

Contributor Profile: Denmark

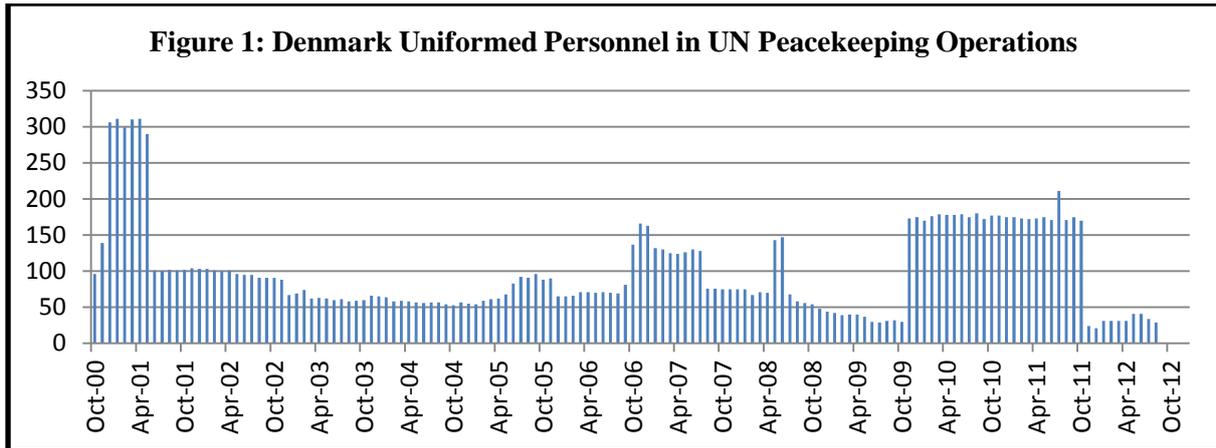
Dr. Peter Viggo Jakobsen
Royal Danish Defence College

Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN peacekeepers	UN contribution breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
18,628 World ranking (size): 96 Army 9,925 Navy 2,880 Air Force 3,358 Joint 2,465	Anti-submarine warfare: 8 Multirole: 8 (light) Transport: 14 (Medium)	2010: \$4.5bn (1.45% of GDP) 2011: \$4.91bn (1.42% of GDP)	29 (3 female) (31 August 2012) Ranking: 85 (17th largest contributor from EU states, 17th from NATO)	UNAMA: 1 expert UNAMI: 1 expert UNMIL: 3 experts, 2 troops UNMISS: 2 experts, 10 troops UNTSO: 10 experts	NATO: Baltic Air Policing: 4 F-16 ISAF: 750 troops KFOR: 35 troops Ocean Shield: 1 Combat / Flexible Support Ship
Defense Spending / troop: ² US\$264,000 (compared to global average of approx. US\$59,000)					

