

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Junior allies in wars of choice: Party politics and role conceptions in Danish and Romanian decisions on the Iraq War

Cornelia Baciú¹  and Anders Wivel² 

¹Centre for Military Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark and

²Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Corresponding author: Cornelia Baciú; Email: Cornelia.Baciú@ifs.ku.dk

(Received 8 February 2023; revised 1 November 2023; accepted 6 December 2023)

Abstract

When and how do party politics matter in junior allies' decisions to engage in multinational military operations? Developing a new role theory model of party politics and multinational military operations, we put forward a two-level argument. First, we argue that the rationale for military action is defined in a contest between political parties with expectations of what constitutes the proper purpose (constitutive roles) and functions (functional roles) of the state. Second, we hold that material and ontological insecurities reduce political space for contestation and debate, but that junior allies tend to focus on role demands for 'good states' and 'good allies' rather than the nature and aim of the military operation. To unpack our argument, we analyse the debate among political parties in Romania and Denmark leading up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Concluding our analysis, we outline the implications for the changing security order and current debates in NATO member states on how to respond to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Keywords: Denmark; Iraq War; party politics; role theory; Romania

Introduction

When and how do party politics matter in junior allies' decisions on how to respond to military conflict? The vivid political debates in most European countries on how to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine have highlighted the role played by political parties in war-related choices, in particular when it comes to identifying what constitutes the proper purpose and functions of the state in international society and in relationships with allies. Constructing and applying a role theoretical framework, and investigating the 2003 Iraq War as a historical case, we argue that junior allies tend to focus on role demands for 'good states' and 'good allies'. This has important consequences for international security at a time when international norms are questioned and international leadership is contested.

While the number of inter-state wars has declined substantially since the sixteenth century, reaching an all-time low in 2020,¹ the involvement of external actors in conflicts around the world has increased substantially since the 1970s. Even though the sites of these conflicts have often been in Africa and the Middle East, a substantial number of the troops deployed have come from Europe and North America. With a more contested security order in Europe and elsewhere, and interstate war resurfacing, most states – as illustrated by the Ukraine War – will continue to make choices

¹Greg Cashman and Leonard C. Robinson, *An Introduction to the Causes of War: Patterns of Interstate Conflict from World War I to Iraq* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), p. 1.

on military conflicts that do not present an existential threat or direct violation of their territorial borders. This article zooms in on the role played by political parties in contexts in which Western junior allies decide on potential military contributions. Decisions on when and how to engage in wars are subject to debate among political parties in most NATO member states and, like the War in Ukraine, the Iraq War spurred considerable debate among NATO member states on which approach would best serve national interests and international security.

For junior allies, the decision to make a military contribution is political and politicised. The external and material threats to national security, which have traditionally been emphasised in the Security Studies literature,² are of little help when seeking to understand deployment decisions. They are decisions on engagements in ‘wars of choice’ rather than ‘wars of necessity’ and consequently subject to politicisation and political contestation over whether, how, and why to engage.³

We claim that political parties play a key role in this process. Political parties traditionally competed over domestic politics but are now important ‘political and ideational agents in security policy.’⁴ We pursue a two-level argument. First, we argue that the rationale for military action is defined in a contest between political parties with expectations of what constitutes the proper purpose (*constitutive role*) and functions (*functional role*) of the state in relations with major allies and international society at large. We acknowledge that party ideology matters in shaping party expectations,⁵ and that party conceptions of a country’s constitutive or functional role may vary as a function of party ideology, but we argue (and show in our analysis) that party ideologies become less relevant when external (ontological and material) threats increase. Furthermore, we acknowledge that foreign policy choices are complex decision-making processes, in which party expectations and country attributes (such as being a junior ally, or material/ontological insecurity) are often intertwined. Consequently, in this article, we do not focus on ideology as a key explanatory variable, but rather on the entanglements between party ideology and role expectations. Second, we hold that material and ontological insecurities reduce political space for contestation and debate, but that junior allies, no matter the size of this political space, tend to focus on *role demands* for ‘good states’ and ‘good allies’ rather than on the nature and aim of the military operation.

Our theoretical starting point is role theory. Over the past two decades, role theory has developed into an important and often used theoretical framework for foreign policy analysis. We offer a reformulation of role theory, allowing us to take into account the increasing importance of political parties in security policy. Our empirical focus is junior allies in multinational military operations. We understand junior allies as any nations taking part in a multilateral military operation without being the one in command; a junior partner is ‘any state whose contribution is not the most important in military (number of troops deployed) or political (leadership) terms.’⁶ Most research focuses on coalition leaders, but today few countries fight alone, and the willingness and ability of junior allies to contribute have an impact on success in the battlefield as well as on the legitimacy of the operations. Why junior allies support or do not support intervention has not been sufficiently addressed in the literature. Understanding junior allies is important for understanding international security, and our article seeks to address this gap.

We conduct a comparative case study of Denmark’s and Romania’s parliamentary debates on participation in the coalition of the willing in Iraq 2003. The ideal-type categories of ‘most similar’

²Stephen M. Walt, ‘The renaissance of security studies’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 35:2 (1991), pp. 211–39.

³Richard Haass, *War of Necessity: War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

⁴Wolfgang Wagner, Anna Herranz-Surrallés, Juliet Kaarbo, and Falk Ostermann, ‘Party politics at the water’s edge: Contestation of military operations in Europe’, *European Political Science Review*, 10:4 (2018), pp. 537–63 (p. 540).

⁵Stephanie C. Hofmann, ‘Beyond culture and power: The role of party ideologies in German foreign and security policy’, *German Politics*, 30:1 (2019), pp. 51–71; Catherine E. De Vries and Gary Marks, ‘The struggle over dimensionality: A note on theory and empirics’, *European Union Politics*, 13:2 (2012), pp. 185–93; Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Ian Budge, and Richard I. Hofferbert, *Parties, Policies, and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994).

⁶Olivier Schmitt, *Allies That Count: Junior Partners in Coalition Warfare* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), p. 6.

and ‘most different’ case-study designs are rarely found outside textbooks for methods courses, but Denmark and Romania are most similar cases when it comes to: (1) a strong pro-Atlanticist security policy, (2) an emphasis on a combination of NATO multilateralism and bilateral relations with the United States, and (3) consistently viewing deployment of troops as a cornerstone of their security policies.⁷ In both countries, the government openly supported the US position on Iraq in 2003. Denmark, with seven other European countries, was a signatory of the ‘letter of the eight’ published in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Times* on 30 January 2003, under the heading ‘Europe and America Must Stand United’. Romania, with nine other Central and East European countries, was a signatory of the ‘Vilnius Letter’ conveying a similar message on 6 February. However, political party debates leading up to votes on support of the invasion played out very differently in the two countries. In Denmark, a junior ally with a long-established and accepted position in the international order, the debate became the most contentious foreign policy issue since the end of the Cold War. In Romania, a state at a crucial moment in the process of establishing relations with the United States and the West at the time of the vote, there was an overwhelming agreement on supporting the invasion, including from the anti-militaristic social democratic party. Cognisant of recent methodological developments in role theory and foreign policy analysis (FPA) scholarship,⁸ we provide a detailed account of our epistemological strategy, research design, and how we conducted our analyses in Appendix 1 ‘Notes on the Epistemological Strategy, Analytical Method, and Data’.

