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DANISH SUPPORT FOR THE BALTIC STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE 1988-1991: A HAWK-DOVE DOMESTIC CONFRONTATION

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ABSTRACT

When the Baltic States regained their independence in 1991, Denmark had been one of their very strongest supporters, at a time when many European countries looked at the Baltic aspirations with caution. It was one of the first examples of the new post-Cold War "activist" Danish foreign policy strategy. It was not, however, without difficulties. Thus, the article argues that the Danish Social Democratic centre-left and Conservative-Liberal centre-right disagreed on how to support the Balts in practice and at what price. The difference was rooted in a hawk-dove disagreement over détente and the Soviet Union. Government party colour, the article argues, is therefore likely to have been crucial for the Danish policy. Had the relatively hawkish centre-right government not been in power, it is very doubtful that we would have seen the kind of aggressive diplomatic support for Baltic independence as we saw from Denmark leading up to 1991.

When the Baltic countries fought their way to independence in 1991, three factors in particular made it possible: the implosion of the Soviet Union, US support for the Baltic cause (pressuring the Soviet Union to abstain from massive bloodshed) and, most of all, an energetic local drive for independence in each of the Baltic countries. However, small countries, especially Denmark and Iceland, also played an important role (Readman, 2006, p. 32), by providing a different array of diplomatic assistance and support. Not so much because Denmark or Iceland mattered particularly much in international politics, but because they mobilized others to follow[1]. This was especially important, when American attention was distracted by events in other parts of the globe, as was the case, for example, during the First Gulf War. As such,

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[1] It is not the purpose of this article to attempt to determine which of these two countries delivered the most important help to the Balts. The help delivered by Denmark and Iceland was, in any event, quite different. For both countries there was, from early on, a link to the US, which was keen on utilizing both Nordic countries to indirectly promote a policy that it itself felt unable to do because of the precarious nature of the US-Soviet relationship. This led the US, on occasion, to directly ask both Iceland and Denmark to criticize the Soviet Union on its behalf (For Iceland, see (Readman, 2006: p. 18), for Denmark, see (Udenrigsministeriet ((Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA)), March 24 1990). However, especially in the relationship with the US, the two diverged. Denmark embraced this cooperation with the US, characterized by being moderately ahead of the US, because the Danes, perceived this strategy as the most efficient way to try to keep the US interested in the Baltic countries (Olesen, 2013: pp. 354-55 & 362-65). Iceland, on the other hand, might have chosen to go beyond that role, especially with the early Icelandic recognition of Lithuania's independence (de jure) in February 1991. This was at least what an US official told the Danish embassy in Washington in February 1991 (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), February 14 1991).

understanding the reason why, is an important part of the story about the Baltic struggle for independence in 1991.

1. THE BALTIC PROJECT AS A DANISH ACTIVIST PROJECT

Understanding small state support for the Baltic cause could therefore mean analysing either Icelandic or Danish Baltic policies. This article focuses on the Danish case, because a consensus on the Baltic policy between the main political factions was initially, as we shall see, rather weak in Denmark[2]. This means that at least one significant competing foreign policy line existed, ensuring for analysis a voice critical to the official Danish Baltic policy.

The Danish Baltic policy is also crucial to understanding Danish foreign policy at the end of the Cold War in general. Thus, in Denmark, the Baltic project became one of the very first examples of a new kind of Danish foreign policy "activism" that followed after the end of the Cold War (Olesen, 2012). Activism in a Danish foreign policy context roughly means that Denmark actively prioritized its limited resources to initiatives believed to further a specific Danish agenda – usually the spreading or strengthening of perceived Danish and Western values abroad[3]. The activist project has generally enjoyed a very broad backing across parties in Denmark (Petersen, 2004, pp. 446-447) to an extent that seemingly stands in contrast to the last Cold War years of bitter foreign policy strife in Danish politics (the so-called "footnote years" spent debating NATO's nuclear strategy). However, as will be shown, this consensus was not initially present with regards to the Danish Baltic project[4]. Rather, the centre-right government, made up predominately by the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party[5], pursued support for Baltic independence much more aggressively than the predominately Social Democratic centre-left opposition would have liked. When and how did the consensus about Danish "activism" then indeed come about? And why could the centre-right and centre-left not initially agree on the Danish Baltic policy?

The approach to the Danish international deliberations in this article goes against the traditional approach to the topic in the literature. Thus, Danish support for the independence of the Baltic countries from 1989 has often been regarded as a prime example of consensus about the new Danish activism in those crucial years when the Cold War was coming to an end (Mouritzen, 1992, p. 18, Petersen, 2004, p. 483) or internal Danish discussions have simply been ignored (Heurlin, 1998). However, based on declassified material on the "behind

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2 In Iceland a centre-left government seemingly competed with its centre-right opposition to be the most pro-Baltic. This was at least the view expressed by the Icelandic ambassador to Denmark in February 1991 (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), February 14 1991). This might be because Iceland, a NATO member that benefitted from a geographical position in the middle of the Atlantic (Readman, 2006: p. 18), was less vulnerable vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

3 While the ideas upon which activism was based were certainly around much earlier (Branner, 2000), the fact remains that it only took centre stage at the end of the Cold War.

