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Prestige-seeking small states: Danish and Norwegian military contributions to US-led operations

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Abstract

In this article we broaden the conventional understanding of prestige and show that prestige-seeking played a major role in the Danish and Norwegian decisions to provide military support to post-Cold War US-led wars. Both countries made costly military contributions in the hope of increasing their standing and prestige in Washington. Both governments regarded prestige as a form of soft power, which they could later convert into access, influence, and US support. Our findings are far from trivial. They make a theoretical contribution by demonstrating that small powers understand and seek prestige in ways that differ fundamentally from the ways great powers do. They also help to explain why smaller US allies made costly contributions to the Balkan, Afghan, Iraq, and Libyan wars at a time when there was no direct threat to their national security and their security dependence on the United States was low. The high value that small US allies attach to their visibility and prestige in Washington suggests that it is far easier for the United States to obtain military support from smaller allies than Realist studies of burden-sharing and collective action problems would lead us to expect.

Keywords

Coalition-Building; Burden-Sharing; Denmark; Norway; Prestige; US-led Military Operations; Small States; Realism

> [Prestige] is, however, far from being a mere bobble of vanity; for the nation that possesses great prestige is thereby enabled to have its way, and to bring things to pass which it could never hope to achieve by its own forces. Prestige draws material benefits mysteriously in its train. Political wisdom will never despise it.[1]

Introduction

The US-led interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks on 9/11 were not only tremendously costly to the United States, but also to the many smaller (mostly) European

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[1] Frederick Scott Oliver, *Vol. II: The Endless Adventure* (London: Macmillan, 1931).

troop-contributing countries. In terms of blood and treasure, the nations that signed up for the Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan paid a remarkably high price for being part of the US-led coalitions.[2] Moreover, few – if any – European governments earned much domestic applause for their willingness to come to the aid of their American ally. In the vast majority of the European troop-contributing nations, governments faced strong public opposition due to their participation in what was generally perceived to be unsuccessful military endeavours, and in at least one instance – the Netherlands – the decision to contribute brought down the government.[3] At the same time, it was less than clear that the Europeans had a national interest in stabilising Iraq and Afghanistan that was strong enough to justify the high economic, military, and political costs involved. In fact, to many of the small state coalition members it arguably made little difference security-wise whether the missions succeeded or not. Neither the Iraqi nor the Taliban regime posed a direct threat to the majority of the countries engaged in the coalitions.

This logic also applies to the expeditionary operations launched by the United States and NATO outside the NATO area in the 1990s. Why did many small European nations with little prospect of making a substantial difference on the ground put their armed forces into harm's way in these operations? At first glance, these out-of-area operations posed very strong incentives *not* to participate. So what convinced small states all over Europe to deploy a significant number of forces to the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central Asia? Why did so many European decision-makers accept the human, economic, and political costs associated with being a member of US-led coalitions?

In this article we argue that an important and overlooked reason why smaller states deploy forces alongside the United States and contribute to risky military operations with little direct bearing on their own national security is that they seek to enhance their standing and prestige in Washington. Most of the time the contributing small states do so not because they perceive of prestige as an end in itself, but because they consider prestige and status means to an end. Increasing prestige is understood to serve the national interest. According to this interpretation, prestige and status is a category of social capital. Once obtained, status and prestige can be converted into influence, agenda-setting power, access, or even material benefits. Not unlike a bank account, small states can take actions that will increase their 'prestige capital', and they can sometimes draw on that capital to further their national interest.

Even so, we fully recognise that states become coalition contributors for multiple reasons – and that their reasons might oscillate over time. To name but some of the motives that presumably influence national policymakers when deciding to contribute to NATO and US-led expeditionary operations: the threat of international terrorism; a desire to keep the transatlantic bonds and NATO strong; human rights and nation-building; bilateral American security pledges; 'democracy export'; becoming a member of NATO; the fear of being marginalised and chastened as a free-rider; and aspirations to uphold a liberal international order. Our purpose is not to weigh the relative importance of these motivations against the proposed prestige-seeking driver. More modest, our aim is to: (1) demonstrate that prestige-seeking played an important, but hitherto overlooked

[2] ICasualties, 'Coalitions Death by Nationality', *ICasualties*, available at: {http://icasualties.org/OEF/Nationality.aspx} accessed 29 June 2017.

[3] Sarah Kreps, 'Elite consensus as a determinant of alliance cohesion: Why public opinion hardly matters for NATO-led operations in Afghanistan', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 6:3 (2010), pp. 191–215; Beatrice de Graaf, George Dimitriu, and Jens Ringsmose (eds), *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War: Winning Support for Foreign Military Missions* (London: Routledge, 2015).

role in the Europeans' somewhat surprising willingness to contribute forces to US-led operations; and (2) to determine *how* small states use their military contributions to enhance their prestige and status in Washington. We conclude that in both Denmark and Norway prestige-seeking was an important explanatory factor driving the decisions to contribute to (mostly) US-led interventions after the end of the Cold War.

The article's contribution to the growing literature on prestige and status is twofold: First, we aim to bring small states into the study of prestige and status in international politics. Following Jonathan Renshon, we find that 'most previous research on status, … has excluded smaller states'.[4] By 'bringing small states in' we reduce the great power bias from which the existing research on prestige currently suffers and suggest that the traditional understanding of what makes for prestige in international politics is too narrow. Second – and intimately linked to the article's first theoretical objective – we suggest that the traditional understanding of what makes for prestige in international politics is too narrow. Some of the literature's most influential definitions of prestige simply exclude the possibility that small states can use prestige as a means of power and influence. For instance, Robert Gilpin argues that 'the hierarchy of prestige in an international system rests on economic and military power'. Moreover, according to Gilpin, 'prestige functions to ensure that the lesser states in the system will obey the commands of the dominant state or states'[5] – that is, small states will always be at the 'receiving end' of prestige. We concur that (perceptions of) material power is an important source of prestige, but hold that also materially weak states can acquire prestige as an instrument of influence vis-à-vis a stronger power. That, however, requires a broader and more flexible understanding of prestige in international politics, an understanding than includes the prospect of gaining prestige via deeds rather than material power.

The article has three main parts. It begins by briefly outlining the different theoretical explanations for why states contribute to coalitions and alliances engaged in out-of-area operations. Our point of departure is the costly interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the article's second part we offer an alternative, Realist-inspired explanation for why states become coalition members. We take our cue from Classical Realism and argue that small states are also concerned about their prestige and status. They perceive of military contributions to US-led coalitions as a means of obtaining prestige and good standing in Washington that they can convert into access, influence, or various forms of US support. In the third and final section we validate this hypothesis by examining the Danish and Norwegian contributions to US-led military operations after the end of the Cold War.

Existing explanations for allied military contributions to US-led coalitions

Over the last decade scholars have provided a variety of explanations for the making of US-led coalitions. Very few, however, have considered the desire for prestige a means to obtain other benefits centre stage.[6]

[4] Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 16–17. For an important exception, see Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho (eds), *Small State Status Seeking: Norway's Quest for International Standing* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge Press, 2014).

[5] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 30. Gilpin suggests that the 'reputation for strength is what we call *prestige*', p. 32. In a similar vein, John F. Kennedy ostensibly asked his confidant Arthur Schlesinger: 'What is prestige? Is it the shadow of power?' (here quoted from Renshon, *Fighting for Status*, p. 41). Also, Renshon subscribes to the same basic formula when he defines prestige as a 'valuable resource for coordinating expectations of dominance and deference in strategic interactions' (ibid., p. 20).

[6] For an important exception, see Nina Græger, 'From "forces for good" to "forces for status"? Small state military status seeking', in Neumann and de Carvalho (eds), *Small State Status Seeking*.

