

**Business as usual?**  
**Assessing change and continuity in states foreign policy traditions**

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**Introduction**

How do we assess the degree of change and continuity in states' contemporary foreign policy decisions? The change debates have traditionally focused on measurement of foreign policy as a dependent variable, where scholars have presented different models and typologies aimed at addressing the degree of change represented in contemporary foreign policy decisions.<sup>1</sup> Recently, however, scholars have begun to assess change based on theoretical assessments of whether contemporary foreign policy choices fit into established interpretation patterns of states' past foreign policy patterns.<sup>2</sup> Inspired by constructivist insights, the concept of "foreign policy tradition" has gained prominence as a conceptual and analytical tool to address questions of change and continuity.<sup>3</sup> Here, the interpretation of states' behavior in the past is assumed to be associated with a theoretically driven understanding of its "foreign policy tradition." Methodological this is often used in the academic literature as an ideal-typical constructed reference point for a comparative assessment of the status of change and continuity in the evaluation of states' contemporary actions. The analytical purpose is to assess whether contemporary actions fluctuate, deviate from, or challenge what the theoretical literature has

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann 1990; Volgy and Schwarz 1991, 616–17; Rosati et al. 1994.

<sup>2</sup>- Verovšek 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Mead 2013; Bouchet 2014; Clarke and Ricketts 2017; Nye 2020; Taylor 2020.

identified as well-established behavioral trends associated with the tradition. Such a methodological use of the concept 'foreign policy tradition' holds analytical promises and methodological advantages as this approach helps us identify when contemporary foreign policy directions and decisions deviate from the 'tradition'. However, the often-implicit use of ideal-typical crisp set<sup>4</sup> conceptualization of countries "foreign policy tradition" has two overlooked shortcomings that might produce biases in our assessment of change and continuity. The first relates to how different theoretically driven ideal-typical understandings of a nation's foreign policy tradition can produce very contrasting interpretations of change and continuity in contemporary foreign policy as contemporary decisions either falls outside or inside the conceptualized tradition. The reason is that the conceptualization of "the tradition" is based on an often-implicit theoretical assumption about the role and nature of states' foreign policy roles and opportunities, which impact upon the interpretation of the status of contemporary actions. This will in turn produce either rather large - or rather small - "continuity spaces," which either exaggerate continuity or paint a picture of pendulum-like changes in states' foreign policy. Such differences make it difficult to "settle" arguments about change and continuity as it is often unclear what is compared.

The second challenge is that the use of ideal-typical concepts helps to exclude, stigmatize, cancel, suppress - or normalize certain historical periods or features in states' foreign policy history at the expense of tendencies in other periods. This raises a question of the status and relations between "the tradition" and the excluded periods: Are they in fact new traditions, or are they offshoots of general tendencies in the established tradition that simply have evolved and been adapted to new conditions? The problem with ideal-typical conceptualizations is that nuances, gradiences, and hybrid policies are difficult to classify, which is unfortunate as the

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<sup>4</sup> Goetz 2006

analyses often overlook generic continuity trends, evolutions, or reinterpretations in the general foreign policies under shifting structural conditions.

To advance our understanding of change and continuity using the tradition concept, the article proposes that the literature instead should take the ‘cure of history’ in order to capture these tendencies through a more nuanced approach to conceptualization. Methodologically this can be achieved through a change in conceptualization logics where traditions can be conceptualized through inspiration from ‘fuzzy set logics’<sup>5</sup>. Such methodological logics has the potential to conceptually connect different dynamics and tendencies in a country’s foreign policy history in a broader and more holistic understanding of traditions and foreign policy history. Accepting the risk of overemphasizing continuity interpretations, the analytical benefit is that it becomes possible to identify long-term trends, tendencies, and developments in the tradition by adopting a more evolutionary perspective on the developments in both degree and kind terms without excluding or suppressing certain periods from the country’s foreign policy history.

The aim is to demonstrate how conceptualizations of foreign policy traditions facilitate very diverse interpretations of change and continuity which is caused by a use of ideal-typical concepts as comparative historical reference points. It shows how the use of ideal-typical concepts can “normalize” certain traits of a country’s diplomacy in certain time periods whereas it can “stigmatize or “de-normalize” the foreign policy in other periods by excluding certain traits from the traditions which raises important questions of what time periods’ deemed outside the tradition raises for our understanding of states foreign policy history and how we evaluate their status. The article introduces a potential methodological solution by shifting from Weberian ideal types to fuzzy set-inspired definitions as a means for the Foreign Policy

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<sup>5</sup> Ragin 2000; 2006; Mikkelsen 2017

Analysis literature to capture the generic, evolutionary, or revolutionary traits in states' foreign policy histories. The argument is that a change of conceptualization allows for more nuanced discussions of change and continuity in both degree and kind terms without excluding time periods based on (too subjective) theoretical definitions and understandings. A comprehensive meta study of the literature's use of the ideal-typical use of the tradition concept and its analytical implications is well beyond the scope of a single article. Instead, the article aims to illustrate the potential shortcomings of the ideal-typical understanding of the tradition concept through an illustrative meta-theoretical case study of the interpretation debates in the literature on change and continuity in Danish foreign policy doctrines but also draws on examples from interpretation debates in other countries.

### **Conceptualizing Foreign Policy Tradition**

Assessing the degree of change and continuity in countries' foreign policy requires a clear definition of the concept "foreign policy" that can distinguish it from domestic policies where many areas also have an external aspect.<sup>6</sup> Foreign policy can be understood as "both broad trends of behavior and the particular actions taken by a state or other collective actor directed toward other states or collective actors within the international system"<sup>7</sup> as they are expressed in official doctrine, documents and speeches.<sup>8</sup> Foreign policy is studied through the literature's interpretation of foreign policy doctrines in a Danish case. Foreign-policy doctrines are here understood as codifications of the broader set of general principles laid out in the overall strategies; they are close to "action plans" for implementation.<sup>9</sup> Doctrines thereby express the

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<sup>6</sup> For a definitional overview see Haesenbrok and July 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Beach and Pedersen, 2020:4

<sup>8</sup> Carlsnaes 1993; Holsti 1991; Rosati et al. 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Builds on Brodin 1972; Wivel 2014.

fundamental set of beliefs belonging to decision-makers and represent development in a country's foreign policy in a certain time period as doctrines can be reformulated or abandoned over time.

The theoretical concept of "foreign policy tradition" can be understood as "a theoretically developed concept that encapsulates a particular theoretical interpretation of a nation's interests, roles, and opportunities, and how such decisions are viewed as parts of the country's political heritage."<sup>10</sup>

The most common approach is to conceptualize "tradition" as an *ideal typical* understanding of the past. Ideal types are abstractions or defined to capture essential features or characteristics of a social phenomenon or a complex concept. This provides a theoretical reference point for understanding and analyzing certain aspects of reality as it enables comparisons against an idealized theoretical standard. Following a Weberian-inspired ideal-typical understanding of the past, this helps us to highlight essential characteristics that can be used to uncover regularities or deviations in states' foreign policy compared to the theorized ideal.<sup>11</sup> The literature thereby often relies on an implicit essentialist Sartorian<sup>12</sup> inspired understanding of the tradition concept where contemporary actions need to match all relevant theorized indicators to be considered "inside" or "outside" the relevant concept.<sup>13</sup> In the change and continuity literature on American foreign policy contemporary decisions are for instance often evaluated in relation to whether they follow conservative (Hamiltonian), liberal internationalist (Wilsonian), conservative nationalist (Jacksonian) or Liberal nationalist (Jeffersonian) tendencies.<sup>14</sup> The use of ideal types can also found in studies of middle powers

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<sup>10</sup> See Brodin 1972; Wivel 2014; Branner 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Lebow 2006; Farbøl 2012, 68.

