Leader-driven foreign-policy change: Denmark and the Persian Gulf War

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Abstract

In contrast to most previous research on foreign-policy change, this article investigates how an individual decision-maker can have an impact on major changes in foreign policy. The article takes as its theoretical point of departure the concept of leader-driven change, which focuses on the determined efforts of a political leader to change policy. Empirically, the article investigates the change that occurred in Denmark's foreign policy when its government decided to participate in the United Nations sanctions against Iraq in August 1990. The article finds that the foreign minister was the main initiator of the policy change, that his personal characteristics played a decisive role, and that the Gulf crisis created a window of opportunity for the foreign minister to initiate the change in policy. In implementing the policy change, however, the foreign minister could not act independently, since he needed the support of other political actors. On the basis of these empirical findings, the article suggests a new theory of foreign-policy change.

Keywords

Denmark, foreign-policy change, leader-driven change, personal characteristics, window of opportunity

Introduction

Previous research on foreign-policy change has primarily focused on the contribution of international or domestic factors to changes in foreign policy, while ignoring the importance of individual decision-makers. In contrast, this article investigates *how* an individual leader can have an impact on major changes in foreign policy. The article takes as its theoretical point of departure a concept coined by Charles F. Hermann (1990: 11) called *leader-driven change*, which is the result of 'the determined efforts of an authoritative policy-maker, frequently the head of government, who imposes his own vision of the basic redirection necessary in foreign policy.'[1] Anwar Sadat's decision to seek a peace settlement with Israel after the 1973 Arab–Israeli War illustrates this type of policy change (Hermann, 1990). Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy's initiative to introduce the human-security approach in Canadian foreign policy in the mid-1990s is another example (Christie, 2010). In spite of these and other historical cases, leader-driven change has not been

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sufficiently explored in previous research. More specifically, earlier studies have not adequately addressed in what ways leaders make a difference, on what types of changes, and the limits of their influence.

This article sets out to demonstrate how an individual decision-maker mattered in a particular case of foreign-policy change. The case of interest is the decision made by the government of Denmark in August 1990 to dispatch a warship to the Persian Gulf to participate in the monitoring of the United Nations (UN) sanctions against Iraq. This decision constituted a major change in the instruments of Danish foreign policy and in Denmark's relationship to the USA. This policy change was, thus, an early step in the gradual reorientation in Danish foreign policy toward a more active foreign policy and a closer partnership with the USA, which would be fully implemented during the remainder of the 1990s and in the early 2000s. As noted by Peter Viggo Jakobsen (2005: 42), the 'deployment of [the warship] Olfert Fischer to the Gulf got the snowball rolling and the subsequent (from a Danish perspective) successful deployments in Croatia and Bosnia created an avalanche that changed Danes' understanding of their appropriate role in the world.' The culmination of this foreign-policy reorientation came with the Danish decision to side with the USA in the controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The changes in Danish foreign policy during the 1990s and beyond have been the subject of previous research (Branner, 2000; Heurlin, 1996; Jakobsen, 2005; Petersen, 1996, 2004; Rasmussen, 2005). However, these studies focus primarily on structural factors, such as strategic culture or collective identity, and not on the ways in which individuals matter. In addition, the particular change in 1990 has not been the subject of systematic empirical investigation.

Another reason for investigating the change in 1990 is that it can be seen as a least-likely case for theories that give their primary explanatory power to the individual level of analysis. There are essentially two reasons for this. First, the policy change occurred in a period of wide-ranging shift in the international system, that is, the end of the cold war. In previous research it has been assumed that factors at the domestic and individual levels of analysis have less of a chance of impacting on foreign policy in situations of major systemic change (Hey, 2003; Mearsheimer, 2001; Mouritzen, 1994). Second, a majority of previous research on the foreign policy of small states assumes that international-level theory has the 'home-court advantage' in explaining the foreign policy of small states (Fox, 1959; Labs, 1992; Ringsmose, 2009; Rosenau, 1966).[2] If this article can show that individual decision-makers played a decisive role in changing the foreign policy of a small state, in a situation in which one would expect that they should not, then the article can provide a basis for individual-level theorizing. However, even though the case qualifies as a 'critical case,' the generalizability of single case studies is limited.

The major argument of this article is that Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen was the main initiator of the Danish policy change in 1990, and that his personal characteristics played a decisive role. Without Ellemann-Jensen, Denmark would most likely not have responded to the Gulf crisis by sending a warship to the region. However, environmental changes also mattered. The Gulf crisis created a window of opportunity for the foreign minister to *initiate* the policy change. In *implementing* the policy change, however, the foreign minister could not act independently, since he needed the support of other political actors. On the basis of this single case study, the article suggests an alternative theory of policy change which takes into account the individual and changing environmental conditions.

