Michael A. Krasner

Direct and Indirect Influence: The Danish Peace Movement and Security Politics, 1979-1986

Fredsbevægelsen har spillet en vigtig rolle i de ændringer i dansk sikkerhedspolitik, der er sket i de sidste 5-6 år. Den direkte indflydelse på ændringerne har været ringe, men til gengæld har fredsorganisationerne spillet en betydelig indirekte rolle. De har sat dagsordenen for debatten, haft en mobiliserende og katalyserende funktion. Organisatorisk struktur og splittelse har forhindret dem i at spille en mere direkte rolle. Partierne har lyttet til fredsorganisationerne, men har bevaret positionen som stedet, hvor alternativ politik udarbejdes.

Since 1979 a great deal has changed in the politics of Danish secutiry policy. The limits on debate and the range of respectable association have been greatly extended. The issue of the NATO INF deployment, largely confined to the inner circles of government before 1979, has been placed at the top of the public and policy agendas and vigorously debated. In December 1983, an antigovernment parliamentary majority rejected the deployment outright. More recently the central tenets of NATO strategy have been called into question by elements of a potential governing coalition, and an alternative to the established security policy forum has been created.

My purpose in this article is to analyse the Danish peace movement's indirect influence on these events. In particular the article will examine such functions as catalyzing, legitimating, extending the range of debate and association, setting the agenda, and chancing the institutional framework. I will begin by reviewing briefly the changes that have occurred, and by summarizing the argument on direct influence in order to establish the context for the discussion of indirect influence.

The History: Process and Policy Change Since 1979

Both process and outcome have changed in the making of nuclear weapons policy in Denmark since 1979. Before that year, the process had generally been closed, subject only to occasional probes from the left wing parties and press. The major parties, including the Social Democrats, forged a pro-NATO consensus that barred nuclear weapons from Danish soil in peacetime. In the 1960s a peace movement put the issue of nuclear weapons policy on the public agenda. However, the movement failed to articulate a position significantly different from the Social Democrats' and therefore to alter the policy agenda (Krasner and Petersen, 1986).

By the 1980s the situation had changed substantially. The challenge to the dual track dicision created a long public debate in the media, the parliament, and perhaps most important, within the Social Democratic Party. After the Social Democrats

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ceded power to a four party conservative coalition in 1982 the debate intensified. Because the traditionally anti-nuclear *Radikale* party, which supported the new government on other issues, continued to oppose the dual track decision, the Social Democrats' adherence became essential to maintaining Danish support. But the Social Democrats' reservations, aggravated by the Reagan Administration's bellicosity, had grown. By December 1983, a four party, anti-government coalition, comprised of the Social Democrats, the Radicals, and the two left wing parties, consistently commanded a parliamentary majority on nuclear weapons policy. They passed a resolution rejecting continued INF deployment and calling for a resumption of negotiations.

Nor has the trend stopped there. In 1984 and 1985, the Social Democrats questioned NATO's potential first use of nuclear weapons and its policy on tactical nuclear weapons. Their party conference, but not their parliamentary party, has adopted a position on a Nordic nuclear weapon free zone close to the peace movement's position (Krasner and Petesen, 1986). More recently, the Social Democrats have been aggressive critics of the Reagan Administratin's failure to end nuclear tests. Thus, the post war consensus on nuclear weapons policy has been disrupted and the consensus on security policy generally called into question.

The Peace Movement's Impact: The Policy Change

Perhaps the most striking fact in this narrative is the policy change summarized in the phrase "footnote diplomacy". This describes the process by which the staunchly pro-Nato Danish Foreign Minister, under instructions from his parliament, rises at the Nato Foreign Ministers meetings to present, through clenched teeth, the latest Danish dissent from the dual track policy. Such dissents are duly registered as footnotes in official reports of the proceedings. Nikolaj Petersen and I have argued (Krasner and Petersen, 1986) that the direct, independent influence of the Danish peace movement on this change was relatively small.

Our analysis attempted a comprehensive review of the influences of the Social Democrats and began by noting that pressures from within the party seem to have been limited. That is, the number of Social Democrats who have been active in the peace movement appears to be rather smal, and their influence, especially prior to 1983, to have been well contained by the more cautious leadership.

More important than direct pressure form within the party have been interparty considerations. The presence of two strongly anti-nuclear left-wing parties has created a constant pressure on the Social Democrats. Particularly with regard to the younger Social Democrats, who are the natural target for an anti-nuclear appeal, and who represent a special source of concern for the party, the alternative presented by these aggressive smaller parties creates a strong motive to co-opt the issue.

The transition from being in power to being in opposition has also played a part. (It is almost certainly a much smaller part than is suggested by critics who accuse the Social Democrats in Denmark and elsewhere of playing a cynical game with the issue). Freed of the constraints created by governmental responsibility at home and abroad, the Social Democrats have been able to reconsider their security policy assumptions. Finding public support and an anti-government majority in parliament

428

has doubtless made the change more palatable. In fact, the issue has been a major focus for the Social Democrats' opposition politics.