4 (Hansen, 1996: pp. 53-55) briefly addresses the Social Democratic caution, but ultimately underplay its importance. This article argues that it was a symptom of a more general disagreement and therefore much more important.

5 The Social Liberals joined the government from 1988-1990, but were not influential in foreign policy issues.

closed doors" deliberations of Danish politicians, this article will, as indicated above, instead argue that the consensus about the Danish Baltic policy was less than perfect, and set out to investigate how we can explain why that was the case.

The main hypothesis of this article is that the initially sparse Danish consensus about Danish activism and Baltic policies can be explained by analysing the divide that separated the way the centre-right government and the Social Democratic opposition reasoned about foreign policy along hawk-dove lines. In so doing the article will argue that disagreements between the two camps can be attributed to the relative importance each camp attributed to détente and the Soviet Union. Answering these questions is important from a Danish perspective to understanding the roots of Danish foreign policy activism. It is important from a Baltic perspective to understanding what really motivated a key Western country to support the Baltic cause during the crucial years leading to independence. And it is important for a broader audience interested in how differences in foreign policy preferences along a hawk-dove divide influence how different parties and politicians perceive foreign policy challenges.

2. HAWKS AND DOVES IN THE DANISH COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY

Hawks and doves are oft-used metaphors in international relations used to describe two ideal foreign policy positions on the question of accommodation vs. confrontation with adversaries[6]. The differences between hawks and doves can range from outright warmongering to full-scale pacifism (Schultz, 2005, pp. 7-8). The categories are quite broad. On the one hand being a hawk or a dove means having different end goals. A pacifist might value peace, and a warmonger might value enemy suffering above any loss in terms of national interests. However, in the real world, these ideal types are rare and most politicians will tend to occupy the wide middle range between the two. Both being hawkish or dovish is a matter of degree. Therefore, the difference in goals is likely to be in terms of having different conceptions regarding the acceptable cost of conflict and war. Being a hawk or a dove also often entails, however, entertaining different ideas about cause and effect in international relations. That is, scripts and schemata about what consequences to expect from taking, for example, a tough line vis-à-vis an opponent in a negotiation. Is such a foreign policy line usually likely to produce desired concessions? Or is it instead more likely to provoke more stubborn resistance? As such, especially moderate hawks and doves can often share objectives such as reaching a peaceful settlement of a conflict, but differ in what they believe to be the most efficient way to achieve those objectives (Onderco and Wagner, 2012, p. 178).

In Denmark, few inside the main parties can be characterized as anything other than *moderate* hawks or doves. As such, the doves, generally the Social Democrats and the Social Liberals, placed more emphasis on détente than the hawks, primarily the Liberals and the Conservatives, who gave more priority to deterrence and a stern foreign policy towards the

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[6] The metaphor is particularly used to characterize different positions in the American foreign policy debate (see for example (Schultz, 2005), (Burgos, 2008) and (Onderco & Wagner, 2012)). The term, though originating in the US, it need not be limited to American foreign policy.

adversary. But it was a question of degree. After the Social Liberals, who had initially opposed Danish membership in 1949, had accepted it as a fait accompli in 1957, there was no real mainstream opposition to Denmark's NATO membership as such. This also meant that the Danish NATO strategy throughout the Cold War was predominately that of a loyal ally – though there were exceptions (Villaume, 1995). Thus, on the really big issues, such as the presence of American bases as well as nuclear weapons in Greenland or the acceptance of Germany into NATO, Denmark had acquiesced to allied requests (DUPI, 1997, Mouritzen and Olesen, 2010). But on other issues, most notably on Danish adherence to détente and on UN norm promotion as well as on the Danish attempt to link defence and aid money together when evaluating the Danish contribution to NATO, Denmark attempted to retain a separate initiative in its policies. In such cases the Danish moderate hawks would generally be less inclined to challenge the official NATO line than the doves – arguably because the preferred foreign policy line of the hawks themselves most often lay closer to the NATO line than was the case with the doves. Until the late 1970s the differences between hawks and doves were overshadowed by a general agreement between Social Democrats, Liberals, and Conservatives about the NATO policy, but especially in the 1980s this agreement was greatly weakened. And because the Social Liberals at the time largely agreed with the centre-right government on economic issues, but remained a dove on foreign policy, the result was the so-called Footnote Policy years: A decade during which a dovish majority in Parliament, spearheaded by the Social Democrats and Social Liberals, forced the hawkish centre-right government, under Prime Minister Schlüter and Minister for Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, to pursue a dovish strategy on nuclear weapons in spite of thereby going against the official NATO line.