The remainder of this article is divided into five sections. The first discusses previous research on foreign-policy change, concluding that previous theories cannot provide a complete explanation of the Danish policy change since they ignore the individual decision-maker. The second section presents the alternative theory of policy change, which is based primarily on Hermann's concept of

leader-driven change, but also on research on the personal characteristics of decision-makers and on how crises can facilitate policy change. The third section discusses the source material used in the case study. The fourth section presents the empirical support for the theory. It starts by identifying the characteristics of the change in policy. Then, it illustrates empirically the personal characteristics of the foreign minister, followed by an account of how the Gulf crisis provided him with an opportunity to change policy. The fifth section summarizes the main findings of the article, explores its comparative implications, and discusses the need for further research.

Competing theories of foreign-policy change

In studies of foreign-policy change, the individual decision-maker has been overlooked.[3] Some theories focus exclusively on how changes in the environment, such as shifts in the balance of power or changes in the domestic political system, impact on foreign-policy change (Cason and Power, 2009; Huxsoll, 2003; Jesse, 2006; Lahneman, 2003; Skidmore, 1994; Volgy and Schwarz, 1991). These theories do not take the individual into account at all. Such theories are very useful when the researcher's ambition is to study the evolution in foreign policy over longer periods of time. However, when the researcher is interested in explaining particular decisions leading to a rapid change in foreign policy, these theories are often inadequate. These theories would, in essence, explain the Danish policy change as a rational response by a unitary actor to the end of the cold war. However, the subsequent empirical analysis demonstrates that such an explanation is insufficient.

Another group of theories has incorporated the individual decision-maker as one of many independent variables (Hermann, 1990; Jian, 1996; Kleistra and Mayer, 2001; Niklasson, 2006). For example, Hermann (1990) introduces four so-called 'agents of change': bureaucratic advocacy, domestic restructuring, external shocks, and leader-driven change. He thereby highlights the importance of a leader's vision and conviction when a policy is changed. Although these theories do take the individual into account, the individual is merely seen as one factor among many that might or might not influence policy change (Gustavsson, 1999: 90). Thus, these theories do not elaborate on the ways in which individuals matter or how they matter in combination with other factors, making such theories insufficient for the purposes of this article.

A third group of theories does not adhere to the view that changing environmental circumstances generate changes in foreign policy in a straight line (Goldmann, 1988; Gustavsson, 1999; Holsti, 1982; Renshon, 2008; Yang, 2010; Ziv, 2011). According to these scholars, the effects of environmental changes are mediated through factors at the individual level of analysis, such as the perceptions of decision-makers. Jakob Gustavsson (1999) argues that international and domestic factors need to be perceived by individual decision-makers, whose beliefs have to change in order to produce a change in foreign policy. Other scholars have incorporated the concept of the operational code in studies of policy change (Malici and Malici, 2005; Renshon, 2008; Walker et al., 1998).[4] These scholars have investigated how traumatic events such as 9/11 or learning processes affect the operational codes of leaders and thereby policy change. In the most recent research, Yi Edward Yang (2010) argues that a decision-maker's level of conceptual complexity interacts with external stimuli to affect the decision-maker's willingness to change policy. According to Guy Ziv (2011), leaders' cognitive openness and complexity are central to determining the likelihood that they will change their beliefs on a foreign-policy issue.

Thus, this third group of theories is promising for the purposes of this study, since it provides more explanatory leverage for the individual. However, as pointed out by Joakim Eidenfalk (2009), most of these theories assume that the process of policy change begins with a change in the

environment, and not with the individual decision-maker. As a result of environmental change, leaders are assumed to develop a propensity to change foreign policy, although the leaders' perceptions or causal complexity can contribute to the timing or the particular characteristics of the change in policy.[5] In contrast to the previous research, this article suggests that the process of policy change can begin with the individual, who has a long-standing desire to change policy, but who is not able to initiate a change in policy due to structural conditions. The political leader, who is assumed to have certain personal characteristics, is then able to initiate a change in policy if the environment changes. Thus, as conceived here, environmental change does not cause a change in the leader's willingness to change policy, but opens a window of opportunity for the leader to initiate desired policy changes. From this perspective, policy change is neither the result of environmental change nor the consequence of a learning process.[6]

An alternative theory of foreign-policy change

The theory presented here takes as its point of departure Hermann's concept of leader-driven change (1990) and combines it with the literature on the personal characteristics of leaders (Dyson, 2009; Dyson and Preston, 2006; Glad, 1989; Hermann, 1980) and Gustavsson's theory on how crises can facilitate policy changes (1999). As noted by Hermann, leader-driven change is the result of 'the determined efforts of an authoritative policymaker,' in this case a foreign minister, 'who imposes his own vision of the basic redirection necessary in foreign policy' (1990: 11). In the attempt to change policy, the leader may face opposition from other political actors. Therefore, in order to facilitate leader-driven change, the 'leader must have the conviction, power, and energy to compel his government to change course' (Hermann, 1990: 11). Thus, Hermann provides us with three personal characteristics of the leader which can smooth the process of leader-driven change.