Our article makes two contributions. It advances our understanding of domestic politics and multilateral military operations, thus filling an imminent gap often signalled in the specialist literature, the need to know more not only about ‘*whether* parties matter in foreign policy-making, but *how, when* and *where* they matter.’^{9,10} We shed light on these aspects by studying political parties’ response to role demands on what it means to be a ‘good state’ in international relations and a ‘good ally’ to coalition leader(s). Second, by employing a comparative analysis of two *prima facie* cases, we gain additional inferential leverage. The most similar case design is particularly useful for gaining insights into different potential explanations, by allowing a discovery of whether there are similarities between the two cases regarding the decision on the Iraq War, but also for uncovering fine-grained nuances of participation. Moreover, the need to move from single case studies to comparative research designs and other research strategies allowed us to produce more general insights on the link between domestic politics and military operations than have often been stressed.¹¹

We proceed in five steps to explain how the interactions of party politics and international role demands account for this difference. First, we construct a role theoretical framework for understanding political parties’ decisions on participation in multinational military operations; identify the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of the existing literature on political parties and multinational military operations; and explain what a role theoretical approach can add to existing research. Second, we provide a concise description of our methodological strategy and the interpretative-hermeneutic approach employed. Third, we apply the proposed conceptual framework to the Danish and Romanian decisions on Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 using

⁷James W. Peterson and Jacek Lubecki, ‘Secure East-Central European NATO members: The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia’, in Jacek Lubecki and James W. Peterson (eds), *Defending Eastern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 83–105; Rasmus Mariager and Anders Wivel, *Hvorfor gik Danmark i krig? Uvildig udredning af baggrunden for Danmarks militære engagement i Kosovo, Afghanistan og Irak* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2019).

⁸Patrick A. Mello and Falk Ostermann, *Routledge Handbook of Foreign Policy Analysis Methods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).

⁹Stephanie C. Hofmann and Benjamin Martill, ‘The party scene: New directions for political party research in foreign policy analysis’, *International Affairs*, 97:2 (2021), pp. 305–22 (p. 306).

¹⁰Another recent answer to this question is Sibel Oktay’s work on how the size of government coalition, ideological distance between governing parties, and relations with the parliamentary opposition influence foreign policy; see Sibel Oktay, *Governing Abroad: Coalition Politics and Foreign Policy in Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022).

¹¹Patrick A. Mello and Stephen M. Saideman, ‘The politics of multinational military operations’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 40:1 (2018), pp. 30–7 (p. 33).

parliamentary debates and resolutions in the two countries as our primary source material. Fourth, we discuss the implications of our findings, illuminating the link between parties and role conceptions and stressing the distinct addition that we make to role theory. Finally, we conclude by stating the limitations of our study and proposing avenues for future research.

National role conceptions, junior allies, and war decisions

National role conceptions (NRC) have been examined by role theorists for decades, but the link between political parties and decisions on multinational military operations, especially in the case of junior allies, has been surprisingly neglected. In this section, we propose a theoretical framework seeking to conceptualise this link.

The study of when, how, and why party politics impact participation in multinational military operations has only taken off since the 2010s, even though scholars have grappled with civilian influence and oversight of military operations, examining the influence of endogenous and exogenous factors since the early Cold War.¹² Issues related to public opinion, the electorate, and parliamentary politics or bargaining in liberal democracies received only marginal attention in the study of foreign policy until the end of the Cold War. Aaron Wildavsky's influential distinction between outward-looking foreign policy and inward-looking domestic policy summed up a fundamental if often implicit assumption of much Cold War security policy research,¹³ and the conduct of foreign policy was seen as largely detached from the electorate.¹⁴ To the extent that the International Relations discipline showed any interest in the matter, it tended to be caught up in debates between liberals advocating democratic restraints on policymakers and realists warning against the dangers of emotional decision-making if the general public, lacking the necessary expertise and information, was allowed to influence foreign and security policy.¹⁵ With few exceptions,¹⁶ FPA, although self-consciously 'multifactorial' and 'multilevel', explicitly aiming for 'multi-/interdisciplinarity' and 'profoundly actor-specific in its orientation',¹⁷ focused little on the role of parties and parliaments but primarily on small-group decision-making, organisational processes, and bureaucratic politics.¹⁸ Against this background, it is no surprise that the study of party politics and foreign policy is mainly a post-Cold War phenomenon. Most of the research is either embedded in an American context, reflecting the peculiarities of the US party system, or focused on the effects of globalisation and European integration¹⁹ i.e. developments with a much more direct impact on the electorate than multinational military operations. Findings in this literature highlight the role of party competition dynamics on foreign policy decisions,²⁰ but also the importance of variation

¹²Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957); Michael Charles Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Wolfgang Wagner, 'The democratic control of military power Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2 (2006), pp. 200–16; Cornelia Baciú, *Civil-Military Relations and Global Security Governance: Strategy, Hybrid Orders and the Case of Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 2021).

¹³Aaron Wildavsky, 'The two presidencies', *Trans-Action*, 4 (1966), pp. 7–14.

¹⁴Bernard Cecil Cohen, *The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972).

¹⁵Ole R. Holsti, 'Public opinion and foreign policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann consensus Mershon series: Research programs and debates', *International Studies Quarterly*, 36:4 (1992), pp. 439–66 (pp. 439–40); Avi Shlaim and Avner Yaniv, 'Domestic politics and foreign policy in Israel', *International Affairs*, 56:2 (1980), pp. 242–62.

¹⁶For example Joenniemi Pertti, 'Political parties and foreign policy in Finland', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 13:1 (1978), pp. 43–60.

¹⁷Valerie M. Hudson, 'Foreign policy analysis: Actor-specific theory and the ground of International Relations', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1:1 (2005), pp. 1–30 (pp. 2–3, italics in original).

¹⁸Early post-Cold War pioneers include Juliet Kaarbo, 'Power and influence in foreign policy decision making: The role of junior coalition partners in German and Israeli foreign policy', *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:4 (1996), pp. 501–30; and Marijke Breuning, 'Ethnopolitical parties and development cooperation: The case of Belgium', *Comparative Political Studies*, 32:6 (1999), pp. 724–51.

¹⁹Tapio Raunio and Wolfgang Wagner, 'The party politics of foreign and security policy', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16:4 (2020), pp. 515–31 (pp. 516, 518).

²⁰Angelos-Stylianios Chrysosgelos, 'Patterns of transnational partisan contestation of European foreign policy', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 20:2 (2015), pp. 227–45.

in party ideologies, the impact of political party group cohesion, and coalition patterns.²¹ At the same time, an emerging research agenda explores how party and parliamentary politics impact on decisions on multinational military operations.²² The shared starting point of this research is that even when it comes to decisions on national security and military affairs, politics do not stop ‘at the water’s edge.’²³

The recent wave of studies on multinational military operations focuses to a great extent on domestic constraints, while the influence of international-level factors receives less attention. It finds that left-wing parties are more likely to commit to the deployment of forces to military operations with inclusive goals, and right-wing parties are more likely to commit to the deployment of forces with strategic goals.²⁴ Demonstrating the importance of domestic institutional constraints (most importantly, rules for involving parliament) and the international organisational context (most importantly, formal alliances and institutions vs. ad hoc cooperation), this literature documents considerable variance across democratic regimes due to factors such as political traditions and the nature and salience of the military operation.²⁵

Foreign Policy Analysis remains a ‘neglected element’²⁶ in the literature on parties’ roles in multinational military deployments, with very few studies in this area challenging the conventional wisdom that party political positions on foreign policy primarily reflect attempts to reconcile the aim of reelection with responding to external threats and demands.^{27,28} While these advancements in the study of party politics and foreign policy have significantly improved our understanding of parliamentary war powers and the effect of political ideology on decisions to go to war, they tell us little about the *politics* of troop deployments, i.e. the struggle over what can be meaningfully said and done in terms of how, why, and when to commit troops to multinational military operations. In a world where commitments to fight are rarely a response to a clear and present danger, ‘competition among political projects trying to fix the meaning of the social and in the social’ becomes pivotal for political action and ‘in order for there to be “meaning” there must be a “plot”’.²⁹

²¹Raunio and Wagner, ‘The party politics of foreign and security policy.’

²²Mello and Saideman, ‘The politics of multinational military operations’; Wagner, Herranz-Surrallés, Kaarbo, and Ostermann, ‘Party politics at the water’s edge’; Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo, ‘Contested roles and domestic politics: Reflections on role theory in foreign policy analysis and IR theory’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8:1 (2012), pp. 5–24; Wolfgang Wagner, *The Democratic Politics of Military Interventions: Political Parties, Contestation, and Decisions to Use Force Abroad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Patrick A. Mello, ‘Paths towards coalition defection: Democracies and withdrawal from the Iraq War’, *European Journal of International Security*, 5:1 (2020), pp. 45–76; Roxanna Sjöstedt and Erik Noreen, ‘When peace nations go to war: Examining the narrative transformation of Sweden and Norway in Afghanistan’, *European Journal of International Security*, 6:3 (2021), pp. 318–37; Peter Viggo Jakobsen, Jens Ringsmose, and Håkon Lunde Saxi, ‘Prestige-seeking small states: Danish and Norwegian military contributions to US-led operations’, *European Journal of International Security*, 3:2 (2018), pp. 256–77; Oktay, *Governing Abroad*.