Finally, we noted the influence of other Social Democratic parties, exercised principally through the Scandilux meetings (Petersen, 1985; Krasner and Petersen, 1986). The impact of the German Social Democrats, represented by Egon Bahr, has been especially strong.

Taking all these factors into account, and noting the relative weakness of the Danish movement, what role can be assigned to it in the process of policy change? If we focus solely on direct influence, say by lobbying, the peace movement's impact appears rather small. The lack of a central organization, the suspicion that still prevailed in the early 1980s and the difficulty of mobilizing constitutents have reduced the Danish peace movement's power as a traditional pressure group. Most peace movement activists accept this point but note that a number of personal contacts with party activists have been established, and that there is generally good communication among the movement and the Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party, even if there is not a great deal of influence exerted.

Indirect Influence on Policy Change

On the other hand, the movement has exercised indirect influence as a legitimator and catalyst. Even leading Social Democrats, eager to assert *their* "movement's independence", will concede that the peace movement accelerated the pace of their change.[1] Because the Social Democrats have long been Denmark's largest political party, and because they seek to maintain control of the public agenda and the policy agenda, the peace movement's threat is a serious one.

If one conceives of the two left parties, the left-wing of the Social Democrats, and the peace movement as a "tendance", a set of loosely related groups which exhibit the same tendancy, the peace movement may be seen as a legitimator and catalyst within the tendance. The political logic of this process is fairly clear. If confined to the left-wing parties, proposals for a nuclear weapon free zone or opposition to the 572 missiles could more easily be dismissed as political ploys, aimed at weakening the Social Democrats. Individual members and suporters of the Social Democrats will probably listen more openly to an appeal from the local peace movement organization than to an appeal from a rival political party. Put in starker terms, the point is that the peace movement represents a more effective rival on this issue than the left parties.

This conception is supported by sociological and political patterns. The left-wing parties – and to a lesser degree, the Radicals – openly embrace the policies and activities of the movement. Together with the Communists, members and supporters of these parties are the mainstay of the peace movement (Jyllandsposten, 1 October 1983), and the People's Socialists and Left Socialists clearly are ambitious to act as its parliamentary arm. The participation of party activists and supporters in the peace movement and the party leaders' regular recitals of its influence and importance testify to the symbiotic relationship between the peace movement and the left-wing parties.

Furthermore, the impact of a careful and conscious strategy of influence on the part of the left-wing parties in which the peace movement serves as a legitimising factor

should not be underrated. On several occasions they have pushed the Social Democrats into new and more radical positions. In these maneuverings, legitimation occurs because the existance of an independent peace movement takes the issue (to some extent at least) out of party politics. Initiatives on the NATO deployment or the nucler-weapon-free zone cannot be so readily dismissed as left party tactics when they are also supported by the peace movement (Krasner and Petersen, 1986).

Indirect Influence: The General Process

Considering other dimensions of political impact suggests a stronger peace movement influence, as even critics will admit. For example, Niels Jørgen Haagerup (1985: 163) says that:

> "The most important aspect of the (Nordic) peace movements ... is the amount of respectability they have gained. In political terms, this is manifest in the willingness of the Social Democratic parties to identify themselves ... not always fully ... with the immediate objectives of the peace movements: opposition to the deployment of the 572 NATO missiles in Western Europe, and the establishment of a Nordic nucler free zone ... the Nordic peace movements have turned out to be important enough to cast serious doubts upon the continued consensus on foreign policy ..."

The quotation illustrates two further dimensions of political influences. First, the peace movements have helped to change the climate of opinion. They have widened the range of debate. In Denmark, straightforward opposition to the NATO INF deployment has become a respectable political position. The Danish peace movement did not initiate the attempt to question nuclear weapons policy or to politicize security policy in general. Credit for this beginning in the early 1970s must go to the Socialist People's Party and its chairperson, Gert Petersen. But the effort never produced a significant public impact until it was combined with the peace movement's endeavours, focussing first on the dual track decision and then reaching broader issues.

By March of 1986 the debate within the tendance had expanded to a full scale, fundamental review of Danish security policy. For the left parties this meant a reconsideration of their traditional anti-NATO stance (see, for example, Klaus Birkholm, 1986). For the Social Democrats it has meant considering seriously a policy of changing NATO strategy from within. For the peace movement as an entity it has presented the formidable, and thus far unmet, challenge of defining an alternative security policy.

Similarly, the peace movement has helped to widen the range of respectable association. Early in 1984 a left-wing Social Democrat stirred considerable controversy within the Party by joining the board of a foundation devoted to peace work (Krasner and Petersen, 1986). Eighteen months later another Social Democrat helped to start the alternative security policy forum, *Freds- og Sikkerhedspolitisk Selskab*, without any similar reaction.

