

As Awkward as They Need to Be: Denmark's Pragmatic Activist Approach to Europe

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Abstract This chapter makes three contributions towards understanding Danish awkwardness. First, the chapter unpacks the characteristics of Danish awkwardness and explains how it has developed since the debate over whether or not to seek membership in the early 1970s. Second, the chapter discusses how Danish state identity, rooted in the context of deep societal changes in Danish society in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth century, has created

This chapter benefitted from presentations at the panel ‘Awkward Nordic Partners in the European Integration Process?’, UACES 46th Annual Conference, Queen Mary University, London, 5–7 September, 2016, and at the panel ‘The Foreign Policy of the EU and Its Member States’ at the 40th Anniversary Conference of the Danish Society for European Studies, 6–7 October, 2016. I would like to thank the participants at the events, and, in particular, Philomena Murray, Malin Stegmann McCallion and Chiara De Franco for helpful comments.

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a particular action space for Denmark's engagement with the European integration project. Third, the chapter discusses Denmark's strategies for managing awkwardness in the European Union.

Keywords Denmark · EU politics · Euroscepticism · Danish foreign policy · Small EU member states · Small state strategy

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Denmark is an awkward European partner. Danish political and administrative elites as well as the population at large are often out of step with the European mainstream regarding which institutions and decision-making procedures are required for the integration process, as well as regarding the specific policies produced by these institutions and decision-making procedures.¹ Selective engagement with a focus on defensively preserving 'bastions' of national autonomy has served as the baseline for Denmark's approach to Europe (Miles and Wivel 2014). However, this approach is combined with a pragmatic and increasing acceptance of Europeanization as a fundamental condition for policy-making, even in policy areas affected by the Danish opt-outs and occasional activism on selected policy issues.

Danish awkwardness is puzzling. There are at least three reasons why we would expect Denmark to be a 'most likely' case for European integration. The first reason is economic. Denmark is a small trading nation with an open economy. Denmark's main export partners are Germany, Sweden and the UK,² and the main import partners are Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. Approximately 60% of Danish exports and 70% of Danish imports are traded with EU member states. Thus, economic developments in the EU and EU economic policies play a decisive role for Danish growth and economic development. The second reason regards national security. As has been the case for other small European states, instability in its geopolitical vicinity has been the major challenge to Danish national security of the past centuries, with Sweden, the UK and Germany historically constituting the most important threats to national security. The transformation of European policy-making taking place in the context of EU-integration, and creating a European security community, has helped stabilise Denmark's security environment and remove some of the most important threats to its territorial integrity.

Finally, the informal Danish political culture seems to be highly compatible with the decentralized negotiation culture of the EU, allowing Danish politicians, civil servants and lobbyists to use the same skills and techniques for influencing policy and technical issues in the EU system as they use at home.

In essence, we would expect Denmark to epitomize the typical pro-European small state described in much of the literature on small states in the EU. Over the past decades, an extensive literature has documented how the European Union serves as the major focal point for small state influence maximization in Europe (Arter 2000; Bailes and Thorhallsson 2013; Goetschel 1998; Grøn and Wivel 2011; Jakobsen 2009; Panke 2010, 2011; Steinmetz and Wivel 2010; Thorhallsson 2006; Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006). According to this literature, the EU serves small member states in several ways. The EU provides an unparalleled, wide-ranging shelter against the soft security challenges emanating from globalization, environmental degradation and non-state violence (Bailes et al. 2014), as well as historically unique opportunities for influencing the policy process in Europe through various institutional channels of the Union's decentralized decision-making structures (Bailes and Thorhallsson 2013; Wivel 2005, 2010). For this reason, the EU offers small member states a platform for influence within and beyond Europe (Larsen 2005).

In this context, Danish reluctance towards major elements of the European integrations process is surprising. Denmark only joined the EU in 1973 and has maintained opt-outs in regard to the Economic and Monetary Union, defence issues and justice and home affairs since 1993. Denmark has generally been sceptical towards initiatives undermining national autonomy. Moreover, along with, e.g. Greece, Denmark has been characterized as belonging to a cluster of small states mostly focused on promoting their narrow self-interests through European institutions (Wallace 1999). Denmark's status as a 'reluctant European' (cf. Miljan 1977) becomes more surprising when looking at Danish foreign policy priorities over the past decades. Pursuing a self-conscious 'activist' foreign policy, often depicted by policy-makers and analysts as a contrast to 'varying adaptive logics' of the Cold War period (Pedersen 2012: 344), Denmark has consistently promoted values such as peaceful conflict resolution, arms control, human rights and international development (Danish Government 1990, 1993; Holm 2002). These values resonate well with general EU priorities as well as the more specific UN policies of the EU (Laatikainen 2003).