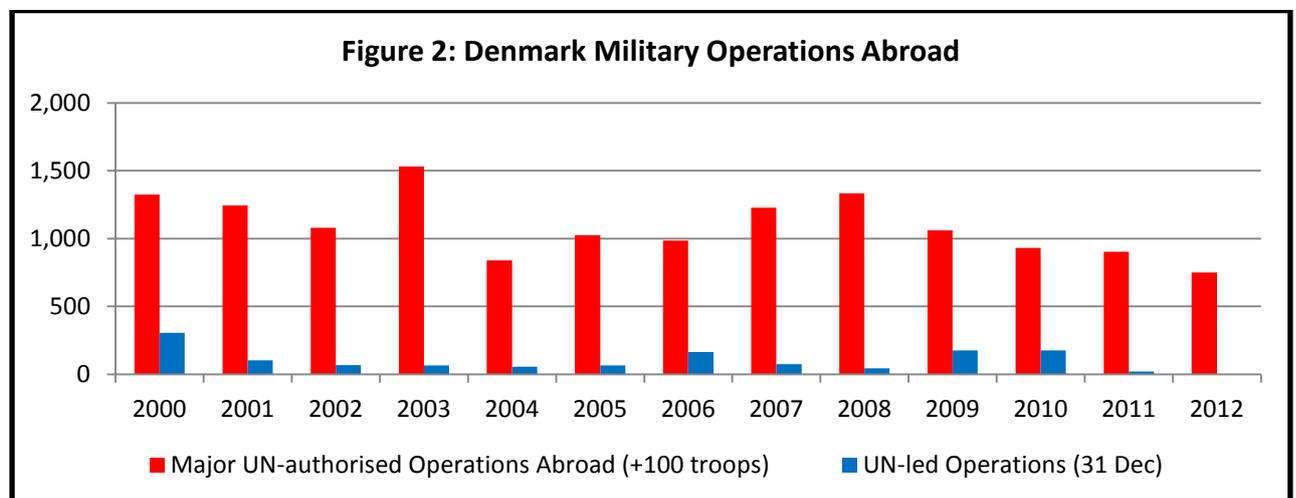
Part 1: Recent Trends

Denmark played a key role in UN peacekeeping operations during the Cold War, contributing forces, developing doctrine and training manuals and programs in close cooperation with the other Nordic countries. It continued to do so in the first half of the 1990s making significant contributions to UNPROFOR and establishing and hosting the [Standby High-Readiness Brigade](#) (SHIRBRIG), a multi-national rapid reaction brigade earmarked for UN peacekeeping operations, which became operational in 1997.

Denmark's major involvement in UN peacekeeping operations came to an end with NATO's takeover from the UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, however (see figure 1). Since then Danish troops have primarily served on UN-authorized NATO missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IFOR/SFOR 1995-2003), Kosovo (KFOR 1999-present), Afghanistan (ISAF 2002-present), Ocean Shield (2009-present) as well as the US-led UN-authorized mission in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom 2003-07) (see figure 2). In the last decade Denmark has only made substantial contributions to UN-led operations on three occasions: UNMEE in Eritrea-Ethiopia in 2001 (320 troops), UNIFIL in Lebanon in 2006-08 (four naval vessels), and UNIFIL again in 2009-11 (150 troops).³ During most of this time Danish contributions have consisted of 40-50 military observers, staff officers and advisors serving on various missions.



Denmark’s rhetorical commitment to UN peacekeeping remains strong. Official discourse holds that the considerable Danish contributions to UN-authorized peace operations conducted by NATO also count as support for the UN. The Danish government would object to the argument that its termination of SHIRBRIG in 2009 indicated a reduced commitment to UN peacekeeping. To them, SHIRBRIG was closed down because it never became the effective rapid reaction capability for UN operations that Denmark had hoped for. UNMEE proved to be SHIRBRIG’s only major troop contribution to a UN mission, and this led Denmark to conclude that it could support UN peacekeeping more effectively by investing its money in enhancing Nordic-UN cooperation instead. So far, however, this change of policy has not produced major joint Nordic force contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. The emphasis has recently been placed on training and capacity-building in Africa rather than Danish troop contributions.



Figures 1 and 2 show that Denmark’s contributions to international operations have remained fairly consistent since the end of the Cold War; the big change has been the shift from UN to NATO-led missions. An increase in Denmark’s contributions to UN peacekeeping is therefore a distinct possibility following the planned ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2015. While the 15% cut in the defense budget taking effect in 2015 is likely to reduce Denmark’s capacities for peacekeeping, there is political consensus that Denmark should continue to play an active role in international peace operations. Since Denmark is [legally barred](#) from making military contributions to EU missions, and major new NATO ground

operations seem unlikely at the moment, the odds are that Denmark may increase its personnel contributions to UN peacekeeping post-2015.

Part 2: Decision-Making

The government is constitutionally obliged to seek consent from the Parliament when it considers participating in operations involving the use of force beyond self-defense. Traditionally, the government only consulted with the Foreign Affairs Committee (Udenrigspolitisk Nævn) in parliament before committing troops to UN peacekeeping missions. Since the end of the Cold War, the increased use of force on peace missions resulted in a new practice whereby all major troop contributions regardless of mission type are submitted to a vote in parliament. Small contributions to observer missions, such as the ten personnel deployed to UNSMIS in 2012 are still made without parliamentary votes. In 2011 the government introduced a new principle according to which the deployment of troops on international operations involving the use of force beyond self-defense requires a two-thirds majority to be approved. In practice this principle will not make a major difference because all Danish military deployments since World War Two except one, the 2003 Iraq war, have enjoyed broad parliamentary and public support.