Realist scholars have not regarded prestige as an important explanatory factor. In our review of the literature we were able to identify only one distinct Realist explanation emphasising prestige-seeking as a motive for supporting the United States militarily – and even then the 'good reputation motive' played a minor role in the explanatory model.[7] Realists have emphasised three motives for deploying with the United States: a desire for credible security guarantees, keeping the Americans engaged in Europe, and the fear of international terrorism. Several Realist scholars have pointed to the fact that most of the European allies closest to Russia chose to assist the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan because they sought more credible security guarantees from Washington.[8] Other Realists have emphasised a strong (and broader) European interest in keeping the United States engaged in Europe to avoid a future 're-nationalisation' of European security and the best way to ensure some kind of influence on American policies.[9] Finally, Realists have argued that European fear of international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction stemming from Iraq and Afghanistan has provided incentives to join the United States in the 'War on Terror'.[10]

Liberal scholars have tended to focus on the importance of institutions and a desire to uphold and export liberal values in order to support the existing liberal world order. For instance, Sarah Kreps argues that participating 'under the banner of NATO is as close to an ideal type iterated game as there is in security cooperation'.[11] Following Robert Keohane, she suggests that actors that do not contribute will be precluded from enjoying the fruits of future cooperation.[12] In other words, in Afghanistan it was NATO – the institution – that provided the incentives for NATO-Europe to contribute forces to an unpopular war. Other liberals have argued that European nations went to war in Iraq to promote international law and human rights.[13] According to this perspective, policymakers in Western capitals were primarily motivated by a desire to expand the sphere of liberal values, underpin the credibility of the UN, and facilitate the spread of democracy.[14]

In line with their preferred focus on ideas and identities, social constructivists have emphasised securitisation processes and strategic culture when analysing contributions to the US-led operations.[15] Observed through the securitisation theory lens, political actors and experts

[7] Jason W. Davidson, *America's Allies and War: Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[8] See, for example, David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together; Fighting Alone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 16–19; de Graaf, Dimitriu, and Ringsmose (eds), *Strategic Narratives, Public Opinion and War*; Jürgen Schuster and Herbert Maier, 'The rift: Explaining Europe's divergent Iraq policies in the run-up of American-led war on Iraq', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2:3 (2006), pp. 223–44; Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and World Politics: A Theory and its Implications* (London: Routledge, 2011); Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005).

[9] Davidson, *America's Allies and War*, p. 188.

[10] Walt, *Taming American Power*, p. 190; Davidson, *America's Allies and War*, p. 16.

[11] Kreps, 'Elite consensus as a determinant of alliance cohesion', p. 192.

[12] Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[13] See, for instance, Thomas Cushman (ed.), *A Matter of Principle: Humanitarian Arguments for War in Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005).

[14] Tim Dunne, 'Liberalism, terrorism, and democratic wars', *International Relations*, 23:1 (2009), pp. 107–14.

[15] See, for example, Auerswald and Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p. 22; Faye Donnelly, *Securitization and the Iraq War: The Rules of Engagement in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2013); Trine Flockhart, 'Understanding NATO through constructivist theorizing', in Mark Webber and Adrian Hyde-Price (eds), *Theorising NATO: New Perspectives on the Atlantic Alliance* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 140–60.

successfully constructed terrorists and insurgents in Afghanistan, as well as Saddam Hussein's presumed weapons of mass destruction, as threats to national security and, accordingly, rationalised the use of 'extraordinary measures'.[16] Studies of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan employing the concept of strategic culture have mainly focused on *how* the wars were fought, while the decision to deploy in the first place has been less scrutinised from this perspective.[17]

While all these theoretical approaches add bits and pieces to our understanding of why the United States succeeded in persuading friends and allies to make military contributions, we argue that something important is missing: the desire for prestige and standing. Although some of the involved actors might have craved prestige as an end in and of itself, we argue that more often the prestige and status believed to be flowing from contributing to US-led coalitions is seen as a means to other ends.[18]

Small state prestige-seeking in coalition war

The gist of this article's theoretical argument is that smaller states also contribute to coalition warfare because they believe that status and prestige can be acquired by being a 'good ally'. Accordingly, we propose that prestige in international politics is more than just the 'shadow of power'. There are other dimensions to the sources of prestige than simply economic and military power, as suggested by Robert Gilpin. Of course, material power is not irrelevant to the status and prestige of states in international politics, but a reputation for being a staunch ally or an 'ally punching above its weight' also has the potential to improve a state's prestige in the eyes of the great power receiving the support. As such, prestige and status flow from both 'the reputation for power, and military power in particular'[19] *and* from supportive military actions by smaller states.[20]

How, then, should we understand the different aspects of prestige?[21] Like Steve Wood, we consider prestige to be a concept belonging to a larger 'conceptual family that includes honour, status, reputation, respect, glory, credibility, pride and legitimacy'.[22] Although these terms are often used

[16] Jarrod Hayes, 'Identity, authority, and the British war in Iraq', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 12:3 (2016), pp. 334–53; Gabi Schlag, 'Securitisation theory and the evolution of NATO', in Webber and Hyde-Price (eds), *Theorising NATO*.

[17] See, for example, Theo Farrell, 'Improving in war: Military adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan 2006–2009', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33:4 (2010), pp. 567–94; Jan Angstrom and Jan Willem Honig, 'Regaining strategy: Small powers, strategic culture, and escalation in Afghanistan', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 35:5 (2012), pp. 663–87.

[18] As suggested by Richard N. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Richard N. Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: The Past and Future of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[19] Gilpin, *War and Change in International Politics*, p. 31.

[20] We thus follow Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth when they argue that 'actors can seize, acquire and invest in their reputation and prestige': A. Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and P. Huth, 'Reputation and status as motives for war', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17 (2014), pp. 371–93 (p. 6); Lilach Gilady, *The Price of Prestige: Conspicuous Waste in International Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[21] For an etymological survey of the term 'prestige', see Kim Youngho, 'Does prestige matter in international politics?', *Journal of International and Areas Studies*, 11:1 (2004), pp. 39–55. For excellent analyses of different aspects of 'prestige' and status, see Jonathan Mercer, 'The illusion of international prestige', *International Security*, 41:4 (2017), pp. 133–68, and Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 'Reputation and status as motives for war'; Renshon, *Fighting for Status*.

[22] Steve Wood, 'Prestige in world politics: History, theory, expression', *International Politics*, 50:3 (2013), p. 388.

interchangeably, they do not hold the exact same meaning.[23] Lana Wylie makes a distinction between reputation and prestige, as the former 'can be both positive or negative, whereas prestige always grow out of a positive reputation'.[24] We subscribe to this distinction, which implies that a good reputation is very similar to prestige. In addition, we agree with – among others – Jonathan Mercer and Jonathan Renshon that prestige is a relational and perceptual concept, as prestige and a good reputation in international politics depend on what others think of the state.[25] Finally, some scholars have made a conceptual distinction between status and prestige, while others have used the two concepts interchangeably.[26] We find the distinctions between status and prestige to be so subtle that we will use both concepts to describe the same phenomenon.[27]

In essence, the possible influence or power flowing from a good reputation and prestige is based on social recognition and intersubjective appraisals bestowed on an individual, institution or state by other actors. Prestige and status in international politics are thus gained when states receive respect, admiration, or esteem from the peoples or representatives (policymakers, diplomats, high-standing officers, etc.) of other states or institutions in the system.[28] As noted by Hans J. Morgenthau:

> Actually, the policy of prestige, however exaggerated and absurd its uses may have been at times, is as intrinsic an element of the relations between nations as the desire for prestige is of the relations between individuals … In both spheres, the desire for social recognition is a potent dynamic force determining social relations and creating social institutions … Thus, in the struggle for existence and power … what other thinks about us is as important as what we actually are. The image in the mirror of our fellows' minds (that is, our prestige), rather than the original, of which the image in the mirror may be but the distorted reflection, determines what we are as members of society.[29]

In the scholarly literature on status and prestige it is often highlighted that an important aspect of prestige is that it 'elicits voluntary deference'.[30] In the words of Renshon, 'States seek status commensurate with their abilities because it is a valuable resource for coordinating expectations of

[23] See, for example, Amatai Etzioni, 'International prestige, competition and peaceful coexistence', *European Journal of Sociology*, 3:1 (1963), pp. 21–41; Joslyn Barnhart, 'Prestige, Humiliation and International Politics' (PhD thesis, University of California, 2013); Wood, 'Prestige in world politics', p. 388; see also Jonathan Renshon, 'Status deficit and war', *International Organization*, 70:3 (2016), pp. 513–50; Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho, 'Introduction: Small states and status', in Neumann and de Carvalho (eds), *Small State Status Seeking*, pp. 1–21; Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth argue that status differs from prestige in that only the former refers to ranking in a hierarchy: 'Status and world order', in T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (eds), *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3–29.

[24] Lana Wylie, 'Valuing reputation and prestige: Canadian foreign policy and the International Criminal Court', *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 39:2 (2009), pp. 112–30.

[25] Mercer, 'The illusion of international prestige'; Renshon, *Fighting for Status*.

[26] See, for example, Renshon, *Fighting for Status*, p. 35; Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and world order', p. 16.

[27] We thus agree with Mercer: 'The illusion of international prestige', p. 136.