To be sure, there are important qualifications to this depiction of Danish European policy. Despite reservations towards important aspects of the European integration process, Danish foreign policy is thoroughly Europeanized (Larsen 2005) and the Danish electorate in general views the EU as necessary and beneficial for a small state like Denmark (Nissen 2016). Even though there are variations across issue areas, e.g. with trade policy being more Europeanized than security policy, no aspect of Danish foreign policy can be completely isolated from European policy-making. Moreover, the relationship between Denmark and the EU has developed, with Denmark gradually accepting a still more encompassing Europeanization (Kelstrup 2014). ‘Macro-reluctance’ towards the European integration project has been accompanied by ‘micro-activism’ in day-to-day politics and occasional attempts at agenda setting on the European arena.

Rather than a consistent and all-encompassing reluctance towards European integration and the opportunities that it offers to small states, Danish awkwardness is characterized by pragmatic, selective engagement. Denmark is not presenting an alternative vision of Europe, but dancing to its own tune, often out of sync with wider European developments. This chapter makes three contributions towards understanding Danish awkwardness. First, I unpack the characteristics of Danish awkwardness and explain how it has developed since the debate over whether or not to seek membership in the early 1970s. Second, I discuss how Danish state identity, rooted in the context of deep societal changes in Danish society in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth century, has created a particular action space for Denmark’s engagement with the European integration project. Third, I discuss Denmark’s strategies for managing awkwardness before concluding the chapter.

2.2 IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES AT STAKE: AGRICULTURE VS. NORDIC CULTURE?

Denmark joined the EU in 1973. Membership was widely viewed as a ‘politics of necessity’. Advocates of membership included the big and old political parties also forming the backbone of all Danish governments in the twentieth century—the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, The Conservative Party and the Social-Liberal Party—trade unions, employers’ associations, and organizations representing a wide selection

of agricultural and industrial interests. Their main argument was economic (trade). With one central market for Danish exports (Germany) already inside the EU, Denmark could not afford to be left outside if the UK—the most important market at the time for Danish agricultural exports—was to join. The pro-membership campaign was organized around a classical small state argument: the great powers were seen as the rule-making drivers of international order, whereas small states needed to adapt by pragmatically responding to the agenda set by nearby great powers in a modern day interpretation of Thucydides dictum that ‘the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept’ (Thucydides 1972 [1954]: 302). This realist position represents one strand in Danish foreign policy thinking typically epitomized by the words of leading Danish Social Liberal politician and editor Viggo Hørup’s words on Danish defence expenditure in a parliamentary debate in 1883: ‘What is the use of it’ (‘hvad skal det nytte’). Hørup’s position was primarily anti-militaristic but came to symbolize a defensive Danish foreign policy position pursuing Danish interests internationally by adapting to the power and policies of the great powers (in Hørup’s case German military power), and identifying Danish interests and opportunities within the confines set by these great powers, rather than thinking up (what was perceived as unrealistic) alternatives.

The opposition to EU membership was mainly organized in a cross-party but left-leaning ‘people’s movement’, arguing that EU-membership would undermine Danish autonomy. Market integration, it was argued, would undermine the ability to preserve the welfare state and in the process sever the close Danish links to other Nordic societies. As a counter argument, advocates held that in contrast Danish membership would provide Denmark with the opportunity to take on a unique role as bridge-builder between Europe and ‘Norden’. This was not an option in the eyes of the EU-opposition, to whom the so-called Nordic model or Nordic international society presented an alternative vision of order incompatible with the perceived capitalist great power politics of the EU.³ In this view, taking their own welfare societies as a point of departure, the Nordic countries promoted a foreign policy agenda of peace, disarmament, cooperation, human rights, ecologically sound development and solidarity with the Third World (mirroring domestic values such as economic equality, peaceful conflict resolution and strong yet accountable political and administrative institutions). At the regional level, the Nordic states could point to successful ‘cobweb