A decision to commit troops goes through the following steps. Once a request for a military contribution has been received or is perceived as likely, the government will ask the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to draw up a list of options. The government will then present a proposal to the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee for reactions and recommendations, which will then serve as input for the proposal that is presented to parliament as a whole for the first reading. This proposal is subsequently sent to the Defence Committee for review. Here, parliamentarians can put forward questions, remarks, concerns, etc. which are then answered jointly by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Defence Committee then submits a written report including a recommendation to parliament for the second reading, at the end of which the fate of the (amended) proposal is decided by a vote. The entire procedure with the two readings can be rushed through parliament in less than 24 hours in emergencies. This was, for instance, the case when Denmark committed [F-16s](#) to enforce the UN-authorized no-fly zone over Libya in 2011.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Danish force contributions are motivated by a combination of security interests and normative values. Its peacekeeping policy balances the need for national security and the desire for establishing an international rule-based society based on respect for international law, peaceful conflict resolution and development. Supporting NATO peacekeeping in the Balkans and later Afghanistan was seen as the best way of protecting Denmark's security, while at the same time supporting the values embodied by the UN because NATO was operating with a UN mandate.

Political and Security Rationales: Protecting national security has always been paramount in Danish decisions to contribute to peacekeeping operations, even if it is seldom articulated explicitly. Of the approximately 62,000 Danish personnel deployed on peace missions during 1948-2002, 60,000 served in the Middle East, Cyprus and the Balkans. Denmark has, in other words, primarily sought to manage conflicts close enough to home that they were likely to affect national/regional security or result in refugees arriving on its doorstep. The deployment to Afghanistan since 2002 also fits this pattern insofar as it was perceived and legitimated as a way of preventing new terrorist attacks against Denmark and its allies, and as a way of

supporting the United States and NATO. Needless to say, these operations were also legitimated with references to the core UN values that Denmark wants to promote.

Economic Rationales: None. The UN's compensation system covers only a fraction of the costs involved when Denmark makes troops available for peacekeeping operations, and the UN has historically not been able to pay Denmark for its contributions. That an economic rationale does not play a role is also reflected in the fact that Denmark has been happy to make large contributions to NATO-led operations, which are financed fully by the troop-contributing states themselves.

Institutional Rationales: The Ministry of Defense and the armed forces prefer deployments with NATO allies and the Nordics in order to enhance force protection. The perceived quality gap between Western forces and those in the majority of the developing world acts as a deterrent against deploying Danish troops in high-risk operations with limited Western participation.

Normative Rationales: Supporting the core values that the United Nations is tasked to uphold and promote – international law, human rights, peaceful conflict resolution, disarmament and development – is an important Danish foreign policy objective in its own right, but the UN is no longer seen as the single most important institution for doing so. These values may just as well be pursued through the EU, the OSCE or NATO. Today, the role played by the UN in Danish foreign policy is primarily a legitimating one. A UN mandate is not necessary for Denmark when resorting to force, however. Since the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, Denmark has been prepared to use force for humanitarian purposes without a UN mandate. A “mandate” from the EU or NATO is now regarded as an acceptable second-best solution. This willingness manifested itself most recently in 2011, when a large parliamentary majority was prepared to use force to stop attacks on civilians in Libya [without a UN mandate](#) if necessary. The decision to participate in the Iraq war in 2003 without a UN mandate and in the face of deep divisions within NATO is not likely to be repeated however. It became a highly divisive domestic issue forcing the government to undertake a premature withdrawal in 2007.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

The principal obstacle is the ongoing contribution of troops to ISAF, which prevents significant contributions to UN peacekeeping operations until 2015.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: The priority given to supporting NATO and the US-led war on terror has ruled out major UN contributions since the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Since the ISAF operation will wind down in 2015, it is possible that priority will shift back towards UN peacekeeping. This will depend upon developments in Washington and in NATO, however.

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: NATO has been the preferred institution for peacekeeping operations since 1995. As pointed out above, it has been perceived as the best vehicle for promoting security interests and normative values as well as the best way of enhancing force protection. The termination of ISAF may result in a reassessment if NATO does not embark on new major missions.

Financial costs: Financial costs have to date not been a serious barrier to Danish participation in international operations. Although, the costs of international operations have exceeded the

budget almost every year since the mid-1990s, the force commitments have not been reduced. That financial constraints are not decisive is also demonstrated by the fact that Denmark decided to contribute F-16s to the [Libyan operation in 2011](#) at a time where there was no money left in the defense budget for additional international commitments.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: On the contrary. Denmark is a long-time advocate of a comprehensive approach to conflict management and has been in favor of expanding the UN peacekeeping agenda since the early 1990s. Denmark views itself as a leading advocate of closer civil-military cooperation on UN missions ([integrated mission planning process](#)), the [Responsibility to Protect](#) agenda and has also worked hard to establish and consolidate the [UN Peacebuilding Commission](#).