<sup>12</sup> Sartori 1970

<sup>13</sup> Goertz 2006

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Clark And Rickett 2017; Nau 2021; Bustinduy 2022

like Germany where the literature have often interpreted German foreign policy tradition as a pacifist Venustian ‘civilian power’<sup>15</sup> and used this as a reference point for assessing change and continuity. What is interesting from a methodological perspective is that the identified historical reference points often run the risk of a temporal truncation bias,<sup>16</sup> where the development in one historical period are considered to represent the normalized reference point that can be utilized to assess deviations in past and future foreign policy trends. The identification of these reference points and the decision to lift these periods up as normal tends to ignore or discard devious trends in previous and future policies as deviations. A methodological insight from the politics of memory literature is that interpretations of traditions and the historical past are never neutral but always a product of the interpretation of those who interpret or memorize “history” as well as which theoretical position the researcher subscribes to.<sup>17</sup> “Memorizing” can here be defined as referring to what the interpreter or the researcher associates with the past and how they identify and select the reference point. This is important as this point can be used to describe efforts by individuals, groups, and states to foster or impose memory in the form of interpretations and commemorations of a country’s past that basically specify “who we are” and “what we were.” Such insights are not only limited to the politics of memory literature but are also encapsulated in the methodological works of Lustick<sup>18</sup> and Møller & Skaaning<sup>19</sup> who have urged scholars to reflect on their historiographic school and its impact upon our interpretation of historical events in order to avoid biases or tendencies in our conclusions about change and continuity.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Malici, 2006: 57-59; Maull, 2000; 2018; Berensköetter and Giegerich, 2010; Harnisch, 2001; Wolff, 2013; Crawford, 2010

<sup>16</sup> Geddes 1991

<sup>17</sup> Mälksoo 2023

<sup>18</sup> Lustick 1996

<sup>19</sup> Møller and Skaaning 2021

<sup>20</sup> Collier and Mahoney 1996

Ideal-typical conceptualizations and unreflected analytical applications therefore run the risks of selecting, promoting, or neglecting certain events or time periods through a particular interpretation of the past. In methodological terms, this induces interpretations of change in kind rather than in degree terms, as ideal types tend to create othering processes depending on the theoretical perspective.<sup>21</sup>

### **Ideal-Typical Understandings of Tradition**

The Foreign policy literature has traditionally operated with two ideal-typical understandings of the tradition concepts that create different types of biases. One originates from a school of thought that has emphasized structural or exogenous factors as the main explanatory factor behind states' foreign policy choices. Building on structural understandings of foreign policy this approach largely promotes a singular *deterministic* interpretation of the tradition concept where the states position in the international state hierarchy largely determines the behavioral trends and actions of countries foreign policies.<sup>22</sup> Another position has argued for a broader understanding of the tradition concept and argued for the inclusion of more endogenous or domestically driven factors that are assumed to coexist with the structural deterministic tendencies that combines elements of liberal and realist tendencies in the tradition concept.<sup>23</sup> This is based on the assumption that states might operate under structural constraints that set the frame but that agency, not only for greater powers, also matters. This suggests that domestic interest, norms, and values also impact upon the conduct of states' foreign policies. This

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<sup>21</sup> Sartori 1970; Goertz 2006; Goertz and Mahoney 2012; Beach and Pedersen 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Korolov 2019

<sup>23</sup> Taylor 2020; Gvalia et al. 2013

understanding of foreign policy tradition promotes a more *dualistic* conceptualization as traditions represent a ‘balance’ between the two tendencies.

### **Deterministic interpretation**

Though structural realism, IR’s long-dominant theory was developed to explain great powers, it nonetheless exercises great influence on how the literature has understood relatively weaker and smaller states’ foreign policy traditions.<sup>24</sup> In this interpretation, states’ foreign policy tradition is rooted in their material capabilities where smaller states relations to great powers are defined as asymmetric due to their lack of capabilities, structural weakness, colonial pasts, economic dependency etc. tend to follow a deterministic path<sup>25</sup> as the boundaries of agency in contemporary actions are pre-determined by structural exogenous forces or by the legacy of the past, which reduces the room for agency.<sup>26</sup>

For many smaller European states, this understanding is rooted in their experiences with the European order, the great power concert and the power politics that grew out of the Vienna Congress that gave rise to certain “small state identities” which is closely linked to the term of foreign policy tradition.<sup>27</sup> Similar emphasis on the character of the international system can be found outside Europe<sup>28</sup> or be found in studies of post-colonial countries where explanations based on their colonial legacy<sup>29</sup> or economic dependency<sup>30</sup> determine the range of foreign policy actions and helped to shape a deterministic structural induced understanding of the

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of small state has traditionally been understood from an absolute or a relational perspective (Long 2022)

<sup>25</sup> Great powers do not suffer the same type of constraints due to their material powers. The deterministic interpretation is there for largely dominant in studies of smaller states’ foreign policies.

<sup>26</sup> Petersen 1977; Rosenau 1970. Keller 1987; Tekle 1989; Gvalia et al. 2013; Kornely 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Branner 2000; 2013; Wivel 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Moore 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Keller 1987.

<sup>30</sup> Ahiakpor 1985.



country's tradition—or identity. The deterministic starting point has often associated foreign policy decisions with pragmatic real-politic adaptation to developments in the exogenous environment—which is used as a central prism to interpret the magnitude of change and continuity in small states' contemporary foreign policy decisions.<sup>31</sup> In an European context, this has been associated with pragmatism, adaptation, acquiescence, neutrality, and bandwagon for protection/with power to describe developments in small states' foreign policy traditions that are seen as accommodations to the overall dynamics in the global and regional power balance.<sup>32</sup> While deterministic pressure is assumed to be felt less directly for greater powers, they are still assumed to follow rational patterns caused by the power balance in the system, and are therefore induced to follow either 'defensive' balancing or more 'revisionist' hegemony strategies.<sup>33</sup> Utilizing the insights from the politics of memory literature, this theoretical construction—or understanding—of foreign policy tradition has important analytical implications for our assessment of change and continuity. Accordingly, changes are often interpreted as *changes in degree* rather than *changes in kind* as the position tends to facilitate continuity interpretations based on exogenous factors in the form of structural, colonial, or shadow of the past interpretations. For many states, this might imply that much of their international engagement in the post-WWII period is interpreted as a necessary adaptation to the international development rather than an active prioritization of liberal internationalistic choice.<sup>34</sup> The analytical implication is that the literature relying on exogenous factors tends to identify rather large "continuity spaces" in states' foreign policy traditions over time, as much of the behavior can be interpreted along continuity lines determined by the small states' lack of capabilities. If

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<sup>31</sup> Gvalia et al. 2013; Tannenwald 2005.

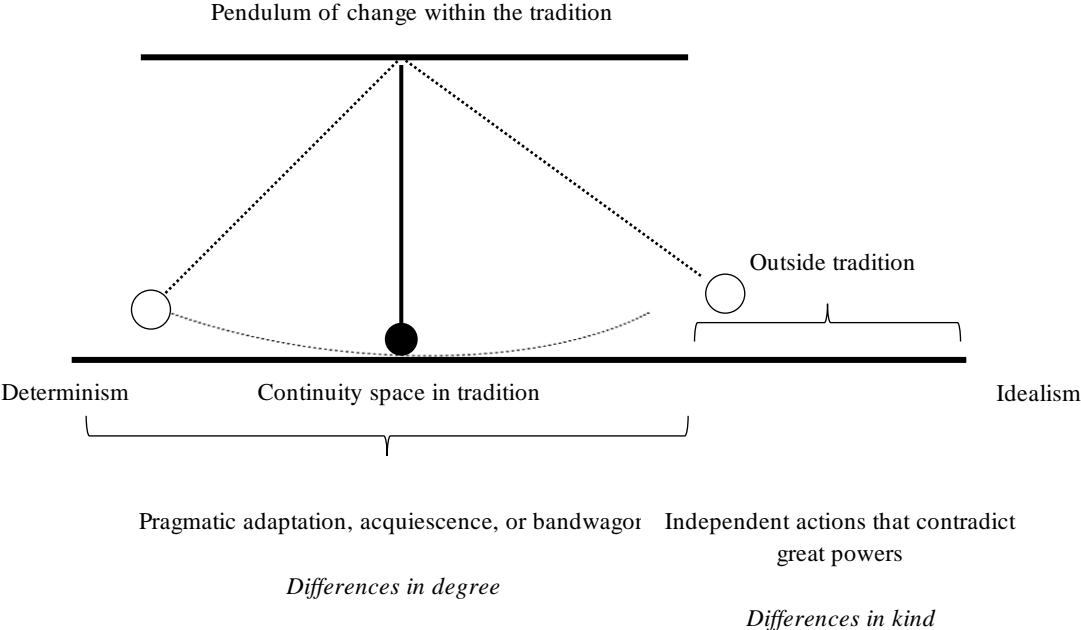
<sup>32</sup> Taylor 2020; Petersen 1977; Holbraad 1991; Ringsmose 2009; Oma and Petersson 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001

<sup>34</sup> Holbraad 1991.

smaller states engage in concrete actions that are (too) bold and idealistic, which would be considered analytically as “outside” the tradition.<sup>35</sup> The logic is illustrated in figure 1 where it is possible to identify a relatively large continuity space, as most actions and paths are associated with strategies of adaptation, acquiescence, or bandwagon that fall within the tradition.