integration' (Andrén 1967), a complex network of cooperative arrangements between the Nordic countries. Cobweb integration was based on a security community with extensive transactions and the construction of common institutions, responsive and predictable behaviour with each member acknowledging the needs of the others and compatible value systems (Deutsch et al. 1957: 5–8, 65–69). From this point of departure, it was only natural to view the Nordic region as 'the other European Community' (Turner and Nordquist 1982) and to explore alternative solutions to membership of the European integration project such as the attempt to create a Nordic customs union.⁴ In the eyes of its adherents, this other European Community offered a long democratic tradition, a relative high level of wealth and a social democratic welfare state with economic equality and low levels of corruption (Archer 1996; Arter 2008; Grøn et al. 2015a; Kuisma 2007; Miles 1996), which made it not only different from Europe but also better than Europe (Wæver 1992). The Nordic community offered not only a 'third way' between the US and the Soviet Union, but also an alternative societal model (domestically, regionally, and globally) to Europe. Paradoxically then whereas the pro-EU membership arguments were largely defensive and centred around realist adaptation professing a deterministic view of international and European relations as inescapable power politics, opposition to membership took a more offensive and internationalist stance with arguments based largely on idealist activism, a second position in Danish foreign policy.⁵

Despite representing opposed views to the question of membership, it is worth noticing the common ground of those advocating and opposing EU-integration. First, advocates and opponents of Danish membership of the EU agreed that the Danish welfare state was worth preserving and that it should be a fundamental political aim to ensure this. Opponents argued that EU membership would transform Danish society, leaving more room for market forces and a smaller role for the welfare state, whereas advocates of membership argued that only through membership would Denmark be able to achieve the levels of growth necessary to provide an economically sound basis for a continued development of the welfare state. Thus, this was a debate over the means to preserve the welfare state rather than a debate over whether or not it should be preserved, reformed or abolished. Second, advocates and opponents agreed that the Danish welfare state was embedded in a larger Nordic community, and that this was a good thing, which needed to be preserved.

Third, neither advocates nor opponents of Danish membership presented a positive vision for the development of Europe. For advocates, membership equalled market access and therefore opportunities for economic growth. They argued that in this context, it was important to be present at the negotiation table. However, Danish decision-makers rarely explicated or detailed what they expected to bring to this table, and being present seemed mainly to be a defensive measure. For opponents, the primary alternative was a Nordic community, although negotiations on a Scandinavian common market—the so-called Nordek—had failed in 1968. Fourth, the operative word for opponents as well as advocates of membership was ‘market’. Quite tellingly, advocates as well as opponents of membership referred almost uniformly to the European integration project as ‘fællesmarkedet’, i.e. ‘the common market’. In sum, the debate over whether or not Denmark should join the EU was a debate on whether Danish membership was a necessary evil or an unnecessary evil. Moreover, rather than a ‘European Community’, European integration was viewed almost exclusively in market terms, and neither opponents nor proponents of membership saw much opportunity for uploading Danish interests to the European level. A policy of pragmatic scepticism resulting in selective engagement with a focus on promoting Danish (primarily economic) interests and defending national autonomy became an acceptable meeting point for opponents and adherents of Danish EU membership.

This common ground has served as the point of departure for Danish EU policies since 1973. To be sure, this does not mean that Danish policy in regard to European integration is without variation or development. As argued by Morten Kelstrup, Danish EU policy has developed through five phases (Kelstrup 2014). From 1973 to 1986, Danish policy was characterized by selective and reluctant engagement largely consistent with the debate over Europe which had preceded the 1972 referendum. From 1986 to 1992, the tone of the debate changed towards a more positive take on membership presenting the EU as a necessary part of Denmark’s strategy for preserving the Scandinavian welfare state in a globalizing international order. This change of tone was as much a consequence of the rapidly transforming political and security environment in Europe in general as it was a consequence of the new dynamism within EU institutions and reinvigoration of the European project in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a brief period of time, the Danish political elite considered Europe to be the benchmark to be measured against

