



New winds in German security policy

POTENTIALS FOR ENHANCED DANISH-GERMAN DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP

Germany is moving towards a more active foreign and defence policy and wishes to engage its European neighbours in long-lasting security and defence partnerships. The effects of these efforts will depend on how those neighbours, such as Denmark, react.

Under the third term of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the German coalition government wants the country to live up to its international responsibility. The first indicators for this decision appeared in the 2013 Coalition Agreement between CDU (Christian Democrats), CSU (Christian Socialists) and SPD (Social Democrats) and in particular in the speeches of Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal

RECOMMENDATIONS

Denmark should:

- Use the flux in German defence policies as an opportunity to reevaluate the Danish-German defence relationship in general.
- Consider if the recent Danish increase in personnel for Multinational Corps Northeast is sufficient to match Danish ambitions for Danish-German cooperation within this framework.
- Explore avenues for cooperation, especially with the German navy, on issues such as training, education and exercises. The Baltic Commanders Conference could be a forum for such initiatives.

A deeper cooperation and further integration with Denmark seems feasible and desirable from a German perspective



Germany is unlikely to replace the US, the UK and France as Denmark's chief strategic partners in the foreseeable future, but cooperation on less high-profile tasks could very well be possible.

President Joachim Gauck and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen at the Munich Security Conference 2014. All three emphasized the need for a more substantive engagement in foreign and security policy, where Germany cannot say 'no' on principle when it comes to the use of military means.

The following months showed that these speeches were more than rhetoric and lip service. Germany acted proactively in providing the Kurdish Peshmerga with weapons to support them in their fight against ISIS and became a strong pillar in the implementation of NATO's Readiness Action Plan. In parallel, von der Leyen announced the publication of a new "White book on security policy and on the future of the Bundeswehr" by summer 2016 as a reaction to the changed security environment.

Like many other European states, however, Germany must bridge the gap between meeting growing security threats in the immediate European neighborhood and shrinking defence budgets. Von der Leyen tackled this challenge by proposing enhanced multinational defence cooperation and by urging to work for the joint development of sets of forces and capabilities as well as for collective training and exercise.

First steps in this direction had been made with the Netherlands and Poland, two nations which purchase defence systems from Germany, in particular the Leopard battle tank. In 2014, Minister von der Leyen and her Polish counterpart Tomasz Siemoniak signed a document which determined the mutual subordination of armored battalions. This cooperation was launched in July 2015 and it should gradually be implemented within the next five years. It will place the German 411th Armoured Grenadiers battalion

under Polish command and the Polish 34th Armoured Cavalry Brigade, equipped with Leopard 2A5 tanks, under German command. Similarly, the Royal Netherlands Army's 43 Mechanized Brigade and its 16 Leopard 2A6 were recently integrated into the Bundeswehr's 1st Panzer Division, whereas the Dutch 11 Luchtmobiele Brigade, a rapid and light airmobile infantry unit, was integrated into the German Rapid Forces Division DSK.

Likewise, a deeper cooperation and further integration with Denmark, a geographically and politically close German ally, seems feasible and desirable from a German perspective. Both countries have a long tradition of good cooperation in defence matters, share common interests and a common neighborhood. Armaments cooperation like the decade-long purchase of Leopard 2 battle tanks by Denmark or the most recent successful conclusion of the joint sealift project ARK bear witness to this. Thus, the ongoing restructuration of the Danish armed forces and the current financial and security challenges that both countries are facing present a window of opportunity to develop these relations.

For Denmark, two main paths are at the disposal for a deeper military and defence cooperation with Germany: more substantial cooperation in the implementation of the Framework Nations Concept, as well as a trendsetting cooperation within the framework of the Baltic Commanders Conference.

Intensifying cooperation within the FNC

The so-called Framework Nations Concept (FNC) is a concept proposed in June 2013 by then German Defence Minister Thomas de Maizière at the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting and was officially endorsed at the Wales Summit in September 2014.

Instead of fulfilling capability goals, the FNC aims at generating capability profiles, thus representing a transition from a targeted approach to a more holistic one. In contrast to initiatives like Smart Defence, which restricts cooperation to a middle term and ad hoc basis, the FNC pushes nations to structure and focus their cooperation on the long term around a framework nation. This nation should ideally possess a broad spectrum of capabilities to be able to act as a facilitator for this group of states.