This was the state of affairs until the election of 1988, which came to be called the "nuclear election." It punished the parties who had supported the so-called "Footnote Policy" and was the first step on the road towards its eventual breakdown. Its abolition greatly weakened the Danish détente-faction. It also removed from Danish politics a topic, which had for a decade been a core point of contention in the foreign and security policy debates. Finally, the break with the footnotes came simultaneously with the growing awareness that the thawing of the Cold War opened room for new initiatives in Danish foreign policy. The pressing question became what those initiatives should be.

In Denmark, times of change have often led to the establishment of commissions on foreign policy or defence, in order to evaluate if change is required on these issues. And, in 1989, a Danish Foreign Policy Commission was established with exactly this goal in mind. In content, their report was quite technical, as it dealt with much administrative restructuring within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, even if the Commission itself did not deliver any truly comprehensive analysis of Danish foreign policy, the few comments that it did make on this matter, signalled that the Danish foreign policy elite was preparing for change. Thus, the Commission report clearly stated that:

> "There has in the Commission been agreement on the point that when stiffened fronts dissolve, it becomes more difficult to orientate while at the same time the need for this and the possibilities to gain influence through new structures are increased. There is therefore

> a need for an active diplomacy for practicing an active internationalism [in this article termed "activist foreign policy"]. Compared to the international conditions the Foreign Policy Commission of 1957 worked under, the situation today is marked by completely different circumstances that require new thinking" (Udenrigskommissionen, 1990, pp. 14-15, author's translation from Danish).

There was no doubt among commission members that Danish foreign policy had to change drastically to adapt to the possibilities and challenges of a new world. This marks a crucial development towards Danish foreign policy activism, not least since the report had a very broad base, not only among the Danish political parties but also in Danish civil life. But what kind of activism? Ellemann-Jensen's opening statement that inaugurated the Commission's work indicated what was in store with the new policy. He stated that while Danish foreign policy practitioners should still prioritize Danish national interests:

> "... we harbor - as a society carried by the respect for the individual, for democracy, and for international legal security - just as strong a wish for other countries to have improved possibility to enjoy the same goods as us" (Udenrigskommissionen, 1990, p. 39, author's translation from Danish).

This statement stressed the strong ideological element in activist internationalism – or activist foreign policy, as it is called in this article. As mentioned above, this was not new; Ellemann-Jensen cited Denmark's on-going aid policy as a good example of this foreign policy line. However, what was new was that activism was given (at least rhetorically) equal weight with classic Danish national interests, such as the safeguarding of Danish political and economic independence, and that it was to focus on a small number of targets in order to maximize Danish influence. As Ellemann-Jensen stated: "Prioritizing will therefore be a keyword" (Udenrigskommissionen, 1990, p. 40, author's translation from Danish). Priority was exactly what the Danish government was about to give to its support for the Baltic countries' struggle for independence.

3. THE CASE: DANISH DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT THE BALTIC INDEPENDENCE PROJECT

One can speak of two phases of disagreement: When Baltic independence movements began to stir in 1988, it was initially the Social Democrats who were in the forefront arguing for Danish involvement, while the centre-right government insisted on restraint and on the continuation of the policy of strict non-recognition and isolation of local Baltic authorities. However, after just a few years, the positions were reversed. From 1990, the Danish centre-right government aggressively pursued contacts with the Balts, while it was the Social Democrats that pleaded for caution and restraint, though primarily behind closed doors.

In order to explain this shift, a short judicial back-story to Denmark's relationship with the Baltic countries and their occupation by the Soviet Union in 1940 is needed. Thus, the truth was that, in the beginning of 1988, Denmark had little in terms of a specific Baltic strategy. Denmark had been occupied by Nazi-Germany when the Baltic countries were annexed by the Soviet Union and as such had not had to actively deal with that annexation. Furthermore,

after Denmark joined NATO in 1949, its Baltic policy came to mirror the US policy, which was a policy of non-recognition of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic countries of 1940. Contact with local Baltic authorities was therefore forbidden, because it was feared that such contacts could be interpreted by the Soviet Union as an indirect *de jure* acceptance of the annexation (Petersen, 2004, p. 483).

Events were proceeding at a brisk pace in 1988: The reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev were loosening the Soviet grip around the Baltic countries. Simultaneously, events in the Baltic countries themselves were moving quickly with widespread popular outcries in particular directed against the historical annexation, linked as it was to the infamous Molotov-Rippentrop Pact, in which Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler divided Eastern Europe between themselves. Though this criticism had not yet developed into a full-fledged popular demand for independence, it was clear, also to local Baltic authorities, that popular attitude towards Russia was steadily worsening. Finally, neighbouring Sweden was drastically boosting its involvement in the Baltic area through the establishment of consulate links to the Baltic countries (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), April 7 1989). This was initially easier for Sweden due to the fact that Sweden, while WWII was still raging, had accepted the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States and could therefore negotiate directly with the local Baltic authorities.