in the future. However, this constituted too dramatic a break with the dominating discourse of pragmatic scepticism, and the Danish electorate voted 'No' to the Treaty on the European Union in June 1992 with the narrow margin of 50.7% of the vote against the Treaty and 49.3 in favour. The Danish 'No' was followed by a short phase of shock and adjustment in 1992–1993 resulting in the Edinburgh Agreement with Denmark opting out of the original treaty on defence, Economic and Monetary Union, Justice and Home Affairs, and European citizenship (cf. DIIS 2008). This adjustment process resulted in a return to a more selective engagement from 1993 to 2001. However, as the European integration process had moved forward (partly as a consequence of the adoption of the Treaty on the European Union, which Denmark had initially rejected) and now entailed both deeper and wider integration than during the first two decades of membership, pragmatic selective engagement needed to change as well. Thus, increased majority voting and intensification of European integration in some areas infringing on core areas of national autonomy (such as the Schengen Agreements) was now accepted by the political elite and population as 'necessary evils' that they pragmatically needed to accept in order to continue selective engagement. An attempt by the then Social Democratic-Social Liberal coalition government to abolish the Danish opt-out on Economic and Monetary Union in 2000 ended in defeat with 53.2% of the electorate voting 'No' and only 46.8 voting 'Yes'. From 2001, a revised pragmatic selective engagement approach of the previous period has been characteristic of Danish EU policies, now combining the acceptance of the EU opt-outs with the acceptance of differentiated integration. The 2016 British referendum in favour of Brexit, i.e. leaving the EU, had little effect on this policy.

The five phases identified by Kelstrup allow us to identify three permanent characteristics of, and two developments in, Denmark's approach to EU integration. First, pragmatic and selective engagement has with few exceptions provided the baseline for Danish EU policies over the whole period. Second, policy-makers and population have understood pragmatic and selective engagement as an inevitable outcome of an 'integration dilemma' between autonomy and influence (Kelstrup 1993; Petersen 1998). EU-integration has largely been viewed as a zero-sum game with regular discussions on whether or not Denmark was earning a 'surplus' or a 'deficit' from EU-membership. Finally, EU policies have generally had a low priority for Danish

governments—independently of which parties were in power—and throughout the period, considerations of domestic politics have played a larger role than consideration on what Europe could or should be and do from a Danish perspective. Only during the exceptional changes in Europe taking place in the late 1980s and early 1990s do we see any evidence of policies that went beyond pragmatic and non-visionary, or even anti-visionary, arguments on Europe, ignoring or questioning the rationale of European integration moving beyond intergovernmental policies. However, even in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Denmark engaged in debates over the status and future of Europe, the most prominent Danish contributions to international developments were unrelated to EU-integration. In 1990 when Denmark recognized the three Baltic States as independent states and thereby provided the starting point for a decade-long engagement with rebuilding the institutional infrastructure of these states after the Soviet occupation, this was not official EU policy. In 1994 in Bosnia when Denmark engaged in military combat proper for the first time since 1864 and successfully won a battle against a Serbian militia, thereby providing a starting point for the military activism that continues to characterize Danish security and foreign policy today, this was as a participant in a NATO mission rather than an EU matter. To the extent that Danish visions on European played into EU discourse, this was mainly as a ‘junior partner’ to Germany in a close cooperative partnership between the Danish foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen and his German counterpart Hans-Dietrich Genscher in the exceptional period of Danish European policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Denmark's approach to Europe has evolved in at least two ways closely connected to the development of the EU. First, the increasingly multidimensional nature of the integration process over time has changed the Danish opportunities for uploading preferences to the EU level as well as Danish perceptions of these opportunities. ‘Negative’ market integration has continued, but is increasingly accompanied by ‘positive integration’ aiming at common positions and policies across Europe. This development has Europeanized Danish policies and administrative practices, but the ‘Europeanization’ of Denmark has been accompanied by a ‘Nordification’ of the EU. In particular, developments of EU debates and policies on issues such as the environment, climate, health and social issues as well as common EU positions on human rights and development in combination with Danish welfare state reforms mean

that EU policies are now more consistent with the Danish welfare state than in 1973. Also, partly due to different levels of integration with the EU, Europeanization across the Nordic countries has been unequal and it is less obvious what would constitute a ‘Nordic’ alternative to the EU. Even though Danish civil servants have extensive networks with their Nordic colleagues and they often meet informally when preparing policies and negotiations, this is rarely with the aim of achieving common ground on policy positions and most often focus on exchange of information (Grøn et al. 2015b; Schouenborg 2013b).