²³Famously coined in a 1991 study by Thomas J. Volgy and John E. Schwarz, ‘Does politics stop at the water’s edge? Domestic political factors and foreign policy restructuring in the cases of Great Britain, France, and West Germany’, *The Journal of Politics*, 53:3 (1991), pp. 615–43.

²⁴See, for example, Tim Haesebrouck and Patrick A. Mello, ‘Patterns of political ideology and security policy’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16:4 (2020), pp. 565–86; Wagner, Herranz-Surrallés, Kaarbo, and Ostermann, ‘Party politics at the water’s edge’.

²⁵Patrick A. Mello, *Democratic Participation in Armed Conflict: Military Involvement in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Tapio Raunio and Wolfgang Wagner, *Challenging Executive Dominance Legislatures and Foreign Affairs* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018); Daniel Schade, ‘Limiting or liberating? The influence of parliaments on military deployments in multinational settings’, *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 20:1 (2018), pp. 84–103.

²⁶Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (Florence: Routledge, 2012), p. 80.

²⁷See, for example, Joe D. Hagan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994); Alastair Smith, ‘Diversionary foreign policy in democratic systems’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:1 (1996), pp. 133–53.

²⁸The accumulation of this research has been facilitated by publication of special issues/sections of *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2018), *Contemporary Security Policy* (2019), and *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2020). For introductory articles to these sections, see Patrick A. Mello and Dirk Peters, ‘Parliaments in security policy: Involvement, politicisation, and influence’, *British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 20:1 (2018), pp. 3–18; Mello and Saideman, ‘The politics of multinational military operations’; and Raunio and Wagner, ‘The party politics of foreign and security policy’.

²⁹Ole Wæver, ‘The language of foreign policy’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 27:3 (1990), pp. 335–43 (p. 390).

We theorise the relationship between party and foreign and military policy roles as a situation in which parties can be shapers of the plot and carriers of roles. This can vary systematically across party ideologies,³⁰ but we do not expect this to be always the case. Deviations from this rule are more likely in the case of a junior ally constrained by material and ontological insecurities, because it has less agency. The rationale for military action is defined in a contest between political parties with expectations of what constitutes the proper purpose (*constitutive role*) and functions (*functional role*) of the state in relations with major allies and international society at large. However, junior allies, no matter the size of the political space, can be anticipated to focus on role demands for ‘good states’ and ‘good allies’ rather than the nature and aim of the military operation.

Party roles in foreign policy can include agenda-setting, agenda-following, and interest-aggregation.³¹ They are central to making sense of the world, the challenges, threats, and opportunities to national security, and the level and types of resources to be allocated for meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities. In debates on troop deployments, political parties contest what counts as ontological and material security challenges and how to meet these challenges in ways that are both effective and legitimate. In doing so, they help shape national role conceptions (NRCs), understood as:

Policymakers’ own *definitions* of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions, suitable to their state, and of the *functions*, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems.³²

National role conceptions, according to role theory, are shaped by an assemblage of agreed-upon standards for how a state should conduct itself depending on its place in the world.³³ NRCs are most often seen as ‘repertoires of behaviour’ inferred from one’s own and others’ expectations³⁴ and may refer both to ‘positions’ in an organised group (e.g. member of NATO) and to any socially recognised category of actors (e.g. the bridge-builder, the loyal ally, the policy innovator).

Roles are relational and made up of two types of expectations. First, the expectations of ‘self’, i.e. the self-narrative generated by expectations from domestic audiences and/or elites of what constitutes the true qualities and characteristics of the state in international relations and how it is seen by others (according to this narrative).³⁵ Second, the expectations of ‘other’, i.e. ‘implicit or explicit demands by others.’³⁶ Foreign policy is defined in the intersection between self and others’ expectations, but the majority of research in the FPA literature concentrates on the NRCs conjured by foreign policy elites.³⁷ This follows logically from K.J. Holsti’s original formulation of the theory, which based NRCs on statements from heads of states and government and foreign ministers.³⁸ As roles are not static, but in relation to a referent object, parties might embrace NRCs differently in different contexts.

³⁰Cantir and Kaarbo, ‘Contested roles and domestic politics’; Brian C. Rathbun, *Partisan Interventions: European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); Cameron G. Thies, ‘Role theory and foreign policy analysis in Latin America’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13:3 (2017), pp. 662–81.

³¹Alden and Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, p. 80.

³²K. J. Holsti, ‘Role conceptions in the study of foreign policy’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 14: 3 (1970), pp. 233–309 (p. 246, emphasis added).

³³Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Toolbox* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2018), p. 271.

³⁴Stephen G. Walker, ‘Symbolic interactionism and international politics: Role theory’s contribution to international organization’, in Martha Cottam and Chih Y. Shih (eds), *Contending Dramas: A Cognitive Approach to International Organizations* (New York: Praeger, 1992), pp. 19–38.

³⁵Cameron Thies, ‘Role theory and foreign policy’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 1, 15.

³⁶Sebastian Harnisch, ‘Role theory: Operationalization of key concepts’, in Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (eds), *Role Theory in International Relations: Approaches and Analyses* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 7–15 (p. 8).

³⁷Klaus Brummer and Cameron G. Thies, ‘The contested selection of national role conceptions’, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 11:3 (2015), pp. 273–93 (p. 273).

³⁸Holsti, ‘National role conceptions in the study of foreign policy’.

	Good state	Good ally
Constitutive roles <i>Who are we?</i>	Competing party understandings of the <i>generalized other</i> international expectations to a good state.	Competing party identifications of <i>significant others</i> and their expectations.
Functional roles <i>What do we do?</i>	How good state expectations are translated into foreign policy on the specific security problem.	How junior ally's expectations are translated into participation in a multinational military operation.

Figure 1. Constitutive and functional roles for junior allies in multinational military operations.

Parties' NRCs usually vary across party ideology, but this may not be the case in foreign and security policy decisions because of the ontological nature of the referent object. In security and defence policy, the substantial and rising costs of defence equipment in combination with increased geopolitical tensions create an upward trend in national military expenditure in most countries, leading to increased competition between defence spending and spending in other issue areas. Consequently, security and defence politics are increasingly part of political 'who gets what, when, and how' debates in domestic society. Moreover, the non-existential nature of most modern wars for the large majority of participating states means that war is a political and potentially contested choice. As concluded in a major quantitative analysis of party contestation on the use of armed force, political parties in Europe routinely debate over whether their nation should take part in missions for peace and security and, over time, gaps in support for military actions across parties are widening, rather than narrowing.³⁹

To take stock of junior allies' decisions on the use of force in contested wars, we develop a matrix framework along constitutive and functional role conceptions based on the meaning of good state (good international behaviour) and good ally, as illustrated in Figure 1. We discuss our framework and define the different dimensions below.

We argue that two constitutive roles are important for junior allies when deciding on multinational military operations.⁴⁰ First, junior allies, like other small states or middle powers, aim to be good states, i.e. to commit to 'foregrounding moral conduct'.⁴¹ A good state is 'committed to moral purposes beyond itself'.⁴² Its foreign policy is characterised by the propensity to seek out multilateral solutions to international issues, the inclination to support concessions in international disputes, and the tendency to support ideas of 'good international citizenship' as a framework for diplomacy.⁴³ Role theory points to two sources of good state expectations. One is domestic and individual expectations denoting the actors' reference to 'self-organizing (usually material) qualities of society' and 'internal principles of political legitimacy'.⁴⁴ They are self-referential discourses

³⁹Wagner, Herranz-Surrallés, Kaarbo, and Ostermann, 'Party politics at the water's edge', pp. 556–7.

