

‘We don't do that’: A constructivist perspective on the use and non-use of private military contractors by Denmark

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Abstract: In this article I put forward a social constructivist perspective on state use of Private Military and Security Contractors (PMSCs). I argue and show that state outsourcing decisions are, to a large extent, shaped by nationally shared values, understandings and dispositions. Concretely, I first provide a detailed overview of the extent of domestic and deployed contracting by the Danish Defence and thereafter, based on a number of semi-structured interviews, I expose the dominant understandings that shaped how PMSCs came to be understood in Denmark. By so doing I can show that the employment of PMSCs by the Danish Defence remains comparatively limited as it is largely perceived as inappropriate and as incompatible with what it means to be ‘Danish’. Although Denmark too has to balance its international engagements with limited resources allocated to defence (the typical functional pressures) Danish particular ‘soft’ neoliberalism and ‘hard’ commitments to IHL speak against using private actors to make that possible. This means I take in the more abstract, macro-level discussions on the end of the Cold War and the advent of neoliberalism but go beyond by asking whether, and if so how, these and other collective experiences and understandings actually (co-)shape(d) outsourcing decisions.

Introduction

Some of my interview partners were resolute: ‘No one has talked about, debated, or even considered using defence contractors for, for instance, guard service ... in Afghanistan. *We don’t do that*’ (Petersen, in interview). Others noted that the Danish ‘*don’t think like that*’ (Major Malm, in interview) or that employing companies for the execution of military functions is still ‘far away from the current political discourse and understanding of the Danish Defence’ (Broderson, in interview).¹

Following cues from Anna Leander and Andreas Kruck, who earlier mentioned the importance of ‘national lexica’ and ‘historical practices’ (Leander, 2013, p.8) and of states’ ‘prior ideational

1 Rasmus Helveg Petersen was defence spokesperson and later Minister for Climate and Energy for Radikale Venstre, a Danish centre oriented political party. Major Kim Malm was in charge of the buildings and real estate for the Ministry of Defence. And Morten Brodersen was, at the time of the interview, Deputy Head of the Finance and Budget Department of the Ministry of Defence.

contexts' which shape interpretations (Kruck, 2014, p.134), I put forward a social constructivist perspective on military outsourcing. I aim to illustrate that more than a logical solution to a functional problem state outsourcing decisions and engagements with Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are (co-)shaped by shared values, understandings and dispositions. Concrete, I will show that in the case of Denmark two particular shared understandings hold back outsourcing for military and support services. These are, first, the Danish particular interpretation and translation of neoliberalism and the 'New Public Management' (NPM) and, second, their particular stance on, and adherence to, International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In short, although Denmark too has to balance its international engagements with limited resources allocated to defence (the typical functional pressures) Danish particular 'soft' neoliberalism and 'hard' commitments to IHL speak against using private actors to make that possible. Therewith, the employment of PMSCs remains comparatively limited because it is largely perceived as inappropriate and as incompatible with what it means to be 'Danish'.

This article thus addresses the question of how we can understand the use and non-use of PMSCs by states in general by taking a closer look at the case of Denmark and the Danish Defence (DD) in particular. By so doing I aim to make both a theoretical and an empirical contribution to the literature.

Regarding the first this article addresses two perceived shortcomings. One, as Kruck noted, although most studies briefly reflect on what could explain contracting more often than not 'comprehensive studies on PMSCs merely point to a multitude of (more or less disconnected) reasons or drivers of privatisation' (2014, p.113). Whilst, two, it can be said that functional and macro-level explanations, particularly regarding the 'end-of-the-cold-war' and the 'spread-of-neoliberalism', have dominated the literature, downplaying state choice and agency. By emphasising sociological aspects of political decision making this article offers a new and different perspective on military outsourcing that addresses both points. On the one hand it offers a way in which the different drivers of outsourcing can be seen as connected or coming together and, on the other, the proposed framework encompasses, but goes beyond, the previously functional and macro-level explanations. Therewith this study also aims to forge a connection between the rather isolated research on defence contracting on the one hand and constructivist thinking in the broader field of International Relations (IR) on the other.

Regarding the latter, the empirical contribution, I offer a comprehensive study of a so far under-researched case; Denmark. It has been observed in recent years that the research into the use of PMSCs has disproportionally focused on only a few cases (Leander, 2013; Berndtsson, 2014; van Meegdenburg, 2015) whereby especially the USA and the UK received much attention. In fact, close to 90% of all studies on military outsourcing by 'Western' countries published between 1998-2012 focussed on either of these two cases (van Meegdenburg, 2015, p.332-33). And although researchers found that outsourcing by the UK 'is not as widespread as in the US' (Kinsey, 2006, p.104) many states are said, or at least expected, to follow this trend (Krahmann, 2013a, Berndtsson, 2014). Petersohn (2010) even argued that outsourcing might well be the new international norm or standard whereby privatisation and civilian support are seen as an integral part, even a 'requirement', of contemporary armed forces (p.543). So far however, despite a more recent diversification in cases studied (i.e. Leander, 2013; Dunigan & Petersohn, 2015), little empirical research has been conducted to verify these expectations. This study offers one such case. Moreover, by explicitly focussing on outsourcing during extraterritorial engagements (contracting during and for deployments) as well as

for domestic support functions (contracting at ‘home’) I aim to offer an encompassing overview of contracting by the DD.

