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THE REMODELLING OF ARMED FORCES

A DANISH PERSPECTIVE

J. OERSTROEM MOELLER

Between 1949 and 1989 the biggest military stand-off in global history took place only 100 km south of the Danish border but not a single Danish soldier was killed in action. The armed forces of Denmark were designed, trained and equipped for the territorial defence of the state against a conventional attack from a Cold War aggressor that possessed a formidable arsenal a mere fifteen minutes away as the crow flies. Since 1988, a total of twenty-nine Danish soldiers have been killed participating in peacekeeping operations, often far away from Denmark. Not a single one of these operations has had any connection with the defence of Danish territory. A platoon of Danish Leopard tanks fought a small tank action at Tusla in the former Yugoslavia in 1994 and inflicted severe casualties on the enemy. F-16 aircraft of the Royal Danish Air Force have flown combat missions in Afghanistan, attacking enemy forces on the ground with laser-guided bombs.

For Denmark, as for a growing number of European countries, security policy has been turned upside down over the past fifteen years. Security is no longer a question of defending national territory; rather security now depends on whether the whole of Europe is secure. For example, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s had a spill-over effect on Denmark's security as did the political crisis in the Ukraine in December 2004. As long as European security is in balance and

stable, Denmark is unlikely to be exposed to any form of security threat. However, if a political or social crisis erupts somewhere in Europe involving the use of military force, it will have repercussions on Denmark's defence.

The definition and perception of security by Europe as an international entity affects Denmark intimately. A parallel may be drawn with the process of economic integration in the sense that, for as long as the continental European economy flourishes, so too do individual national economies in the union prosper. It is now almost impossible for a European country to adopt an economic policy that is contrary to the policies pursued by other members of the European Union. In short, in no other continent are the repercussions of the process of globalisation more spectacular than in Europe. Every individual European country contributes to economic stability and political security in the region. Globalisation blurs the distinction between military operations and non-military operations. This article examines how Denmark, as a European country, has remodelled its armed forces to meet the demands of a globalised world. The author goes on to make some observations about the likely shape of future military forces using a Danish perspective.

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TERRITORIAL DEFENCE OUT, INTERVENTION ABROAD IN

To meet new global security conditions, the Danish defence forces have gone through a full-scale restructuring during the past fifteen years. Basically the Danish military has been remodelled away from a focus on territorial defence towards a force structure designed for military actions abroad. Thus, Danish security forces have participated in two wars against Iraq and provided a military presence to help rebuild that country. Danish military activity has also taken place in Afghanistan. In Europe itself there were combat missions of an offensive character under North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) auspices in Kosovo in Operation *Allied Force* and military operations were conducted in the early 1990s in the former Yugoslavia.

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The most significant remodelling of the Danish forces has been in the Army, which has been completely recast in its character. The Danish Army is no longer expected to provide a classic battleline against a conventional enemy. Instead the land forces have been converted into a 'toolbox' from which the Danish Government draws out the various instruments required for operations abroad. A Dane would say that, rather than depend on territorial defence forces, one now 'digs into a box of Lego bricks' in order to choose the preferred force model. For example, the acquisition of a number of wheeled fighting vehicles has occurred in order to give the army greater mobility than that provided by tracked vehicles. To reverse General Nathan Bedford Forrest's statement, the aim is 'getting there firstest rather than getting there with the mostest'.

The Danish Navy has also been remodelled. Before 1989 the pride of the navy was its submarine force and missile boats, which were responsible for patrolling and intelligence-gathering in the Baltic Sea. Today, the Danish submarine force has been decommissioned and it is highly unlikely that any submarines will ever fly the *Dannebrog* (the name of the Danish flag) again. The decision to abandon a submarine capability was hotly contested in Denmark. Many Danes, including this author, felt that Denmark had achieved a unique experience in NATO in handling submarines in shallow waters. It was a hard-won, exclusive experience that should not have been thrown away but one that should have been put to good use in naval operations around the world, not the least in intelligence-gathering. Despite these arguments, the submarine arm of the Navy was dismantled. In terms of defence policy, the view that submarines and missile boats were primarily combat platforms associated with territorial defence carried the day. Today, a whole new naval force has been developed around the concept of multiflex ships that are able to support operations far away from Danish shores. This offshore policy has delivered the Danish Navy its biggest ship ever, HDMS *Absalon*, a frigate-type vessel with priority given to endurance, logistics and support capabilities. A variety of multiflex ships now constitute the backbone of the Navy.

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The service least affected by change has been the Danish Air Force. The service has maintained most of its fighter element, acquiring updated F-16 jets. The transport arm of the Air Force has also benefited from purchases of Hercules C130 aircraft. In masterminding the remodelling of the Danish defence forces, policy-makers found two unique experiences helpful. First, active Danish participation in peacekeeping operations since the Suez crisis in 1956 gave Copenhagen a useful understanding of what force elements were needed for overseas operations. Almost fifty years of active duty in peace operations provided the Army with a considerable number of soldiers who had been exposed to the exigencies of overseas operations.