**Figure 1: The continuity space in the singular ideal-typical understanding of tradition**



**Dualistic interpretations**

The dualist conceptualization has taken inspiration in classical studies who have showed greater appreciation for states’ opportunities to exercise influence.<sup>36</sup> In line with broader trends of “opening the domestic black box” in the FPA literature, it has been argued that the

<sup>35</sup> See also Mouritzen 2022 for a discussion of the limits for the Nordic countries idealistic foreign policies.  
<sup>36</sup> Long 2022.

developments in states' foreign policies are better explained through the inclusion of domestic beliefs, values, and identity-based sources rather than only structural induced explanations.<sup>37</sup> Endogenous interpretations do, however, recognize the need to take the exogenous power-political aspect into consideration when foreign policy traditions are conceptualized. The integration of exogenous and endogenous factors in the conceptualization has led to a dualistic understanding of the tradition concept that combines structural induced action paths (deterministic) with more idealistic elements.<sup>38</sup> This dualism is visible in the academic literature's interpretation of many states' foreign policy traditions, which are interpreted as a mixture of these drivers.<sup>39</sup> It is often argued that the two overall drivers should be understood as opposite but not mutually exclusive tendencies as agency and structure always tend to co-exist. This dualistic understanding opens for more complex interpretation patterns as change and continuity are evaluated based on whether "the balancing" of deterministic and endogenous idealistic tendencies is successful. The logic is illustrated in figure 2. The ideational pendulum can be in *ruhestande*, i.e., the balance between the factors is upheld within certain definitional boundaries. These theoretically defined boundaries mark the threshold for whether contemporary politics falls within the tradition or whether the pendulum has swung outside the theorized continuity space. Transgression of these demarcation lines (a disturbance of the balance) would represent a break with the dualist tradition where policies were either "too" determined by external factors or "too" idealistic in the sense that small states would jeopardize national interest due to the pursue of idealistic values. Exactly where the boundaries begin, and end is often not fully clarified or justified in the theory as it often entails an element of subjective

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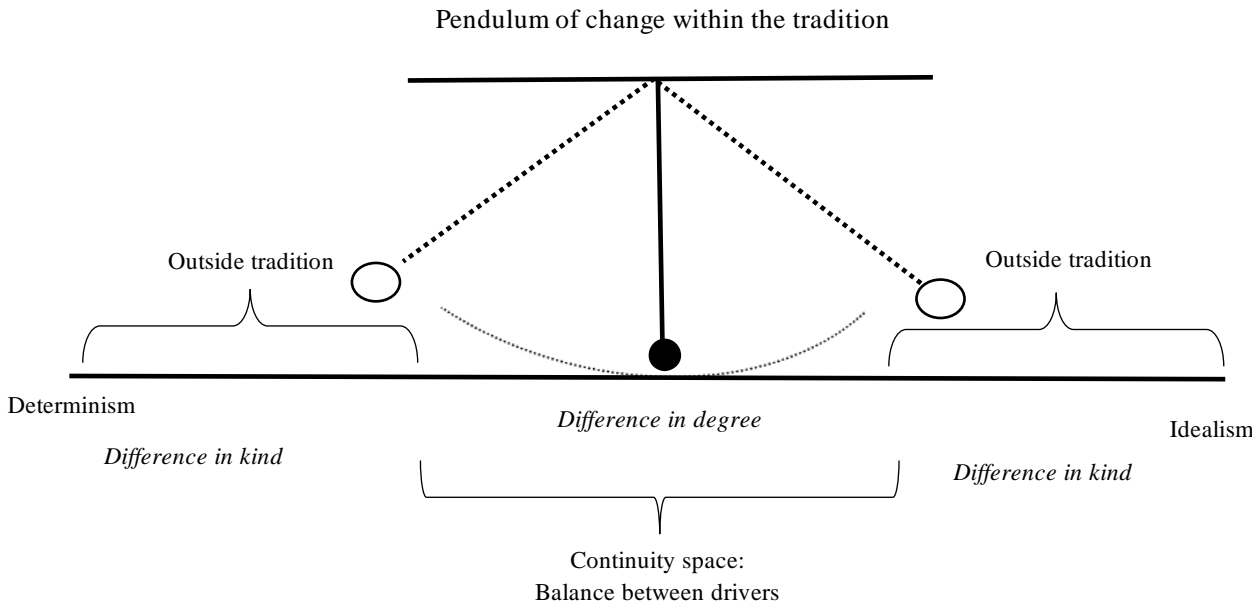
<sup>37</sup> E.g. Kaarbo 1996; Eliasson 2004. See also Long 2022 for a thorough discussion of the role of exogenous and endogenous factors.

<sup>38</sup> Monten 2005; Mead 1013; Wivel 2014; Taylor 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Lawler 2007; Branner 2013; Wivel 2014; Bergmann 2020; Blumenau 2022; Keller 1987; Gvalia et al. 2013; Kakachia et al 2018; Taylor 2000; Brechenmacher 2023.

assessment based on the theoretical starting point – often determined by the situation related to the identified reference point.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore unclear exactly what constitutes the “continuity space” as the boundaries are often a result of a conscious or unconscious theoretical construction by the interpreter through the utilization of theoretical defined ideal types of a truncated period that represent a particular variant of the balance between the drivers.

**Figure 2: The continuity space in the dualitic understanding of the tradition**



**Change and Continuity in Ideal-Typical Understandings**

In the following, the aim is to illustrate the analytical implications of adopting different understandings of the tradition concept and its implication for our understanding of change and continuity and the risk of excluding large time periods in states’ foreign policy histories by labelling them “outside” the tradition. A full survey of the foreign policy literature and its use of the tradition concept is outside the scope of this article, and the more modest empirical

<sup>40</sup> See for example Branner 2013; Wivel 2014 for examples.

aim is to illustrate the implications for our interpretation of change and continuity based on a case study of a meta study of the interpretation debates in the literature on Danish foreign policy on whether central doctrines in the country's foreign policy from 1909-2009 represent change and continuity in relations to the country's foreign policy tradition. Denmark has been chosen as the interpretation debates largely build upon ideal-typical understanding(s) of the country's foreign policy tradition, which allows for an illustration of the differences between ideal types and fuzzy conceptualizations. While the findings naturally entail certain case-centric particularities or tendencies, similar tendencies can also be found in debates that utilize ideal-typical conceptualization of countries foreign policy tradition. Examples can for instance be found in the debate over change and continuity in German foreign policy after the Ukraine War. Constructivist analyses have for instance used different 'role perceptions' of German foreign policy identity to argue for change and continuity in the countries contemporary actions.<sup>41</sup> Following liberal inspired interpretations the German tradition has often been associated with an identity as a 'civilian power'<sup>42</sup> in the post-WWII period which according to the literature is associated with non-inference, integration and economic cooperation. This has analytically been used as a comparative reference point to argue for 'change' in kinds terms in contemporary German foreign policy.<sup>43</sup>

In the following, the analysis focuses on the debates on the status of the different foreign policy doctrines that have dominated the country's foreign policy over the past century. This allows us to evaluate how the literature through its conceptualization identifies continuity traits

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<sup>41</sup> Harnisch, 2011; Opperman, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Maull, 1990; 2000; 2018; Berenskötter and Giegerich, 2010; Harnisch, 2001; Wolff, 2013; Crawford, 2010

<sup>43</sup> Bunde, 2022; Blumenau 2022; Helferich, 2023; see also Langenbacher, 2014, Warburg, 2010. For other types of interpretations that emphasize more 'Martian' elements as the core in Germany's foreign policy see Luttwak, 1998; Kundnani, 2015, 2018; Szabo, 2015, 2017.

between these doctrines and how the literature explicitly or implicitly has “normalized” certain doctrines or stigmatized others by excluding them from the foreign policy history.