In short, this article provides an in-depth assessment of the use of military and support contractors in an under-researched case and puts forward a framework that focusses on understanding and explaining the particularities of that use. I will proceed in three steps. First, I briefly argue how a sociological approach to PMSCs and defence contracting can be helpful in bringing state agency and choice – or political decision making – in to the debate on defence contracting and why I believe this is necessary in the first place. Second, I give a detailed overview of the extent of domestic and operational support contracting by the DD to show that outsourcing in Denmark remained sparse in both domains. Third, I will expose the dominant understandings in Denmark regarding the use of PMSCs and argue and show that the use of PMSCs has remained limited because it is largely perceived as incompatible with what it means to be Danish.

Understanding military outsourcing

To date it are the companies themselves and the consequences of their use that have received most attention. The at times scandalous and illegal conduct of contractors – from hazing scandals, over-billing, and fraud to violations such as human trafficking and torture (Schooner, 2005; Dickinson, 2007) – has led to a strong problematisation of the contracted parties and focused attention on regulatory and accountability issues (Leander, 2013; van Meegdenburg, 2015).

Although most studies address explanations for contracting they frequently focus on macro-level phenomena such as the end of the Cold War and the overall transition towards neoliberal governance. Moreover, and in close relation to that, functional explanations dominate the literature. Especially in relation to the end-of-the-cold-war logic – the ‘master-narrative’ as Abrahamsen & Williams (2011) called it – military outsourcing is often presented as the logical, almost inevitable course of history: post-Cold War changes in warfare and technology, in combination with military downsizings and the operational requirements of new wars are said to have created a need, or void, that forced states to ‘cooperate with a range of different actors’ (Kinsey, 2006, p.52, see also Berndtsson, 2014, p.543). Closely related are arguments regarding (post-Cold War) ‘budget pressures’ whereby outsourcing is presented as a response to diminished defence spending – the so called ‘peace dividend’ (Krahmann 2005, p.252; Schreier & Caparini 2005, p.3; Franke & von Boemcken 2011, p.727) – or financial and economic pressures. Spearin, for instance, explains why the Canadian Defence ‘embraced alternative service delivery’ by reference to the Canadian public debt in the early 1990s and the thereto related budget cuts (2005, p.1097). On the other hand, more ideational explanations focussing on the ‘ideas-system of neoliberalism’ (Kruck, 2014, p.117) frequently draw on a strong neoliberalisation thesis whereby the ‘powerful conservative coalitions in the US and the UK in the 1980s’ (Avant, 2005, p.35) and ‘Thatcherism and Reaganomics’ in those same countries (Krahmann, 2010, p.37) stand as models for broader social changes. Even Petersohn’s sociological institutionalist approach follows a strong top-down narrative whereby ‘armed forces *need to match* a particular model’ and norms are said to have ‘*pressed* states to privatize military tasks’ (Petersohn, 2010, p.537, emphasis added).

In these logics state agency, interpretation, and decision making are largely taken out of the equation. As Leander noted: the ‘academic and para-academic research on security commercialisation ... has reserved a rather minor place for questions about politics’ (2013, p.2). To bring politics in to these debates a first step is to move away from purely functional explanations and to acknowledge that the decision to deploy, or not to deploy, with contractors is indeed that: a decision. A decision, moreover, which is non-obvious. As Avant once asked in relation to US-American outsourcing: ‘Why must the US rely on fewer troops (could downsizing not be reversed as military requirements grow)?’ (2005, p.32). It is here that I argue a sociological perspective on state sense- and decision-making is helpful. As has been argued elsewhere: a state’s foreign and defence policy, its perception of the appropriate composition and build-up of its forces and its involvement in international missions are not inevitable outcomes of global or functional changes but of processes of sense-making and political deliberation drawing on particular understandings of the self and the domestic and international histories and contexts (Berger, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996; Finnemore, 2002, Guzzini, 2012, Bevir & Daddow, 2015).

Constructivists IR-scholars of all inclinations have long noted that new experiences and developments go through a deliberative sense-making process in which their meaning in relation to the ‘self’ is constructed (Wendt, 1992; Ringmar, 1996; Risse 2000). From this literature we may learn that collective cultures and shared values and belief systems (Berger 1996; Lund Pedersen 2012; Bevir & Daddow, 2015) as well as shared understandings of the self (national identities) (Ringmar 1996; Browning 2008; Guzzini 2012; Bucher & Jasper 2017) guide attention and perception and form an intricate part of our active and collective construction of reality: they shape ‘how our “national interests” are to be defined, or which foreign policy to pursue’ (Ringmar, 1996, p.455). As Berger elaborated, state particular ‘historical experiences and the way in which those experiences were interpreted by domestic political actors’ bring forth particular belief systems and values which, in turn, provide the social structures and shared understandings that inform future interpretations and policy decisions (1996, p.318-19). Moreover, considering such understandings are neither fixed nor necessarily uncontested political decision making is generally understood as a process through which particular emphases and interpretations become ‘temporarily bundled and stabilized in action’ (Bucher & Jasper, 2017, p.393). They are struggles over meaning and action that converge on answers of ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’ considering particular circumstances.