⁴⁰We take inspiration from Juliet Kaarbo and Cristian Cantir, 'Role conflict in recent wars: Danish and Dutch debates over Iraq and Afghanistan', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48:4 (2013), pp. 465–83, who highlight the importance of domestic politics and identify a conflict between good state and good ally roles in Danish and Dutch debates on multinational military operations but do not theorise the roles and their embeddedness in party politics.

⁴¹William C. Wohlforth, Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and Iver B. Neumann, 'Moral authority and status in International Relations: Good states and the social dimension of status seeking', *Review of International Studies*, 44: 3 (2018), pp. 526–46 (p. 534).

⁴²Peter Lawler, 'The good state: In praise of "classical" internationalism', *Review of International Studies*, 31:3 (2005), pp. 427–49 (p. 441).

⁴³Andrew F. Cooper (Andrew Fenton), Richard A. Higgott, and Kim R. Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993), p. 175.

⁴⁴Vit Benes and Sebastian Harnisch, 'Role theory in symbolic interactionism: Czech Republic, Germany and the EU', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50:1 (2015), pp. 146–65 (p. 149).

identifying the ‘true’ qualities of the actor. The other source – in the language of role theory – is the ‘generalized other’, an imagined and ‘abstract reference point for the “I” to recognize itself as belonging to a special type (identity) or social category’.⁴⁵ Consequently, the generalised other appears in political speech when references to impersonal entities, such as mankind or Europe, are made.⁴⁶

Second, junior allies aim to be good allies. As in the case of the good state role, the good ally role is constituted by domestic and international expectations or, in the language of role theory, ego and alter roles. Political parties may vary in their expectations of what constitutes a good ally: is it speaking truth to power or loyally doing as you are told? At the same time, expectations from the ‘significant other’, i.e. one or more states represented as ‘the main socializing agent(s) in role learning, attracting the attention of politicians of different stripes [in domestic discourse]’ enable that ‘the nation’s self emerges as its politicians constantly compare and relate their nation vis-a-vis the significant other’.⁴⁷ The significant other may be good, e.g. a great power with which the junior ally sees itself in a ‘special relationship’,⁴⁸ or bad, e.g. a former colonial power against which political parties construct the national role. Political parties may have different significant others, and the good significant other of one party may be the bad significant other of other parties. In multinational military operations, the significant other(s) may be the coalition leader, the target state, or other states that the junior ally defines its own role in relation to (e.g. liberal democracies, European partners).

The constitutive roles of good state and good ally (‘who we are’) underpin *functional roles* (‘what we do’).⁴⁹ We define functional roles as the perceived state functions in relation with major allies and international society at large. We argue that party conceptions of a country’s constitutive or functional role may vary as a function of party ideology, but that party ideologies become less relevant when external threats increase. In the absence of an imminent threat to national security, political parties can afford to have micro-grained debates and engage in contestation based on their ideologies. When the issue debated is salient for state survival, party ideologies might become less relevant, in the sense that material and ontological insecurities reduce political space for contestation and debate, similar to a securitisation dynamic in which referent objects are non-negotiable. In regard to multinational military operations, some political parties may agree on what it means to be a good state or a good ally but not on what this implies for foreign policy and troop deployment in the actual situation. Roles can be constituted by both current others and historical others, i.e. past deeds, formative and traumatic experiences.⁵⁰ The individual histories of political parties and how their historical role in foreign and security policy is constructed today help shape the view on current challenges. The political party discourse on multinational military operations may be ego or alter dominated, i.e. in the extreme, rejecting international expectations as irrelevant or, in contrast, viewing them as all important.⁵¹

Methodological considerations

To illustrate our argument, we employ an *interpretative-hermeneutic strategy*. We define this as an interpretative type of phenomenological research.⁵² As it is an epistemological approach based on qualitative inquiry, the advantages of this particular strategy is that it brings to the fore

⁴⁵Harnisch, ‘Role theory’, p. 11.

⁴⁶Benes and Harnisch, ‘Role theory in symbolic interactionism’, p. 150.

⁴⁷Benes and Harnisch, ‘Role theory in symbolic interactionism’, p. 150.

⁴⁸Kristin Haugevik, *Special Relationships in World Politics: Inter-State Friendship and Diplomacy after the Second World War* (Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2018).

⁴⁹On constitutive and functionally specific roles, see Harnisch, ‘Role theory’.

⁵⁰Benes and Harnisch, ‘Role theory in symbolic interactionism’, p. 151.

⁵¹See also the discussion in Benes and Harnisch, ‘Role theory in symbolic interactionism’.

⁵²Ann E. Holroyd McManus, ‘Interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology: Clarifying understanding’, *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 7:2 (2007), pp. 1–12; Philip Cushman (ed.), *Hermeneutic Approaches to Interpretive Research: Dissertations in a Different Key* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

historical experiences and phenomena such as past occurrences and collective memory, allowing us thus to interpret the meaning of certain foreign policy decisions in context. What makes an *interpretative-hermeneutic approach* distinct from a simple ‘interpretative approach’ is the focus on states’ historical experiences and phenomena. Applying an interpretative-hermeneutic method allows us to take into consideration the past, current, and future aspirations of states, and their significance for foreign policy preferences. Acknowledging that ‘language is pivotal’⁵³ in uncovering meanings and justifications, we look at the speech acts in Romanian and Danish parliaments and adopted resolutions in the context of votes accompanying the countries’ decision in relation to the US invasion of Iraq. We document the empirical material used and how exactly we analyzed it in Appendix 1.

We now move to present our argument on the case of the 2003 Iraq votes in the Romanian and Danish parliaments.

Party politics and the 2003 Iraq votes in the Romanian and Danish parliaments

This section provides an overview of the parameters and background of the voting on the 2003 Iraq invasion in the Romanian and Danish parliaments. We discuss the meaning of those votes from a role theory perspective in the following section. An overview of the two countries’ involvement in international missions and military deployments, as well as the legal-constitutional framework regarding the circumstances of use of force abroad, are provided in Appendix 2, ‘Overview on International Missions and the Legal-Constitutional Framework Regarding the Use of Force Abroad’.

In the context of the intervention in Iraq in 2003, there were four votes in the Romanian parliament during common sessions of the two chambers, as shown in Table 1.⁵⁴

The February vote on Romania’s support for an eventual US intervention in Iraq, in the context of the accession to NATO, received overwhelming support, despite concerns about the legality of such an intervention. Most remarkably, role conceptions conflict between parties’ interpretations and expectations was low, and support for the United States during the debates was largely justified by the ontological meaning of the decision to support or not support the United States for the country’s national security on the one side, and the continuation of the tradition of support for Western values of freedom and democracy post-Revolution on the other. Securing access to the Western international system was a major priority for Romanian leaders, and NATO membership was largely perceived as the only security guarantee for building a security framework in the Black Sea region in the face of a hostile Russia.⁵⁵ Seeking to re-emerge from the severe isolationism during the Ceaușescu era, Romania made desperate efforts to ‘remain afloat in the warm waters of international events’, with the conflict in Transnistria and the wars in the former Yugoslavia being perceived as national threats.⁵⁶ While Europe was divided on Iraq, for Romania it was clear that support for their US ally was crucial and, as the social democratic prime minister Adrian Năstase put it, the country was willing to ‘pay for action, rather than for inaction.’⁵⁷ President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Adrian Năstase both agreed on the support, and voting occurred at a time when the social democratic party had a significant lead in the polls. Public support for the government, pro-Western attitudes, high trust rates for NATO (which was perceived as source of security), and possibly an opposition ‘weakened by excessive splitting and factionalism’⁵⁸ might have all

⁵³Holroyd McManus, ‘Interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology’, p. 2.

⁵⁴Based on Falk Ostermann, Cornelia Baciu, Florian Böller, et al., *Parliamentary Deployment Votes Database*, Version 3 (2021). Harvard Dataverse, available at: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LHYQFM>.

⁵⁵James W. Peterson, *Building a Framework of Security for Southeast Europe and the Black Sea Region: A Challenge Facing NATO* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013).