To ensure a sufficient level of within-case variation, the illustration includes the literature’s treatment of the relationship between the six different doctrines (Table 1) that have constituted the country’s modern foreign policy history from 1909-2009. Each qualifies as doctrines as they can be understood as codifications of the broader set of general principles that were laid out in overall strategies, rooted in the underlying perceptions of the country’s role and position in the international system. It should be noted that the ambition is not to conduct a detailed empirical analysis of the content and developments in the different doctrines in Danish foreign policy as this is done extensively elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> The aim is rather to demonstrate how the different doctrines can be related in different ways depending in the concepts we utilize, which in turn can produce significantly differences in our interpretation of change and continuity in the developments on the ‘dependent variable.’

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<sup>44</sup> Petersen 2004; Olesen and Villaume 2006; Lidegaard 2003, see also Pedersen 2015.

**Table 1. Doctrines in Danish foreign policy**

Name of doctrine	Periods	Main characteristics
Scavenius	1909-1910 1913-1920 1940-1943	A <i>neutralist</i> doctrine that saw Denmark as a small state with no real options in the regional system due to geographical proximity to the regional great powers.
Munch	1920-1940	A <i>neutralist</i> doctrine focused on maintaining sovereignty that included elements of opting in and out of the international system.
Hækkerup:	1965-1990	An <i>internationalist-inspired doctrine</i> focused on how Denmark should pursue different interests in international organizations and alliances by following what was labelled a compartmentalized foreign policy.
Jørgensen: Footnote policy	1982-1988	A doctrine that emphasized <i>idealistic</i> elements in defense and security. Denmark should work for non-proliferation and de-escalation between the great powers, raise criticism of allies in NATO, and formulate Danish opt-outs in the form of footnotes.
Ellemann-Jensen:	1990-2001	Emphasis on <i>activist internationalism</i> . Denmark should support and engage in international organizations and work for a norm-based and institutionalized international society.
Fogh Rasmussen:	2001-2009	Associated with a militarization of security policy where military participation in international interventions played a prominent role and interpret as both idealist, adaptational but also <i>internationalist</i> .

### Singular interpretation: Change and Continuity

It is often argued that the formative moment for a modern Danish small state tradition was the Danish defeat to Prussia and Austria-Hungary in 1864. The defeat reduced the Danish territory by one third, which real-politically and psychologically affected decision-makers and laid the foundation of a particular Danish small state identity, which has influenced the literature's understanding of the country's foreign policy tradition. In conventional determinist interpretations, "1864" is the starting point for a small state reactive pragmatism, which was later reinforced by the lessons from the period from 1870 and onwards with the "fear of national extinction and a lack of confidence in the willingness of the great powers of Europe to help maintain the territorial integrity of Denmark."<sup>45</sup> The unification of Germany in 1871 altered the regional power balance and further reduced Danish options and opportunities which meant that

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<sup>45</sup> Holbraad 1991, 45.

the country's foreign policy is largely interpreted as appeasement to German positions in order to minimize the risk of armed conflicts and thereby increase the chances of survival.<sup>46</sup> These lessons in the modern history of the Danish foreign policy have sedimented into a deterministic and realist-inspired research position<sup>47</sup> where the "tradition concept" largely became associated with a weak *small state identity* with a limited international action space where Denmark could neither deter nor balance great regional powers which meant that the country had to follow a deterministic path and pursue a non-provocative, German-oriented policy, which suppressed idealism by focusing on survival. Tendencies that are not unknown to other European small states in this period. In this interpretation, the Scavenius doctrine can be seen as the foundation of the modern Danish foreign policy tradition building on deterministic logics<sup>48</sup> where Scavenius pragmatically noted that the countries' "*foreign policy is determined by factors on which the Danish government and parliament can exercise little influence.*"<sup>49</sup> From the defeat in 1864 and until 1940, Denmark pursued what the small state literature terms "a neutrality strategy" aimed at withdrawing from the power politics of international relations.<sup>50</sup> Following this line of thought, the literature's interpretation of the roots of the modern Danish foreign policy tradition resides largely in an understanding of the Danish role as limited by geopolitical realities where the shadow of 1864 has continued to shape and form the content of Danish foreign policy strategies and doctrines. The influential work of Petersen<sup>51</sup> theorized how Danish strategies largely fit into the general IR literature at the time and reflected what Rosenau<sup>52</sup> labeled adaptation politics. Such an understanding of the tradition has led to interpretations of

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<sup>46</sup> Holbraad 1991

<sup>47</sup> Bjøl 1963; 1971; Petersen 1977; Wivel 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Lidegaard 2003; Olesen 2013, 256–60.

<sup>49</sup> Scavenius 1948, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Pedersen 2015

<sup>51</sup> Petersen 1977; 2000; Due and Petersen 1995.

<sup>52</sup> Rosenau 1970.



later trends and developments that largely emphasize pragmatic Danish adaptation to international developments, which in turn has produced continuity interpretations due to the long shadows of 1864 that cemented the country's lack of capabilities and consolidated its small state status. The implications are most strongly illustrated in the debate about the role of the Fogh Rasmussen (2001-2009) doctrine in relation to the Danish foreign policy tradition. The realist-inspired literature following this understanding has focused on the strong adherence to the American alliance and the militarization of security policy as indications of Danish accommodation to great power pressure. Mouritzen<sup>53</sup> has put forth a continuity interpretation and argued that the period represents a new example of adaptation to the great power in the international system expressed as Danish "super Atlanticism." In Mouritzen's readings, participation was seen as a manifestation of the deterministic tendency we saw in the period before the Second World War.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the active Danish participation in the war coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq should not be seen as independent activism but rather as active adaptation to American demands to take "a stance in the fight against terror," which draws on the Danish small-state experience. Danish foreign policy is seen through a deterministic lens that emphasizes adaptation to a great power, which is interpreted negatively.

A variant of this is found in the alliance literature where Danish dependence on the US security guarantee promoted bandwagon-for-protection behavior. To obtain the security guarantee, Denmark participated in US-led operations to pay for protection and to enhance its reputation as a loyal and relevant ally. Logically, the militarized activism was interpreted as a continuation of the small-state tradition where the bandwagoning in the Fogh Rasmussen doctrine is seen as a new form of adaptation and accommodation to the great power(s) in the

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<sup>53</sup> Mouritzen 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Mouritzen and Olesen 2010.

system.<sup>55</sup> Similar viewpoints are expressed by Rasmussen<sup>56</sup> and Lidegaard,<sup>57</sup> who, despite working in a more dualistic understanding, argue that security dependency determined Danish coalition contributions.

Villaume<sup>58</sup> has argued that the period represents a continuation of adaptational elements in the country's foreign policy tradition. Participation in the coalition wars is seen as accommodation to great power pressure that reinforced adaptational tendencies from the Cold War. Denmark's engagement in NATO is also seen as a typical adaptational small-state strategy, which continued and perhaps even reinforced elements of the traditional Danish neutrality policy.<sup>59</sup> One central challenge to this overall continuity interpretation concerns the idealism of "the footnote period" in the Jørgensen doctrine (1982-1988), as the emphasis on idealism and critique of the major powers is assumed to challenge the established modus of (re)active accommodation. As noted by Wivel,<sup>60</sup> from a theoretical perspective, the footnote policy of the Jørgensen doctrine broke with the reactive elements in determinism and seemed to undermine the policies that would protect Denmark from the Soviet Union and provoke Denmark's most important ally, the United States. At the same time, it challenged NATO policy, which was against the normal conduct of Danish security policy. In the context of the Danish tradition, historians generally agree that the period represented a challenge to the official line, but they disagree about its viability, impact, and consequences.