My argument here is that PMSC employment too is better understood as a discrete outcome of political sense- and decision making. What PMSCs came to mean for and in a particular country is largely shaped by that country’s historical experiences and shared understandings. And whether or not a country employs PMSCs depends on the collective self-understanding of the state domestically – ‘for what/whom do we stand?’ – as well as on the perceived international position and willingness to engage – ‘what is our role in world affairs?’ (Guzzini, 2012, p.50-51). Understood this way, the point of departure for research aimed at understanding the use of PMSCs shifts from macro-level events – the end of the Cold War, the advent of neoliberalism, the existence of PMSCs – to more micro-level and particular *understandings* of these events and developments. As Guzzini put it: ‘We need to start from the relevant and diverse communities of interpreters. How were they disposed to understand the events ... in one way rather than another?’ (Guzzini, 2012, p.49). I thus start from the premise that state policy making does not take place in a functional vacuum and that we, in order to understand military

outsourcing, have to look at the local understandings and meanings that informed outsourcing decisions. Such a perspective takes in the more abstract, macro-level discussions on the end of the Cold War and the advent of neoliberalism but goes beyond by asking whether, and if so how, particular understandings of these developments actually (co-)shaped outsourcing decisions.

Note on data collection and analysis

The below discussions draw on a number of predominantly primary sources. First, the overview of defence contracting is based on a report by the Danish Auditor General (Rigsrevisor, 2008) regarding the use of private actors by the DD during international missions and the Danish ‘Defence Agreements’ which set out defence policy for a 4-year period each.² Moreover, I obtained copies of the in-theatre/deployed contracts the DD had with three companies – ATCO Frontec, Danish Camp Supply ApS, and Supreme Food-service AG – in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Lastly, I draw on the outsourcing policy applicable to defence – the *Forsvarskommandoens politik vor forsvarrets udbud af egen opgaveløsning* (Defence Command policy for defence tenders of internal assignments) – to illustrate how Danish outsourcing practices are translated in defence.³ I largely limit the discussion to outsourcing taking place under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Although I briefly discuss outsourcing by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for diplomatic protection in conflict zones I do not, for instance, discuss maritime security arrangements on commercial vessels or the privatisation of guarding functions in domestic public spaces. Notwithstanding these too form part of a related public debate, I decided to retain the focus on a single issue; contracting by defence.

Second, the discussion on the relevant Danish understandings is primarily based on a number of semi-structured interviews I conducted with civil servants from the DD, the MOD, and MFA, as well as with politicians. The interviews centred on exploring the perceived ‘boundaries’ to outsourcing – what can be outsourced and what not? – and why they perceived them to be there where they indicated them. The aim was to tease out the understandings that informed Danish outsourcing by focussing on their perceptions of the social norms and dispositions that influenced sense- and decision making. Using MAXQDA to organise the data I found the arguments clustered around two particular understandings: a) the Danish interpretation and translation of neoliberalism and a thereto related ‘caution’ when it comes to outsourcing; and b) their particular stance on and adherence to IHL (both are further elaborated below).

There are two potential downsides to this approach which, I believe, are both mitigated by other considerations. The first regards the double hermeneutics whereby I largely rely on the interviewees’ interpretations of the collective understandings that influenced the debate. Although this is difficult to avoid when engaging in this type of research it is interesting to note that also those disagreeing with the perceived dominant understandings still acknowledged that these particular understandings

2 Whereby it should be noted that the Defence Agreements are not executive policy but political compromises reached between the majority of Danish political parties represented in Parliament. The latest Defence Agreement, for instance, is signed by the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne), the Social-Liberal Party (Radikale Venstre), the Socialist People’s Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti), the Liberal Party (Venstre), the Danish People’s Party (Danske Folkeparti), the Liberal Alliance, and the Conservatives (Det Konservative Folkeparti). I will refer to the ‘coalitions’ as the authors of the Agreements (Defence Coalition, 2012).

3 I thank Nicolai Brennholt and Nikolas Burmester for their help translating some of these documents.

informed decisions. Troels Lund Poulsen lamented, for instance, that an intensification of outsourcing was ‘not possible in Denmark’ as the prevailing dispositions did not allow it (in interview).⁴ This shows that despite political disagreements regarding which values *ought to* guide Danish practices there was an agreement on which actually *did*. Second, it might be the case, as Krahnmann noted earlier, that there are ‘competing discourses ... each with its own language and ideals’ (2013b, p.168-171), one in the bureaucratic structures, an internal discourse favouring outsourcing, and an external discourse informing the broader public debate about military contracting in parliament and the media, more critical of outsourcing. Besides the fact that I did not have the impression that such a second, hidden discourse existed, this being the case would also not undermine the argument. As Finnemore argued in relation to public justifications; these practices and statements are ‘important because [they] speak directly to the normative context’ (1996, p.159). The Danish public position as presented in the Defence Agreements and as presented to me in interviews shows what is currently perceived as politically feasible and publicly acceptable.

The following two sections take two empirical steps. I first elaborate on the extent of contracting by the Danish forces for both domestic and deployed services. Thereafter I highlight the two particular understandings that seem to have been most salient in the Danish case, shaping how PMSCs came to be seen.

The use and non-use of PMSCs by Denmark

In his assessment Mandrup (2013) argued that ‘commercial actors and mechanism are today a common phenomenon in Denmark’ including in ‘security related tasks’ (p.40). However, despite some outsourcing – on occasion also in conflict zones – I find the Danish record too ambivalent for such a strong conclusion. In relation to domestic contracting outsourcing came late and remained cautious. In relation to deployed contracting it has remained limited and ad-hoc. Especially regarding outsourcing for security related tasks there are good reasons to assume this is still ‘a political no-go area in Denmark’ (Stepputat, 2009, p.33).