This was the state of affairs, which Danish politicians had to deal with in in 1988 and 1989. In the following, the argument will be made that the Danish internal disagreements can be explained on the basis of old hawk-dove differences between Liberals and Social Democrats that simply carried over from their Cold War strategies to their forming activist policies.

3.1 Before January 1990: Social Democrats press in vain for more active engagement

The most substantial discussion about establishing the Danish Baltic Project occurred between Liberal Minister for Foreign Affairs Ellemann-Jensen and the leading Social Democrats from 1989 and onwards. Initially, much of the disagreement among the parties was technical, and related to how the policy of non-recognition could be pursued in practice. Ellemann-Jensen adhered closely to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' recommended line described above, while former Prime Minister and former Social Democratic party leader Anker Jørgensen and current Social Democratic party leader Svend Auken were impatient. But there were also signs of more fundamental differences between the two parties. In the minutes from a Danish debate connected to a Nordic Foreign and Development Ministers' meeting in August 1989 over the Nordic Baltic policies, Auken is referenced to have said:

> "…concerning the Baltic States he did not find that Denmark was particularly active. He wondered if the reason for this was the policy of non-recognition, which seemed to represent a restraint for Denmark and Norway. If one looked at Sweden and Finland, they were capable of doing quite different things…. He had to ask if the time had not come to reconsider the doctrine about non-recognition, in such a way that one could expand the scope of contact with the Baltic countries…." (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), August 1989, author's translation from Danish).

Furthermore, Auken is referenced to have said "…he wanted to make clear that they [the Social Democrats] did not want to support separatist movements…." (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), August 1989, author's translation from Danish).

This statement indicates two things about Social Democratic thinking about grand strategy in 1989. First, it supports the assertion above that the Social Democrats did not have a problem giving up the strict interpretation of a policy of non-recognition. Second, the conclusion at the end - that they did not want to support separatist movements - indicates that the reason that non-recognition did not matter as much to the Social Democrats now was that the Cold War was thawing. They saw this as being primarily due Gorbachev's reforms, and as confirming evidence for their détente-leaning understanding of how to approach the Cold War. With Gorbachev as a negotiating partner rather than an adversary, Social Democrat's concerns about possible Soviet attempts to frame a Danish relaxation of the policy of non-recognition as an acceptance of their 1940 annexation of the Baltic countries were also less than the Liberals'. Thus, the Social Democrats sought a solution to the Baltic problem in 1989 through increased contacts and cooperation with Gorbachev, thereby seeking to combine a cautious activism in the Baltics with their détente based Cold War strategy.

Ellemann-Jensen initially largely rejected the Social Democratic concerns on the grounds that the Baltic countries themselves allegedly did not want the non-recognition policy abandoned,[7] although he shared their interest in getting involved in the Baltic countries. However, a key concern for him was also that the policy of non-recognition was just then being debated among the Western European countries and in NATO. Thus, "It was therefore the position of the Minister for Foreign Affairs that one should not rock the boat by changing formalities."[8] As long as the NATO line was firmly set against giving up on non-recognition, the Minister for Foreign Affairs was against it. The Baltic countries were occupied countries, and any leaders there were assumed to be henchmen of the occupying power. Therefore, the West had to demonstrate its opposition to the occupation by refusing to have contacts with Baltic representatives.

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7 In fact, the Baltic leaders sometimes paid relatively little attention to the policy of non-recognition in their eagerness to secure contacts with the West, (see for example, Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), March 10 1989). What Ellemann-Jensen might have meant here may have been along the lines that the Baltic states *ought* not to wish for Denmark to give up its policy of non-recognition. In fact, the Danish policy towards the Baltic countries could be paternalistic at times. In October, 1990, a senior Danish official, wrote in a hand-written comment on a memo that suggested the Balts were taking a step back for tactical reasons, "Yes, if we can presuppose rationality with the Balts" (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), October 31 1990, author's translation from Danish,).

8 Minutes from a debate at the Nordic Foreign and Development Ministers' meeting in August 1989 (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), August 1989, author's translation from Danish,). It is curious that Minister for Foreign Affairs Ellemann-Jensen would choose the expression "rocking the boat", as it was exactly the phrase that would come to symbolize the policy opposite to his own on the Soviet Union and the Baltic question: one must not "rock the boat" and make life more difficult for Gorbachev, because Gorbachev was "our man" in the Soviet Union. In fact the term was used by Ellemann-Jensen as late as March 13, 1990 (Svensson, Terkel: "Anerkendelsen står fast" in *Berlingske Tidende*).