Conviction is here defined as a fixed or strong belief on the part of the leader, that is, he or she has an unshakeable belief in something without need for further proof. In operational terms, a leader is considered to have conviction if he or she has demonstrated a long-standing desire to change policy. Thus, in the case under scrutiny here, the foreign minister is considered to have conviction if remarks made by him after coming to office (in 1982) demonstrate a willingness to strengthen Denmark's relationship to the USA and to pursue a more active foreign policy.

Energy is defined as a strong eagerness on the part of the decision-maker to change policy. A decision-maker is considered to have energy if he or she has made earlier attempts to change policy and has demonstrated a willingness to take political risks in his or her attempts to do so. In this case, the foreign minister is considered to have energy if he tried to change policy in a more pro-US direction prior to the change in 1990 and in the process took political risks, such as that of losing credibility or even office.

Power is here related to the skills and experience of the decision-maker, rather than to institutional characteristics, such as the political power of the party that the decision-maker belongs to. One important aspect of power, as defined here, is the decision-maker's *training in foreign affairs* (Hermann, 1980) or *policy expertise* (Dyson and Preston, 2006), which can be measured on the basis of the number of years the decision-maker has held office (Hermann, 1980: 23–4). Other important aspects involve his ability to act strategically within the decision-making process by forming coalitions with like-minded colleagues, persuading skeptics, or manipulating the political process.

This article suggests that, in order to initiate changes in foreign policy, decision-makers are likely to have these three characteristics, since changing foreign policy is most often a difficult

enterprise, in particular if the decision-maker does not have the formal authority to change policy himself. For instance, a foreign minister's policy initiatives can be blocked by the prime minister or the president (depending on the type of political system). Decision-makers with a strong conviction to change policy, a willingness to take political risks, and with foreign-policy experience seem more likely to be able to initiate changes in foreign policy.

In order to show that the foreign minister initiated the change in policy (that is, he was a necessary individual for introducing the change), the analysis must show that the initiative is linked to the foreign minister's long-standing conviction to change policy. In addition, the analysis must show that other members of the decision-making process were not at first thinking along the same lines. If these two conditions are met, it seems reasonable to assume that the policy change was not a mere response by a unitary actor to changing environmental conditions (since the original idea of changing policy can be linked to the foreign minister only) or a result of a learning process (as the idea of changing policy was part of the minister's fixed beliefs).

The subsequent empirical analysis demonstrates that the foreign minister had conviction, energy, and power when he initiated the policy change. However, the Gulf crisis created an opportunity for the foreign minister to initiate the change. Thus, it was the combination of the foreign minister's personal characteristics and environmental changes that created the possibility for the foreign minister to initiate the change.

The facilitating role of crises for foreign-policy change was first elaborated by Gustavsson (1999). Crisis situations can promote policy changes because they 'are associated with a sense of fear and urgency. They thereby have a tendency to unlock institutional structures and make it possible for determined policy-makers to undermine vested interests and overcome institutional inertia' (Gustavsson, 1999: 86). In short, crisis situations can create a window of opportunity. This can be related to John Kingdon's notion of 'policy windows' (1984), which refers to a moment of opportunity that can be used for introducing political reforms (see also Eidenfalk, 2009). A crisis is here understood to have three properties: the perception of a threat to some established value, uncertainty over the outcome, and shortage of time (Stern, 2003).

In sum, this theory suggests that the ability of an individual decision-maker to initiate changes in the instruments of foreign policy increases if the decision-maker has the conviction, energy, and power to change policy and if the decision-maker acts on a window of opportunity created by a crisis situation.

Source material

In order to investigate the Danish policy change, the article utilizes a multitude of different sources, such as official policy documents, memoirs, media coverage, and secondary research. The aim has been to triangulate these sources in order to get as accurate a picture as possible of the causes of the policy change.

The *official policy documents* consist of government declarations and reports, resolutions submitted to parliament by the government, as well as speeches made by government members and the opposition. Parliamentary records have also been used in order to capture the debate in parliament between the government and opposition concerning how Denmark should respond to the Gulf crisis.

The article has also relied on *memoirs* and books written by key figures in the foreign-policy decision-making process in Denmark at the time of the Gulf crisis. One weakness with this material is that memoirs may exaggerate the logic and coherence of the decision-making process. Another problem is that individuals tend to magnify their own significance to the outcome studied.

In addition, the decision-makers could have ulterior motives for wanting to portray past events in a particular way. This material was, therefore, interpreted with great caution and cross-checked and supported by other sources (Gustavsson, 1998: 10–11).

Contemporary *media coverage* found in different Danish newspapers has also been used. This material has been important in the attempt to recreate parts of the contemporary political atmosphere in Denmark, as well as to gain further insights into the political debate between the government and opposition.