[28] In the words of Wohlforth, 'Although it is related to material capabilities and observed capacities, status is socially constructed in that it achieves meaning through intersubjective beliefs and social processes': William C. Wohlforth, 'Status dilemmas and interstate conflict', in Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth (eds), *Status in World Politics*, pp. 115–40.

[29] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* [brief edition] (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1993), pp. 84–5.

[30] See, for example, Renshon, *Fighting for Status*; Mercer, 'The illusion of international prestige', pp. 136–7.

dominance and deference in strategic interactions.'[31] We agree that 'dominance' and 'deference' are significant aspects of prestige. However, that is not the whole story about how prestige is translated into influence and power. Great powers are highly unlikely to behave in deferential ways towards smaller states that have won prestige by contributing significantly to coalition warfare. That does not mean, though, that prestigious small powers cannot make use of their good reputation as a source of influence. We argue that the prestige of small powers can still buy them influence, as their greater brother-in-arms will be more inclined to accommodate their wishes and listen to their points of view. Obviously not because great powers are awestruck by their smaller allies' 'shadow of power', but rather because the prestige and status of being a 'good ally' obtained by the small ally will sometimes translate into a sense of obligation and gratitude towards an important partner. In a way, our broader understanding of how small states can convert prestige into influence turns the traditional understanding of how prestige and deference relate on its head. Gaining prestige does not help the smaller states achieve deference from their larger allies. Rather, small states achieve prestige by acting deferentially towards their greater allies (and contributing forces to US-led coalitions).[32]

The scholarly literature on prestige, status, and reputation in international affairs is divided into two schools of thought holding different views on states' motives for seeking prestige. One school of thought maintains that states desire prestige for its own sake, that is, prestige for the sake of identity or as an end in itself; the other school of thought holds that states first and foremost acquire prestige as a means to an end.[33] The first general perspective on prestige has deep roots in the study of international politics. Already, Thucydides claimed that honour was one of three principal motives driving the Peloponnesian War (the other two being *security* and *self-interest*). Several Realist thinkers, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Aron, have subsequently subscribed – with minor semantic variations – to the same three-pronged understanding of what fuels the behaviour of states. To all of them, the lust for *glory*, *pride*, *reputation*, *status*, and *prestige* was a fundamental driver of international relations.[34]

Later on Social Constructivists and scholars working from within the field of international sociology picked up on the idea that states seek prestige as an end in itself.[35] Like Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Aron, these scholars perceive of prestige not as an instrument of power or a means to make other political entities voluntarily defer to the state's wishes or suggestions. Rather, prestige is seen as a 'final goal' sought simply because states (and statesmen) prefer to have international status and standing; that is, states seek the intersubjective and social recognition inherent in prestige for its own sake. According to this non-instrumental – or intrinsic – perspective, states might even engage in 'financially costly or otherwise potentially risky

[31] Renshon, *Fighting for Status*, p. 33.

[32] We thank one of the three reviewers for making this point.

[33] Barnhart, 'Prestige, Humiliation and International Politics'; Renshon, 'Status deficit and war'; Renshon, *Fighting for Status*; Youngho, 'Does prestige matter in international politics?'; Mercer, 'The illusion of international prestige'; Daniel Markey, 'Prestige and the origins of war: Returning to Realism's roots', *Security Studies*, 8:4 (1999), pp. 126–72; William C. Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, status, competition, and Great Power war', *World Politics*, 61:1 (2009), pp. 28–57; Wood, 'Prestige in world politics', p. 388; Wylie, 'Valuing reputation and prestige'.

[34] Markey, 'Prestige and the origins of war'.

[35] See, for example, Youngho, 'Does prestige matter in international politics?'; Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Politics*; Lebow, *Why Nations Fight*; Evan Luard, *Types of International Society* (London: The Free Press, 1976); Wood, 'Prestige in world politics'; Wylie, 'Valuing reputation and prestige'.

international behaviour' to obtain a good reputation and prestige.[36] Lilach Gilady identifies several examples of such state behaviour that she pointedly terms 'conspicuous waste'.[37] Seeking to build a distinct identity, states and diplomats thus pursue policies in order to be seen as prestigious actors doing the right thing.

In this article we subscribe to the second school of thought. We acknowledge that states sometimes seek prestige and standing as a final goal, but – in the words of Hans Morgenthau – we maintain that prestige is an 'indispensable element of a rational foreign policy'.[38] This is because, as pointed out by Harold Nicolson, policymakers and diplomats understand prestige as 'power based on reputation' (and not only as a 'reputation for power', as suggested by Gilpin).[39] States often adopt certain 'prestige-augmenting policies' because they believe that a good standing or reputation will increase their potential influence and access to those nations that bestow social recognition upon them. Sometimes the policies undertaken to build a good reputation are entirely unrelated to the policy areas where the state wishes to capitalise on the enhanced prestige. In this perspective, prestige is a means to a higher end. Statesmen and diplomats thus engage in prestige-seeking for strategic reasons. Again, we subscribe to the analysis of Morgenthau: 'The prestige of a nation is very much like the credit of a bank. A bank with large, proven resources and a record of successes can afford what a small and frequently unsuccessful competitor cannot.'[40]

We expect small or third-tier states to be particularly attracted to prestige-seeking strategies and coalition contributions, because they typically lack the material resources to make a difference on the international scene, and because they generally depend upon others for their security.[41] Small states do not contribute to coalitions in order to influence great power policy or to win. Instead, their primary objective is to be seen and recognised in the hope of generating goodwill and 'credit in the bank' that can be translated into something that they want at a later point in time: security, access to great power decision-makers, economic, or other forms of support. It is our thesis that small allies provide military contributions to US-led operations in the hope of establishing prestige and a sense of obligation in Washington that will make American decision-makers more inclined to meet requests for access, assistance, or influence.

[36] Wylie, 'Valuing reputation and prestige', p. 114; see also Neumann and de Carvalho, 'Introduction: Small states and status', in Neumann and de Carvalho (eds), *Small State Status Seeking*, pp. 1–21.

[37] Gilady, *The Price of Prestige*.

[38] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 93; see also John Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 4–5; Oliver, *Vol. II*; Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), pp. 95–8. For a similar approach, see Renshon, 'Status deficit and war'. Yet, Renshon's work is more concerned with how states *initiate* war to gain status rather than with the motives that make smaller states bandwagon with larger powers. He argues: 'Status is a valuable resource, and conflict is status enhancing, so states deprived of the status they deserve may well turn to conflict (among other strategies) to attain their goals' (p. 521). For a distinct Realist approach to status in international politics, see Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth (eds), *Status in World Politics*. Wohlforth argues convincingly that major powers sometimes get involved in a 'status dilemma' that 'occurs when two states would be satisfied with their status if they had perfect information about each other's belief. But in the absence of such certainty, a state's leadership may conclude that its status is under challenge even when it is not.' This may lead to 'an upward spiral of needless status competition among fundamentally satisfied states' (p. 119).

[39] Harold Nicolson, *The Meaning of Prestige: The Rede Lecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 23.

[40] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 95.

[41] For this point, see also Neumann and de Carvalho, 'Introduction: Small states and status', in Neumann and de Carvalho (eds), *Small State Status Seeking*.

The purpose of the empirical analysis in the next two sections is to determine whether prestige-seeking was an important factor driving Danish and Norwegian contributions to recent US-led military operations. We look for three types of evidence in order to validate our small state prestige hypothesis:

1) Statements by key policymakers and senior officials indicating that Danish and Norwegian decisions to contribute to US-led interventions were motivated, partly at least, by a desire to gain prestige and visibility in Washington.
2) A greater concern with visibility, social capital and prestige than with military effect when designing and offering military contributions.
3) A definition of success focusing more on American praise, access to US decision-makers and influence on other issue areas than military success.

Denmark: Fighting for prestige, access, and Influence

Determining the role played by prestige-seeking in specific Danish force contributions is not as straightforward as it may seem. To be legitimate in a Danish context, a decision to go to war has to be couched primarily in idealistic and legal terms. Interest-based arguments beyond self-defence are generally frowned upon, and many critics of Denmark's involvement in out-of-area military operations reject the argument that prestige-seeking in Washington constitutes a legitimate *casus belli*.[42] This gives Danish decision-makers an incentive to downplay the role played by these motivations in parliamentary bills and other official documents seeking to mobilise political and popular support for making military contributions in support of the United States. Yet, we do expect interest and prestige-seeking motives to surface from time to time in public statements and memoirs, and indicators 2 and 3 are designed to capture these motivations indirectly in order to address this methodological challenge.