3.2 Roles are reversed: Aggressive government support for the Balts in 1990

In late 1989 changes were underway regarding the NATO policy towards the Baltic countries. Most strikingly, the US, previously the key proponent for non-recognition, gradually began to change its view. This did not go unnoticed in Copenhagen. Puzzled Danish ministerial inquiries into the matter were later met with the response, "You can do a lot of things if only you have good lawyers" (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA) March 5 1991). This change on the American side was influenced by and coincided with the fact that stronger and stronger evidence suggested that the Baltic governments could no longer be seen as Moscow puppets. Nevertheless, not all NATO countries decisively changed their Baltic policies as a consequence as anything that could now be said to support Baltic pleas for independence came to be seen as creating difficulties for Gorbachev. "Don't rock the boat" and thereby risk the new détente was a common viewpoint in many Western European capitals[9].

In Denmark the government used the changed conditions to make a drastic shift in its foreign policy. Thus, on January 17, 1990, the Minister for Foreign Affairs sanctioned a crucial memo officially giving up Denmark's policy of non-recognition and opening the option of contact with the Baltic local governments – many of which were newly elected in early 1990 (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), January 17 1990). Because of these changes, establishing contacts with the Balts shifted to being a quite hawkish initiative directly challenging Soviet authority. For the same reason, the Social Democrats also changed their position since widespread contact with the Balts could no longer be combined with a détente-based foreign policy. This led to a series of internal disagreements between Liberal Ellemann-Jensen and the leading Social Democrats throughout the period, which were very different from the disagreements prior to the abandoning of the strict policy of non-recognition on January 17, 1990. It is to these new disagreements that we will now turn.

Some of the differences came out in the open in the April 1990 debates on the Baltic policy in the Danish Parliament. On the surface, there was an almost historic consensus among the Danish parties about the Baltic policy, since none of them, from the left-wing Socialist's People's Party to the nationalist right-wing Progress Party, opposed it. This also mirrored the attitude in the population, where two thirds, almost independent of political affiliation, condemned the Soviet repression of Lithuania (Gallup, 1991). Besides the obvious incentives not to be on the "wrong" side of public opinion, the general agreement among the political parties seemed to be anchored in a general feeling of small state sympathy (See for instance the debate in Parliament on April 18 1990, Folketinget, April 18 1990).

This consensus was not perfect, however. If one zooms in on the motivations of each side of Parliament, one realizes that although they might have shared a certain amount of small state sympathies, all parties in Parliament did not see the situation in exactly the same light.

The Danish government and the politically extreme right in Parliament focused on the historical wrongs inflicted upon the Baltic countries by the Soviet Union and expected good

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[9] Uffe Ellemann-Jensen refers to the use of this term in the international debates in his autobiography (Ellemann-Jensen, 1996: p. 133)

Soviet behaviour as proof that it was no longer the brutal great power it had been in 1940. In addition, the right in Parliament focused on Denmark's historical experience with great powers. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ellemann-Jensen stressed in Parliament on April 18, 1990, that:

> "In the attempt to restore contacts [with the Balts], we owe it to the Balts and to ourselves to proceed responsibly. The situation in the Baltic countries and especially in Lithuania is tense. The process which the Baltic countries have initiated in different ways is both difficult and dangerous. It is our duty to plan our policy in such a manner that it benefits and at least does not hurt the chances for the process to succeed, and that requires that we act with afterthought and responsibility," (Folketinget, April 18 1990, author's translation from Danish).

Conservative Per Stig Møller stressed the Baltic movements as a natural consequence of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika policies and "Therefore, the Baltic conflict questions Gorbachev's credibility. If he wants democracy, he must respect the decisions of democracy" (Folketinget, April 18 1990, author's translation from Danish). This also corresponds well with the aforementioned statement of Ellemann-Jensen regarding the need to push the Soviets in the right direction and points to general agreement between the two largest government parties around a quite hawkish foreign policy line: If one wanted results from enemies, they must be pushed.

On the political left of the Danish Parliament, most among notably the Social Democrats, the Socialist's People's Party and the Social Liberals, their small state sympathy was connected to their vision for a more orderly international system, where great powers could not simply impose their will on small states. Social Democratic Party leader Auken remarked in the Foreign Policy Committee, on what were likely his own views, which he projected on the Danish voters, that he thought the reason the Baltic countries commanded such great sympathy with the Danes was that Denmark is:

> "…a small country that was put under pressure by great powers. The same had been the case in Afghanistan and Vietnam and, to a degree, in Nicaragua. It was all about special resistance towards the great powers saying that they had special rights in their own backyards" (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), April 4, 1990, author's translation from Danish).