Domestic contracting and the Danish outsourcing policy

Domestic contracting in Denmark first took shape in 2012. In that year the DD tendered and closed a large facility contract with Forenede Service A/S putting the company in charge of the cleaning, canteen services, and maintenance of the ‘green areas’ at defence estates in Sjælland and Bornholm in eastern Denmark (Poulsen, in interview).⁵ One year later a functionally similar but in geographical reach larger contract was closed with ISS Facility Services for a period of 5 years where-under the company services defence estates in Jutland and Funen in western Denmark. These contracts, which hand over the responsibility of an entire function to a private contractor, constituted a new frame of contracting for the DD. As Grith Poulsen explained this ‘is a different type of outsourcing then we

4 Troels Lund Poulsen was Defence Spokesperson and former and current Minister from Venstre, the Liberals, a Danish centre-right wing political party.

5 Grith Sandst Poulsen was Head of the Outsourcing Department of the Danish Defence at the time of the interview.

have traditionally been used to' as previous outsourcings were ad-hoc and far more limited in scope.⁶

In essence, however, these two contracts *are* the extent of outsourcing for domestic support functions by the DD. Indeed, by calling for further 'competitive tendering and optimization' the most recent Defence Agreement shows the extent of functions still executed in-house (Defence Coalition, 2012, p.25). By saying the DD should look into the 'outsourcing suitability' of the maintenance of vehicles and air-crafts, the logistics inside Denmark, and the military driving schools and other 'civilian education' the Agreement makes apparent these functions are still executed by the DD. Especially when compared to the 'usual suspects' this shows outsourcing arrived late – the UK and USA initiated 'market-testing polic[ies]' in 1985 and 1984 respectively (Krahmann, 2010, p.73-74) – and remained scant.

To understand this difference it is worth looking at the outsourcing policy applicable to defence. Following an 'efficiency strategy' by the MOD the Defence Agreement of 2005-2009 suggests the DD start exploring the 'outsourcing suitability' of some of its functions (Defence Coalition, 2004, p.4). The DD, however, follows an outsourcing process that shows precaution and the official policy includes two steps that illustrate this. The first relates to the assessment of 'suitability' or 'appropriateness' of outsourcing a particular function, the second to the desire to include internal bids for the contract.

A first step, however, will be a preliminary optimization of the tasks internally within the defence, in order to gain the immediate streamlining benefits and secure the necessary knowledge of the tasks. When the benefits of the internal optimization have been gained, it must be considered whether it is possible to gain further economic benefits or increased flexibility in the structure of the defence. Among other options are competitive tendering of all or part of the tasks (Defence Coalition, 2012, p.26).

This 'optimisation phase' is a required step that gives the DD a chance to restructure its functioning and to ensure the benefits of a potential outsourcing 'are reaped by the public' (Lene Espersen, in interview).⁷ The decision to open a public tender is then based on an assessment of the 'optimised functioning' and is first taken one year after the re-organisation finished (Forsvarskommandoen, 2011). As Morten Broderson told me: 'actually, we are not allowed to outsource anything until we have been through that phase' (in interview), and the outsourcing process could be stopped at this point. A second precaution is the internal bidding requirement. The DDs internal bids are evaluated on equal footing with other bids whereby defence can decide to retain a function in-house if the DD is expected to provide higher quality or to be more cost-efficient. According to the outsourcing policy:

The control bid is the current organizations specific proposal for the future settlement of the tendered contract. The control bid can therefore be seen as the ever-present possibility to cancel a tender if the tender's prices exceed the organizations own budget figures for the assignment (Forsvarskommandoen, 2011, Bilag 1, p.2).

In short, the DD has an 'outsourcing process that does not necessarily result in an outsourcing'

6 The DD at times employed local plumbers, carpenters, etc., on an if-needed basis.

7 Lene Espersen is Former Deputy Prime Minister, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and defence Spokesperson for Det Konservative Folkeparti (The Conservative Party). A Danish liberal right-wing oriented political party.

(Poulsen, in interview). Considering this, it is less surprising that more than 10-years after outsourcing was first explored there are still few concrete outsourcings to be discussed. This policy, however, relates only to domestic functions. Adding Danish outsourcing for operational support to the overview creates a less unambiguous picture: whereas domestic outsourcing was first shaped in 2012, deployed contracting for similar functions was first used in 2003.

Deployed contracting by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence

Danish deployed outsourcing has two components. First, is the organisation (respectively indirect and direct) of security contractors for the protection of Danish aid-workers in Helmand, Afghanistan, and the protection of the Danish embassy in Iraq after the forces left. Both organised by the MFA. Second, is the employment (again both direct and indirect) of contractors during international missions in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq by the DD itself.

Deployed outsourcing by the MFA. Mandrup (2013) already noted that part of the employment of PMSCs by Denmark lays in the ‘purchase of a given service from one of the larger alliance partners’ (p.54). In this case the reference is to the protection of the British-Danish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Helmand. Employees of the Danish MFA and aid-workers of the Danish International Development Agency received close protection from AmorGroup – a well-known British PMSC. This arrangement was however indirect; it was based in an agreement between the MFA and the British government regarding the protection of the joined PRT. The agreement left the concrete security measures to the latter’s discretion and the British government subsequently contracted ArmorGroup for the assignment. This ‘enable[d] Danish advisers to make consistent use of [the company]’ (Stepputat, 2009, p.33).