Do Danish decision-makers and officials highlight prestige-seeking as a policy-driver?

> Reputation is for a leader of a kingdom what credit is for a merchant and his business.
>
> Count Johann Hartwig Ernst von Bernstorff,
> head of the Danish diplomatic corps (1751–70).[43]

In his memoirs, Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (Liberal Party, 1982–93) argued with reference to the above-mentioned quote that reputation and prestige are critical assets for Danish foreign policy.[44] In Ellemann-Jensen's view, Denmark depended on international prestige and goodwill, particularly in Washington, in order to make a difference on the international scene. He explicitly said in his memoirs that his successful efforts to mobilise political support for the dispatch of a corvette to the Persian Gulf in 1990 and for Danish participation in the UN force that

[42] Henrik Dørge, 'Den skjulte magtpolitik', *Weekendavisen* (6 January 2012); Sten Rynning, 'Til forsvar for den nationale interesse', *Weekendavisen* (6 September 2013); Magnus Boding Hansen, interview with Villy Søvndal, 'Skal vi skele til danske interesser, når vi vælger vores krige? Nej', *Ræson* (2012), pp. 66–7; Jacob Svendsen and Lars Halskov, *Et land i krig: Hvordan Danmark blev krigsførende – og politikere og generaler famlede i blinde* (Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag, 2012), p. 670.

[43] Count Johann Hartwig Ernst von Bernstorff in Votum im Königl, *Consei, betreffend die Spanische Declaration zu Aufhebung des Commercii* (1753), reprinted in Poul Vedel (ed.), *Vol 1: Correspondance Ministérielle du Comte J. H. E. Bernstorff 1751–1770* (Copenhagen: Jørgensen & cie, 1882), p. 84, available at: {https://archive.org/stream/correspondancemi00bern#page/n111/mode/1up} accessed 29 June 2017.

[44] Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, *Din egen dag er kort: Oplevelser og indtryk* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 1996), p. 273.

was deployed in Iraq after the end of the Gulf War in 1991 were driven by his desire to repair Denmark's standing in Washington, which had been tarnished by its opposition to NATO's decision to deploy intermediate range nuclear missiles in Europe in the 1980s.[45] He used the quote again in a blog in 2013, arguing that the Danish contributions to the US-led operations in Afghanistan had been successful because they had enhanced Denmark's 'prestige in London and Washington'.[46]

Former Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Liberal Party, 2001–9) shared this perspective. His view of foreign policy was shaped by his close cooperation with Ellemann-Jensen for 13 years as his vice chairman of the Liberal Party.[47] Fogh Rasmussen made it clear before taking office in 2001 that he favoured 'active participation in international military operations in order to give Denmark a stronger position on the international scene than its size warranted'.[48] Fogh Rasmussen personally pushed through the decision to support the United States in Afghanistan with F-16s and Special Forces in Afghanistan in 2001 against the wishes of the main opposition parties, which would have preferred a 'softer' contribution. He was also the principal architect behind the controversial decision to support the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. He made this decision ignoring protests from his own party, his Minister for Foreign Affairs Per Stig Møller (Conservative Party, 2001–10) and the main opposition parties, pushing the decision through parliament with a slight 11-vote majority.[49] He subsequently reiterated his desire for international 'visibility' when defending his decision to participate in the Iraq War on a number of occasions.[50]

Public statements also indicate that prestige-seeking played a prominent role in driving the military contributions made by the government headed by Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (Liberal Party, 2009–11, 2015–). Løkke Rasmussen explained his swift support for the US-led coalition launching military operations against Libya in 2011 on the grounds that he wanted Denmark 'out in front' with the 'right states' (that is, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States).[51] Being part of the first wave of attack appears to have been an overriding priority for the prime minister. The prime minister's office reportedly put heavy pressure on the Danish chief of defence to hand over operational command to the US coalition commander even before the command arrangements and rules of engagement had been agreed upon – a request the latter flatly refused.[52]

[45] Ibid., pp. 240, 269.

[46] Ellemann-Jensen, 'Soldaterne skulle vise et godt eksempel – og det har de gjort!', available at: {http://uffeel-lemann.blogs.berlingske.dk/2013/07/23/soldaterne-skulle-vise-et-godt-eksempel-og-det-har-de-gjort/} accessed 29 June 2017.

[47] Thomas Larsen, *I godtvejr og storm* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2003), pp. 145, 148, 215.

[48] Ibid., p. 220.

[49] For a detailed analysis of the decision-making process based on interviews with the key players, see Christian Aarøe and Kasper Tonsberg Schlie, 'Hvornår og hvorledes får individet betydning i International Politik? En integreret approach til analysen af sikkerhedspolitiske beslutninger med den danske Irak-beslutning i 2003 som case' (Master's thesis, Aarhus University, 2010).

[50] Mads Kastrup, 'Verden ifølge Anders Fogh', *Århus Stiftstidende* (22 June 2008); Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'Hvad kan det nytte?', *Berlingske Tidende* (26 March 2003); Ole Vigant Ryborg and Noa Redington, 'Fogh: Danmark må gøre op med småstatsmentaliteten', *Mandagmorgen* (11 September 2006), p. 8.

[51] Quoted in Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 'The Danish Libya Campaign: Out in front in pursuit of pride, praise, and position', in Dag Henriksen and Ann Karin Larssen (eds), *Political Rationale and International Consequences of the War in Libya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 199.

[52] Christian Brøndum, 'Oberst: Statsministeriet ville presse fly i krig uden retsgrundlag', *Berlingske Tidende* (25 January 2014).

Interviews and correspondence with senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark confirm that prestige-seeking has been one of the drivers behind Denmark's military contributions to US-led operations since 9/11. An experienced Danish senior diplomat put it this way: 'I believe that it is entirely OK and a commonplace interest-based policy for a small country to also consider … where and how our most important ally wants our support and assistance. I believe that practically all nations consider when and how much credit it will create in Washington.'[53] By the same token, another senior official emphasised that a good standing is an important vehicle for security, access, and influence: 'Although a desire for prestige and standing was not the principal motive for participating in Iraq and Afghanistan, it played a role. Other nations listen to the allies that deliver – to the allies with standing. Those allies are in another category. And remember: standing and reputation provides you with access. And for a small state access is the key to information and influence'.[54]

Are Danish force contributions designed to generate visibility and social capital?

Denmark's military contributions tell the story of a strong desire for visibility in Washington and NATO. The already mentioned desire to be 'out in front' appeared again in a Ministry of Defence factsheet on a major increase in Denmark's contribution to the US-led campaign against the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in April 2016. This factsheet also highlighted that the increase made Denmark 'one of the largest force contributors' (measured per capita) in the fight against ISIS. It was also clear whom Denmark was seeking to impress, as it explicitly stated that the contribution was made in direct response to requests from the United States and France.[55]

The ambition to be among the largest contributors per capita to military operations is a constant in Danish foreign policy, originating from the Cold War when Danish decision-makers realised that the position as a top per capita contributor to UN peacekeeping operations provided an effective way of generating international prestige and goodwill.[56] Denmark maintained this position in the UN and NATO operations in the Balkans in the 1990s, in the Iraq operation in 2003–7 and in NATO's Afghanistan operation (2006–14), and it is highlighted time and again in official statements and documents.

Yet Danish policymakers have done more than play the leading-contributor-per-capita numbers game in order to generate prestige. They have also sought to do so by making a qualitative 'difference' with their contributions. Not in the sense of making a decisive difference to the outcome of a campaign; Danish decision-makers rarely mention victory or winning in their statements; they are well aware that Danish force contributions are generally too small for that.[57] Instead, they stress their desire to make a difference to their key alliance partners.