Thus, even the relatively dovish Social Democrats expressed an interest in making demands of the Soviet Union. The choice of historical examples, however, somewhat softens the statement. Afghanistan was another example of Soviet tyranny, but in Vietnam and Nicaragua it was American interventions he criticized. As such, one senses an attempt to criticize the Soviet Union without simultaneously joining the NATO hardliners. Furthermore, the Social Democrats were also quite sceptical towards Lithuanian conduct regarding independence in particular, which they found too hasty and risky. This reflects that the Social Democrats, in all likelihood, still had continued détente as their primary goal, and that they feared that too forceful a Danish posture might provoke the Soviet Union and weaken détente efforts there. The scepticism regarding the Balts is also reflected in the summaries of Auken's remarks at

the Social Democratic parliamentary group meeting on March 13, 1990, where he cautioned, "We must be careful not to be sucked into the diplomatic game. There is no need for Danish adventurism" (Socialdemokraterne, March 13, 1990, author's translation from Danish). He continued along these lines at another group meeting two weeks later:

> "My best advice is that we shall be patient. Even if it might seem a peculiar example, I want to point out that Greenland's self-rule took 4-5 years [to establish] after full agreement about establishing it had been reached. We must keep in mind that if things go wrong in Lithuania, everything is threatened. Not just perestroika, but also the German reunification and the presently favourable disarmament efforts" (Socialdemokraterne, March 27, 1990, author's translation from Danish).

Erik B. Smith, a Social Democratic member of Parliament, put it even more bluntly on April 18, 1990, when the Lithuanian crisis had been a centre of attention for over a month, "To the question about the development in the Baltic countries, I would like to caution restraint. Lithuania is gambling with Europe's security" (Socialdemokraterne, April 18 1990, author's translation from Danish). Social Democratic ambivalence towards the Lithuanians was probably rooted in one of the most fundamental aspects of the Danish centre-left's dovish Cold War strategy: That détente was the most effective means to soften and break down Cold War enmity and mistrust.

The smaller left-wing parties seemed to share Social Democratic sentiment, although the Social Liberals do not seem to have made any big impact on the government's line. Social Liberal spokesman Jørgen Estrup stressed in Parliament, "The foundation for this debate must be the realization that it is an incredibly difficult situation, not just for the Baltic countries, but also for the reform-friendly faction in the Kremlin" (Folketinget, April 18 1990, author's translation from Danish). So, too, was the general position of Socialist People's Party spokesman Gert Petersen, who remarked in the same debate in Parliament:

> "I agree with the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Denmark, when we – and we must do this unconditionally – support the demands for independence [coming] from Lithuania, we must do it with reason and responsibility, for, of course, it must be done in such a way that one does not sink the entire ship" (Folketinget, April 18 1990, author's translation from Danish).

Petersen then went on to talk about the promising development in reform movements within the cities of the Soviet Union. This last point, however, again shows the difference between the government line and representatives of the political left in Parliament. While the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the centre-right government stressed that one must not do anything that could hurt Denmark or the Balts, the centre-left and the left were more concerned about hurting reform movements within the Soviet Union.

There were limits for the Liberals as well, however. In the summer of 1990, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ellemann-Jensen, as host of the CSCE conference in Copenhagen on human rights and minority rights, rejected the Baltic application for observer status, though he still invited them as guests of Denmark. According to Ellemann-Jensen, doing otherwise could

have caused the entire conference to become a failure due to Soviet backlash (Ellemann-Jensen, 1996, pp. 137-38). A decision that might seem to mirror the “don’t rock the boat” policy that guided many other European countries. However, the incident is also consistent with an overall Danish strategy based on being in the forefront regarding support of the Balts, but not so far ahead as to risk being marginalized – for example by becoming responsible for the entire conference’s possible failure (see also footnote 1 for a discussion of the Danish strategy). This seems especially likely if one considers the fact that Denmark together with Iceland proceeded to work hard for Baltic participation in the follow-up in Paris in November 1990, as well as the fact that they hosted a press conference for the Balts, when it became clear that efforts to include the Balts had failed. (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), November 22 1990).

3.3 End game: Disagreements during the final months of the Baltic struggle for independence in 1991

By 1991, the Danish Baltic Project enjoyed considerable public support. In principle the same was true in Parliament where no major party ever directly challenged the core of the policy. However, there were certainly still subtle nuances in approach that persisted in 1991. This became evident not least in the way the different parties reacted to three key events: the news of the Lithuanian TV tower massacre in early 1991, the August coup, and eventual Baltic independence when the August coup failed.

In a Foreign Policy Committee meeting on January 15, 1991, Ellemann-Jensen briefed members about the preceding negotiations in the “council of the twelve” where Denmark, as mentioned earlier, had pushed hard for a stern Western European demarche of the Soviet massacre in Vilnius. Ellemann-Jensen characterized the negotiations and the demarche in the following manner:

> “Some countries had found that if one reacted too harshly [towards the Soviets] one risked weakening Gorbachev in the power struggle that apparently was going on in the Soviet Union at the present. There had, however, been broad support for the Danish view that it would, in any circumstance, be right to send a strong signal. This would, in the Danish view, not just be morally necessary, but also strengthen the Soviet reform-minded factions.... [The declaration] was unusually strong for this forum, not least considering the very different views that existed. Thus, France had thought that now that one had protested nothing more should be done. Others said that one should give Gorbachev the benefit of the doubt. To this, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had remarked that if this was the case, and Gorbachev had been forced into the situation, then all the more reason to react strongly...” (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), January 15 1991, author’s translation from Danish).