Second, EU-multidimensionality combined with a more fluid institutional environment in the Euro-Atlantic area after the Cold War has made it more difficult for political and administrative elites as well as the population to uphold traditional distinctions between EU policy and domestic policy, domestic policy and foreign policy and foreign policy and EU policy. During the Cold War, Danish foreign policy was based on a functional compartmentalization between four so-called cornerstones. Each cornerstone identified a central area of foreign policy and a corresponding international organisation, which Denmark could use as a platform for promoting its foreign policy interests. The EU was one of these international organizations viewed as central for pursuing economic cooperation and trade interests, whereas the others were NATO (security and defence policy), the Nordic Council (identity politics), and the UN (value promotion) (Due-Nielsen and Petersen 1995: 38; Hækkerup 1965). Today, these distinctions make little sense. The EU continues as the main organization for the economic cooperation and the promotion of Danish trade interests, but Danish security policy, value promotion and identity politics cannot be isolated from EU developments. In contrast, the EU plays a central role in creating security and stability in Europe through integration. In the UN, the EU has subsumed the Nordic bloc by promoting many of the same issues of peaceful co-existence, environmental issues, human rights and development (Laatikainen 2003), and Danish foreign policy-makers view the EU as a useful vehicle for promoting Danish values and interests at the global level (cf. Larsen 2005). At the same time, NATO and (typically US-led) ad hoc coalitions play an explicit role in Danish value promotion and identity politics.

In sum, selective engagement with the European integration process has served as the baseline for Denmark’s approach to Europe but combined with a pragmatic and increasing accept of Europeanization

as a fundamental condition for policy-making, even in policy areas affected by the Danish opt-outs. What accounts for this approach to EU integration defying the expectations about Denmark's interests and policy in regard to EU integration outlined in the introduction and frequently placing Denmark in the role of an 'awkward partner' in the European Integration process? The next section seeks to answer this question by exploring how the constitution of Danish state identity in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century has left a particular action space for Danish European policy.

2.3 THERE IS SOMETHING AWKWARD IN THE STATE OF DENMARK

Since 1973, all Danish governments have formulated their general approach to Europe in the context of the integration dilemma. To be sure, all states participating in international negotiations may face a dilemma between autonomy and influence as they engage in multiple negotiations over the construction and reconstruction of regional and global orders and their own role in these orders. For small states, this dilemma is particularly intense as they have a smaller say over the nature of orders and less action space to define a role within these orders (Goetschel 1998), and the European integration process may be considered to intensify the dilemma, as it poses both greater challenges to national autonomy and better opportunities for influence than other orders. However, not all states perceive their interests in terms of this dilemma. It presupposes a particular view of the state and its role in society for a state to view its interests in terms of the integration dilemma. In particular, it presupposes a close link between state and society with the state acting as a protector of vital societal interests (cf. Hansen and Wæver 2002). In order to navigate in this dilemma, states tend to define a number of political bastions, i.e. interests that they perceive as fundamental to domestic society and that are therefore non-negotiable (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005). Thus, in order to understand Danish awkwardness we need to understand why these bastions became vital to Danish elites and population and how they delimit an action space for policy-making within the state and in its relations with the outside world, i.e. we need to identify the particular—or even awkward—aspects of Danish state identity.

In order to do so, we need to understand which values serve as the legitimate base for law-making and political activism, nationally and internationally. In Denmark, this complex of ideas—Danish ‘state identity’ (Wivel 2013)—is dominated by a fusion of classical liberal values (e.g. civil liberty, free trade) with strong notions of egalitarianism, i.e. what Østergaard has termed a ‘libertarian ideology of solidarity’ (Østergaard 2000: 161). It originates in the peasant movement and its organisational structures, which came into being in the nineteenth century, and it developed in the context of the Danish labour movement from the early twentieth century. From the beginning, it was a reaction to wider European developments—most importantly the Napoleonic wars and the European order that followed and the Danish defeat to Prussia and Austria in 1864, when Denmark lost the three duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg, a third of its territory. Post-Napoleonic Scandinavianism based the idea of ‘Norden’ on national romanticist ideals and in Denmark, this ideology of cultural community was parallel to the protestant (so-called Grundtvigian) conception of enlightenment and universal brotherhood influencing Danish society at the time (Breitenbauch and Wivel 2004).