Danish decision-makers have thus made combat contributions without caveats their trademark and volunteered for dangerous tasks that few other nations were willing to undertake. Denmark was one

[53] Correspondence with senior official (A), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 2016).
[54] Interview with Danish senior official (B), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (May 2016).
[55] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Danish Ministry of Defence, 'Danmarks samtænkte og brede indsats i kampen mod ISIL' (4 March 2016), available at: {http://www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Pages/regeringen-vil-sende-f-16-fly-tilbage-til-kampen-mod-isil.aspx} accessed 29 June 2017.
[56] Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 'Denmark and UN peacekeeping: Glorious past, dim future', *International Peacekeeping*, 23:5 (2016), pp. 741–61.
[57] Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringsmose, 'In Denmark, Afghanistan is worth dying for: How public support for the war was maintained in the face of mounting casualties and elusive success', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50:2 (2015), pp. 211–27.

of only five US allies contributing to the attack on Iraq in 2003; one of only six NATO members deploying combat troops to Southern Afghanistan in 2006; one of only eight NATO members dropping bombs over Libya in 2011; the only nation together with France supporting the US threat of air strikes against the Syrian regime in 2013; one of only six NATO members dropping bombs over Iraq in 2014–15 and over Iraq/Syria in 2016;[58] and one of a handful of NATO members allowing their Special Forces to operate inside Syria in 2017.[59] The desire for visibility and prestige is also indicated by the fact that Danish F-16s dropped 11 per cent (821 bombs) of the NATO bomb total during 'Operation Unified Protector', and that they were second only to the United States dropping 102 bombs in the initial US-led 'Operation Odyssey Dawn'. In 2014–15, Danish F-16s dropped more bombs (503) than the British and French planes operating over Iraq.[60]

Do Danish metrics of success privilege praise, access, and influence?

It is intensely debated in Denmark whether Denmark's military support for the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Iraq/Syria has paid off or not.[61] This is not the issue here, however. We are seeking to determine whether Danish decision-makers measure success in a way that signals interest in generating prestige and goodwill in NATO, London, Paris, and Washington.

This is certainly the case. Praise from US presidents and other key decision-makers features prominently in official statements and decision-maker memoirs. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ellemann-Jensen and Minister of Defence Søren Gade (Liberal Party, 2004–10) both argued that the Danish contribution to Afghanistan was successful because it 'fostered respect' and was noticed by NATO's big powers;[62] the F-16 contribution to Libya was a success according to the Danish force commander because the US commander of 'Operation Unified Protector' in Libya nicknamed the Danish pilots the 'rock stars of the campaign'; the Libya contribution was a success in the eyes of Danish Minister of Defence Gitte Lillelund Bech (Liberal Party, 2010–11), because it was praised by the US Secretary of Defence and the US Ambassador to NATO;[63] it was seen as a sign of success by Prime Ministers Løkke Rasmussen and Thorning-Schmidt that President Barack Obama in 2011 and 2012 respectively told them that he appreciated Denmark's contributions to Afghanistan and Libya;[64] and Minister for Foreign Affairs Kristian Jensen (Liberal Party, 2015–) hailed the increased contribution to 'Operation Inherent Resolve' in 2016 as a success because US Secretary of State John Kerry had praised it in a bilateral meeting.[65]

Second, Danish decision-makers and officials have pointed out time and again that Denmark's military contributions have significantly improved Denmark's standing in NATO and Washington. This view is expressed by all Danish ministers for foreign affairs and ministers of defence who have served since 1989, by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Danish ambassadors to NATO and the United States, and Danish NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

[58] Peter Viggo Jakobsen, 'Derfor skal Danmark fortsat gå i kamp', *Ræson* (December 2015), p. 27.
[59] Reuters, 'Denmark says deploying special forces to Syria against Islamic State', *World News* (20 January 2017).
[60] Jakobsen, 'Denmark and UN peacekeeping', pp. 201, 207.
[61] For an overview of this debate, see Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Jens Ringsmose, 'Size and reputation – why the USA has valued its "special relationships" with Denmark and the UK differently since 9/11', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 13:2 (2015), pp. 135–53.
[62] Ellemann-Jensen, 'Soldaterne skulle vise et godt eksempel'; Søren Gade, 'Små lande gør en forskel', *Dagbladet Ringkøbing-Skjern* (11 August 2008).
[63] Gitte Lillelund Bech, 'Dansk indsats skaber respekt', *JydskeVestkysten* (14 June 2011).
[64] Ritzau, 'Obama brugte Løkke-kliché over for Thorning', *Information* (24 February 2012).
[65] Ritzau, 'Kristian Jensen i USA: Stor ros til dansk militærbidrag', *Ekstra Bladet* (9 March 2016).

(2009–14).[66] Fogh Rasmussen thus argued that Denmark's many military contributions to NATO operations had earned it a reputation as an 'elite ally' in the alliance, in spite of the fact that Denmark spent considerably far less on defence than the 2 per cent of the GDP demanded by the alliance.[67]

Third, Danish politicians and officials stress that Denmark's military activism has given them far better access to US policymakers, all the way to the White House. This has been stressed in the interviews we have conducted with senior Danish diplomats for this article and in interviews given by other Danish diplomats elsewhere.[68] It is also stated in official documents. For instance, a 2006 report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark on globalisation noted that Denmark enjoyed 'easy access to American decision-makers'.[69] Similarly, the Danish Defence Command argued in its annual report in 2011 that the United States and the United Kingdom treated Denmark as a privileged partner that is granted easier access to high-level decision-makers, intelligence, courses, staff positions, and equipment than most other nations.[70]

Fourth, Danish ministers and officials argue that Denmark's high standing in NATO and easy access to US decision-makers translate into increased influence. Minister for Foreign Affairs Per Stig Møller argued in 2008 that support for the United States enhanced Denmark's international influence on issues of strategic importance, because its reputation as a close ally made it easier to obtain US support for Danish initiatives on the international scene. He backed his argument by listing a number of successful Danish foreign policy initiatives that in his view would have failed without US support.[71] Minister of Defence Nick Hækkerup (2011–13) also found that Denmark carried greater weight in NATO debates because the other members knew that the Danish view was respected in Washington.[72]

Minister for Foreign Affairs Martin Lidegaard (Social Liberal Party, 2014–15) is not so sure that access translates into influence, but he agrees that it is an advantage: 'It is hard to measure political influence but when Denmark is one of the first 12 countries that are invited to discuss an operation against ISIS this provides an indication of our position … Our position gives us the opportunity to discuss the strategies and influence them. But there is no doubt that because we are good at contributing and because we are a close ally, we are listened to.'[73]

Finally, the close link that Danish policymakers perceive between military contributions and prestige is also highlighted by the concern that reductions in Denmark's military contributions typically trigger.

[66] Charlotte Aagaard, 'Danmark bør kun gå i krig, når det er tvingende nødvendigt', *Information* (21 July 2015); Anders Henriksen and Jens Ringsmose, 'What did Denmark gain? Iraq, Afghanistan and the relationship with Washington', in Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen (eds), *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2012* (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2012); Hans Hækkerup, *På skansen* (Copenhagen: Lindhardt & Ringhof, 2002), p. 40; Hans Hækkerup, 'Fodnotepolitikken gavnede ikke Danmark', *Jyllands-Posten* (18 July 2005); Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'Size and reputation'; Per Stig Møller, 'Dansk udenrigspolitik mellem EU og USA', *Berlingske Tidende* (14 August 2007); author interview with Niels Helveg Petersen (March 2016).

[67] Ritzau, 'Anders Fogh før Nato-topmøde: Danmark er eliteallieret', *Information* (3 September 2014).

[68] Two other interview-based articles demonstrating this are: Henriksen and Ringsmose, 'What did Denmark gain?' and Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'Size and reputation'.

[69] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Globaliseringsrapport* (Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2006), p. 9.

[70] Defence Command Denmark, *Årsrapport 2011* (Copenhagen: Defence Commando Denmark), p. 67.

[71] Møller, 'Dansk udenrigspolitik mellem EU og USA'.

[72] Emma Knudsen and Lasse Marker, 'Ministeriet for krig', *Ræson* (June 2012), p. 78.

[73] Quoted by Charlotte Aagaard, 'Danmark bør kun gå i krig, når det er tvingende nødvendigt', *Information* (21 July 2015).

A representative example was provided in 2015 when Denmark temporarily withdrew its F-16s from the ISIS campaign. Minister for Foreign Affairs Kristian Jensen felt the need to assure a journalist that the withdrawal would not harm Denmark's prestige in the eyes of its allies because it was only temporary and because Denmark compensated by making another contribution to fill the gap.[74]

In sum, the evidence is clear. Since 9/11, Danish ministers, regardless of their party affiliations, and senior diplomats have staunchly supported US-led operations and designed the Danish contributions in order to gain prestige. They have done so in the hope that such prestige could be translated into access and influence in NATO and in Washington. Moreover, they all argue that these efforts have been highly successful. The extent to which this is the case is a topic of heated debate in Denmark as influence is notoriously difficult to measure.[75] But no one would dispute the conclusion that Danish policymakers have been motivated partly by this ambition.