The *secondary research* includes books and articles on Danish foreign policy, including works on the personal characteristics of the foreign minister. When relying on secondary research, it is important not to make use of 'a single, seemingly authoritative study of the case at hand by a historian.' The danger here is that 'a researcher who draws upon too narrow a set of historical or descriptive accounts that emphasizes the variables of interest may overstate the performance of favored hypotheses' (George and Bennett, 2005: 95 ff.). Thus, multiple sources were sought in order to assess the collective expertise of recognized country specialists.

The Danish engagement in the Gulf crisis

The Gulf crisis started on 2 August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. After the UN Security Council (UNSC) approved Resolution 665 on 25 August 1990, sanctioning a naval blockade against Iraq, Denmark decided to send a warship to participate in the sanctions. In order to understand the scope of this policy change, Denmark's foreign policy during the cold war must first be described, particularly Denmark's role within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Denmark's relationship to the USA.

During the cold war, Denmark often showed an unwillingness to participate in specific NATO programs and had a tendency to diverge from the particular policies of the alliance (Holbraad, 1991: 108–9). Denmark was often seen by other NATO members as a half-hearted member of the alliance. The reluctant NATO policy of Denmark culminated in the 1980s with the so-called 'footnote policy.' The footnote policy started in 1982 when a weak center-right coalition under Prime Minister Poul Schlüter of the Conservative Party came to power (the other coalition parties were the Liberal Party, the Center Democratic Party and the Christian People's Party). This minority government enjoyed parliamentary support on economic policy, but in the area of foreign policy four opposition parties (the Social Democratic Party, the Social Liberal Party, the Socialist People's Party, and the Left Socialists) established an 'alternative majority' and began to adopt parliamentary resolutions on foreign policy against the will of the government, forcing the government to include dissenting footnotes in NATO communiqués (Pedersen, 2006: 42).[7]

From 1982 to 1988 Denmark's official foreign policy, which was formulated by parliament, was characterized by skepticism toward NATO in general and the USA in particular. This infuriated especially Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen of the Liberal Party, who wanted Denmark to play a more active role in international affairs and to develop a closer relationship to the USA. Since the prime minister's major area of interest was in domestic politics, the foreign minister became the most vocal opponent of the parliamentary opposition within the government, and he frequently adopted a confrontational strategy in his dealings with that opposition (Doeser, 2011: 229; Ellemann-Jensen, 2004: 233 ff.; Petersen, 2004: 222–3). Ellemann-Jensen's confrontational approach was at times moderated by a more consensus-seeking strategy pursued by the prime minister (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 16–17, 30).

The final showdown between the government and the alternative majority took place in April–June 1988 when the government managed to put an end to the 'footnote policy' after calling

parliamentary elections on one of the policy issues that had divided the government and parliament (Doeser, 2011: 229–30; Engell, 1997: 234–5).[8] After the elections the Social Liberal Party joined the government and as a result the parliamentary opposition was split.

Although the fall of the 'footnote policy' was a victory for the pro-NATO government, Denmark was still perceived by other NATO members as a reluctant member of the alliance. The decision in August 1990 was, thus, an important step in changing the status of Denmark within the alliance. First, this decision constituted a major turning point in support for the USA, which the Danish government perceived as the informal leader of the UN-sanctioned 'coalition of the willing.' In the words of Hans Hækkerup (2002: 94), the operation had a UN mandate, but it was not a UN operation.

Second, the decision entailed the first Danish 'out-of-area' operation with an element of coercion (Petersen, 2004: 455).[9] During the cold war, 'Denmark's security perspective was strictly regional, confined to the Western Baltic and the North German plain, and as a consequence, Denmark was reluctant to envisage any geographical expansion of NATO's missions' (Petersen, 1996: 179). Even though the warship's presence in the Gulf was circumscribed by a ban on involvement in shooting operations, it constituted a major change in Danish foreign policy, 'especially in consideration of the country's long tradition of pacifism and skepticism toward the effectiveness of military means' (Petersen, 1996: 180).

Using Hermann's typology of foreign-policy change (1990), the decision can be seen as a *program change*, that is, a change in the instruments of foreign policy.[10] Thus, this change introduced a new instrument of statecraft for dealing with security problems (that is, out-of-area operations) and it improved Denmark's relationship to the USA. For Denmark, in contrast to other small NATO countries participating in the sanctions, this decision was a *major* deviation from previous policy, due to Denmark's reluctant NATO policy and tense relations with the USA during the 1980s. However, the Danish policy change did not affect the goals of foreign policy or other issue areas, which are requirements for it to be considered a goal change or international orientation change.