In December 1995, a Danish strategic analysis led to the establishment on 15 December 1996 of the SHIRBRIG (Standing High Readiness Brigade) with seven founding members aimed to provide the United Nations with an instrument for urgent and vital peacekeeping action. The SHIRBRIG initiative reflects Danish thinking about the importance of peacekeeping activities and, as a result, the headquarters of SHIRBRIG is located in Denmark. Currently there are fifteen members of the organisation: Argentina, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.¹ Seven other countries—Chile, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Jordan, Senegal and Portugal—participate as observers. Hungary has recently been accepted into full membership of the SHIRBRIG.

Second, surveillance activities in the North Atlantic by Greenland and the Faroese Islands are the responsibility of the Kingdom of Denmark.² While both territories have home rule, their foreign and security policy falls under the competence of the government in Copenhagen. Since the early 1950s, Danish defence forces have carried out surveillance missions associated with the fishing boundaries for these two geographical areas. For the Navy, these responsibilities have provided valuable experience in operating ships for long periods away from Denmark in extremely rough and unfriendly seas. There are many incidences of helicopter pilots having rescued persons and being forced to execute landings in 'out of box' conditions. Similarly, the Danish Air Force has had to operate in uninviting conditions in the same area. Indeed, in 1996, the Danish Chief of Defence was killed when his plane was caught by adverse winds while trying to land in the Faroese Islands.

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THE ARMY OF THE FUTURE: A DANISH VIEW

The modern army of the future will probably consist of four layers: a 'bang for the buck' or spearhead force; a mop-up force; a special intelligence component; and an occupation component.

THE 'BANG FOR THE BUCK' FORCE

A 'bang for the buck' force constitutes the spearhead of the current US Army. For example, it was demonstrated in Iraq in 1991, and again in 2003, that the choice for the modern armoured attack force is not between firepower and mobility but the combination of the two elements. American operations combine mobility and firepower using all available forms of information sensors backed up by satellite communication. The weak point of such an integrated force is its high dependence on logistics. In battle, such a force consumes enormous amounts of ammunition and fuel, making it both cumbersome and time-consuming to deploy. Such a force is also vulnerable against an enemy who seeks to confront not its head but its tail by targeting its logistics support.

The high priest of German armoured warfare, Heinz Guderian, taught that an armoured force is invulnerable as long as it keeps moving constantly.³ Yet, constant and continuous movement requires a tail of logistics putting a heavy strain on manpower and financial resources. If the enemy does manage to cut the supply chain, then the spearhead changes from a lightning bolt into a sitting duck. The mobile 'fireball' directed by superlative intelligence, crushing and paralysing all before it, can only be extinguished by enemy counterattacks on the thinly protected and often outstretched supply columns.

The US battle plan against Iraq in March–April 2003, was strongly reminiscent of the German attack against France in May 1940. Like the German assault of 1940, the US plan relied on an armoured spearhead deployed far in front of the rest of the army, sowing confusion among the Iraqi enemy and indecision among its leaders. The plan worked in both cases, but it was something of a gamble for the US military in Iraq in 2003. An enemy capable of targeting the Coalition's supply lines might have jeopardised the whole ground operation. In terms of logistics, the weak links are 'gas guzzlers' such as heavy battle tanks, self-propelled artillery and other heavy pieces of equipment that may slow down the build-up and the operation itself. In the future, Western armies will unquestionably have to devote serious thought to analysing how much durability the tracked vehicle offers in comparison to the much cheaper and faster wheeled vehicle.

THE MOP-UP FORCE

After the main battle has been fought and won by the spearhead or 'bang for the buck' force experience from Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2001 demonstrates how vital it is to mop up what is left of the enemy's forces.

Without being contained and controlled, enemy forces may melt away or may regroup to stage some type of guerrilla warfare or insurgency operation.

The use of mop-up force elements would enable the fast and unequivocal removal of the threat of residual forces—potential or real—by disarming what is left of enemy forces. Mop-up forces, especially their infantry, must be versatile and capable of fighting in urban warfare conditions that are reminiscent of Stalingrad and Berlin while exercising restraint in the choice of tactics and weapons. Human intelligence becomes the key in this phase. Such intelligence-gathering must be able to detect groups of people and concentrations of vehicles. It must also have some capacity to determine whether groups of people assembling behind a vehicle are preparing an ambush or whether they constitute a funeral procession behind a hearse.

A SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE FORCE

Having won the battle and mopped-up enemy forces, the job is now to find the political and military leaders of the country whose military forces have been defeated. As the hunt for leaders such as Karadzic and Mladic in the former Yugoslavia, Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein and Al-Zarqawi in Iraq demonstrates, accomplishing this mission is not easy. As long as renegade leaders are loose, the risk is that they may act as a rallying point and help to mastermind an insurgency, as indeed has been the case in Iraq.

The instrument to apply in decapitating resistance is a special covert branch of special forces and intelligence officers capable of operating inside enemy territory before military action starts. Only by preparatory covert operations can a network of operatives be created that is capable of striking fast in the slipstream of hostilities.