Besides this more indirect reliance the MFA partly outsourced the protection of the embassy in Iraq. Ambassador Thomas Winkler confirmed to me that, after the Danish forces withdrew from Iraq in 2010, guarding of the embassy was handed over to a private company until the embassy closed in 2012 (in interview).⁸ However, recalling the Vienna Conventions on Consular Relations, Ambassador Winkler argued that the uncommon element in this arrangement was not that the protection was provided by a private company but that it was protected by the DD in the first instance. As he argued: ‘it is quite clear that the host country has an obligation to protect the embassies’ and when the host country cannot provide sufficient guarantees ‘then the next step would be private security, it would never be to contact the Danish army’ (Winkler, in interview). In this particular case the DD took the responsibility for mission protection because the diplomatic mission was established in support of the military mission and the Danish Comprehensive Approach.⁹ Moreover, information came out that Danish diplomatic convoys would have been able to request Blackwater services in case of emergencies in Baghdad, Iraq. An arrangement which caused much controversy in the Danish

8 Thomas Winkler is a Danish Ambassador and legal advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

9 A discussion on the use of security contractors in the Danish standing committee for Foreign Affairs, June 11th 2007, further illustrates that embassy protection is decentralised and may rely on private security. Then Minister Per Stig Møller indicated that at least 10 Danish embassies use Group 4 Securicor (G4S) for additional protection and five missions have an ‘alarm service’ agreement with G4S. Notwithstanding the situation in Iraq constituted a clear outsourcing by the MFA in a conflict zone, the status and normalcy of this type of outsourcing remains ‘something that needs to be discussed’ (Winkler, in interview).

parliament, not in the least case because the arrangement was sought shortly after the infamous Blackwater shooting in 2007 – a fact which loomed large in Danish newspapers (see a.o.: Seidelin, 2015; Corfixen & Svendsen, 2016). Although the Ambassador in Baghdad initiated contact it was the DD that was in charge of diplomatic protection at that point in time. In the end however, this informal emergency option was never called upon.

Deployed outsourcing by the DD. Direct deployed outsourcing by the DD remained confined to transportation, construction, and other support functions. Although indirectly also the DD engaged *security contractors* – Denmark benefited, for instance, from the British organised private protection of Camp Bastian in Afghanistan by paying rent to the British government for the shared camp facilities (Mandrup, 2013, p.50, whereby it may be noted that these types of indirect arrangements are likely difficult to avoid for the smaller allies, see Østensen, 2013, Terlikowski et al, 2013) – regarding direct arrangements especially transportation stands-out (see table 1) (Rigsrevisors, 2008, p.4). Most of this regards chartering of air- and sea-lift capacities through international cooperative framework agreements. Examples are the chartering of three ships from DFDS Seaways – a Danish logistics company – as part of the ‘ARK’-project, the Danish contribution to the 2002 NATO Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC), and the Danish participation (until 2007) in NATO’s Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) wherethrough six Antonov An-124-100 transport aircraft were chartered from Volga Dnepr, a Russian company.¹⁰ On most occasions these private arrangements were used to transport people and goods to regional hubs and Kabul whereafter the DD covered transportation within the conflict zones (Major Malm, in interview)

Assignment type	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Logistic ¹⁾	7,6	6,9	8,5	15,5	21,0
Catering	1,9	2,7	3,8	3,7	2,2
Construction	0,0	0,9	0,1	0,3	0,2
Maintenance	1,0	0,1	0,2	0,6	0,6
Other ²⁾	1,8	0,3	0,4	0,8	1,2
<i>Total contracting</i>	<i>12,3</i>	<i>10,9</i>	<i>13,0</i>	<i>21,0</i>	<i>25,2</i>

Table 1: Danish Defence contracting for international missions 2003-2007 (in millions of Euros)

1) excluding the costs of fuel 2) includes expenditures for communication, cleaning, interpreters, etc.
source: Rigsrevisors (2008, p.2)

Beyond logistics the DD had in-theatre contracts with three companies: ATCO Frontec, Danish Camp Supply, and Supreme Food-service. These contracts covered basic deployed facility services such as construction, catering, and cleaning. The total costs are included in table 1 and thus reached a maximum of Euro 4,5 million in 2005.¹¹

¹⁰ I refer to Mandrup (2013, pp. 44-48) for a more in-depth discussion of these arrangements.

¹¹ The value of the individual contracts is not given in Rigsrevisors (2008) and were likewise erased by the MOD before the copies of the contracts were released to me.

The first deployed support contract was closed between *Hærens Materielkommando* (Army Material Command) and Danish Camp Supply ApS in 2002. Under this contract the company took over a number of shops at three camps in Kosovo and Bosnia – Camp Olaf Rye, Camp Dannevirke, and North Pole Barracks – where the company was to offer products ranging from magazines and refreshments to boots, binoculars and other equipment. With a six month trial period the contract was closed for a maximum of three years. One year later, in February 2003, a second contract handed over the responsibilities of the canteen services at one camp, Camp Olaf Rye, to the same company. Under this contract Danish Camp Supply took charge of supplying and preparing all meals at the camp. The contract was likewise signed for a period of three years.