Norway: Seeking prestige, access, and influence through contributory warfare

Like their Danish counterparts, Norwegian political leaders and senior officials hardly ever talk about 'prestige' as a motive for deploying forces in US-led military operations. Most of the time the argument is that this is the right thing to do for humanitarian or security reasons,[76] or that participating in military operations abroad is necessary to preserve Norway's security guarantee in NATO. Since Norway is a 'frontline state' bordering Russia, ensuring allied reinforcements in a crisis is a more important objective in Norway than in Denmark.[77] Security-based explanations therefore figure prominently among the reasons why Norway deploys troops abroad. As the Norwegian Minister of Defence Jørgen Kosmo (Labour Party, 1993–7) once put it, 'it is expected both in the U.S. and in Europe that Norway makes effective contributions to collective defence and international peace operations. This is a requirement if other alliance members, especially the U.S., are to make forces available to defend our territory.'[78] However, Norwegian policy documents also stress the importance of contributing to international operations in order to be seen as a 'credible' and 'constructive' country. Norwegian decision-makers view it as important to be in 'good standing' with allies and partners.[79] This supports our thesis that prestige is a policy driver in its own right, inducing small states to provide military support to important great power allies in order to put 'credit' in the bank.

Do Norwegian decision-makers and officials highlight prestige-seeking as a policy driver?

> The fact that Norway is willing to contribute [to the US invasion of Afghanistan] means that we can call on solidarity if we get in a difficult situation [in the future] … we put something in which it is good to have on our bank account.[80]
>
> Minister for Foreign Affairs Jan Petersen (Conservative Party, 2001–5)

[74] Ritzau, 'Minister: F-16 fly skal hjem fra Irak til tjek', *Politiken* (22 August 2015).
[75] Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 'Size and reputation'.
[76] See, for instance, Jens Stoltenberg, *Min historie* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2016), pp. 418–19.
[77] The last long-term plan for the armed forces placed high emphasis on allied reinforcements. Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Kampkraft Og Bærekraft. Langtidsplan for Forsvarssektoren*, Proposition to the Storting, No. 151 S (2015–16).
[78] Jørgen Kosmo, 'Nasjonale og internasjonale utfordringer for forsvaret', *Norsk Militært Tidsskrift*, 166:2 (1997), p. 11.
[79] Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Interesser, Ansvar Og Muligheter: Hovedlinjer i Norsk Utenrikspolitikk*, Report to the Storting, No. 15 (Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008–9), p. 98.
[80] Quoted in Kari Karstensen, 'Ingen Diskuterte Med Høyre-Ministeren', *Nordlys Morgen* (30 January 2002).

After the Cold War participation in US-led and NATO-led military operations became a central way for Norway to gain access, influence, and build up prestige, which Norway hoped to be able to draw on when required. As the government argued in a report to the Norwegian Parliament in 1999, 'the overall goal of Norway's participation in international military operations is to demonstrate to our allies that we are willing to take responsibility and make a solidary effort'.[81] By actively participating with military forces in UN and NATO operations Norway sought to become 'a serious partner who is taken into consideration and listened to'.[82]

After 9/11 it became a key objective for Norway to ensure that its reputation as a good ally was preserved. This is clear from the comment by Minister for Foreign Affairs Jan Petersen regarding Norwegian participation in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001–2, which is quoted above in the beginning of this section. This is also underscored by the findings of the government-appointed Afghanistan Commission tasked with evaluating Norway's military and civilian involvement in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014. Its report, published in June 2016, concluded that Norway's chief objective in Afghanistan had been to visibly demonstrate that the country was a 'good ally' to the United States and other NATO countries.[83] The commission found that Norway had pursued a 'contributory-warfare strategy' (*bidragskrigføring*). There was no independent or long-term strategy behind its military contributions 'apart from being a good ally'.[84] For Norway, in other words, it was far more important how its contributions were perceived in Washington, than if they actually made any noticeable differences 'on the ground' in Afghanistan.

The importance attributed to prestige and credit in the Washington bank account is also highlighted by politicians who are critical of Norway's pro-American policies. They often fail to understand why their political colleagues place so much emphasis on 'what they think of us in Washington'. For example, Kristin Halvorsen, leader of the Socialist Left Party (SV) and Minister for Finance 2005–9, successfully opposed her coalition cabinet colleagues' desire to deploy Norwegian forces to southern Afghanistan. According to Halvorsen, her coalition cabinet colleagues were mainly motivated by concerns about how Norway would be perceived in allied capitals. '[I] understood that it was important for the prime minister, foreign minister and minister of defence how Norway's contribution's to missions abroad were perceived in NATO'. However, Halvorsen nevertheless 'just could not understand why Norway should be there for NATO and the United States no matter what they asked of us'. Halvorsen clearly thought it wrong to send Norwegian soldiers to war just in order to, as she saw it, get praise in Washington and NATO.[85]

Halvorsen represents a minority opinion in the Norwegian political establishment. Most Norwegian leaders see it as self-evidently beneficial for Norway to ensure that Norway has a good reputation in allied capitals as well as access and influence with allied leaders. As the long-serving Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre (Labour Party, 2005–12) put it, 'the transatlantic ties are still vital for Norway's security … we still need the support of our European and North American allies'. Norway has an unpredictable great power neighbour in Russia and lacks membership

[81] Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Tilpasning av forsvaret til deltagelse i internasjonale operasjoner*, Report to the Storting, No. 38 (1998–9), p. 10.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Norwegian Afghanistan Commission, *NOU 2016:8 En god alliert*.
[84] Ibid., p. 45.
[85] Kristin Halvorsen, quoted in Lilla Sølhusvik and Kristin Halvorsen, *Gjennomslag* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2012), p. 154.

in the EU. These factors make 'nurturing the relationship with the EU and U.S. … key priorities in [Norwegian] foreign policy'.[86]

Are Norwegian force contributions designed to generate visibility and social capital?

Norway was noticeably slower than Denmark when it came to embracing 'robust' participation in expeditionary military operations after the Cold War. In the 1990 Gulf War the country provided only a field hospital and a logistical vessel to support the Danish corvette, and in the UN peacekeeping missions in the Balkans in the 1990s the Norwegian contributions were generally not comprised of combat formations, but for the most part restricted to medical and logistical units.[87] This practice, of only deploying support units, came under fire in the late 1990s. The main criticism was that it did not generate a sufficiently 'visible profile' with Norway's allies.[88] This argument seems to have been decisive. In 1997 Norway changed tracks by deploying a mechanised infantry battalion as part of the NATO forces in Bosnia.[89] Thereafter, Norway regularly sought to contribute 'visible' combat forces to NATO-led and US-led operations.

In the run-up to NATO's 1999 Kosovo War, Norway's first participation in a war since 1945, the government decided that Norway should make a 'significant and visible' contribution.[90] However, this proved militarily challenging. It turned out that its F-16 aircrafts could not operate at night or attack ground targets, and its mechanised battalion took four months to arrive on the ground. Afterwards, this was considered highly unsatisfactory by the Norwegian government.[91] It was perceived as deeply embarrassing that the British Kosovo Force (KFOR) commander, Lieutenant General Michael Jackson, supposedly had asked sarcastically: 'What took you so long, have you been walking?' Norwegian politicians subsequently repeated this quote often in order to justify reforming the armed forces. The aim was to make them more flexible and capable of rapidly partaking in missions abroad.[92]

During the invasion of Afghanistan, Norway sought to do better than in Kosovo. In 2003 Minister of Defence Kristin Krohn Devold (Conservative Party, 2001–5) told *The New York Times* that her objective was 'to be relevant'. Her strategy was to 'identify what you are good at, and concentrate on it. That way you can play with the big boys even if you are small'.[93]

Norway sought to make a visible and effective contribution to US and allied efforts, both in and outside of ISAF. It sought out more demanding tasks, such as providing the quick reaction