The experience with organizing production and decision-making in the Danish cooperative movement, which was particularly strong in agriculture from the late eighteenth to mid-twentieth century, followed from these ideas and at the same time it had the effect of ingraining them into important Danish societal and economic structures. Although generally less successful in economic terms, labour movement-affiliated production cooperatives fused these ideas with socialism from the late nineteenth century, and from the mid-1930s, the ideas came to serve as the important ideational common ground in the so-called Kanslergade compromise of 1933. In this agreement, Social Democrats (labour), the Liberal Party (agriculture) and the social-liberal party (agricultural small-holders, intellectual city elite) united central societal interests to forge a political response to the economic crisis (e.g. free medical care, enhanced unemployment benefits, economic aid to disabled and elderly) and in the process created the basis for the development of the Danish welfare state. With similar compromises being forged in Sweden and Norway during the same period, Nordic romanticism, protestant ‘Grundtvigianism’ and the communal values of the labour movement came to serve as the ideational base for an approach to policy-making combining classical liberalism and egalitarianism and providing the underpinnings for an

'exceptionalist' Nordic internationalism, characterised by democratically accountable foreign policies, free trade, common social rights within the Nordic region and a strong commitment to multilateral conflict resolution (cf. Schouenborg 2013a). Liberal-egalitarianism thus created an ideological 'action space' for Danish politics, domestically and internationally.

Denmark navigates this action space with a functionalist pragmatism with strong roots in the defeat in 1864, which came to serve as a strong influence for the international expression of its ideational base in at least three ways. First, liberal egalitarian politics is pursued with a sound dose of pragmatism, an important lesson of 1864 being that the Danish state needed to prove its worth as a provider of basic needs such as security to the Danish people, a task that it had failed in 1864 (Knudsen 2006). The role of the state is basically to defend the interests and values of the people, and the pursuit of less tangible goals must be embedded in this function. This is in accordance with Denmark's selective EU engagement focusing on what is in the Danish interest rather than the European. Also, this approach is reflected more generally in Denmark's pragmatic approach to international institutions such as NATO and the UN. This is linked to a second lesson of 1864: the state elite needs to be accountable to the people that it serves. The defeat of 1864 was widely interpreted as a consequence of reckless elites pursuing unrealistic international goals (i.e. entering into a conflict with a much stronger opponent that Denmark could not defeat). In EU policy, this is reflected in a tradition of strong parliamentary control of the Danish government in EU policy, and a tradition of referendums on major policy decisions/treaties in regard to the EU. Finally, a lesson of 1864 (further strengthening the nationalist sentiments of the time) was that what was lost externally, should be won domestically ('hvad udad tabes, det må indad vindes') leading to a somewhat inward-looking political discourse focusing on self-reliance and the needs of domestic society.

In sum, liberal-egalitarian pragmatism has had important consequences for Denmark's approach to European integration by delimiting a particular political space defined by the development of Danish state identity. Although the development of this ideological space was spurred by European developments and in particular Denmark's intention to survive and flourish within the European order, the content was primarily defined by domestic developments and societal compromise. This societal compromise resulted in a conception (in Denmark) of Denmark being

a Nordic country different from and better than Europe (Wæver 1992), and with a national elite obligated to protect the interests of the people by pragmatically using the state to further Danish interests. Thus, in the Danish view, Denmark is *avant-garde* rather than awkward. As a consequence, Denmark has often been dancing to its own tune out of sync with wider European developments. In particular, Danish state identity has had two fundamental consequences for Danish policy towards EU-integration. First, autonomy and influence are seen as natural opposites, and therefore the EU places the Danish state in an integration dilemma between the two. European integration in this conception remains a zero-sum game not only between member states, but also between two strategies: defensively defending autonomy or actively seeking influence. Second, navigating this dilemma and seeking to ameliorate its consequences has left little room for a 'European project' or EU-integration as a goal for its own sake. In contrast, pragmatic functionalism applies to the Danish state as well as to the EU. Elites at both levels must justify their position as well as the role of the institution they are representing by continuously proving their ability to serve the Danish people.