ATCO Frontec was employed only shortly and serviced the DD at NATO KAIA Camp in Kabul, Afghanistan. The contract stipulates the company was contracted by the Royal Danish Airforce Logistics Group to ‘provide rehabilitation, renovation, and minor construction services to specified facilities’ in the camp between June and September 2005. More concretely, ATCO Frontec was to work on the shower facilities, the construction of fire escape routes and pedestrian walkways in the Danish section of the camp, and smaller services such as the preparation of insulation and air-conditioning.

Lastly, the Danish section of the international Shaiba Logistic Base in Basra Province, Camp Danevang, was partly serviced by Supreme Food-service. Commencing February 2005 Supreme was contracted to run a shop in the Danish camp and to serve three meals a day to the Danish contingent. Related to this contract was the lease of the accommodation necessary to run the facility, as well as maintenance of toilet and shower facilities. The latter was stipulated in a separate contract that commenced in August that year. A final, smaller contract with Supreme was closed by the Danish Defence Acquisition and Logistics Organization and refers to technical support in camp Danevang, consisting of engineers, plumbers and technicians.

These arrangements, both the more extensive logistics arrangements and the support contracts discussed above, constitute clear and direct outsourcings by the DD in relation to deployments in conflict zones. As noted however they remain fairly limited and confined to rear-support services. That notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that in-theatre contracting preceded contracting of similar services domestically: whereas Danish Camp Supply took over the canteen services in Camp Olaf Rye in 2003, Forenede Service took over similar functions in eastern Denmark only in 2012.

‘We don’t do that’

Mandrup (2013) puts forward that outsourcing by the DD was partly driven ‘by the heavy burden put on the armed forces owing to the war efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan’ and partly by ‘the neoliberal privatization tendencies that have affected the entire public sector’ (p.44). An argument in line with the dominant explanations of contracting in the literature. Yet, considering the cautious approach at home and the limited outsourcing abroad, this explanation leaves wanting. This section aims to expose the Danish disposition towards PMSCs. Thereby my aim is not to dismiss the above line of argument entirely but to lay emphasis on the pre-existing frames and conceptions that informed outsourcing considerations and that may explain why, especially regarding outsourcing for security

related tasks, there are good reasons to assume this is still ‘a political no-go area in Denmark’ (Stepputat, 2009, p.33). What is it that restrains outsourcing by the DD?

Danish ‘soft’ neoliberalism

First, as Peck & Tickell (2002) argued: the concrete expression neoliberalism finds in a given country can itself be seen as the outcome of contextually embedded sense- and decision making creating a variegated landscape of ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ (p.383). Therewith the question arises what neoliberalism came to mean in Denmark.

In Denmark, although a marked NPM-discourse took hold in the public-sector practices focussed more on modernisation efforts such as interdepartmental contracting, performance based management, and ‘customer relationships’ whereby the consensus remained on ‘developing the public sector rather than dismantling or minimizing it’ (Greve, 2006, p.168). As Kjær & Pedersen argued: in Denmark ‘neoliberal concepts were translated into structural policy in ways that were heavily conditioned by the particular discursive and institutional order of Danish economic policy making’ (2001, p.220). Based on the Danish history of consensus, social-democracy and the strong collective understanding of the self as an egalitarian country neoliberalism did find its way into policies, but did so in a strongly ameliorated way specific to the Danish understandings and context (Kuisma 2007, Kjær & Pedersen, 2001; Campbell & Hall, 2006). Therefore, although ‘neoliberal tendencies’ are and were present in Denmark, Mandrup may have over-stated their extent or overall success (see a.o. Kuisma, 2007; Pedersen & Löfgren, 2012). Moreover, that the neoliberalism of Denmark cannot be compared to the neoliberalisms of the UK and USA (Jessop, 2002) is important for understanding the Danish disposition towards defence contracting. Simply put; the Danish perceptions of government and the market – and the proper distribution of functions over them – co-shaped decisions regarding outsourcing and the appropriateness of using contractors. What this means becomes clearest in relation to the outsourcing policy applicable to the DD.

The outsourcing policy itself, and the re-iteration of the precautions included in this policy by the latest Defence Agreement, are probably the strongest reflections of Denmark’s careful approach to the market. The inclusion of an ‘optimisation phase’ and the requirement to make an internal bid for the contract show that the DD, although it is exploring outsourcing, is not rushing forward. As Grith Poulsen put it: the DD has ‘a tendency to also think that, before we outsource everything, maybe we should take it one step at a time’ (in interview). Moreover, it is important to emphasise that the Defence Agreements are not executive policy: they are the outcomes of negotiations between all Danish political parties represented in Parliament and, as such, they stipulate the political compromise of the time. They are a concrete example of political sense- and decision making as a process through which particular and potentially conflicting understandings and emphases converge on ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’ in relation to defence. They show what was perceived to be politically feasible and acceptable at that time. At the same time, although we can see a particular NPM-discourse in defence, and although NPM-style auditing, measurability, and ‘performance-accountability’ structures were imposed on the DD (Skærbæk & Thorbjørnsen, 2007), actual outsourcing remains scarce. Except for the driving schools, where it explicitly states that an ‘outsourcing model’ will be pursued (p.18), the 2012 Defence Agreement puts forward that it would be ‘appropriate to consider’ alternatives for the

execution of certain other functions (Defence Coalition, 2012, p.25). Stipulating what ‘to consider’ means the Agreement refers back to the outsourcing policy, explicitly mentions the optimisation phase and puts competitive tendering forward as only one of multiple solutions. As Major Malm stressed: ‘it has not been said that we have to outsource. That is very important. There is no statement: outsource!’ (Malm, in interview).