However, similar to Smart Defence, the FNC aims at raising the interoperability and is rooted in the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) for the generation of these profiles. In this manner it contributes to the realization of NATO's level of ambition – understood as the number, scale and nature of operations the Alliance should be able to conduct in the future. Especially in the perspective of potential future common deployments, it makes sense to procure military capabilities jointly and to adjust capability profiles. Due to its flexibility, the FNC is a tool of

choice for NATO to address, and adapt to, present and future threats swifter. It is, therefore, closely connected with NATO's Readiness Action Plan and is an integral part of NATO's strategic adaptation.

At the Wales Summit three groups of allies, each group led by a framework nation, implemented the FNC. While a first group of seven nations, including Denmark and led by Great-Britain, agreed to establish the Joint Expeditionary Force, a second group of six nations, with Italy as a framework nation, wished to improve NATO's stabilization and reconstruction capabilities. Finally, Germany positioned itself as a framework nation as well in order to improve and expand capabilities within the scope of logistics, command, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and anti-missile defence. In total, 16 nations, including Denmark, joined the German led FNC group and first concrete projects were decided: While Poland works under German guidance on an anti-missile defence system, Denmark has improved NATO's command structures by raising, together with Poland and



Danish soldiers during an exercise in the large Grafenwöhr exercise area in Southern Germany © Danish Defence/Morten Fredslund

Germany, the readiness of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE). For Germany, the FNC is a tool of choice to cooperate with as many states as possible and to develop capabilities for future military engagements.

The Baltic Commanders Conference

A further forum for deepening the defence cooperation between Denmark and Germany could be the Baltic Commanders Conference (BCC), an initiative of German Vice Admiral Rainer Brinkmann, bringing together the Naval Commanders of the neighboring states of the Baltic Sea (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden). The BCC intentionally excludes Russia since the conference was especially created to address the security concerns of the Baltics. With Russia's growing military activity near and even through their airspace and territorial waters, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia no longer consider the Baltic Sea as a "sea of peace". Once again, deterrence and credible capabilities seem to be a necessity. To this end, the BCC aims at mitigating the effects of defence budget cuts through a better defence coordination among the different participating states and their Navies.

On their first meeting in May 2015, the Naval Commanders set up five working groups, which will present their results in March 2016 at the second meeting of the BCC. With the increasing importance of the Baltic area, the BCC could foster the sharing of training facilities and the maritime cooperation between Germany and Denmark, two seafaring nations that navigate the same waters and which traditionally cooperated closely with each other during the Cold War as well as the 1990s. Especially in the absence of a shared threat perception amongst the participant states, education as well as training and exercise will most likely present the fields of cooperation with the best chances of success and in which Germany has the greatest interests for cooperation

with Denmark. Furthermore, Germany has a strong wish to institutionalize the BCC and hopes for the emergence of a multinational Maritime Operations Command based in Rostock.

Danish initiative is needed

Denmark is appreciated as a reliable and good partner by Germany and presents a high degree of interoperability. Nevertheless, Germany perceives France, the United States and the United Kingdom as Denmark's primary strategic partners. Indicators for this are its intensive cooperation with these countries in Afghanistan and the reliance on defence procurements from the United States. Particularly the recent creation of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) with an important Danish participation was interpreted as a landmark decision, especially in comparison to the increase of Danish troops at the MNC NE, which Germany considered too marginal to signal real commitment.

Germany is unlikely to replace the US, the UK and France as Denmark's chief strategic partners in the foreseeable future, but cooperation on less high-profile tasks could very well be possible. However, if Denmark wishes to mitigate the German impression of Danish disinterest and wishes to cooperate more intensively with Germany, Denmark should make the first step and propose concrete initiatives. The BCC, as well as the 2014 established Senior military expert talks, an official forum between the Danish and German Ministries of Defence which takes place once a year at the director-general level, could be two fora to discuss new initiatives. The intended visit of Defence Minister von der Leyen to Denmark at the beginning of 2016 would be the ideal moment to present and concretize such initiatives.

This Policy Brief builds on interviews conducted with various German experts and employees in the German defence establishment.

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Cover photo: German chancellor Angela Merkel shakes hands with soldiers in Leer, northern Germany, 7 December © AP Photo/Martin Meissner