THE OCCUPATION FORCE

The most complex component of an army is the occupation force. The need to hold ground is a lesson that filters across centuries of military history. In today's rapid mobile-firepower wars, one may not need to hold ground in order to win in the field, but once operational victory occurs, an occupation force is required in order to win the peace. In a regime-change mission, it is essential to ensure that the majority of the population feels secure.

A traditional warfighting army is not trained or equipped to win the hearts and minds of the majority of a population. Furthermore, in modern conditions, there are often insufficient numbers of soldiers available for such a task. The unpleasant

but striking truth is that forces must be at hand who have experience in peace-keeping or similar activities, and possess education and a deep knowledge of inter-cultural communication. This type of military component acts as a 'social neighbourhood police force' and guarantees security around homes and workplaces, repairs facilities destroyed during the fighting, provides basic medical care and participates in reconstructing the local economy.

No existing modern army is capable of performing such a range of operations. The US and British armies are trained and equipped for warfighting, but not for the occupation-style duties of phase four operations. Although the British Army has been confronted with complex civil-military challenges in Northern Ireland, the circumstances cannot be compared to the scale of reconstruction now required in Iraq.

In the future, the question arising for Western militaries that might have to undertake operations of the kind outlined above is whether their population and the politicians are willing to mobilise the manpower and devote the financial resources for occupation and reconstruction duties. If Western societies do not confront the full spectrum of operations, the risk is that they will possess glorious, hard-hitting armies capable of winning almost any battle, but incapable of winning lasting peace.

ARMIES MANNED BY WHOM?

Who will constitute the rank and file of advanced Western armies in the future? Based on military history, there are several military options open to any society. These options include creating professional army, calling up a conscript army or spending money on hiring a mercenary army. These three options have to be considered in the context of a sociopolitical and economic world shaped by a decreased willingness among democratic populations to serve in the armed forces and by privatisation, and a tendency towards outsourcing government services, including security.

For the foreseeable future, the 'bang for the buck' or spearhead army will undoubtedly consist of citizens of nation-states. However, the growing costs of even limited wars and the constraints on manpower emphasise a need for coalition warfare in order to

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share the burden of security. It may be less and less likely that a superpower such as the United States will find it attractive to fight a war like the one against Iraq in 2003 if such an operation must be undertaken alone. The second component of advanced armies—the mopping-up force—might also be made up of citizen soldiers, particularly from armies in a coalition that do not possess the capabilities for high-speed, firepower warfare, yet remain eager to contribute to operations.

The special intelligence force segment might become privatised since many of its activities would probably skirt on a legal knife-edge. The temptation of nation-states to disguise such operations is likely to become irresistible. Such a course would, of course, create a contradictory situation in which national authorities seek to exercise control over privatised security while simultaneously seeking to avoid legitimisation or responsibility for the outcomes of their actions.

The fourth component, or layer, of the future military is the occupation army, and it is in this sphere where outsourcing enters into the equation. Despite reservations, Western nations may be forced to recruit foreign troops or mercenaries for military service. In the future, troops from developing countries may well be cheaper to recruit and retain by advanced nations than citizen soldiers. Such a comparison of military service with economic outsourcing may displease some readers but circumstances increasingly favour such measures. In both economic and military outsourcing cases, large manpower savings make a substantial difference in human and financial costs. Moreover, in both cases, little transfer of sensitive technology or intelligence is likely to be involved. The challenge, of course, will be whether 'outsourced soldiers' will possess the appropriate military qualities in order to perform a successful occupation mission.

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CONCLUSION

Armed forces establishments reflect the nations and the peoples they serve. They do not live a life of their own, and in the course of the 20th century we saw two world wars being won by the side having the largest industrial production capacity. Those great struggles of the first half of the last century were followed by fifty years of peace dominated by nuclear deterrence. In this era, the armies of the great powers, with the exception of a few limited wars, were not called into action. In practice, the risk of mutual destruction made large-scale war largely unthinkable.

At the beginning of the 21st century, we are moving into an era that is increasingly shaped by two trends: globalisation and technology (including information technology, nanotechnology and biotechnology). We do not know what effect these new dynamics will have on war as a concept. It is, however, tempting to see wars as an instrument of last resort, at least among individual nation-states pursuing globalisation. The philosophy of war as an act of force may eclipse Carl von Clausewitz's philosophy. War may become an act that is not aimed at territorial gains or conquest but rather at making recalcitrant nation-states or trans-state organisations observe global peace. Safeguarding internationalism and securing the workings of globalisation are likely to be the objectives of future uses of force by most states. Pursuing national interests has fallen victim to the intellectual dry-cleaning of globalism, and the analysis presented in this article may suggest the kind of armies that advanced states will require in the future for waging war.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 It should be noted that Argentina has temporarily suspended its membership.
- 2 These two geographical entities are special cases when dealing with military security strictly speaking, but however interesting and even exciting, it falls outside the scope of this article.
- 3 Colonel-General Heinz Guderian's book *Achtung—Panzer! The Development of Armoured Forces, Their Tactics and Operational Potential* is regarded as the first textbook in armoured warfare. Guderian proved the validity of his doctrines in the campaign against France in 1940 and against The Soviet Union in 1941.

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