The conviction, energy, and power of the foreign minister, 1982–90

When he became foreign minister in 1982, Ellemann-Jensen saw it as his personal responsibility to root out the ideas of two former foreign ministers, Peter Munch and Erik Scavenius, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Most of Denmark's foreign-policy thinking prior to the Second World War, and during the cold war, can be illustrated by the cautious and passive foreign policy advocated by these two foreign ministers (Due-Nielsen and Petersen, 1995: 15–16, 30). During the footnote period, it thus became imperative for Ellemann-Jensen to change Denmark's image as a footnote country and its traditional pacifist, low-profile foreign policy and to improve Denmark's standing within NATO (Hækkerup, 2002: 9–10, 40; Jakobsen, 2005: 45 n.; Larsen, 1997: 230–5; Petersen, 2004: 223). Thus, this conviction on the part of the foreign minister had developed long before the cold war ended and the Gulf crisis erupted.

As the cold-war international structure started breaking down, with decreasing tensions between the superpowers and peaceful revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, the foreign minister became more active in arguing *officially* for a change in Danish foreign policy, which shows his eagerness for changing policy. On several occasions in 1988–89, Ellemann-Jensen argued that Denmark should start to take more responsibility for its own foreign policy and pursue a more active foreign policy within organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the European Community, while the prime minister kept a low profile on foreign policy. Ellemann-Jensen motivated the need for these policy changes on the basis of the changes in the international system (Ellemann-Jensen,

1988a: 148–51; 1988b: 200; 1989: 210–3; 1990d: 35–40). However, the international changes did not cause a change in the foreign minister's view of Denmark's role in international affairs, as he already had this view. Rather, the international changes were used as an argument to change policy. In his opening statement at a meeting of the Foreign Policy Commission on 17 April 1989, the foreign minister used the term 'active internationalism' to describe the new policy under development (Ellemann-Jensen, 1990d: 35–40; Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1990).

Thus, as a result of the end of the cold war, the foreign minister started perceiving increasing possibilities for changing Denmark's foreign policy, since the country's cautious and low-profile NATO policy was motivated by most Danish politicians on the basis of the cold-war international structure. During the cold war, the possibility of pursuing an active foreign policy by using military force out of area was perceived by most Danes to be constrained by the threat of a Soviet invasion and the risk of nuclear war between the superpowers. The Danish defense forces were, thus, assigned the role of territorial defense.[11] When the Soviet threat began disappearing, Ellemann-Jensen started arguing that new types of threats would emerge, such as regional and local conflicts between ethnic, national, and religious groups. These external political developments created increasing opportunities for the foreign minister to lead Denmark into closer security cooperation with NATO and to project military force in operations outside the European theater (Ellemann-Jensen, 1990a: 254–7; Wivel, 1990). However, the window would not open until August 1990 when the Gulf crisis presented Ellemann-Jensen with an opportunity to initiate a policy change.

In early August 1990, Ellemann-Jensen had served as foreign minister for eight years and had become a very experienced foreign minister with a good knowledge of foreign affairs and the decision-making process in Denmark (which are indicators of power). During his years as foreign minister he had from time to time adopted a confrontational and risky approach in his dealings with the parliamentary opposition, and this approach had paid off in 1988 when he was very active in the government's victory over the parliamentary opposition (Doeser, 2011: 230–5; Petersen, 2004: 222–3). When initiating the policy change in August 1990 these skills and experiences played an important role, as demonstrated further in the next section. Ellemann-Jensen notes in his memoirs that by sending the warship, he tried to root out the small-state mentality that had characterized Denmark's previous foreign policy (1996: 239).

The Gulf crisis as a window of opportunity, August 1990–February 1991

On 6 August 1990, the UNSC passed Resolution 661 to embargo trade with Iraq, and the buildup of US and allied troops began in Saudi Arabia under Operation Desert Shield. The following day, the USA and other NATO members initiated a naval blockade of Iraq, an action not sanctioned by the UN. Ellemann-Jensen perceived these developments as a possibility for Denmark to initiate a more active foreign policy and to improve its reputation after the footnote period. Ellemann-Jensen believed that these objectives could be achieved by contributing militarily to the naval blockade (2004: 299). At this stage of the crisis, however, the foreign minister was not able to muster the necessary political support for such action, since Prime Minister Schlüter was hesitant toward participating in the naval blockade without a UNSC mandate (Schlüter, 1999: 248). In addition, the Social Democratic Party, which was the biggest party in opposition, and the Social Liberal Party, which was part of the government, made it clear they were strongly against Danish participation without a UNSC mandate (the government at the time consisted of the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, and the Social Liberal Party) (Ellemann-Jensen, 1996: 241).

On 8 August 1990, the foreign minister assured the political opposition that Denmark would not participate in the military operation without a UNSC mandate and that there would be no break

with the Danish policy on out-of-area operations. However, in a NATO meeting on 10 August he informed his allies that Danish military units could take over assignments in Europe from NATO forces operating in the Gulf if requested to do so by NATO. He also noted that Denmark was willing to participate in the blockade with naval units, if sanctioned by the UN. Other possible Danish contributions, such as sending a field hospital to the region, were also presented at the meeting (Petersen, 2004: 451).