⁵⁶Mariana Cernicova-Buca, ‘Romania: The quest for membership’, in Gale A. Mattox (ed.), *Enlarging NATO* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022), pp. 199–218 (pp. 200, 201).

⁵⁷Aura Matei, ‘Adrian Năstase: Prefer sa platesc pentru actiune decat pentru inactiune’, *Revista 22* (7 April 2003).

⁵⁸Ronald H. Linden, ‘Twin Peaks Romania and Bulgaria between the EU and the United States’, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 51:5 (2004), pp. 45–55 (p. 52).

Table 1. Votes on the 2003 military engagement in Iraq in the Romanian parliament.

Cabinet	Parties in Government	Date	Name	Yes votes	No votes	Abstentions	Votes cast	Share yes	Share no	Support intervention
Nastase I	PDSR; PSDR; PUR	12 Feb. 2003	Parliament Decision no. 2 of February 12, 2003 on Romania's participation in the Coalition against Iraq	351	2	74	427	82.2%	0.5%	82.2%
Nastase II	PSD	19 June 2003	Parliament Decision no. 15 of June 19, 2003 on the participation of Romania with units and sub-units from the Ministry of National Defense in the fourth phase of stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq	unACC	unACC	unACC	Missing data-point	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Nastase II	PSD	26 June 2003	Parliament Decision no. 17 of June 26, 2003 on supplementing Romania's participation with special formations from the Ministry of National Defense in the stabilization and reconstruction missions in Iraq	481	0	1	482	99.8%	0.0%	99.8%
Nastase II	PSD	9 October 2003	Parliament Decision no. 22 of October 9, 2003 on supplementing Romania's participation with personnel from the Ministry of National Defense in the fourth phase of stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq	ACC	0	3	Missing data-point	Missing data-point	Missing data-point	Missing data-point

factored in the voting preferences. The vote on 12 February was on Romania's participation in a multinational military operation against Iraq, subsequent to a letter by US president George W. Bush of 31 January 2003 to the president of Romania. The letter came nearly two months after the visit of President Bush to Revolution Square in Bucharest, in which he praised the US partnership with Romania and formally invited the country to join NATO. The February vote on supporting a US armed invasion in Iraq, potentially in the absence of a United Nations (UN) mandate, was not a given. The party in power, the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat, PSD), surprisingly supported the US-led intervention war. Interestingly, in the context of the intervention in Kosovo, although the multi-party coalition under the centre-right-led cabinet at the time largely aligned with the NATO position, PSD (at that time in the opposition) was against the country's participation in the intervention in Kosovo and formally abstained during that vote. Although the party might have changed in comparison to 1999, the PSD-led government in 2003 would have been expected to be similarly sceptical towards a US-led military invasion without UN approval, also given that 2003 was an electoral year. PSD had made a U-turn compared to its 1999 position. Despite being the first country to join the NATO Partnership for Peace in 1994, the country's liminality between the West and Russia since the end of the communist era was a central reason for which it was believed⁵⁹ to have not been invited to join NATO during the fourth round of enlargements in 1998, when Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joined the alliance, and PSD⁶⁰ was believed to be responsible for the ambivalence, and potentially partially for the failure, to join NATO in 1999. In that context, Russia's foreign policy ambitions to establish spheres of influence 'near abroad'⁶¹ raised regional concern. PSD's reorientation in its foreign policy preferences had already been made visible with the party's support for the United States in the context of the 2001 war in Afghanistan. Although we cannot know for sure how much of a role was played by party ideology and how much by other factors in the PSD's voting choice to support the US intervention in Iraq, one core line of our argument holds strong: disagreement as a pattern will be more likely to emerge in Denmark rather than Romania, given Romania's more severe material/ontological constraints. In the context of Iraq, the Romanian parliament approved the deployment of 278 troops. They were part of different sub-units, such as nuclear, chemical, and biological decontamination, medical, and others, but not in a combat capacity. The use of Romanian airspace and airbases, such as that in Constanta, did not require renewed approval by the parliament, as it had already approved it for use on 19 September 2002, in the framework of the War on Terror and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.⁶² The support for the 12 February vote was 82.2%, the lowest in the recent history of deployment votes in the Romanian parliament, with 2 members of the nationalist, right-wing⁶³ Great Romania Party (PRM) voting no and 74 abstaining from the vote.⁶⁴ On 19 June, the parliament voted on the additional deployment of 778 troops from various divisions,⁶⁵ in the framework of the fourth phase of stabilisation and reconstruction in Iraq, under the command of the United Kingdom. The deployment was approved in unanimity, and two subsequent parliamentary votes in 2003 received overwhelming cross-party support for continued

⁵⁹ See, for example, the interview with former president Emil Constantinescu (1996–2000), available at: <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/de-ce-nu-ne-a-vrut-clinton-in-nato-in-1997-emil-2053575.html>.

⁶⁰ At that time, the Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR).

⁶¹ Elias Götz, 'Near abroad: Russia's role in post-Soviet Eurasia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 74:9 (2022), pp. 1529–50.

⁶² Petre Dobrescu, 'Astazi se decide intrarea in razboi', *Libertatea* (9 February 2013).

⁶³ We use labels to delineate attributes of parties in Romania and Denmark and their party families based on the joint assessment of the Comparative Manifesto Database (WZB), Chapel Hill Expert Survey (University of South Carolina), and Ostermann et al., *Parliamentary Deployment Votes Database*. We find the labels useful, because the absence of labels would require additional explanation of the ideological articulations of each party, or the party names would become empty signifiers.

⁶⁴ The vote of 30 April 2002 on supplementing 500 more troops for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan had a similarly low level of support.

⁶⁵ The parliament unanimously agreed on the continuation of Romania's active participation with a contingent of 405 military troops, 100 members of the military police (gendarmarie), a 'genius' detachment consisting of 149 militaries, 20 major state officers, and four legacy officers.

engagement (see Table 1). In a subsequent vote on Iraq in 2008, the continuation of Romania's participation with units and sub-units from the Ministry of Defence in the stabilisation of Iraq was approved with a large majority, 42 abstentions (of the liberal PNL party),⁶⁶ and no votes against. The importance of the 12 February vote is illustrated by the length of the debate, which occurred during an emergency session in the parliament, where debates are usually rather short.⁶⁷

During the 12 February debate, only the nationalist PRM representative Ilie Ilascu argued against intervention, with the Social Democrat Party (PSD), the liberal-conservative Democratic Party (PD), the National Liberal Party (PNL), the ethnic centre-right Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), and the independents supporting the intervention. In his intervention, the nationalist PRM representative objected to the uncertain conditions under which Romania would contribute to a potential operation, emphasising that the invitation came from the United States and not from NATO. PRM representative Ilie Ilascu outlined the lack of a UN mandate and the Council of Europe vote against the war in the absence of such a mandate. The UN was perceived as the only valid authority to take such a decision as invading Iraq. Moreover, he expressed concerns about the costs, potential loss of human lives, repercussions on national security, and aversion by European countries regarding future investments in Romania. He argued that the US endeavour to invade was driven by domestic politics and the need to find scapegoats, closing his intervention with a patriotic appeal invoking the war in Transnistria against Russia and Transnistrian separatists, in which he participated as the leader of a unit of volunteers (in Tiraspol). Russia actively supported the Russian-speaking population and separatists in Transnistria, especially in the context of anxieties about an imminent reunion of the Republic of Moldova (of which Transnistria is formally part) and Romania after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Moldova's proclamation of independence in 1991.⁶⁸

Despite the controversial matter of intervention, all other political parties, including the left-wing Social Democratic Party, whose leaders consisted largely of member of the old pre-1989 communist *nomenklatura*, voted in favour of supporting the US operation, with Romania having one of the highest rates of parliamentary approval for the invasion in Iraq. In their interventions, the supporting parties shaped a meaning of Romania as both good state and good ally, as we explain in depth in the discussion part of this article. Being a good state and good ally to the United States was largely perceived as a premise and obligation in return for eventual security guarantees in the form of NATO membership. As one PSD senator rhetorically asked during the February debate: 'Does anyone think that the country's security can be ensured and guaranteed without having obligations?' (emphasis added).⁶⁹ The decision on the Iraq War was seen as a critical juncture for Romania's ontological condition, both in terms of being (who we are) and doing (what we do), crucial foremost for the country's security. The meaning of the war for the country's national security and the critical juncture of the vote ahead of the decision on the country's NATO membership left little room for taking 'mistaken decisions', as one PSD senator put it:

Allow me to evoke another diplomat, Bruce Lockard, who said: 'In foreign affairs, only great powers can afford the luxury of making mistakes.' We are not a great power, except perhaps

⁶⁶While counterintuitive, given the PNL's liberal foreign policy outlook, the party abstained from the 2008 extension vote. As per the party official justification, this was for two reasons: (1) the expiration of the UNSCR 1790 on 31 December 2008, which would have involved Romanian troops being stationed in Iraq for a period of eight days without a clear mandate, and (2) the lack of a clear exit strategy. The PNL highlighted multiple times during the parliamentary debate on 22 December 2008 that, while the Romanian decision to respond favourably to their allies' invitation to continue participation in the stabilisation mission was correct, the legislative act which was voted on should have been amended to include provisions on the two aspects mentioned above. See the full transcript of the parliamentary debate of 22 December 2008, available at: <https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno2015.stenograma?ids=6564&idm=8&idl=2>.

⁶⁷The full transcription of the debate can be found at: <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=58&idl=1>.

⁶⁸Ioan Popa and Luiza Popa. 'Transnistria: A challenge for Romania', *Annals: Series on History and Archaeology*, 6:2 (2014), pp. 89–98.

⁶⁹See the intervention by Ghiorgi Prisăcaru, available at: <https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=58&idl=1>.

in its cultural dimension. Therefore, we cannot afford to make mistakes in moments of great emotional charge on a political-diplomatic level. (Ghiorghi Prisăcaru, PSD)

Being a good ally in the context of the war in Iraq was perceived as being a reliable country, i.e. a credible and supporting partner for the United States and the transatlantic alliance.⁷⁰ The meaning of good state was mainly shaped by the appeal to democratic values and a view of emancipation from the communist past. Strongly condemning the violation of international norms by Saddam Hussein, support for the intervention was seen by Romanian parties as a commitment to those who fought in the 1989 Revolution and an abstract recognition of self as a country promoting liberal democratic values.

In the case of Denmark, politics had stopped at the water's edge with stable support for military engagement by a centre-right and centre-left coalition supporting military engagement since the end of the Cold War, but the March 2003 decision on military engagement in Iraq was a major exception to this rule of consensus. As shown in Table 2,⁷¹ the vote divided the Danish parliament into two blocs almost equal in size, and the otherwise stable pro-military engagement majority was only rebuilt gradually in succeeding votes on continuing the engagement.⁷²

On 21 March 2003, a narrow majority in the Danish parliament decided to adopt Resolution B118 authorising Danish military participation in a multinational operation in Iraq. The resolution was supported by the members of the coalition government – the liberals and the conservatives – and the Danish People's Party, a nationalist populist party which had lent its support to the formation of the government after the 2001 election in exchange for stricter migration policies. In total, the three parties had 94 seats in parliament, just over the 90 seats needed for a simple majority. All other parties in parliament voted against the resolution, including the Social Democrats, the Social Liberal Party, the small Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist People's Party, the far-left Unity List, and the Greenlandic Siumut. The vote constituted the first major break in centre-left, centre-right consensus on Danish security and defence policy after the Cold War, and only the second major break since the end of World War II.⁷³ The cause of this break was competing understandings of Denmark's role as a good state and a good ally.⁷⁴

According to B118, Danish participation was 'a natural extension of the traditional Danish effort to contribute towards a strengthening of the international legal order', which allowed Denmark to contribute towards the 'elimination of the threat to peace and stability in the region [the Middle East]'.⁷⁵ The parliamentary resolution authorised a Danish contribution, including a submarine, a corvette, a medical team, and liaison and staff officers, and stressed that the operation was in accordance with the existing Danish policy on Iraq as well as the Danish policy to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Overall, and in contrast to the political debate in Denmark and internationally, the resolution stressed the non-exceptional character of the contribution. Surprisingly, given this controversy, it signalled role compliance with 'active internationalism', a centre-right, centre-left consensus post-Cold War understanding of the good state in international relations. In this understanding, a good small state takes advantage of the increased foreign policy action

⁷⁰Cf. Nele Marianne Ewers-Peters and Cornelia Baciuc, 'Differentiated integration and role conceptions in multilateral security orders: A comparative study of France, Germany, Ireland and Romania', *Defence Studies*, 22:4 (2022), pp. 666–88.

⁷¹Based on Ostermann et al., *Parliamentary Deployment Votes Database*.

⁷²The Danish military engagement in Iraq was subsequently renewed by parliamentary resolutions in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007, each time with a large parliamentary majority. See Clara Lyngholm Mortensen and Anders Wivel, 'Mønstre og udviklingslinjer i Danmarks militære engagement 1945–2018', in Rasmus Mariager and Anders Wivel (eds), *Hvorfor gik Danmark i krig? Irak og tværgående analyser* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2019), appendix.

⁷³The Cold War divide between 1982 and 1988 was over US and NATO policy towards the Soviet Union, which was supported by the centre-right government but often viewed as too confrontational by the centre-left opposition.

⁷⁴Kaarbo and Cantir, 'Role conflict in recent wars', see this as a role conflict between being a good state and a good ally, whereas we argue that it is a conflict between two different understandings of what it means to be a good state. They rely on international news sources, whereas we base our study on debates in the Danish parliament and Danish news sources.

⁷⁵Folketinget, 'B 118 (som fremsat): Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational indsats i Irak' (18 March 2003), available at http://webarkiv.ft.dk/Samling/20021/afstemningsforslag_fremsaettelse/B118.htm.

Table 2. Votes on the 2003 military engagement in Iraq in the Danish parliament.

Cabinet	Parties in Government	Date	Name	Yes votes	No votes	Abstentions	Votes cast	Share yes	Share no	Support intervention
Fogh Rasmussen I	Liberals, Conservatives	21 March 2003	B118 Dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational indsats i Irak	61	50	0	111	55.0%	45.0%	55.0%
Fogh Rasmussen I	Liberals, Conservatives	15 May 2003	B165 Dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational sikringsstyrke i Irak	89	15	0	104	85.6%	14.4%	85.6%
Fogh Rasmussen I	Liberals, Conservatives	10 October 2003	B1 Styrkelse af det danske bidrag til den multinationale sikringsstyrke i Irak	94	15	0	109	86.2%	13.8%	86.2%
Fogh Rasmussen I	Liberals, Conservatives	2 December 2003	B56 Fortsat dansk bidrag til den multinationale sikringsstyrke i Irak	103	9	0	112	92.0%	8.0%	92.0%

space after the Cold War and leaves behind acquiescence and adaptation to great power politics. It proactively defines its international goals and strategically uses available means to pursue these goals by prioritising and mobilising the necessary resources, even when this is risky.⁷⁶ Institutional and military activism are viewed as two roads to the same end: a stable and rule-based international order serving Danish interests and values.⁷⁷ While Danish foreign policymakers viewed the UN as the ideal institutional framework for active internationalist role enactment in the early Cold War,⁷⁸ Danish participation in the NATO bombings of Serbian positions in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 without UN approval had been authorised by a majority in the Danish parliament, including liberals and conservatives as well as social democrats and social liberals.