[86] Jonas Gahr Støre, *Å gjøre en forskjell: Refleksjoner fra en norsk utenriksminister* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2008), p. 27.
[87] Håkon Lunde Saxi, *Norwegian and Danish Defence Policy: A Comparative Study of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, 2010), pp. 29–45.
[88] Colonel Kjell Grandhagen, 'Med IFOR til Bosnia-Herzegovina: Erfaringer fra den Nordisk-Polske brigade', *Norsk Militært Tidsskrift*, 166:2 (1997), p. 46.
[89] Gullow Gjeseth, *Hæren i omveltning 1990–2008* (Bergen: Vigmostad Bjorke, 2008), pp. 163–4.
[90] Government Conference, 14 June 1999, quoted in Jacob Borresen, Gullow Gjeseth and Rolf Tamnes, *Allianseforsvar i endring: 1970–2000*, Vol. 5: Norsk forsvarshistorie (Bergen: Eide Forlag, 2004), p. 226.
[91] Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Omleggingen av Forsvaret i perioden 2002–2005*, Proposition to the Storting, No. 45 (2000–2001), p. 6.
[92] Minister of Defence (Conservative Party 2001–5) Kristin Krohn Devold, *Nyttårsforedraget 2005: Vilje Til Å Endre, Evne Til Å Forsvare* (Oslo: Ministry of Defence, 2005), p. 12.
[93] Minister of Defence (2001–5) Kristin Krohn Devold, quoted in Matthew Brzezinski, 'Who's afraid of Norway?', *The New York Times* (24 August 2003).

force (QRF) in Kabul (2003) and Northern Afghanistan (2006–8), since this was viewed by Devold as a 'high-profile mission that will demonstrate … Norway's ability and willingness to support the efforts of the alliance in Afghanistan'.[94] From 2005 the Norwegian effort was mainly in northern Afghanistan. When internal disagreements within the coalition government precluded participation in southern Afghanistan in 2006–7, the government sought to compensate by deploying Special Forces and intelligence personnel to Kabul. It deliberately chose to assume a larger part in securing the Afghan capital because ISAF preferred this to a greater contribution to northern Afghanistan.[95] Special Forces, the intelligence service and peace-mediation diplomacy were used actively and deliberately to provide 'visible and highly-sought contributions'.[96] The same tactics were employed in 2003 when internal disagreements inside the coalition government prevented Norway from contributing to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. On this occasion the government compensated the United States and the United Kingdom by deploying an engineer company to the British occupation zone in Iraq in 2004–5.[97]

The 2011 Libyan War stands out as a high point for Norway in terms of providing high-visibility combat forces. Norwegian F-16 combat aircrafts dropped 8 per cent (588 bombs) of the total number of ordinances during NATO's air campaign.[98] Prime Minister Stoltenberg was pleased that 'few countries contributed as much as Norway'. For a few weeks Norwegian and Danish F-16 aircrafts flew 'more than 30 per cent of the sorties' for the alliance and undertook 'some of the hardest tasks'.[99]

In 2014, unlike Denmark, Norway declined to deploy combat aircrafts as part of the US-led anti-ISIS coalition. Prime Minster Erna Solberg (Conservative Party, 2013–) argued that 'due to our border with Russia, Norway is in a different situation than countries such as Denmark, Holland and Belgium'.[100] The aircrafts were needed at home. However, shortly thereafter, in addition to its military trainers in Iraq, Norway agreed to be one of only a few countries to provide Special Forces to train Syrian rebel forces in Jordan to combat ISIS. The mission was domestically controversial in Norway, especially since the government even authorised its troops in Jordan to mentor the rebels *inside* Syria.[101] To compensate the United States for its lacking contribution to the anti-ISIS air campaign, which risked hurting Norwegian standing in Washington, the Norwegian government undertook a visible, but domestically controversial and potentially risky, military deployment.

[94] Quoted in Ida Maria Oma, 'Small States and Burden-Sharing in Allied Operations Abroad: The Case of Norway in ISAF' (PhD thesis, University of Oslo, November 2014), p. 63.
[95] Norwegian Afghanistan Commission, *NOU 2016:8 En god alliert*, p. 64.
[96] Ibid., pp. 196–7.
[97] Prime Minister (Christian Democratic Party, 2001–5) Kjell Magne Bondevik, *Et liv i spenning* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2006), pp. 563–70, 582. The company was deployed with reference to a UN mandate to stabilise Iraq and was technically not part of the US-UK occupation forces. However, *de facto*, it was an integrated part of the UK-led force in southern Iraq. The United States and the United Kingdom therefore considered Norway to be part of the 'Coalition of the Willing' in Iraq.
[98] Norwegian Armed Forces, *Forsvarets Årsrapport 2011* (Annual Report 2011) (Oslo: Norwegian Armed Forces, 2012), pp. 22–3.
[99] Stoltenberg, *Min historie*, pp. 444, 446.
[100] Quoted in Alf Bjarne Johnsen, 'Derfor holder hun F-16 hjemme', *Verdens Gang* (22 October 2014).
[101] Sofie Prestegård, 'Utelukker Ikke Skarpe Oppdrag', *Dagsavisen* (29 June 2016).

Do Norwegian metrics of success privilege praise, access, and influence?

> It was this type of mission that ensured that we received such tremendous recognition … I know that the Norwegian effort [in Libya 2011] made a strong impression among our allies.[102]
>
> Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg (Labour Party, 2005–13)

Norwegian leaders, and the armed forces themselves, regard it as a sign of success that the capabilities of the Norwegian Armed Forces are held in high esteem and are sought after by key allies. Indeed, for better or worse, this has become a major metric for success. As the Afghanistan Commission concluded, 'the first and most important objective in the whole period [in Afghanistan 2001–14] has been the alliance dimension: to support the U.S. and contribute to NATO's relevance. Norway has been a good ally and to a great extent achieved this goal.'[103]

After Norway's participation in the 2011 Libyan War, the armed forces presented the operation as a success mainly by arguing that 'the armed forces have received a great deal of praise for the way in which the operation was conducted'.[104] Minister of Defence Espen Barth Eide (Labour Party, 2011–12) argued that the Libyan War was proof that the transformation of the Norwegian Armed Forces had been a success, since it enabled Norway to be in the 'forefront' of foreign interventions.

> During [the 1999] operation Allied Force in Kosovo, Norway was not among those countries who stood in the forefront with our F-16 aircraft. Now we do just that. Yes, therefore our participation in the Libya War is a sign of successful restructuring … Feedback from NATO on Norway's efforts have been exceptionally good. This makes me confident that what we have done, and continue to do, is correct.[105]

Ivar Kristiansen (Conservative Party), a member of the parliamentary defence committee, stressed that when the committee visited the United States after the war, it experienced how Norway's contribution was praised as 'Best in Class' and 'Gold Star'. A 'unanimous committee' concluded 'that this is feedback … that we all have reasons to be very proud of'.[106] Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg similarly stressed that the Libyan War was a success for Norway, in spite of its economic and domestic political costs, because he knew 'that the Norwegian effort made a strong impression among our allies: in NATO, in Washington, in Paris and in London'.[107] After the war, for the first time in eight years, the Norwegian prime minister was invited to a bilateral meeting with the US President.[108] During this meeting President Obama heaped praise on Norway for its contribution to the campaign.[109]

Norway's contribution to the US-led anti-ISIS coalition was hampered by the country's inability to deploy F-16 combat aircrafts. However, the deployment of Norwegian Special Forces to Jordan was greeted by US Secretary of Defence Ash Carter as 'a welcome contribution from a

[102] Stoltenberg, *Min historie*, p. 447.
[103] Norwegian Afghanistan Commission, *NOU 2016:8 En god alliert*, p. 9.
[104] Norwegian Armed Forces, *Forsvarets Årsrapport 2011*, p. 23.
[105] Espen Barth Eide, 'Åpningsforedrag', in Torgeir E. Sæveraas and Vidar Løw Owesen (eds), *Norsk Luftmakt over Libya – Suksess Uten Innflytelse?* (Trondheim: Akademika forlag, 2012), p. 16.
[106] Debate in the Norwegian Storting, 10 November 2011. Quoted in Stortinget, *Stortingstidende (2011–2012)*, p. 353.
[107] Stoltenberg, *Min historie*, p. 447.
[108] Alf Ole Ask, 'Stoltenberg skal møte Obama i Det hvite hus', *Aftenposten* (1 October 2011).
[109] The White House, *Fact Sheet: The United States and Norway – NATO Allies and Global Partners* (Washington, DC: The White House, 20 October 2011); Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Stoltenberg After Bilateral Meeting (Washington, DC: The White House, 20 October 2011).

stalwart ally'.[110] Norway also maintained its Special Forces presence in Kabul. Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen Søreide subsequently argued that Norway's Special Forces were a key asset because they were 'highly appreciated among our most important Allies in NATO'. As evidence, she pointed to the fact that 'I regularly meet colleagues and military chiefs in NATO who strongly praise our Special Forces.'[111]

Today, Norway assigns priority to those 'strategic capabilities' in its armed forces that are not only valuable for national defence, but which are also of great importance for generating goodwill and prestige with its major allies. These include Special Forces, new F-35 combat aircrafts, the intelligence service, and new maritime patrol aircrafts. These sophisticated, high-tech capabilities deliver a 'considerable contribution to our allies and NATO' and form a key part of the bilateral relationships with the US.[112] Such capabilities need not be primarily intended for deployment abroad to generate prestige. As a government-appointed expert commission on security and defence argued in 2015, 'Norway has gained particular recognition [from the United States] for its contributions in the field of intelligence and surveillance in the High North.'[113] Some Norwegian experts and members of the political opposition have criticised the priority given to these 'strategic capabilities'. Critics claim that their prioritisation comes at the expense of capabilities needed mainly for national defence, such as the Norwegian Army and Home Guard.[114] The high priority, which is nevertheless given to those capabilities regularly praised by Norway's allies, especially by the United States, gives clear indication of the degree to which the opinions of key allies serve as a central metric for success.