2.4 AWKWARD OR AVANT-GARDE? OVERCOMING/ACCEPTING AWKWARDNESS

Is Denmark likely to overcome its awkwardness in the European integration process? Overcoming awkwardness is a function of the willingness and ability to do so. Small states are rarely in a position to dictate or even affect regional orders without allying or cooperating with other states. For this reason, small states tend to cooperate with other states, often great powers, with compatible belief systems in order to influence their external environment.⁶ The closer the ideational starting point of two states, the more likely they are to find common ground on policy issues. The ideological distance between Denmark and the European mainstream has been reduced since Denmark became a member state in 1973. In policy areas such as the environment and gender politics, the European mainstream has moved closer to the Danish/Nordic position, which has become less '*avant-garde*'. On issues concerning the core of the welfare state, the EU has developed policies approaching those known from the Danish and Nordic welfare states and Denmark has moved closer to the European mainstream through a series of welfare

state reforms. However, this has more often been seen as a threat against autonomy than an opportunity for influence: general rights for EU citizens are viewed as entailing the risk of undermining the Danish welfare state. Thus, to a significant part of the Danish political elite and the Danish population, awkwardness is not something to be overcome, but something to be cherished for its own sake—as it follows directly from Danish state identity.

At the same time, political decision-makers have viewed active engagement with the EU as a pre-condition for developing Danish society and sustaining the economic growth necessary for an economically viable welfare state. This has resulted in a dual approach to European integration; selective engagement with the European integration process has served as the baseline for Denmark's approach to Europe, but been combined with a pragmatic and increasing accept of Europeanization as a fundamental condition for policy-making, even in policy areas affected by the Danish opt-outs. Thus, regarding the opt-outs, Denmark has allowed for a 'permissive' interpretation, e.g. in regard to defence policy (Olsen 2011), allowing for Danish participation in formal and informal negotiations from which they would have been excluded if the interpretation had been stricter (Marcussen and Wivel 2015). The focus has been on product rather than process, i.e. allowing for participation if it would further Danish interests even though it was closer to (or maybe even crossing) the border for permissive action within the restrictions of the opt-outs. In effect, in the day-to-day politics of the Union Denmark is more engaged than we would know from looking at official Danish policy statements and the opt-outs. Permissive interpretation of opt-outs has been combined with occasional activism showcasing Danish preferences (and the Danish 'brand') in selected high-profile areas such as climate policy, free trade and labour market policy. Finally, Denmark has been among the most effective member states when it comes to the implementation of EU legislation.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS: TWO (AND A HALF) CHEERS FOR AWKWARDNESS

Denmark is an awkward European partner in the sense that it is often out of step with the European mainstream regarding which institutions and decision-making procedures are required for the integration process

as well as regarding the specific policies produced by these institutions and decision-making procedures. Danish awkwardness is a consequence of its 'dual approach' to European integration. In this dual approach, selective engagement with the European integration process has served as the baseline for Denmark's approach to Europe but combined with a pragmatic and increasing acceptance of Europeanization as a fundamental condition for policy-making, even in policy areas affected by the Danish opt-outs.

Dualism is at the same time a consequence of and a particular strategy for managing Danish awkwardness.⁷ As argued above, dualism is a strategy for navigating an 'integration dilemma' between autonomy and influence by combining the identification of bastions for national autonomy with an active pursuit of influence in a Union characterized by increasing political, economic and cultural diversity. Thus, Denmark has defended an intergovernmentalist position in regard to the EU's institutional development and preserved the reservations granted by the Edinburgh Agreement, while at the same time allowing for intensified cooperation in some policy areas and actively participating in day-to-day negotiations and workings of the Union. This dualist strategy originates in the characteristic features of Danish state identity established in the formative period of the modern Danish state. In particular, two features stand out. First, the Danish defeat to Prussia and Austria in 1864 had profound consequences for the political and administrative elites who had put the survival of the country at risk by entering into war with a much stronger enemy, and for the governance of Denmark. The main consequences were a strong element of pragmatic functionalism in Danish governance holding the elites accountable for proving the 'value' of chosen policies and administrative procedures and their own value as guardians of national survival and autonomy. Second, regarding the ideational content of legitimate policies, this is dominated by a so-called libertarian ideology of solidarity (Østergaard 2000: 161) fusing classical liberal values (e.g. civil liberty, free trade) with strong notions of egalitarianism, originating in the nineteenth-century peasants' movements and developed in the welfare state into a set of more specific values.