While Parliamentary Resolution B118 signalled that Danish military engagement was merely an enactment of Denmark's post-Cold War good state role as an active internationalist, Denmark's participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom caused considerable political controversy and remains the most prominent example of politics *not* stopping at the water's edge since the end of the Cold War. It was the first time since 1945 that Denmark had committed troops without the backing of all parties behind the Danish defence budget, typically a five-year agreement negotiated between the centre-left and the centre-right. It was also the first time that the liberals and the social democrats (who between them had supplied the prime ministers in Danish governments for 83 out of the preceding 102 years since the advent of parliamentary democracy in 1901) were on different sides in a vote on deployment of Danish troops. To be sure, this was not a disagreement over military activism. Since 1945, the two parties had stood shoulder to shoulder in their support for Danish military deployments, and, together with the conservatives, they self-defined as 'the defence friendly parties' during and after the Cold War. It was also not a disagreement over the importance of Atlanticism. Both parties had viewed the US security shelter as vital for Danish security interests during and after the Cold War. US president Bill Clinton had visited Copenhagen in 1997 upon invitation from the social democratic government, and then Danish social democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen caused considerable international attention following his commitment in an interview with CNN to go 'all the way' with the United States as a response to 9/11.⁷⁹

Political parties and the role-based conceptions of 'good state' and 'good ally' in Romania and Denmark

This section first unveils how the rationale for military action is defined in a contest between political parties with expectations of what constitutes the proper purpose (*constitutive roles*) and functions of the state (*functional roles*) in international society and in the state's most salient alliance relationships. Second, it shows that material and ontological insecurities reduce political space for contestation and debate, but that junior allies, no matter the size of this political space, tend to focus on role demands for 'good states' and 'good allies' rather than the nature and aim of the military operation. Third, we unpack how and why our contribution to role theory makes a difference for understanding the role of party politics in junior allies' decisions to go to war.

In both Danish and Romanian parliaments, parties focused their discourse on constitutive roles concerned with questions of identity and 'who we are'. Romanian political parties complied with good state expectations in line with democratic values. Participation in the US-led coalition was viewed as being a good state in 'the West', worthy of NATO membership. Not only was NATO

⁷⁶Hans-Henrik Holm, 'Danish foreign policy activism: The rise and decline', in Bertel Heurlin and Hans Mouritzen (eds), *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2022* (Copenhagen: Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Institut, 2002), pp. 19–45 (p. 23). Anders Wivel, 'Between paradise and power: Denmark's transatlantic dilemma', *Security Dialogue*, 36:3 (2005), pp. 417–42 (p. 419).

⁷⁷Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, "'What's the use of it?' Danish strategic culture and the utility of armed force', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40:1 (2005), pp. 67–89 (p. 77).

⁷⁸Poul Villaume, 'Denmark and NATO through 50 years', in Bertel Heurlin and Hans Mouritzen (eds), *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 1999* (Copenhagen: Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Institut, pp. 29–61 (p. 48).

⁷⁹Mariager and Wivel, *Hvorfor gik Danmark i krig?*, p. 268.

membership seen as a guarantor of 'self' and as defence against the threat from the east – just as this is contemporarily seen by Finland and Sweden in the context of the Russian invasion in Ukraine – but this was genuinely seen as being in line with the country's post-communist foreign policy posture of openness and aspirations to integrate into the club of the liberal democratic countries of the West. Regarding Denmark's constitutive role, the decision on Iraq crystallised ideologically grounded disagreements over what constituted the 'generalised other', i.e. what generated international expectations of a good state and therefore competing ideal-type expectations of the good state in party discourses. We now discuss the debates in the two countries and how they relate to constitutive roles of what constitutes a good state.

The debate in the Romanian parliament revealed a large party consensus on constitutive role conceptions, with hefty invocations of liberal democratic values and condemnation of non-compliance with international law and terrorism. Access to the club of Western institutions was seen as a natural continuation of Romanian foreign policy since the end of the Cold War and as a guarantee of national security in a strategically laden region. In the former communist country, Euro-Atlantic integration evolved as the new strategy to maintain security in the Black Sea region,⁸⁰ but also as a source of military modernisation so as to be better equipped in a context of turmoil and uncertainty, especially with eyes on Russia's ambitions. In the context of Iraq, many parliamentarians expressed faith in a political solution and successful implementation of UNSCR 1441, and war was perceived as a measure of last resort for ending a dictatorial regime violating international law. Unsurprisingly, the intervention was seen as largely legitimate, a corollary to the country's own remembered past and the bloodshed during the 1989 revolution to end the communist regime, as well as formative and traumatic experiences in that context.⁸¹ During the February 2003 debate in the Parliament, the representative of the opposition liberal party PNL, Ovidiu-Virgil Drăgănescu, condemned Saddam Hussein's violation of 18 UN resolutions.⁸² He made an appeal to democratic values, justifying his position with reference to the Romanian revolution, when thousands of people lost their lives fighting for democracy, and argued that the United States had also paid the price of democracy. The rapporteur of the NATO General Assembly, Petre Roman, formerly affiliated with the social democrats as well as a participant in the Romanian 1989 revolution, also stressed UNSCR 1441 and previous breaches of international peace by Saddam Hussein.⁸³

Support for participation was understood as a continuation of Romania's posture of alignment with Western democratic powers and previous support of interventions in Iraq, former Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan. The social democratic minister of foreign affairs Mircea Geoană stated⁸⁴ that the continuous policy of alignment with democratic values was a consensual policy. Not only were Romania's security interests best protected within Western organisations such as NATO and the European Union (EU), but Romania belonged in the West. Saddam Hussein was depicted once more as a negative 'other' and a risk to international security, in the context of the view on weapons of mass destruction. Addressing concerns raised by the other opposition parties (the liberals, ethnic Hungarians, and liberal conservatives) regarding the lack of consultations with EU states, Geoană argued that consultations were conducted with Germany, France, and Greece, which was holding the EU presidency at that time, signalling that Romania sought to convey its position to EU leaders. He clarified, addressing some of the particular objections of the nationalist PRM party, that the

⁸⁰Ronald D. Asmus, Konstantin Dimitrov, Joerg Forbrig, and Dimitris Filippidis, 'A new Euro-Atlantic strategy for the Black Sea region', *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 5:2 (2005), pp. 311–13; Peterson, *Building a Framework of Security*.

⁸¹Benes and Harnisch, 'Role theory in symbolic interactionism', p. 151.

⁸²See the intervention by Ovidiu-Virgil Drăgănescu, available at: <https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=5&idl=1>.

⁸³See the intervention by Petre Roman, available at: <https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=5&idl=1>.

⁸⁴See the intervention by Mircea Geoană, available at: <https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=5&idl=1>.

Council of Europe decision would be interpreted as a preference for military action within the UN mandate; not, however, as prohibiting military action altogether.

Romanian political parties did not view supporting a US-led intervention as a deviation from European integration and the EU. Referring to the need to avoid a false dichotomy between the United States and the EU, the social democrat Ghiorghi Prisăcaru (PSD) stressed the necessity of a convergent Euro-Atlantic vision of unity along common democratic values.⁸⁵ Opponents of the Iraq War – France (in particular), Germany, and Belgium – were viewed as jeopardising transatlantic and Western unity. The letter of the eight, which Romania also signed, was a strong signal of Central Eastern European (CEE) countries in support of the transatlantic pillar of European security. In contrast, France was perceived as being ‘obsessed’ with transforming the EU project into a strategic competition with the United States.⁸⁶ One concern expressed in the parliamentary debate in February 2003 was that France would opt for dislocating the transatlantic pillar from the European security architecture, to replace it with a Paris–Berlin–Moscow axis. Germany also opposed a military operation without UN mandate. However, Berlin’s position was seen as being a matter of conjuncture, explained by the political leadership of the social democratic government led by Gerhard Schröder. In contrast, France’s stance was seen as having been consistently hostile to the United States since the Charles de Gaulle era and the 1967 withdrawal from the NATO command structure, as well as the request to remove NATO institutions and military installations from France.