This statement demonstrates Ellemann-Jensen’s need to present the Western European demarche as a victory for the Danish hard line activist approach to the Soviet Union. At the same time, it demonstrates his hawkish approach by focusing on pushing Gorbachev in the right direction by threatening strong EC reactions, rather than by merely trying to support him by not creating problems for him.

The Social Democrats were again the primary representatives of disagreement with the government line. Thus, a more dovish détente tendency was clearly visible in statements by Social Democratic Party Chairman Auken in the Foreign Policy Committee. After stressing that he agreed with the government line, Auken stated that:

> "In Parliament, it was the majority view that, of course, one should seek to secure the full independence of the Balts. But one should at the same time refrain from contributing to instability. Not least for this reason the Social Democrats and others had supported the negotiation strategy. Of course, one should protest, but when peaceful negotiations were within reach, one had to seek the stability line at the same time. Therefore Auken thought that the statement from the EC-ministers was balanced and good *and not quite as strong as the Minister for Foreign Affairs indicated* [author's italics]" (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), January 15, 1991, author's translation from Danish).

The statement indicates that Auken preferred the EC-compromise to the more one-sided condemnation that Ellemann-Jensen had perhaps wished for it to be. From an international perspective, the difference between the centre-right and Social Democrats shows that the Social Democrats were much closer than the centre-right to the so-called "don't rock the boat" foreign policy line that stressed the importance of supporting Gorbachev, which was long the predominant position of the other Western European countries.

The Social Democratic argument was difficult to make to a public that was becoming increasingly pro-Baltic. At a demonstration against the Soviet crackdown in Lithuania in the Rådhuspladsen, the main square in Copenhagen, on January 14, 1991, Social Democrat Ritt Bjerregaard expressed views similar to Ellemann-Jensen's:

> "Today is one of those days where words feel too weak. It is one of those days where the night before the dawn feels so terribly long. It is dark and cold nights that we have experienced before - in 1956, when men and tanks raped Hungary. I remember exactly this feeling of powerlessness by being confronted with an unreasonable, un-understanding and inhuman overwhelming power. And the evil night returned in 1968. The same army sent its tanks towards Prague. And in the same fashion, we had to see the just and the humane crushed by stupidity. In the holy name of communism. Today we would like to do something more than simply talk. We yearn to be able to turn back the clock this one day back. We yearn to avoid those tanks and give life to those killed. For their sake, for their country's sake, and for our own hope's sake" (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), January 14 1991, author's translation from Danish).

She then said that she believed this to be "…the last despicable cramps of communism. Vile and brutal" (Udenrigsministeriet (Danish MFA), January 14 1991, author's translation from Danish). Clearly, Bjerregaard expressed strong antipathy for the Soviet conduct in Lithuania. However, what is just as interesting here is what she did not say, and the fact that she focused on what she believed was bound to happen in Lithuania on its own, as opposed to addressing what Denmark might do. This might very well have been intentional, in order to avoid her being bound to pursue as active a policy as one might otherwise expect from her level of

indignation. Thus, the next day, behind the closed doors in the Foreign Policy Committee, Bjerregaard is referenced in the meeting's minutes:

> "The meeting at Rådhuspladsen had been a good indicator of the anger and worry that was present [in the Danish population]. There was *no way around* [author's italics] a strong signal, like the one she [Bjerregaard] and the prime minister had also given at the meeting. However, sometimes politics was strong signals that went straight to the people in the midst of their homes. And at other times one carefully and soberly had to analyse how to act and how to play one's cards best" (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), January 15, 1991, author's translation from Danish).

Her indignation must, thus, be considered to have at least a rhetorical element. The minutes continue:

> "Her only worry was the Minister for Foreign Affairs' statement about the humanitarian work in the Soviet Union. If the West pursued a very restrictive line vis-à-vis the Soviet Union that caused the people to starve, it was certain that it would lead to refugee flows that would be difficult to handle" (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), January 15 1991, author's translation from Danish).

These statements can be seen as an indicator of the Social Democrats' support of humanitarianism as well as wishes to avoid refugee flows over value-promoting. However, when coupled with the fact that Ritt Bjerregaard, later that month, also supported the decision of the Danish Social Democrats in the European Parliament to vote against adopting harsh measures towards the Soviet Union (Berlingske Tidende, January 29 1991), one sense once more that the Social Democrats believed that a dovish, somewhat conciliatory approach to Gorbachev was still the best course of action.

