constraints, this providing Denmark with a rather activist stance, a quite military-prone profile and a position among the countries pioneering to stabilize the new, increasingly cosmopolitan international order. The military institution may, in that context, be de-linked from the nation and the processes of nation-building by reverting to more restricted forms of drafting with emphasis on professional service. In other words, engagement in military activities on the international scenes has, more recently, assumed a different (inclusive) meaning, one playing into the hands of the established Danish 'we', although allowing it to unfold within a far broader sphere than has been the case previously.

Much seems to speak for this kind of *transitionalist* account, one premised on the idea that the increased harmony that is there in the shape of a new and qualitatively different external sphere now invites Denmark to unfold in an undistorted manner. Importantly, the end-point of such a transitionalist story is given. The historical tensions between either the internal Denmark endeavoring at overcoming the obstacles presented by the qualitatively different external sphere by staying aloof and remaining in a category of its own or, instead, by trying to accommodate the 'alien' by pursuing policies of a similar kind, can now be defused. Those tensions belong, with the end of the Cold War constituting a true formative moment, to the

dustbin of history. They have been rejected with the occurrence of a third (activist) choice, one that does not divert Denmark from its true essence. Denmark's inner 'soul' is no longer at risk but allows for broad and active military engagement (albeit this analysis has not yet been extended, it seems, to apply also to 'Europe' and Denmark's participation in the EU-related security policies). Denmark may continue to unfold guided by its own true essence. The past may also become the future. The country does not have to stand out any more as a somewhat particular case (representing for example 'foot-note' policies in the context of NATO) as the Grundtvigian ideology has over the recent years become increasingly applicable on the international scene and may now also engulf participation in military activities. The transitionalist view implies that Denmark can under the present conditions aspire for fulfillment and project itself rather broadly as an inherently peaceful entity.

As one of the consequences, also the meaning of military matters changes. Instead of being seen as representing and reflecting the 'evil' nature of the qualitatively different external sphere, they turn into an instrument applicable in purifying and securing the new nature of international relations. By being converted into 'a force for good' they may be used in the counteracting and tackling of various disturbances located at the fringes of the system. Military affairs shrink, in this context, in significance as the challenges tend to be rather modest in nature. In any case, the change allows Denmark to engage itself actively as part of the international society and pursue policies with military involvement becoming - instead of remaining something 'alien' and non-Danish in reflecting power politics - part and parcel of the country's overall policies. In fact, they may conquer a place at the very heart of Denmark as a political project. The past no longer counts in the sense of Denmark remaining in danger of slipping to the pursuance of power political or, on a more principal level, as the difference that separates the external from the internal sphere. In essence, Denmark is set free - with the contradistinction between the internal and the external spheres having been nullified - to construct itself in a struggle against various current and future threats embedded in global development.

The bordering of Denmark in spatial terms changes as well. One of the implications of the argued harmony between the different spheres, the internal and the external one, consist of that also the choice of a military manpower system comes out differently. The system does not have to be designed and articulated with the aim of safeguarding the nations grip on its state. This is so as there is no ideationally different field for the state to exploit and engage with. The state is prevented, due to profound changes in the quality of the international system, from turning 'foreign' and to pursue tasks that are in conflict with the peaceful aspirations of the nation. Consequently, conscription turns by and large meaningless as to its

constitutive impact (unless totally rethought to correspond to the requirements of the cosmopolitan era). It becomes redundant in terms of its traditional (political) significance as there is little need for mediation between the nation and the state in the field of military matters. Issues pertaining to recruitment of manpower are then largely stripped of their previous ideational impact and restrained to their more narrow military meaning. The functional and intra-military perspectives grow in importance, this then bolstering professional service and the application of normal market principles also in the domain of military affairs.

Some problematic aspects remain to be tackled, though. This is so as the accounts offered by the two lines of explanation outlined above, the first one being ontologically traditionalist (with the true goals anchored in the power political past) and the second transitionist in essence (with Denmark seen as finally on its way of achieving the peace-related goals residing in the future that have been on the nation's agenda already for long but have so far out of reach due to the power political nature of international relations) seem problematic. Both are premised on the idea that there remains an established and durable anchoring point - to be found in the past - for Denmark to utilize. In order to exploit the potential that is inherently there in Denmark as a quite established project, one has either to dig deep into the history of the country in order to rediscover and revive past departures or, alternatively, have renewed faith in the Grundtvigian (anti-power political) heritage as a teleologically predetermined direction, one that is now to be continued under increasingly favorable conditions.

However, also a third line of thinking is conceivable. The story could be depicted in a rather different manner with Denmark having lost, due to the end of the Cold War and the way international relations have been thematised in the post-September 11 situation, both previous points of anchorage. The horizon of inter-state relations as the sphere of power politics no more constitutes a firm and reliable point of anchorage. Such development, if true, renders Denmark into a quite open construction. It invites a valorization of the present and requires a going beyond any dichotomies premised either as transitionalism or traditionalism, these two usually defining the space available for theoretical informed efforts of tracing the futures available for Denmark. Both appear to be premised on a linkage between past and future (albeit each in their own way). They downgrade the very event of change as to the available anchoring points, thereby disabling inquiries into the politics of emergence. In essence, they tend to miss the ambiguity and openness involved in the foundational moment that Denmark has experienced with the turmoil of the last years.

The recent fate of Danish conscription could, in this perspective, also be highlighted as part of a moment that is marked by the absence of political, epistemic and cultural foundations of the

social order located in the past. It should tie in with the present seen as a historical moment reflecting the emergence of quite different constitutive stories. There is some contingency - elements of power politics as well as politics of peace - to be traced but above all flux and indeterminacy. The political arguments are neither to be premised on the negation nor the fulfillment of some aspects of the past but should be seen in terms of a twist that severs the past from the present and the future. It seems that Denmark is rather about becoming rather than being, this then adding to the options of defining what the project is basically about. In essence, Denmark becomes reflective in being premised on the presence of the future, i.e. events which have yet to occur but nonetheless serve as motives for action today. The past dangers of the power political world (as well as the ideal solutions) have been written off with the political and the military arguments dominant in the discourse being instead premised on managing possible events in the future, and in some sense the mastering of time.

A discursive frame anchored in possible future threats - such as terrorism - impacts above all the military sphere with military affairs then also becoming far more central in the overall discourse underpinning what Denmark is about. The faith of conscription as an increasingly post-national and individualist narrative may well be depicted as indicating and pointing, in its own relatively light way, to the dissolution of the previous markers of certainty. At large, there seems to exist space to comprehend the military endeavor in a variety of ways based on the increased plurality and openness that is there as to Denmark's self-understanding. The military arguments may gain in weight but this is not to be interpreted against the background of some of the previous discursive frames now part of the past. Conscription may, in the current temporal context, still hang on by resonating with the new constitutive stories and by carving out its own specific niche, albeit it appears to be doomed to a rather shadowy existence facing also acutely the danger of permanent extinction in being too much determined by the resonance between political and military arguments part of discursive frames that have now largely lost their relevance.



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