Moreover, at the time of our meetings shortly after the new Defence Agreement was closed Lene Espersen, Troels Lund Poulsen, and Rasmus Petersen essentially agreed that outsourcing in Denmark, and thus in the DD, is not an ‘ideological path’ as ‘that is not possible [in Denmark]’ (Lund Poulsen, in interview). Morten Brodersen similarly noted that outsourcing in the DD is not introduced as a ‘dogma’ and expected that the relative enthusiasm towards outsourcing expressed in the latest Agreement is primarily related to the first phase of the process, the optimisation phase, to ‘not necessarily go all the way and actually outsource ... but to start the process as a way to save money’ (Brodersen, in interview). To repeat the words of Grith Poulsen, it is noteworthy that the DD has an ‘outsourcing process that does not necessarily result in an outsourcing’ which reflects the ameliorated, ‘softer’ expression neoliberalism found in Denmark.

Denmark’s ‘hard’ commitments to IHL

Second, although also in Denmark the actual end of the Cold War changed the perspective on defence and the armed forces, this alone cannot explain Denmark’s ‘political-military culture’ or how the Danes ‘view national security, the military as an institution, and the use of force in international relations’ (Berger, 1996, p.326). Rather than focussing solely on the end of the Cold War as an event that started (or accelerated) certain processes, it is thus worthwhile to look at the Danish understanding of the post-Cold War order and their role therein. This regards decisions on the military budget and military engagements, as well as on the use (or non-use) of PMSCs.

According to Heurlin (2001) Denmark always had a strong focus on international cooperation and integration, and contemporary policy still stresses that expeditionary missions and international cooperation ‘contributing to the prevention of conflicts and war, in respect of democracy, freedom and human rights’ are a cornerstone of Danish foreign and defence policy (Defence Coalition, 2012, pp.1-2). Lawler (2007) discusses this role interpretation as a particular form of ‘internationalism’ that is not a simple function of Denmark’s geo-political position but shaped by an ‘ideological commitment to global welfare as a “logical extension” of the Nordic emphasis on “social solidarity at home”’ (Lawler, 2007, p.104).¹² An ideological commitment which, according to him, is anchored in public narratives and thus an important element of the Danish collective understanding of the self. Moreover, and in direct relation to these commitments, Jakobsen & Ringsmose (2015) showed that Danish public support for the war in Afghanistan was maintained by appeals to ‘broadly shared national interests, values and role conceptions’ (p.216) whereby, importantly, the role conceptions appealed to regard Denmark as a reliable NATO ally and ‘a responsible member of the international community’ (Jakobsen & Ringsmose, 2015, p. 217-218). However, whilst the Danish role conception and its

¹² This, although he also notices particular changes becoming apparent in the Danish role fulfilment amongst which an increasing willingness to employ force alongside softer development measures (see also Lund Petersen, 2012, p.53-54).

particular understandings of the post-Cold War order are likely to have shaped its military commitments in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq – policy decisions, and thus outcomes of political sense- and decision making, that would ‘stretch’ the DDs capacities and that brought about the ‘functional need’ for support contractors – the Danish commitment to IHL is likely to have tempered the direct engagement with PMSCs, especially for security services.

As the Defence Agreement (2012) puts it: ‘a strong international rule of law [and] adherence to international humanitarian law ... remain a Danish priority’ (p.2). And in the Danish understanding and interpretation of IHL this excludes the use of contractors for security functions. Grith Poulsen, when asked why Denmark is more reluctant to outsource security related functions, answered that the DD has a:

very specific view on international humanitarian law, which would be very dimensioning of how we would view outsourcing of more security related tasks. ... We hold very strongly to the Geneva conventions in that we have a duty not to let ourselves be defended, or in any way involved with civilians with weapons if there is a risk of an armed conflict (Poulsen, in interview).

Similarly, although he stressed that there is no clear policy in Denmark that delimits outsourcing during extraterritorial engagements, Jes Knudsen emphasised that ‘Denmark is clearly very cognisant of the fact that the monopoly on the use of force is a state monopoly’ and that there is a consensus that ‘the use of force against any civilian population anywhere should be restricted to armed forces, or indeed police’ (in interview).¹³

Most interesting, however, is that the initial answers given conveyed a certain taken for grantedness, or obviousness. Rasmus Petersen, drawing on his reflections of a more general Danish discourse and disposition, noted: ‘there is a very strong collective feeling of where the boundary [to outsourcing] is. And it is unquestioned, also by me’ (in interview). Moreover, as he so resolutely stated at the beginning of the interview: ‘No one has talked about, debated, or even considered using defence contractors for, for instance, guard service ... in Afghanistan. *We don’t do that*’. Jes Knudsen similarly put forward that rear-support outsourcing was seen as ‘safe to outsource’, also politically, whilst the use of PMSCs for security functions was ‘*simply not considered*’, whilst Major Malm argued that ‘that would never work, not in the Danish model. ... *we don’t think like that*’.