In a newspaper article on 10 August 1990, the foreign minister discussed both a possible role for Denmark in the Gulf and out-of-area operations. He argued that there were threats to Denmark that lay beyond the borders of Europe. In order to prevent such threats, Europe must act in concert (Ellemann-Jensen, 1990b). A few days later, the foreign minister stated that there were vital Danish interests to protect in the Gulf, since Denmark was highly dependent on the transport of oil from the region (Ellemann-Jensen, 1991: 98).

On 16 August 1990, the government received a letter of inquiry from the Americans asking whether Denmark would aid Egypt with a transport vessel which could carry an Egyptian division to Saudi Arabia. For Ellemann-Jensen, this was an opportunity to show support for the US-led operation. He immediately began to explore the possibilities of reaching a decision on this matter within the cabinet and the opposition, which is another indicator of the foreign minister's energy. However, Minister of Economic and Business Affairs Niels Helveg Petersen of the Social Liberal Party made it clear to Ellemann-Jensen that his party would not support involvement in the US-led operation without a UNSC mandate. The foreign minister argued that the naval blockade was a multinational effort under the leadership of Denmark's most important ally, the USA, and that Denmark should therefore participate. However, due to the lack of support from the social liberals, the foreign minister was not able to commit Denmark to this endeavor (Ellemann-Jensen, 1996: 240–4).

A couple of days later, the Americans asked Ellemann-Jensen whether Denmark could assist in the shipping of war materials to the Gulf. Rather than discussing the matter with parliament, Ellemann-Jensen approached the shipowner Maersk McKinney Møller with this proposal. McKinney Møller was positive toward the idea and decided that his company would supply the Americans with a number of transport vessels (Ellemann-Jensen, 1996: 244). During the following days, Ellemann-Jensen discussed the possibility of sending a warship to the Gulf with Vice Admiral Hans Garde. The vice admiral made it clear that a warship would be available if requested by the government (Ellemann-Jensen, 2004: 299; Petersen, 2004: 255–6).

On 25 August 1990, the UNSC approved Resolution 665, which sanctioned the naval blockade. Immediately after receiving informal support from the prime minister for sending a warship, Ellemann-Jensen declared to the public that Denmark would send a warship to the Gulf. This statement was made before Ellemann-Jensen's proposal had been presented to the Social Liberal Party and a formal decision had been made, which infuriated the social liberals as well as the prime minister (Schlüter, 1999: 248). Ellemann-Jensen's statement demonstrates his conviction and energy to initiate a change in policy. It also illustrates his power in initiating a policy change by creating a fait accompli, which made it difficult for the Social Liberal Party to block participation in the multinational coalition. According to Schlüter (1999: 248), Ellemann-Jensen tried to 'monopolize' foreign policy during the Gulf crisis and make it a 'one-man show.' However, in order to *implement* the new policy, Ellemann-Jensen needed the support of his government and of a majority in parliament. Agreement within the government was facilitated by Ellemann-Jensen's strategic behavior and Resolution 665. The resolution provided the prime minister and the social liberals with UNSC authorization, which was necessary for them in order to accept the foreign minister's proposal for sending a warship (Ellemann-Jensen, 1990c: 188; Schlüter, 1999: 248).

Without UNSC authorization, Ellemann-Jensen would not have been able to commit Denmark to any military endeavor in the Gulf. The foreign minister was, nonetheless, the main initiator of the policy change, since the original idea of sending the warship can be linked to him.

On 26 August 1990, a unanimous government proposed to send the corvette *Olfert Fischer* to the Gulf. Both Schlüter and Ellemann-Jensen declared that Denmark needed to show solidarity with the USA (Ellemann-Jensen, 1990c: 185–8; Lyngby, 1990; Schlüter, 1999: 248). This proposal was debated in parliament on 27 August. The Chairman of the Social Liberal Party, Jørgen Estrup, said that it had been a difficult decision for his party to support participation in the UN operation. However, he added that in order to preserve peace, being peaceful oneself was sometimes not enough (Ellemann-Jensen, 1990c: 189). The social democrats were placed in an uncomfortable situation. On the one hand, they were dissatisfied with the foreign minister, who, in their view, had pre-empted the decision-making in a dishonest and 'Rambo-like' fashion. On the other hand, the situation had changed due to the UN mandate (Petersen, 2004: 453).

On 31 August 1990, the government's proposal was debated in parliament once again. During the debate, Hans Hækkerup of the Social Democratic Party demanded that there be several conditions on Danish participation in the Gulf. First, the operation should not be coordinated by NATO. Second, the corvette should be under Danish command. Third, it should be nonbelligerent. Fourth, Danish conscripts should participate on a voluntary basis. Fifth, in addition to deploying the corvette, the government should send a field hospital to the region. Sixth, Denmark should prepare for participation in a peacekeeping force after the operation. Seventh, additional humanitarian aid for refugees should be sent to the region after the conflict (Hækkerup, 1990: 379).