Difficult domestic politics: Not at all. A large majority in both parliament and the public at large favors Danish military participation in international operations. The support for ISAF is higher in Denmark than anywhere else and all parties in parliament and 80% of the public supported the decision to go to war against the Qaddafi regime in Libya in 2011. International operations have become the *raison d'être* of the armed forces and the hallmark of the so-called “activist foreign policy” that Denmark has pursued since the end of the Cold War. The question in Danish domestic politics is not whether Denmark should contribute to peacekeeping or peace enforcement but where and how.

Resistance in the military: The Danish armed forces have generally been skeptical towards the UN since their UNPROFOR experience. The SHIRBRIG failure reinforced this perception as it was generally seen as additional proof of the UN's inability to act. NATO is the organization of choice for the armed forces, and following their engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Danish army regards itself as part of the elite due to its ability to operate side-by-side with UK and US forces in the toughest operational environments. Given a choice, the Danish armed forces therefore prefer to work together with UK and US forces in the field.

The level of military resistance should not be exaggerated, however. The military preference for cooperating with the UK and the US is by no means a decisive factor in the decision-making process, and the Danish armed forces will go where their political masters tell them. It should also be pointed out that most officers who serve on UN-led missions as staff officers, advisors or observers generally come home with a positive view of the organization. This also applies to the officers serving as military advisors in the [Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN](#) in New York.

Legal obstacles: There are no legal obstacles preventing deployment of Danish troops in UN-led peacekeeping operations.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

From the UN perspective, the challenge is to use the opportunity presented by the Danish withdrawal from ISAF in 2015 to convince Danish decision-makers to start making major contributions to UN-led missions instead. If NATO or the US embark on new missions Denmark is most likely to contribute to those missions. Major Danish contributions to UN-led missions are most likely if Western countries contribute the lion's share of the personnel, like was the case in UNIFIL. Given the volatility characterizing Northern Africa and the Middle East in the wake of the so-called Arab Spring, a similar, Western dominated, UN-led operation there in the decade ahead could also receive Danish contributions.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

The [United Nations Association Denmark](#) is one of the few vocal supporters for a Danish return to UN peacekeeping but it does not have much impact. The same goes for the informal network, Friends of the United Nations, made up of Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel (both retired and active) with UN experience, politicians, and academics. This network tries to stimulate interest and debate concerning the UN in Denmark but also with limited success. The military advisors working at the [Danish Mission to the UN](#) in New York also voice their support for UN peacekeeping on a regular basis. In the [army magazine](#) the current military advisor recently argued that participation in UN peacekeeping would be a worthwhile task for the army once it had withdrawn from Afghanistan.

There is no overt resistance to participation in UN peacekeeping in Denmark.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The Danish armed forces will continue to possess relevant air, sea and land capabilities for peacekeeping operations once the planned 15% cuts in the defense budget take effect in 2015. The capabilities will be reduced, but since priority will be given to maintain as much international capacity as possible, the key issue will be political will, not capability. Danish troops were deployed to Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq with hardly any national caveats and there is no reason to expect this not to be the case on future operations, including UN-led ones. Denmark is best placed to provide small but specialized contributions that the UN has difficulty in obtaining. Capacity-building experts, logistics, mentoring, staff officers, and naval assets are areas that Denmark will be both able and willing to make available to UN peacekeeping operations in the future – most likely in cooperation with the other Nordic countries. Whether Denmark will also be willing to make major (100+) troop contributions is the key question post-2015. Such contributions are most likely to be made in close cooperation with key allies such as the UK and the US or the Nordics.

In terms of civilian capacity, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' [Peace and Stabilisation Roster](#) (formerly International Humanitarian Service) has some 400 experts covering Rule of Law, human rights, mission support, water and sanitation, logistics, management etc. The Danish Red Cross, [the Danish Refugee Council](#) and Medicines sans Frontiers have government funded rosters totaling some 600 personnel available for humanitarian and emergency actions as well as in reconstruction activities. Finally, the Danish police force has some 75 personnel available for peace operations, and the [Danish Emergency Management Service](#) has equipment and 500 personnel deployable at short notice in natural emergencies.

Part 8: Further Reading

Jakobsen, Peter Viggo, *Nordic Approaches to Peace Operations: A New Model in the Making?* (London and New York: Routledge 2009).

[Summary Danish Defence – Global Engagement](#). Report by the Danish Defence Commission 2008 (March 2009).

Notes

¹ *The Military Balance, 2012* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2012).

² Armed Forces Spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of *active* armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012*.

³ In addition, a patrol vessel from the Danish navy escorted ships from the [World Food Programme](#) transporting food supplies to Somalia in 2008.