Conclusion

The theoretical aim of this article was to bring small states into the study of prestige to offset the great power bias that this growing field of research currently suffers from. We took issue with the prevailing view that regards prestige as a function of material and especially military power. We argued that small states lacking material power may derive prestige and good standing by acting as loyal allies and heeding great power requests for military contributions. Taking our cue from Hans Morgenthau, we conceptualised small power prestige as a form of soft power that small powers may generate by providing military and other forms of support to great powers that they wish to influence or obtain protection or other forms of support from. We hypothesised that small states should be particularly attracted to this way of generating leverage vis-à-vis great power patrons because they lack the material and military power that forms the basis of great power prestige and status. We consequently expected prestige-seeking to be a major factor driving Danish and Norwegian military contributions to the US-led operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. To corroborate our hypothesis we looked for statements by key policymakers and officials indicating that Denmark and Norway had been

[110] Quoted in DoD News, 'Carter Welcomes Norway's Expansion of Counter-Isil Role', US Department of Defense (2 May 2016), available at: {http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/747682/carter-welcomes-norways-expansion-of-counter-isil-role} accessed 29 June 2016.

[111] Ine Eriksen Søreide, 'Norske spesialstyrker – fra hemmelige til ettertraktede', speech at the SOF-conference in Oslo (2 June 2016), available at: {https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/norske-spesialstyrker—fra-hemmelige-til-ettertraktede/id2502858/} accessed 29 June 2016.

[112] Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Kampkraft Og Bærekraft: Langtidsplan for Forsvarssektoren*, Proposition to the Storting, No. 151 S (2015–16), pp. 63–5, 68–71.

[113] Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence Policy, *Unified Effort* (Oslo: Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2015), p. 69.

[114] Magnus Lysberg and Simen Tallaksen: 'Avsløres i hemmelige notater', *Klassekampen* (29 August 2016); 'Advarer mot offensivt forsvar', *Klassekampen* (14 September 2016); 'Hadde ikke penger til alt', *Klassekampen* (26 September 2016); Marie Melgård, 'Ikke tatt regningen for Hæren', *Dagsavisen* (30 August 2016).

Table 1. Prestige-seeking in Danish and Norwegian military contributions to US-led operations.

	Denmark	Norway
Prestige statements identifying prestige as a major policy driver	Several statements highlighting the importance of prestige and standing in NATO and Washington	
Prestige-generating contributions	Denmark made high-risk military contributions without caveats its trademark after the Cold War	Norway has used its armed forces to enhance its visibility and standing in Washington after the Cold War
Prestige definitions of success	Both countries emphasise US and NATO praise, access and support as evidence of success when evaluating their military contributions	

motivated by a desire for increasing their prestige in Washington and NATO; we sought to determine whether force contributions had been designed to maximise visibility and prestige rather than military effect; and finally we examined whether the Danish and Norwegian definitions of success focused more on generating American praise and support than on operational success.

As is clear from Table 1, our two case studies leave little doubt that the desire for prestige among decision-makers in Washington and in NATO was a major driver in both countries.

Although prestige-seeking is not regarded as a legitimate *casus belli* in neither Denmark nor Norway, we found several statements from central decision-makers indicating that the desire for prestige was among the key factors driving decisions to provide military support for the United States and NATO in the post-Cold War era. Denmark and Norway designed their contributions to generate visibility in NATO and Washington, and decision-makers primarily measured success in terms of allied praise, access to US decision-makers and influence on US and NATO policy as well as US support in other issue areas. These metrics were far more important than the results of the actions taken by Danish and Norwegian forces on the ground.

Our finding that prestige-seeking constitutes a major policy driver for small states contemplating whether or not to meet a military request from a major ally is no trivial finding. It does make a difference that smaller US allies value prestige and standing in Washington as highly as our case studies suggest. This makes it easier for the United States to elicit military support from its allies than existing interest-based and rational choice studies of burden-sharing and collective action problems would lead us to expect. This not only helps to explain the puzzle highlighted in the beginning of this article: why smaller European states continued to support the US-led wars after the end of the Cold War in the face of public protests and at a high cost in blood and treasure. It also suggests that it will be easier to maintain the transatlantic bonds and the military cooperation between Europe and the United States that many now fear may be damaged beyond repair by the Trump presidency. The uncertainty caused by the Trump presidency will not remove the small state desire for influence, access and US support; it may well have the opposite effect, inducing them to work even harder to retain their prestige and standing in Washington.

Our findings do not refute the existing research on coalition-building and coalition management. Denmark and Norway were not just motivated by prestige-seeking. Policy drivers such as the threat posed by terrorism, concerns related to national security, a desire to promote human rights and democracy, and domestic party politics also influenced the decision-making processes. Divergent threat perceptions regarding Russia and differences in strategic culture explain why Denmark responded positively to US requests for military support for the attack on Iraq in 2003

and Norway said no; why Denmark supported the US threats of air strikes against Syria in August 2013 and Norway did not; and why Denmark sent F-16s to Iraq and Syria in 2014–16 and Norway did not.[115] These differences cannot be accounted for by prestige-seeking. It is clear from our case study that Norway gave priority to national defence following the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 2014, and that this was deemed more important than generating prestige by making military contributions to the US-led campaign against ISIS.[116] Similarly, the Norwegian refusals to participate in the attack on Iraq or to support air strikes against Syria, and the Norwegian decision to withdraw early from NATO's Libya campaign, reflect that Oslo attributes greater importance to the United Nations and international law than Copenhagen. It also reflects greater domestic bipartisan support for the use of military force in general in Denmark than in Norway, which can be attributed to different strategic cultures.[117] The importance of prestige-seeking is thus conditioned by other factors than the existing literature on coalitional warfare would lead us to expect. Prestige-seeking should consequently only be regarded as one policy driver among others, and its relative importance must be determined empirically from case to case.

To break new ground, future Realist studies of international prestige-seeking would be well-advised to focus on two pertinent issues that are outside the scope of this article. First, our study raises the question of how small states manage the politics of adjusting their approach to prestige and thus gain the expected benefit: Both Denmark and Norway entered the wars of terror with established reputations (prestige) for soft power – in matters of development aid, UN diplomacy, and in Norway's case especially, peace diplomacy. How did the change come about, and – more generally – how do small states decide on prestige-seeking? To what extent do great power responses to prestige-seeking affect the foreign policy choices of their smaller allies? And how do leaders argue the case of prestige? Second, future scholarship on prestige-seeking should zoom in on the ways in which great powers respond to small state prestige-seeking. This article has first and foremost examined how small state policymakers are motivated by prestige (as a means); a sensible next step would be to investigate the reactions of their greater allies. How do a good reputation and prestige translate into small power influence and benefits (if at all)? Do great powers act out of gratitude or self-interest (or both), when they react positively to prestige-seeking small states? Do larger allies categorise their troop-contributing smaller brother-in-arms according to status? And what difference does it make? These are but some of the questions that ought to be part of a future Realist research agenda dealing with prestige-seeking in international politics.

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[115] Jakobsen, 'Denmark and UN peacekeeping'; Lunde Saxi, *Norwegian and Danish Defence Policy*, pp. 61–74, 91–102.

[116] Håkon Lunde Saxi, 'Baltic Sea Security: Norwegian perspectives', in Ann-Sofie Dahl (ed.), *Strategic Challenges in the Baltic Sea: Deterrence and Reassurance* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, forthcoming 2018).

[117] Tormod Heier, 'Is "out of area" Also "out of control"?', *The RUSI Journal*, 160:1 (2015), pp. 58–66; Jakobsen, 'Denmark and UN peacekeeping', pp. 61–74, 91–102.

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