Ellemann-Jensen together with Schlüter and Hækkerup then managed to persuade the skeptics within the opposition to accept the deployment of the warship under the conditions suggested by Hækkerup instead of limiting the participation to humanitarian aid (Jakobsen, 2005: 41). The three governing parties, all of the social democrats except one, the center democrats, and the Christian People's Party supported the decision. While the social democrats and the social liberals emphasized the UN aspects of the operation, the conservatives and liberals stressed the importance of showing solidarity with the USA. Only the Socialist People's Party and the populist Progress Party voted against dispatching the corvette (Parliament Records, 1989-90b: Volume VIII, 11,387 ff.). The Socialist People's Party was critical of the operation in itself, since the party perceived the operation as being under UN camouflage, but led by the USA (Parliament Records, 1989-90a: Volume II, 2286 ff.). The decision to send the corvette was the first major foreign-policy decision after the footnote period that was implemented on the basis of a broad majority in parliament (Petersen, 2004: 455). Defense Minister Knud Enggaard called the decision 'a milestone in Danish defense and security policy' (quoted in Svensson, 1990). Ellemann-Jensen (1990c: 185) called the decision a radical break with previous foreign policy.

The *Olfert Fischer* left Denmark for the Gulf on 12 September 1990. The government's official goal was the complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the reestablishment of Kuwait's sovereignty (Schlüter, 1990: 140 ff.). On 29 November, the UNSC passed Resolution 678, which authorized the use of force against Iraq. The deadline for Iraqi withdrawal was set as 15 January 1991. In response to this resolution, a number of social democratic parliamentary members announced that the corvette should be withdrawn if war broke out. Both Schlüter (1998: 95) and Ellemann-Jensen (1990c: 191) noted that it was shameful to send such signals in a situation in which unity was important for the international community in its negotiations with Iraq. After the parliamentary elections on 12 December 1990, the social liberals left the government due to disappointing election results. The conservatives and liberals continued as a weak minority government.

The social liberals then joined forces with the social democrats, arguing that the *Olfert Fischer* should be withdrawn if war broke out (Ellemann-Jensen, 1996: 260–1).

The UN deadline of 15 January 1991 passed without an Iraqi withdrawal, and the following day allied forces commenced a bombing campaign of Iraq under Operation Desert Storm. Ellemann-Jensen and Schlüter tried to get parliamentary support for expanding the mission, arguing that the corvette should take part in the war. However, the social democrats blocked this proposal (Ellemann-Jensen, 2004: 301). During the Gulf War, the government had to settle for an official policy that stated that the corvette should avoid the war zone, but continue to operate under Resolution 665. Thus, the foreign minister failed in his attempts to introduce further changes in policy.

In sum, the Danish program change cannot be explained adequately with reference to international or domestic factors, since the change was initiated by a single individual (that is, the foreign minister) whose conviction, energy, and power were necessary factors for the specific way in which Denmark responded to the Gulf crisis (that is, by sending a warship). Without the foreign minister, Denmark would most likely have limited its participation to humanitarian aid. Another necessary condition for the change was the window of opportunity created by the Gulf crisis, which the foreign minister acted on to initiate the policy change. In executing the policy change, however, the foreign minister could not act independently, since he needed the support of the prime minister and of a majority in parliament. In addition, he was forced to compromise with these actors regarding the conditions on Danish participation – most notably, the UNSC authorization to use force.

Conclusions

This article has demonstrated how Foreign Minister Ellemann-Jensen, on the basis of his personal characteristics, acted on a window of opportunity in order to initiate a change in the instruments of foreign policy. On the basis of these empirical findings, the article has suggested an alternative theory, one predicting that the ability of leaders to initiate program changes increases if the leader has the conviction, energy, and power to change policy and if the leader acts on a window of opportunity created by a crisis.

The scope of this theory must be investigated further, however, since the theory is based on a single case. The reorientation in Canadian foreign policy under Foreign Minister Axworthy (see the Introduction above) may shed some additional light on how leaders, and especially foreign ministers, matter for policy change. While the Danish leader-driven change was facilitated by a crisis, the Canadian change was facilitated by Canada's ambition to reclaim a leadership role in international politics and by the rise of development and regional security issues on the international agenda. Human security 'was the right approach at the right time' (Christie, 2010: 175). Thus, foreign-ministerial initiatives can also be facilitated if they are linked to a more wide-ranging and ongoing transformation of the country's foreign policy or to trends in global politics, or both. This hypothesis also seems to be supported by Hillary Clinton's initiative to make women's rights a central aspect of the Obama administration's foreign policy. In this case, Clinton's initiative was facilitated by the administration's overall emphasis on human rights and an increased global interest in such issues (Dietrich and Witkowski, 2012). Another example of foreign-ministerial change is the decision made by Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura to terminate Japan's yen loans to China in 2004. In this case, policy change was facilitated by a dramatic rise in anti-Chinese sentiment among the Japanese public (Sekiyama, 2012).