As illustrated in figure 3, this perspective tends to emphasize a high degree of continuity in the country's foreign policy history. The figure demonstrates that almost all doctrines are perceived to be the result of an overlying deterministic tendency driven by the Danish small

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<sup>55</sup> See also Jakobsen et al. 2018; Oma and Petersson 2019.

<sup>56</sup> Rasmussen 2011, 136–37.

<sup>57</sup> Lidegaard 2018, 96–97.

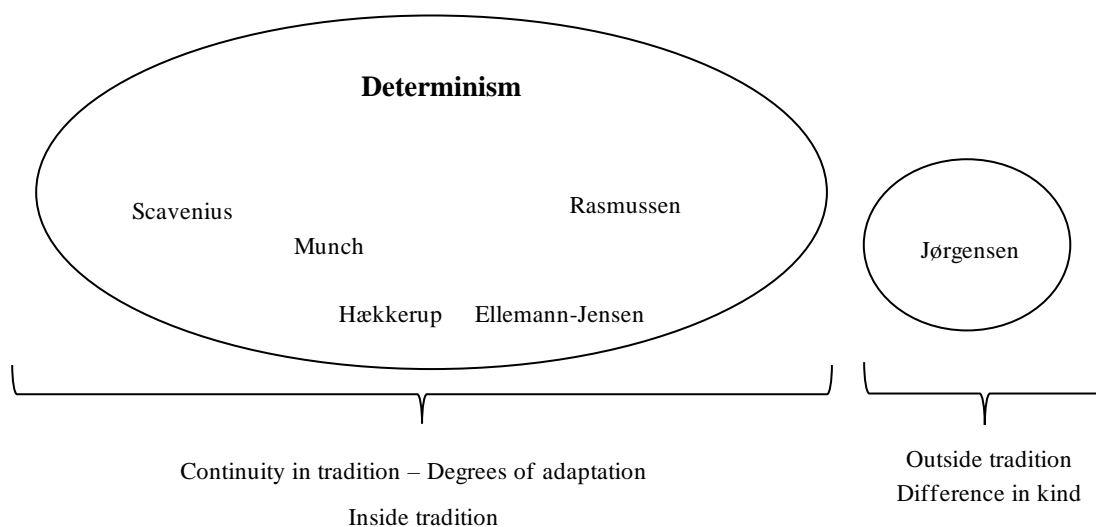
<sup>58</sup> Villaume 2008a; 2008b;

<sup>59</sup> Villaume 1995.

<sup>60</sup> Wivel 2014.

state status across different polarity constellations. Accordingly, most of the foreign policy doctrines are considered differences in degree rather than differences in kind as they all fall into the overall understanding of tradition. The only exception is the footnote policy of the Jørgensen doctrine; a period dominated by idealism that can be considered a (failed) attempt to challenge the tradition. The figure also illustrates that the main part of the doctrines can be considered as inside the tradition, but also that the conceptualization fails to identify how they relate and what patterns of continuity that exists between them. More nuanced interpretations of evolutionary /tendencies thereby become problematic.

**Figure 3. The deterministic understanding of Danish foreign policy tradition**



### **Dualistic Conceptualization: Change and Continuity**

In the dualist understanding of continuity and change, the Danish lessons of 1864 not only led to the formulation of the deterministic tendency but also gave rise to other more idealistic elements, and it is argued that the combination of these two underlying drivers constitutes the Danish tradition.<sup>61</sup> The core doctrine in their reading is not the Scavenius but rather the two

<sup>61</sup> Olesen and Villaume 2006; Branner 2013; Wivel 2014.

doctrines formulated by Munch and Hækkerup as they more or less explicitly aimed to achieve a balance between pragmatic realism and internationalism. Interestingly the chosen reference point for their understanding of is pushed forward in time to a period, where certain internationalist tendencies had found their way into the official doctrines in the period. This significantly alter our understanding of the reference point, which in turn impact upon our understanding of change and continuity. The post-war period in Danish foreign policy was characterized by departure and distancing from the neutralist Scavenius doctrine with its emphasis on adaptation, and acquiescence to Germany became severely stigmatized in the public and academic debates. Although Denmark joined the UN and NATO in the 1940s, the country still found itself operating as a frontline nation. In February 1959, the newly appointed Foreign Minister Jens Otto Krag described the government's foreign policy as three-winged; divided between membership of the UN, membership of NATO, and involvement in Nordic cooperation.<sup>62</sup> This division of the Danish foreign policy strategy was visible from 1949 to 1961, but after the first Danish application to the EEC (later EU), Krag added the EEC as a fourth arena. The division was later codified in the publication *Dansk udenrigspolitik* by Per Hækkerup, who succeeded Krag as foreign minister. In this publication, the different dimensions are characterized as “cornerstones” or “columns” in the shadow of which ordinary bilateral diplomacy is pursued. The division was an expression of what has been called a functional compartmentalization of the different aspects of general foreign policy<sup>63</sup> that in practice combined activist and more adaptational elements in the Danish foreign policy tradition. The Hækkerup doctrine was designed to allow for some flexibility in Denmark's adaptation to the bipolar structure in the international system. Thus, the country could adopt a

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<sup>62</sup> Olesen and Villaume 2006, 15.

<sup>63</sup> Hækkerup 1965.

more passive and reactive stance in the area of security and be more active in other areas, such as the UN. As argued by Wivel,<sup>64</sup> the doctrine can therefore be interpreted as a continuation of a dualistic security thinking of the Munch doctrine, which combined and balanced pragmatic realism and liberal egalitarian values, and thus as an example of the dualist tradition where the flexibility in the doctrine allowed Denmark to operate within the “continuity space” outlined in figure 2. The dualism rests with the idea that the doctrine allowed for both idealist and deterministic tendencies, but the overarching goal was Danish integration in world politics, which is different from the goals in the Scavenius doctrine. The main contribution of the doctrine was—according to the interpretations in the literature—to emphasize some of the aspects of Danish state identity, which were suppressed by the Munch doctrine, and to reflect on the increasing globalization of foreign and security policies as well as Denmark’s increased action space. Furthermore, it can be argued that it facilitated a normalization of Danish foreign policy, which came to include a wider range of participation strategies. The Hækkerup doctrine was interpreted to represent an adjustment of Danish foreign policy thinking in terms of its continuation and was perceived to be a consolidation of previous dualistic thinking but also codified a strong internationalist dimension in the foreign policy. The interpretation pattern points to a high degree of continuity as this tradition dominated the period before and after the Second World War.<sup>65</sup> Following this logic, the Hækkerup doctrine continued to cast shadows into the post-Cold War period, which helped to shape Danish activism until the militarization after 2001. Branner<sup>66</sup> suggests that the militarization after 2001 represented a break with the tradition as it forced Denmark to abandon its traditional order politics and moved *too* far away

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<sup>64</sup> Wivel 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Olesen and Villaume 2006; Branner 2013; Wivel 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Branner 2013.

from the pragmatic elements in the dualist tradition. Branner<sup>67</sup> directly questions whether the militarization of Denmark's security policy can be considered a permanent characteristic in the country's foreign policy tradition. The increased use of military means after 2001 (that lasted at least until 2014) is considered a deviation from earlier practice as the priority changed from the international order to the alliance with the United States.<sup>68</sup> Wivel argues that although the militarization after 2001 can be seen as a continuation of the Hækkerup doctrine's "realist embedded idealism," and there are parallels to the more adaptive policies of the Munch doctrine, its ideational foundation can be seen as "*an idealist antithesis to the two dominating doctrines in particular, and to pragmatic power politics in general.*"<sup>69</sup> On the rhetorical side, the idealism in the Fogh Rasmussen doctrine was explicitly contrasted with the collaboration policy during the German occupation and with the restrained line in Danish NATO policy during the Cold War.<sup>70</sup> As Larsen<sup>71</sup> notes, especially the strong promotion of idealist liberal values under Super Atlanticism<sup>72</sup> (Fogh Rasmussen) and the footnote period (Jørgensen) on behalf of a pragmatic balancing of idealist and deterministic motivations can be considered attempts to departure from the dualist model. Wivel<sup>73</sup> and Branner<sup>74</sup> have therefore suggested that only the Munch doctrine and the Hækkerup doctrine from 1965 onward qualify as doctrines that reflect "the tradition." In their reading, the Ellemann-Jensen doctrine also falls within the overall logic of the dualist-inspired thinking. According to their interpretation, both doctrines are influenced by a dualistic combination of "pragmatic realism" and "liberal values" but vary in structural context.