This difference was also apparent when Auken and Ellemann-Jensen discussed the consequences of the Soviet coup in a Foreign Policy Committee meeting on August 19, 1991. There, Auken regretted that the West had not done enough to help Gorbachev, while Ellemann-Jensen disagreed (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), August 19 1991). This meeting proved to be the last before Danish re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the Baltic countries. At the next Foreign Policy Committee meeting on August 27, 1991, three days after Denmark had re-established diplomatic contacts with the Baltic countries, the Social Democrats expressed some irritation about not being included in the final decision about re-establishing diplomatic relations, even though they fully supported the decision on its merits (Udenrigspolitiske Nævn (Danish Foreign Policy Committee), August 27 1991). This was not surprising, as a shift in the balance of power in the Soviet Union in favour of Yeltsin, who supported independence, tended to make arguments anchored in support for Gorbachev obsolete. Thus, there was simply no longer a dilemma. With the power of the Soviet Union broken, and with Russia in support of Baltic independence, the risks to détente connected with that support largely disappeared. Therefore, the Social Democrats now wholeheartedly committed to the Baltic Project.

Once established, the consensus on the Baltic project proved stable. During the Social Democratic Social Liberal government from 1993 to 2001, and during the new centre-right government of 2001, Denmark pushed for both EU and NATO membership for all three Baltic countries with a very broad backing in the Danish parliament.

4. THE ALTERNATIVE "BEING IN GOVERNMENT" HYPOTHESIS: PERHAPS IT IS JUST "THE CHAIR" THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?

The hypothesis here has been that the relative hawkishness and dovishness of the centre-right government and the Social Democratic opposition can explain their different foreign policy preferences in the Baltic question. However, alternative variables might be able to explain this as well. In this regard, one might ask the methodological question of whether the different positions of the parties, the Social Democrats being in opposition and the Liberals and Conservatives being in government, might itself influence their policy preferences. Thus, one might argue that leaders feel the heavy burden of responsibility to national interests more keenly than opposition politicians, who might be freer to pursue other agendas? Leaders often accuse oppositions of sabotaging their foreign policies for domestic political reasons[10]. Following this logic, it is quite conceivable that being in government makes a party more likely to be affected by outside pressure (from allies or enemies).

However, in our present case this factor is likely to be limited. Thus, the Danish disagreements about the Baltic policies can be divided into two phases: In the first we saw the Social Democratic opposition push for an active policy that might well be in conflict with the NATO line. And in the second period, we saw a centre-right government pursuing an active policy, often threatening to bring Denmark into conflict with European partners and the Soviet Union (though not without support from the US), while the Social Democrats expressed grave worries about the risks of such a policy. It is, of course, impossible to know for sure how the debates would have transpired if the government had been Social Democratic and the opposition centre-right, but it seems unlikely that it would simply be the same debate in reverse. Thus, while an argument about an opposition eager to put itself on the political map might make sense for the first period, it seems much less likely for the second period. In contrast, the Social Democratic resistance towards the government policy was pursued rather *in spite* of public opinion and, as we saw, primarily behind closed doors. The divergences in Ritt Bjerregaard's expressed views in public and behind closed doors seem to exemplify this tendency. The reverse can be said about the centre-right government, which proved willing to withstand political pressure for a more active Baltic policy before 1990 in order to stick to the line of non-recognition promoted by the allies. This, furthermore, even though this policy proved extremely hard to "sell" to the public – perhaps due to its complex nature.

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[10] Examples from Danish domestic politics include then Minister for Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen's accusations that the centre-left were motivated by domestic concerns when they forced him to pursue the previously mentioned Danish Footnote Policy (Ellemann-Jensen, 2004). A recent American example is former President Bill Clinton blaming the Republicans in Congress for sabotaging the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1998 for domestic concerns (Jentleson, 2013, pp. 35-36).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Activism was gaining across a broad political spectrum in Denmark from 1988, and the Baltic cause quickly became very popular in Denmark. The centre-right government and the Social Democrats never waged serious wars against each other over the Baltic issue that are in any way comparable with the battles of the Footnote Policy Years. However, the analysis has shown that being a hawk or dove, nevertheless, did matter: It is, thus, highly unlikely that a Social Democratic government would have pursued a policy similar to the one pursued by the centre-right.

We have seen that the Social Democrats saw the Baltic question as a dilemma: On the one hand, they wanted to support Baltic independence because of small state sympathies and because of an interest in strengthening an international order which safeguards the interests of the small. On the other hand, however, they remained committed to détente as the way out of the Cold War. This dilemma was never solved for them until the failed coup in August 1991 and the imminent implosion of the Soviet Union thereafter. Because of this dilemma, the Social Democrats could not commit wholeheartedly to the Baltic cause as an activist project until détente had been made obsolete.

For the centre-right government, the dilemma was smaller. They shared a small state sympathy and a wish to strengthen a world order that safeguarded the rights of small states. However, due to their more hawkish approach to the Cold War and to foreign policy in general, they were never as committed to détente policies as the Social Democrats. For them, influencing Soviet behaviour was as much about pushing the Soviets, when possible, as it was about keeping the dialog going. Since activist support for the Balts therefore did not contrast with their general strategy for bringing the Cold War to an end, they could commit to the activist project much earlier than the Social Democrats. The policies of the moderately centre-right government are therefore unlikely to have been pursued had the opposition been in power. Their hawk-dove differences likely explain why.

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