From this point of departure, awkwardness seems to have served Denmark relatively well in the European integration process. There are two (and a half) reasons for this. First, the main lesson from the defeat in 1864 was that a small state needed to approach international relations with a pragmatic assessment of what is possible and necessary in a world

of great power politics. One might expect that this Thucydidian view of international relations would have fitted badly with the highly institutionalized, negotiated and self-consciously anti-Thucydidian soft power order of the EU. However, while the Danish approach to and view of Europe have been out of sync with the general visions and grand designs of the European integration process (to the extent that Denmark seems to be living in a parallel dimension or wholly different world than the founding fathers of the EU), and has at times put Denmark at odds with EU trendsetters, pragmatism has served Denmark extremely well in the day-to-day politics of the Union.

Second, whereas Denmark's liberal-egalitarian worldview put it at odds with its partners in the Western alliance during the Cold War—and even served as a basis for a Nordic position advocating a 'Third Way' between the Capitalist West and the Communist East—it has positioned Denmark well in the post-Cold War developments of the EU. Moving from 'negative' market integration to a process characterized by more 'positive integration' one might argue that the EU comes closer and closer to the liberal-egalitarianism ideology characteristic of Danish state identity. Thus, whereas 'Europeanization'—denoting the process where ideas and regulative measures are downloaded from the EU to the national level—has increased over the past decades, so have Denmark's opportunities for uploading ideas and policy proposals to the European level. The EU now takes a more direct interest than in the past in classical Danish priorities i.e. in environmental, labour market, and human rights policies. Although Denmark has not so far been able to take full advantage of this development, it provides a promising starting point for the future.

Finally, Denmark's liberal-egalitarian state identity combines with a more indirect fall-out of 1864 to produce a particular view of the Danish civil service that fits well with EU negotiation and implementation. As argued above, the 1864 defeat undermined the legitimacy of Danish political and administrative elites and created an expectation in the Danish population as well as in the elites that their future legitimacy would be based on their ability to prove themselves as worthy of their status. In liberal-egalitarian Denmark, the proof is found in their ability serve the population at large. This helped create one of the most effective and least corrupt civil services in Europe and the world, and therefore also a civil service well suited to enter into negotiations at the EU-level serving Danish interests as defined by the political

decision-makers. It has given Denmark the ability to act effectively when implementing EU-regulation consistently giving the awkward and sceptical Denmark one of the best implementation records in the EU. In fact, to the extent that Denmark has had implementation ‘failures’, these have been cases of potential over-implementation rather than lack of implementation. And these cases of potential over-implementation have typically been linked to environmental policies, a cornerstone of the liberal-egalitarian Danish welfare state.

What does this tell us about Denmark’s future as an awkward partner in the European integration process? Despite increased scepticism against EU decision-making undermining Danish autonomy in general and direct opposition to common EU policies intervening in the core functions of the state such as defence, policing, monetary policies and control of immigration, there has been little political debate of a Danish counterpart to a Brexit. However, the aim of Danish pragmatic liberal-egalitarianism should not be forgotten: to secure the survival and continued development of Denmark as an independent state. This may help explain Danish popular and elite opposition to common migration policies and more generally a more clearly articulated elite scepticism towards continuing integration undermining national autonomy. In sum, Denmark is likely to remain both ‘awkward’ and as a ‘partner’ in European integration.

NOTES

1. For discussions of awkwardness, see the introduction to this volume and Murray et al. (2014).
2. The importance of the British market for the Danish economy has been reduced significantly since Denmark followed the United Kingdom into the EU in 1973. In the early 1970s, Britain was Denmark’s most important export market with approximately 20% worth of Danish exports going to Britain. Today, Germany, Sweden, the United States and Norway have superseded the British market in importance and export to the British market constitutes approximately 7% of Danish exports. Brexit is not expected to change this dramatically.
3. See Schouenborg (2013a) and Wivel (2014) for discussions of the characteristics of this particular Nordic approach to international relations.
4. The idea of a Nordic customs union was on the agenda simultaneously with Danish applications to EU membership in 1961 and, in particular, in 1967.

5. On determinism and internationalism in Danish foreign policy in general, see e.g. Branner (2000).
6. For a general discussion on the importance of compatibility of belief systems for small state foreign policy, see Gvalia et al. (2013: 108).
7. For a discussion of how the Danish approach to European integration may be interpreted as a 'smart state strategy', see Miles and Wivel (2014).

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2018, XIII, 143 p. 2 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-57561-2