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<sup>67</sup> Branner 2013, 148-51.

<sup>68</sup> Knudsen 2004; Holm 2002; Rynning 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Wivel 2014, 129.

<sup>70</sup> Farbøl 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Larsen 2017, 160.

<sup>72</sup> Mouritzen 2007

<sup>73</sup> Wivel 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Branner 2013.

Wivel<sup>75</sup> points out that the idealistically motivated militarization in the Fogh Rasmussen and the Jørgensen doctrines can be considered “logical next steps” in the evolution of Danish foreign policy. Both doctrines attempted in very different ways to move Danish foreign policy towards a more idealistic small-state policy, but both failed to make a lasting impact as they ignored the pragmatic lessons of 1864 and thereby broke fundamentally with the tradition. This has led to a changed interpretation according to which this period and the footnote period do not fit into the overall tradition, as the Jørgensen doctrine is seen as making little sense in the context of the Munch and Hækkerup doctrines’ more pragmatic activism (see figure 4). The footnote policy was aimed at undermining the policies that would protect Denmark from the Soviet Union and at provoking Denmark’s most important ally, the United States. Contrastingly, the principles of super Atlanticism were formulated as a Wilsonian-inspired idealist antithesis to the two dominant doctrines and to pragmatic power politics in general, which—according to Wivel<sup>76</sup> and Branner<sup>77</sup>—became *too* idealistic and non-pragmatic to be included in the dualist tradition of Danish foreign policy.

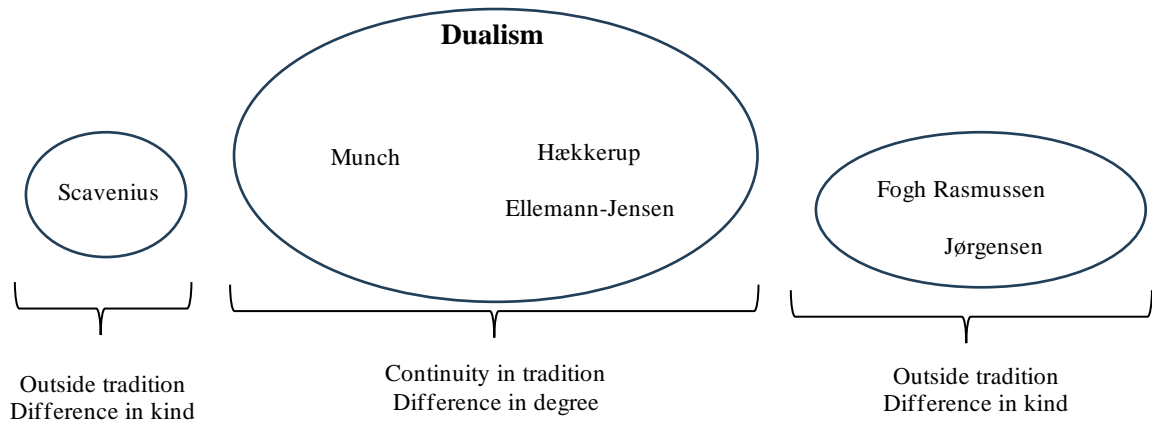
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<sup>75</sup> Wivel 2014, 129–30.

<sup>76</sup> Wivel 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Branner 2013.

**Figure 4. Ideal-typical dualist interpretation of change and continuity in the tradition**



A more principal consequence of this argument, which is not explicitly addressed in the works of Branner, Wivel, or Olesen and Villaume, is the status of the doctrines and time periods that falls out of the tradition. In the Danish case, this relates to the period of the Scavenius, the Fogh Rasmussen, and the Jørgensen Doctrines. Scavenius believed that Denmark—due to its position as a small, exposed state in the shadow of the regional hegemons Germany and Great Britain—should adapt to the power-political realities by adopting neutrality as its main reaction to external developments. The main task of Danish foreign policy is therefore to keep informed about these factors and their interplay and pick the right moment to exploit the situation. Denmark was therefore forced to adapt to German politics. Forming an alliance with Great Britain to balance German influence was not an option due to the lack of British interest in Denmark. Denmark had to live in Germany’s shadow, accept practical political realities, and try to survive by insisting on Danish neutrality while maintaining good diplomatic relations with Berlin to avoid provoking or upsetting German decision-makers. While the Fogh Rasmussen and the Jørgensen doctrines are seen as failed challenges to the tradition, Scavenius represents a doctrine whose pendulum swung too far in the deterministic direction as it gave priority to pragmatism and active adaptation, which is considered outside the tradition.



## **Theoretical Shortcomings**

The analysis demonstrated two central shortcomings that have relevance beyond the Danish case. The first is related to the measurement challenges in assessing change and continuity using ideal types. Singular interpretations drawing on structural theories largely suggest a high degree of continuity in the doctrines, as foreign policies are typically considered as continuations or variations of adaptation to power balance and the greater powers in the system. The conceptualization therefore has its strength in highlighting differences in degree whereas differences in kind are harder to investigate as these must break fundamentally with the tradition. In contrast, the dualist understanding tends to produce change interpretations as the use of ideal types is used to differentiate whether contemporary actions are outside or inside the tradition. Actions, trends, or decisions that do not fit into the tradition are thereby considered as deviations, which emphasizes differences in kind rather than degree. Accordingly, this tends to promote interpretations of countries' foreign policy histories that are characterized by dramatic shifts rather than evolutionary, incremental, and generic changes. This leads to another shortcoming, namely the analytical question of how we should classify the excluded periods that—for different reasons—are deemed outside the tradition. In the Danish case study, the excluded, non-traditional time periods range from 7 in the singular to 28 years in the dualist interpretation over the past century. Interpretations following the dualist conceptualization thereby paint a dramatic picture of the long-term trends in the foreign policy history. The meta-analysis of the interpretation debates in the Danish case might in a comparative perspective exaggerate the extent of this analytical shortcoming, but the conclusions do raise a more principal question of how conceptualization shapes our understandings of change and continuity. Similar tendencies can as mentioned also be found in the continuity debates over the status of the German “Zeidenwende” where more dualist interpretations also circulate in the

debate. In such a dualist interpretation the question is whether it represents a break with the pillars in German foreign policy and its tradition for balancing its dualist tradition for “Westbindung” and “Ostpolitik.”<sup>78</sup> The problems of classification of contemporary decisions in relations to a dualist tradition are also visible in the change and continuity debates in recent debates in Ireland and Austria<sup>79</sup> and in the Swedish and Finnish continuity and change debate following their NATO membership.<sup>80</sup>

On a more principal level, the findings illustrate a more fundamental question of what these periods outside the tradition represent in the country’s history and how we can classify “grey zone” or hybrid doctrines and decisions: Can these excluded periods be considered as traditions in their own right? Are they offshoots of general tendencies in the established tradition or simply adaptations of the old tradition to new structural or domestic conditions?

### **Towards a More Generic Conceptualization of the Tradition Concept?**

To address these shortcomings, a potential methodological solution is to reconsider the utility of the Weberian-inspired understanding of the “tradition concept” and shift our conceptually attention of the tradition concept towards a more generic definition that goes beyond the logics of crisp set conceptualizations.<sup>81</sup> The crisp set conceptualization is generally a method to form the basis of how elements are classified into essential sets based on well-defined membership criteria of the concept. As illustrated above the conceptualization logic implies that an element (like a doctrine) either completely belongs to a ‘set’ (tradition) or does not belong to it at all,

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<sup>78</sup> Blumenau 2022.

<sup>79</sup> For example, McNamara 2023; Mulqueen 2023; Schwarz 2022; Baciu 2022.