This example illustrates the dimension of institutional impact. The peace movement in Denmark, like its counterparts around Western Europe, has opened the national security institutions to increased scrutiny and participation. Because of the similarly directed activities of allied actors, it is again difficult to assign a precise

weight to the peace movement's influence, but the legitimating function seems even more powerful in this context. As an independent people's movement, the peace movement can make claims on officials institutions that ring truer than similar claims advanced by political parties. Further, the peace movement has mobilized groups which otherwise would not have pressed such claims, and in so doing has spurred the parties to do likewise.

Institutional patterns have begun to shift in other ways as well. In the summer of 1985 members of the Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party joined a boardmember of the newly established Center for Peace and Conflict Research at Copenhagen University to create the alternative to the established security policy forum mentioned above. Approximately 60 members drawn from the ranks of journalism, the military, the trade unions, the universities, the peace movement, and the four parties of the anti-deployment majority meet to discuss security matters in a relatively private setting.

Opinions vary as to the forum's importance. One can see it as a major political achievement as the movement helps to produce a new political alignment and a new security policy. This was the view of one peace movement participant who said it might be considered as "discussing the security policy of the next Danish government". An outside observer took a more prosaic view, suggesting that the forum was mainly intended to be a sounding board for the boardmember of the Peace and Conflict Research Center and that it was not taken seriously by the Social Democrats. The forum's history is not long enough to permit a definite judgement, but its creation is a considerable achievement by itself. Five years ago discussions among the peace movement, the left parties, and the Social Democrats would have been inconceivable.

Further institutional effects may be noted in the trade unions associated with the Social Democrats. As the peace issue became more prominent in Danish politics, those unions in which the left parties, including the Danish Communist Party, are strong, began to shift resources toward peace work. An institution called the Workers' International Center, supported by the trade unions, and the Social Democrats, has received funds to pursue peace work, and the powerful General Workers Union (SID) has taken a leading role in peace work, often in association with the peace movement.

Most obviously, the persistence of the peace movement itself, albeit at reduced levels of activity and organizational strength, attests to an important institutional change. Despite the defeat on the deployment issue outside Denmark, the peace movement has not folded its tents and gone away. The idea (Mayer and Ash, 1966) that either success or failure threatens a social movement's existance has been contradicted. Unlike its 1960s predecessor, the Danish movement has sustained itself despite defeat and despite the weariness of many activists. While the precise effects of maintaining a presence are also difficult to measure, it is equally difficult to imagine that they are negligible.

Some Theoretical Considerations

One question which arises from the foregoing analysis is why the Danish peace movement has been influential in the indirect ways described, but relatively weak in terms

of direct impact. The lack of direct influence comes, I would argue, from the organizational weakness of the Danish movement, which is in turn produced by its division into three often competing entities, its relatively small size, and by the grass roots structure of two of the three main groups. On the other hand, the Danish movement, despite these organizational weaknesses, has been very active, especially at the local level, and Nej til Atomvåben (No to Nuclear Weapons) especially, has produced good analytical work. Nej til Atomvåben's leadership has had close contact with the two left parties and with some Social Democrats, contacts which have certainly helped to influence the debate within those parties on issues such as alternative defense.

It is precisely through such contacts and influence that the peace movement's indirect influence has been felt. This leads to a more general point. It may be that the importance of organizational strength and direct influence varies according to the political setting. In a situation such as West Germany where there were no significant parties to the left of the Social Democrats, the peace movement has to develop the organizational strength to contribute to the creation of a new party.

In Denmark the function of interest aggregation and some part of interest articulation could be performed by the existing parties. The peace movement's role has been to help to change the agenda, performing catalytic and legitimating functions as noted, and to contribute ideas without necessarily producing a neatly packaged alternative security policy. Thus, the movement has helped to raise the issue of nuclear weapons policy, without always framing it precisely, and without presenting a clear alternative. In Denmark, these deficiencies have not been so important because the two left parties, and more recently, the Social Democrats, have taken up where the peace movement left off, defining policy alternatives, attempting thus to complete interest articulation and, more recently, exploring the compromises that must occur if interest aggregation is to be achieved. The general point would be that the strategy and organizational form of a social movement can vary depending on the political context, especially the constellation of parties. There is no one "right" strategy or organizational form. What would be a crippling weakness in one country may be only a slight hindrance in another.

Finally, I might amend my own language to suggest that the peace movement and its allies have done something more than set the agenda. Considering the history since the Second World War suggests that a non-decision had been created. The consensus in support of NATO and its policies was so strong as to rule out debate. Now NATO policies are freely challenged and discussed. This is more than setting the agenda, a phrase which implies that the agenda is equally open to all. Instead, the system was strongly biased in favour of the status quo and the insurgent tendance had to overcome powerful institutional and social barriers in order to gain a hearing. In this effort, the presence of an independent, people's movement was certainly important and probably crucial.

432

Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, statements are based upon interviews with participants.

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