It could also be rewarding to study cases in which foreign ministers have tried to change policy, but failed. One example is Colin Powell, who, after being isolated by the neoconservatives

within the Bush administration, struggled to shape the administration's Iraq policy between 2002 and 2004. The power relations within the cabinet as well as Powell's personal view that a foreign minister should be the loyal servant of the president, even if he does not agree with the president, limited the influence of Powell (LaFeber, 2009). Another example is the attempt by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to change the USA's decision not to sign the Ottawa Convention to ban antipersonnel mines. Albright was not able to secure President Clinton's approval, since the president believed that signing the convention would have negative consequences for other US foreign-policy interests – most notably, its commitment to defend South Korea (Fischer, 1998).

On the basis of these successful and unsuccessful foreign-ministerial initiatives, it seems that both personal characteristics and environmental conditions affect the ability of foreign ministers to initiate policy changes. The presence of a crisis, a strong linkage between the suggested change and other ongoing policy changes, major changes in public opinion, and that the foreign minister has a strong, informal power position are some of the conditions facilitating a foreign minister's ability to initiate policy change.

In addition, the limits of leader-driven change can be investigated by studying cases of goal or international orientation change. In this article, a foreign minister was, under certain circumstances, able to initiate changes in the instruments of foreign policy. To what extent can an individual decision-maker initiate more fundamental changes in foreign policy? A final issue concerns how different political systems impact on the ability of leaders to initiate policy changes. In dictatorial states, in which the institutional constraints on leaders are more limited, the ability of the leader to change policy is likely to be greater. For instance, in August 1990, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, who was traditionally anti-American, promptly decided to side with the USA against Iraq. How can we explain foreign-policy changes simultaneously taking place in democratic and non-democratic countries?

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Notes

1. In the conceptualization of leader-driven change used here, the individual initiating a change in policy does not necessarily have to be the head of government. In the case under scrutiny here, the foreign minister was the main initiator of the policy change.
2. The previous research is based on the assumption that small states, in contrast to great powers, are particularly responsive to the constraints of the international system, since they are more preoccupied with survival.
3. In foreign-policy analysis in general, however, this has not been the case. The foreign-policy actions of states have to a large extent been the subject of analyses that take the individual into account (Dyson, 2009; Glad, 1989; Jervis, 1976). However, in attempts to explain foreign-policy *change*, the individual has been ignored.
4. Operational codes are a particular subset of an individual's beliefs, focusing on the political universe. According to Jonathan Renshon (2008: 821), operational codes 'exert a tremendous influence on how decision-makers interpret information, perceive the social environment and make decisions.'

5. For instance, in his explanation of Sweden's reorientation on European Community membership in 1990, Gustavsson (1999) notes that the individual decision-maker was important primarily for the timing of the change and how this occurred. 'Given the structural conditions, I consider it likely that a change would eventually have taken place regardless of who had been Prime Minister, and if there had been no balance of payment crisis' (Gustavsson, 1999: 89). In contrast, this article demonstrates that the leader was a necessary condition for the policy change as such. Thus, without Foreign Minister Ellemann-Jensen there would most likely not have been a Danish warship in the Gulf.
6. See Carlsnaes (1993) for discussion of this.
7. This parliamentary situation was a result of the Social Liberal Party acting as a swing party that confronted the government on foreign policy, but did not support declarations of no confidence while supporting the government on economic matters.
8. The issue concerned a resolution passed in parliament in April 1988 which obliged the government to inform all visiting warships, including NATO ships, about Denmark's policy of banning nuclear weapons from its territory in time of peace. According to the government, the resolution constituted a threat to Denmark's full membership of NATO.
9. During the cold war, Article 6 of the NATO Treaty, which establishes the alliance's borders as comprising the territories of the allies in Europe and North America, was used to stop discussions of so-called 'out-of-area' operations (that is, operations in areas outside the European theater) before they reached the point of common military action.
10. Hermann's typology (1990: 5–6) consists of four graduated levels of change. *Adjustment changes* 'occur in the level of effort (greater or lesser) and/or in the scope of the recipients (such as … refinement in the class of targets).' *Program changes* 'are qualitative and involve new instruments of statecraft (such as the pursuit of a goal through diplomatic negotiation rather than military force).' *Problem or goal changes* mean that the 'initial problem or goal that the policy addresses is replaced or simply forfeited.' *International orientation change* 'involves the redirection of the actor's entire orientation toward world affairs. In contrast to lesser forms of change that concern the actor's approach to a single issue or specific set of other actors, orientation change involves a basic shift in the actor's international role and activities. According to Hermann, the latter three types of changes can be regarded as *major* changes in foreign policy.
11. For a similar argument, see Rasmussen (2005).

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