<sup>80</sup> Thorhallson and Vidal 2023

<sup>81</sup> Goetz 2006.

with no ambiguity or partial membership in the set.<sup>82</sup> In other words a doctrine is either a member (1) or a non-member (0) of a tradition. In the case example above, Wivel and Branner, for instance, draw upon such a binary distinction in their analysis of change and continuity (see also figure 4). Such binary distinction is an exemplary use of the hallmark of the crisp set conceptualization, which often requires very precise definitions and criteria for establishing the definitional boundaries (demarcation lines) for membership or non-membership. Such requirements are often problematic when studying variations in policy trends as the conceptualization (e.g., balance between fundamental drivers, excessive use of military instruments etc.) lacks nuances and precisions. Accordingly, it becomes difficult to account for variations or degrees of membership, and the identification of non-membership might be somewhat context sensitive. This becomes problematic when dealing with concepts that often exist or operate on a continuum or when we are trying to capture nuances and evolutionary trends between doctrines, as there are many examples of “boundary ambiguity” that can lead to a failed classification of “hybrid” or grey zone doctrines. Another challenge is also that this concept type does not capture the rich patterns and relationships that exist within and between concepts as ideal types depend on clear and accepted definitions and interpretations. This is why analyses utilizing this type of conceptualization might fall short when dealing with more complex, multifaceted, or evolving doctrines that operate under shifting (structural) conditions.

A potential methodological solution for the Foreign Policy literature, which often works with more ambiguous concepts and historical developments, is to utilize insights from the comparative method literature and its application of fuzzy set logics.<sup>83</sup> The advantage of using

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<sup>82</sup> Mikkelsen 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Ragin 2000; 2016; Mikkelsen 2017.

fuzzy set inspired conceptualization is that it provides a more nuanced representation of the diversity and complexity in historical developments. The reason is that the conceptualization logic is designed to capture the graduations and variations on a spectrum of outcomes (often expressed on a continuum rather than in an ideal type). The conceptualization thereby avoids oversimplification of complex political strategies and diplomatic paths by acknowledging that many characteristics exist on a gradient rather than in discrete categories. This allows for a more flexible definitional approach that avoids imposing rigid categories to specific events and trends and allows us to pay more attention to changes in both degree and kind. The change in conceptualization logics support a more inclusive dualistic approach in the FPA literature which is in line with the existing practice in many studies. Fuzzy set logics are therefore an alternative conceptual approach to categorizing concepts that allows us to establish *degrees of membership* that incorporate and capture the grey zones and overlaps between different doctrines or analytical categories which might help to remedy some of the theoretical shortcomings by pointing our attention to the *degree of membership* between them. The basic logic in fuzzy set is that elements are assigned membership values ranging from 0 to 1 to indicate the degree to which they belong to a particular category.<sup>84</sup> This enables the representation of concepts that are not easily binary or discrete, and in this way, it captures the complexities and nuances in foreign policies better. The membership value represents the strength of association between an element and a category, allowing for gradual transitions and representing partial membership, which is particularly useful for concepts that exhibit overlap or uncertainty. Another advantage is that this type of conceptualization allows for finer levels of granularity than ideal-typical crisp sets—instead of strictly being inside or outside a category, an element's

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<sup>84</sup> Adding numbers might give an impression of artificial precision in our conceptualization and is only used here for heuristic reasons.

membership can fall anywhere along a continuum. What fuzzy logics therefore offer the study of change and continuity is conceptually to include a continuous sequence or spectrum of values, qualities, or characteristics in foreign policy traditions where there is often no clear boundaries or distinct categories. Instead, the elements gradually change from one end to the other. In various contexts, a continuum can describe anything that exists on a gradual, dynamic and unbroken scale, which fits a more evolutionary and generic development in many states' foreign policies. Memberships become a matter of degree, which suggests that doctrines can share certain aspects but differ on others, which then again means that some doctrines can “be more in than out” or “more out than in” an overall tradition which clearly differs from the essentialist logic in crisp set. Applying fuzzy sets in a dualistic interpretation of the tradition concept, this means that we need to specify how much different doctrines belong to the sets of determinism and idealism to identify their degree of membership (differences in kind) and their membership in different clusters or subsets (difference in kinds) in the overall tradition.<sup>85</sup>

Figure 6 below illustrates the potentials through a qualitative assessment of how the different doctrines analyzed in the Danish case could be positioned in terms of membership on the deterministic and idealistic dimension, based on the different patterns in the interpretation debates. For the sake of heuristic simplicity, the score 1 resembles full membership, and 0 represents no membership in the concept. The logic is that a tradition and the associated doctrines can be distributed along a continuum. In the Danish case example, the Scavenius doctrine would be closest to the deterministic pole but farthest away from the idealistic pole, while the Jørgensen doctrine, which can be associated with an idealistic strategy, is positioned

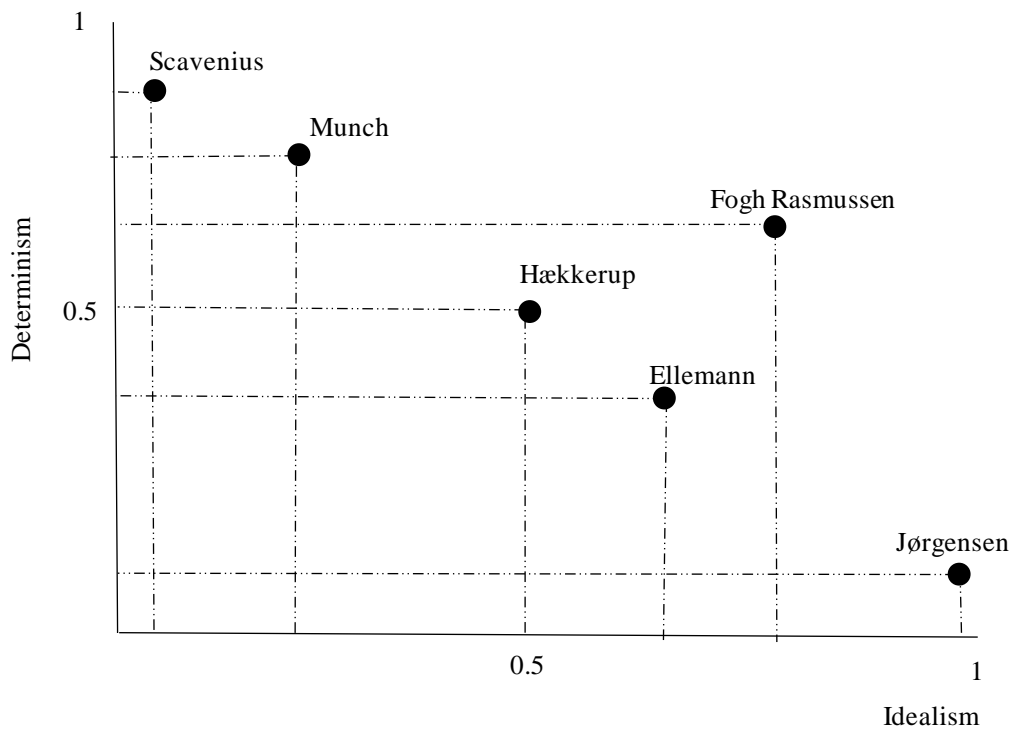
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<sup>85</sup> Fuzzy set logics are built on a sophisticated mathematical foundation (Ragin 2000; Mikkelsen 2017), but the logics can also be applied without reducing our conceptualization to formal logics.

closest to the internationalist pole and farthest away from the pragmatic pole. These two doctrines thereby represent the outer boundaries of the tradition. Within these boundaries, we can position the different doctrines depending on their membership on the two dimensions. For the sake of heuristics, the Munch doctrines are assumed to score high on membership in the deterministic dimension, while they assume only weak membership on the idealist dimension. The Hækkerup doctrine is positioned in the middle, assuming a balanced position between the two drivers, and the Ellemann Jensen and Fogh Rasmussen doctrines are assumed to have higher membership on the idealist dimension while assuming different values on the deterministic dimension. The figure thereby also illustrates how a more “inclusive dualist tradition” can be conceptualized on an abstract level where different doctrines are related to the dualist tradition based on assessed membership in the two sets.<sup>86</sup>