As Nina Tannenwald (1999) noted; it is significant if a particular norm (or taboo) is ‘a shared but “unspoken” assumption of decisions makers’ and when the reasoning for non-use or non-action follows a line of: ‘because of who we are, what our values are, “we just don’t do things like this”’ (p.440). Therefore, the fact that ‘no one has talked about, debated, or even considered using defence contractors for, for instance, guard service [...] in Afghanistan’ (Petersen, in interview) and that the use of PMSCs for security functions was ‘simply not considered’ (Knudsen, in interview) as there seems to be a ‘political expectation’ (Knudsen, in interview) and ‘collective feeling’ (Petersen, interview) that outsourcing for military and security tasks is ‘not possible in Denmark’ (Lund Poulsen, in interview) is perhaps the strongest indication that the use of PMSCs by Denmark during

¹³ Jes Rynkeby Knudsen is the Director of the Danish International Humanitarian Law Manual Project for the Danish Defence and chief legal advisor to the Danish Defence.

extraterritorial missions has remained limited and ad-hoc because it is regarded as inappropriate and incompatible with Danish values and collective understandings of the self. Or, as the two independent statements of Rasmus Pedersen and Major Kim Malm can be puzzled together: *'we don't do that'* because *'we don't think like that'*.

In all, the actual (but limited) use of PMSCs by the DD is likely to have been a compromise resulting from struggles between different and at that time conflicting values and role conceptions. Denmark's softer neoliberalism and its particular interpretation of and adherence to IHL seem to have been at odds with the desire to actively and militarily engage with limited resources allocated to defence: while the Danish role conception as a responsible international actor and reliable NATO ally speaks in favour of military engagements, Danish 'soft' neoliberalism and 'hard' commitments to IHL speak against using private actors to make that possible. Therefore, and notwithstanding that Denmark did use private support for international deployments, contracting in Denmark has remained relatively scant and ad-hoc. Or, as Morten Borderson formulated his reply:

in Denmark, the idea of employing private contractors for military functions is far away from the current political discourse and understanding of the Danish Defence. And I think that discourse would take a long time to change (Broderson, in interview).

Conclusion

I argued that the emphasis on the-end-of-the-cold-war and the predominantly top-down perspective on the spread of norms and world-views (neoliberalism) means that political agency has been largely neglected in the literature on PMSCs. I put forward that to overcome this, and in order to better understand military outsourcing, we have to look at the local political context in which outsourcing decisions are made. As shared dispositions and understandings guide political attention and action a country's use or non-use of PSMCs is not the outcome of a functional imperative but is better understood as the outcome of a process of sense- and decision making. Although this article focused on the case of Denmark the framework I put forward is not limited to the single case. The tacit comparisons I made to other countries may illustrate this. In relation to these cases too we may ask what PMSCs came to *mean* in these countries and how they were disposed to understand them in this way rather than another. I believe this to be one of the main advantages of a more sociological framework: it allows for country particular dispositions and interpretations, takes account of political agency and choice, and favours an actualist position that questions which particular understandings *did* influence deliberations.

The potential downside of such a framework, for some, is that it does not allow for ex-ante statements about which meanings informed (or will inform) a state's disposition towards PMSCs. This, as it cannot be known on forehand which elements of collective understandings, and which interpretations and meanings, will be cued and applied to make sense of the new situation. Therefore, despite the expectation that states' particular translations of neoliberalism as well as their particular understanding of their security context and role in the world are relevant to study for most countries, the question remains whether, and if so how, these particular understandings actually (co-)shaped outsourcing decisions. Kruck, for instance, explains the differences in outsourcing between the UK and USA by a particular historical experience of the former:

The MoD generally keeps a distance from armed PMSCs, which can be traced back to the 1990s when the PMSC Sandline, ..., imported weapons to Sierra Leone in violation of an United Nations arms embargo, causing a major political scandal (Kruck, 2014, p.124, see also Kinsey, 2006).

Such particular experiences and country specific histories may thus feature in collective sense- and decision-making processes and influence a state's disposition towards the employment of PMSCs.¹⁴ The framework suggested here may thus make it interesting to revisit 'old cases' and critically assess the arguments and assumptions that have so far been dominant in the field.

This also relates to questions of normative and perceived appropriate behaviour (Petersohn, 2010; Krahnmann, 2013a). Although I do not believe outsourcing is currently internationally regarded as the 'proper' practice, it would be interesting to look closer into whether contracting out is becoming more acceptable. As Berger argued: past compromises and political decisions 'have to be legitimised, both internally within the group and externally in the rest of society. Such legitimations often involve a reinterpretation of past events, current conditions, and future goals' (Berger, 1996, p.327). Positive experiences with outsourcing and (post-)justifications of previous actions may thus slowly lead towards a normalisation of initially controversial practices. In Denmark, while the critically perceived 'near collaboration' with Blackwater in Iraq may have had the opposite effect, positive experiences and justifications of domestic outsourcing may well contribute to a slow change in dispositions. Military outsourcing may thus offer an interesting case for studying norm adaptation and attitude change for IR scholars interested in the micro-foundations of norms and normative change.

Wrapping-up, I argued that outsourcing in the DD came late and remained scant because it is regarded as inappropriate and as incompatible with the dominant Danish understandings of the collective self: *they don't do that because they don't think like that*. Such an understanding of defence contracting takes in the more abstract macro-level discussions on the end of the Cold War and the advent of neoliberalism but goes beyond by asking whether, and if so how, these and other collective experiences and understandings actually (co-)shape(d) outsourcing decisions.

¹⁴ See also Spearin (2005) in relation to particularly experienced budget pressures in Canada, Berndtsson's (2014) discussion on outsourcing in Sweden, and Cusumano (2014) for a brief discussion on military role conceptions in the UK and USA).

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