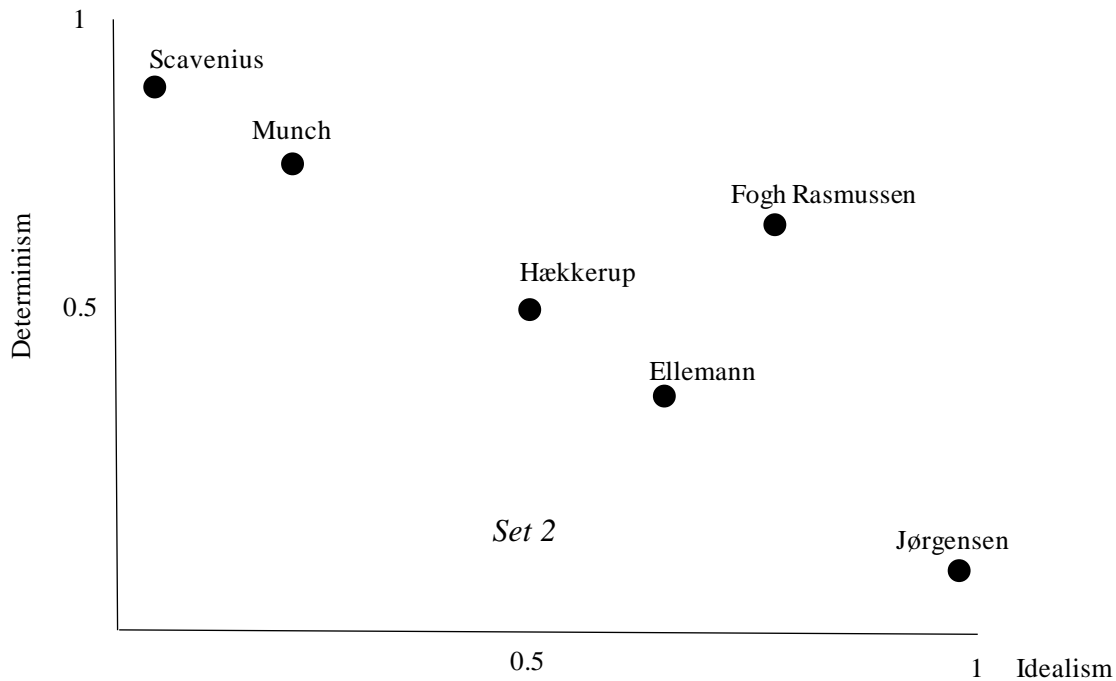
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<sup>86</sup> The use of numbers might give an impression of artificial precision and serves only a heuristic purpose to illustrate membership degrees on both dimensions.



**Figure 6. Doctrines divided by assessed membership in different sets in overall dualist tradition.**

Fuzzy logics also hold another potential for assessing change and continuity, as it becomes possible to identify different sets within the tradition, giving their membership on the two dimensions and the scored doctrines relative distance to other doctrines. The logic is illustrated in figure 7 that illustrates how we can identify 4 different sets of doctrines within the tradition. *Set 1* relates to the two neutralist doctrines that both score high on the deterministic dimension and low on the idealistic one. *Set 2* has middle scores on both dimensions. *Set 3* shows high values on the idealistic dimension. *Set 4* represents doctrines that score high on determinism but have mixed scores on the idealistic dimension.



**Figure 7. Doctrines divided by assessed membership in different sets in overall dualist tradition.**

The substantial interpretation of patterns of continuity and change becomes more complex but also nuanced following this type of conceptualization. The identification of different sets based on their membership of the two dimensions allows for discussions of change and continuity in both degree and kind terms within and across the different sets in the overall tradition. The added value of this type of conceptualization compared to the ideal-typical one is that it becomes possible to qualify discussions about change and continuity in both degree and kind terms. Such conceptualizations help to identify areas where the doctrines might share similarities despite their different outlooks. Such conceptualizations can more substantially qualify the more case-specific debate presented above. More specifically, this conceptualization allows scholars to study how and whether the Fogh Rasmussen doctrine continues or even reinforces certain elements from the internationalist trend in the country's foreign policy



tradition but also bridges certain elements from the deterministic interpretation tradition as a central driver behind the militarized activism related to fear of marginalization from the USA.<sup>87</sup> It especially highlights continuity traits from the Ellemann-Jensen doctrine and how it developed and evolved under the Social Democratic-led governments in the 1990s due to its emphasis on opting into international organizations and/or allies. This interpretation follows Petersen's<sup>88</sup> argument that we have witnessed the introduction of a coherent liberal paradigm in Danish foreign and security policy that was visible in both strategic thinking and practice from 1990 to 2009. Building on this argument, Pedersen<sup>89</sup> has argued that there are numerous defining commonalities in the way the activism (Elleman-Jensen and Rasmussen doctrines) was performed before and after 2001, which are centered on a full "opting-in" strategy to international institutions and alliances.<sup>90</sup> This perspective emphasizes a high degree of continuity in Danish internationalism before and after the end of the Cold War, since the closer alliance with the United States is considered another way to opt into the international alliance system (difference in degree). On the other hand, the militarization also represents an element of adaptive pragmatism as the Fogh Rasmussen doctrine also emphasized the relevance of building a reputation as a loyal and relevant ally in order to secure the country's long-term security through its bandwagon behavior.<sup>91</sup> On the rhetoric side, the Fogh Rasmussen doctrine also shares elements with the Jørgensen doctrine as it represented a much more idealistic and value-based approach despite other obvious differences, not least related to the view on the utility of a close alliance and cooperation with the USA on the security area. The identification of these similarities—and differences—can be attributed to the identification of the overlaps

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<sup>87</sup> Such overlaps are also demonstrated in empirical literature (Mariager and Wivel 2019), but also in part of the more theoretical literature on Danish security policy (Jakobsen et al. 2018).

<sup>88</sup> Petersen 2009.

<sup>89</sup> Pedersen 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Pedersen 2015; 2023

<sup>91</sup> Jakobsen et al. 2018; Ringsmose 2009; 2010.

(joint memberships) between the different sets. In the figure, the overlaps between the doctrines represent the inclusion of different “grey zones” that represent disagreements over the classification of the different doctrines in the literature. In terms of membership score in the overall tradition, the Hækkerup and Ellemann doctrines are considered as “inside” the tradition, the Munch and Rasmussen doctrines, for different reasons, can be considered “more inside than outside”, while the contested Scavenius and Jørgensen in the Danish case are considered “more outside than inside.” It is wrong to argue that they are completely outside the tradition as both doctrines represent certain continuity elements related to either of the underlying dimensions in the tradition, which has spilled over to the characteristics of other doctrines. While such findings hold case-specific elements, the substantial interpretation of change and continuity tendencies in the case also demonstrates how conceptual fuzzy logics can be relevant for change and interpretation debates beyond the Danish case that helps to identify cross doctrinaire trends in the foreign policy. This is especially relevant in situations where relations between doctrines and developments in foreign policy are better captured on a gradual dynamic and unbroken scale, which typically fits the more evolutionary and generic developments in most states’ foreign policies.

### **Conclusions**

This article has contributed to the recurring debate on change and continuity in the foreign policy literature. The argument is that the conceptual use of the term “foreign policy tradition” as a means to create comparisons between past and present holds significant potentials as well as shortcomings in the evaluation of change and continuity. The first disadvantage relates to the use of ideal-typical understandings of the tradition concept and its ability to identify change and continuity patterns in small states’ foreign policy doctrines. Exogenous interpretations tend to

identify large continuity spaces over time, while the dualist understanding tends to exclude large periods from states' foreign policies. The second disadvantage relates to the unresolved question of how to classify and relate excluded periods to the overall tendencies within the tradition. In order to remedy the shortcomings originating from the use of ideal-typical concepts, the article proposed adopting a modified dualistic interpretation of foreign policy tradition that utilizes fuzzy set logics to establish set memberships in the tradition for the different doctrines that are assumed to exist in the tradition. The benefit is that it becomes possible to identify long-term trends, tendencies, and developments in the tradition in both degree and kind terms. Another benefit of adopting such a conceptual understanding is that it becomes possible to integrate central doctrines into the tradition concept and identify different sets of doctrines that represent central tendencies within the overall tradition. This opens for a more inclusive generic understanding of the tradition concept that allows for more nuanced interpretations of continuity and change. In addition, it raises our awareness about the relationships between empirical trends over time instead of excluding them or stigmatizing them, which in turn opens for a more holistic interpretation of states' foreign policy traditions.

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