The Danish parliament on the 2003 Iraq vote can also be ascribed to constitutive roles of ‘who we are’, although the parties manifested different conceptions regarding the country’s roles. For the pro-participation parties, the role of international society was to defend the *liberal* international order.⁸⁷ Prime minister and chair of the Liberal Party Anders Fogh Rasmussen argued that ‘in the fight between dictatorship and democracy, one must choose sides’ and ‘we should choose democracy’.⁸⁸ The conservatives supported this position, arguing that the war was a political choice, either for the ‘free and democratic world’, or remaining passive to the benefit of the Iraqi dictator,⁸⁹ while the Danish People’s Party viewed the war as ‘the free world’s defence against terror’.⁹⁰ In this war between democracy and autocracy, the US-led coalition, not the UN, was viewed as representing international society. Iraq had for years violated disarmament obligations following UN resolutions, and these resolutions gave international society a right to act. The three pro-participation parties saw a parallel between Europe in the late 1930s and international society in 2003. Representatives from the Danish People’s Party saw parallels between Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein and between the League of Nations and the UN, which, according to party chairperson Pia Kjærsgaard, was ‘unmasked’ by the Iraq crisis, leaving the UN Security Council ‘useless’ and without legitimacy.⁹¹ To the conservative minister for culture Brian Mikkelsen, arguments against military intervention ran parallel to Neville Chamberlain’s attempt to negotiate with Hitler.⁹²

⁸⁵See the intervention by Ghiorghi Prisăcaru, available at: <https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?id=5382&idm=58&idl=1>.

⁸⁶Alexandru Lazescu, ‘Efectele colaterale ale crizei irakiene’, *Revista 22* (25 February–3 March 2003).

⁸⁷Unless stated, the quotes and references on Danish party positions are from Folketinget (2003). ‘Første behandling af beslutningsforslag B 118: Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational indsats i Irak’, 19 March 2003, folketingsåret 2002–3, available at: <http://webarkiv.ft.dk/Samling/20021/MENU/00768271.htm>, and Folketinget (2003). ‘Anden behandling af beslutningsforslag B 118: Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om dansk militær deltagelse i en multinational indsats i Irak’, 21 March 2003, folketingsåret 2002–3, available at: <http://webarkiv.ft.dk/Samling/20021/MENU/00770399.htm>. All quotes are translated by the authors.

⁸⁸Klaus Justsen, ‘Irak-krisen: Krig om få dage’, *Jyllands-Posten* (17 March 2003).

⁸⁹Søren Lange, ‘Uenighed: Verbal krig i Folketinget’, *Berlingske Tidende* (20 March 2003).

⁹⁰Jesper Langballe, ‘FN i naturlig størrelse’, *Berlingske Tidende* (28 March 2003).

⁹¹Pia Kjærsgaard, ‘Barnetroen på FN brister’, *Berlingske Tidende* (28 March 2003).

⁹²Brian Mikkelsen, ‘Derfor må Saddam afsættes’, *Jyllands-Posten* (14 March 2003).

For the parties against Danish participation, the role of international society was to defend the *rule-based* international order. Without an explicit UN mandate for military action, Denmark should not participate, whereas the pro-participation parties argued that only a war could save international society. The chairman of the social democrats, Mogens Lykketoft, emphasised that a war without a direct UN mandate would be ‘a big mistake with serious consequences for stability throughout the world.’⁹³ The US-led coalition was not perceived to represent international society. In contrast, it was perceived as divisive, not only for the UN but for NATO and the EU as well. The social liberals shared the pro-participation parties’ aim of disarming Iraq but disagreed that war, rather than more time for weapons inspectors and diplomacy, would be the solution. To the social liberals, international society reflected the common ground of the great powers, not just some of them. In contrast to the pro-participation parties, the Socialist People’s Party argued that the war was ‘a failure for democracy and rule of law’ solving ‘no problems.’⁹⁴ For the far-left Unity List, the war was simply ‘vigilantism,’ an ‘illegal war’ against the majority of international society.

In both Danish and Romanian parliaments, party debates over the Iraq vote articulated concerns with ‘who we are’ (constitutive roles) and ‘what we do’ (functional roles). They were debates on what it means to be a good international citizen and ally in principle and in practice. In the case of Denmark, the different readings of what international society should do led to contrasting recommendations for how Denmark could contribute to defending and strengthening international society, and what it means to be a good ally.⁹⁵ The parties agreed on Denmark’s role as an active internationalist, but they disagreed on how to play the role of an active internationalist, i.e. the functional role following from the constitutive role: how can the policy of Denmark contribute to defending and strengthening international society?

For the pro-participation parties, the US-led coalition represented international society. Consequently, contributing troops was seen as defending this society. As summed up by one of the most prominent members of the Danish People’s Party, it was the UN that ‘blocked disarmament of the madman in Baghdad’, and therefore, ‘the United States and the United Kingdom had to take responsibility for acting.’⁹⁶ Liberal defence minister Svend Aage Jensby stressed that Danish participation was not only against Saddam Hussein but for ‘our democratic societies’ basic civil liberties and values. It is worth stressing that it is exactly these values that American society shares with European societies.⁹⁷ For the conservatives, not supporting the war was effectively a support for Saddam Hussein. In contrast, the social democrats argued that rather than participating in a military intervention with ‘Bush, Blair and Berlusconi’, Denmark should choose a humanitarian engagement with the other Nordic countries.⁹⁸ For the social liberals, Denmark’s international role was based on engagement with both the UN and the United States and on balancing European and transatlantic bonds but with Operation Iraqi Freedom, the balance tipped in favour of the United States severing Danish ties to the UN and undermining long-term Danish priorities of a rule-based international order. According to the Socialist People’s Party, the government left Denmark ‘in the slipstream of the United States’, and, like the other opposition parties, they called for more time for UN weapons inspectors and a direct UN mandate before military action.⁹⁹

⁹³ Christian Brøndum, Ole Birk Olesen, and Jakob Weiss, ‘Splittelse: Politikerne skændes om dansk deltagelse’, *Berlingske Tidende* (18 March 2003).

⁹⁴ Morten Homann, ‘Unødvendig og ulovlig krig’, *Jyllands-Posten* (20 March 2003).

⁹⁵ These differences also help explain why the social democrats decided to back Danish engagement in Iraq from May 2003 and onwards (see Table 2). By this time, the US president had declared victory in the war, and in contrast to B118, parliamentary resolution B165 authorises the deployment of Danish personnel to take part in an international effort to begin the rebuilding of Iraq and provide humanitarian assistance, promising an active Danish engagement in the UN to secure a broadly based backing for the effort, i.e. a return to working towards a rule-based international order.

⁹⁶ Langballe, ‘FN i naturlig størrelse’.

⁹⁷ Svend Aage Jensby, ‘Nye trusler kræver nye svar: også i Europa’, *Jyllands-Posten* (18 March 2003).

⁹⁸ Jørgen Rye, ‘Demonstration: Auken: Vi er i det forkerte selskab’, *Jyllands-Posten* (23 March 2003).

⁹⁹ Mette A. Svane and Jette E. Maressa, ‘Irak-krise: Kritik af Foghs Irak-kurs’, *Jyllands-Posten* (12 March 2003).

For the pro-participation parties, being a good state in the liberal international order is being a good ally to the United States. For the parties against participation, the two things have little to do with each other, as the Iraq question is not to be solved by a military coalition but through the UN. Denmark's role as a good ally has little to do with the war: it is Bush's war, not America's war (or international society's war). In conclusion, the Danish debate on participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom represents a clash of different party discourses on the national role conception based on rival understandings of Denmark's constitutive and functional roles.

In the Romanian Parliament, party debates on the functional role ('what we do') revealed the wish to meet role expectations for a good ally and avoid possible sanctioning by the United States. Support for the intervention was associated with formal NATO membership, being thus *de facto* about defending Romania's national security against an aggressive Russia. The 1990–2 war in Transnistria – in which Romania actively supported Moldova's territorial integrity as part of the quadripartite mechanism from which it was later excluded due to Russian opposition¹⁰⁰ – was early evidence of Russian revisionism across the political spectrum. Romanian political parties saw the United States as the good significant 'other' and Russia as the bad significant 'other'. Romanian participation in a potential US-initiated operation against Iraq was largely justified through Romania's responsibility and obligations as a premise for future security guarantees in the form of NATO membership, and thus its long-term interest. For example, centre-right PD representative Gheorghe-Liviu Negoită portrayed Romania's support for the United States as a natural continuation of the country's foreign policy in the post-Ceaușescu era and the fulfilment of ally obligations,¹⁰¹ given that Romania was the first country to join NATO's Partnership for Peace on 26 January 1994. NATO membership was viewed not only as a guarantee of national security but also of a democratic future.

To some parties, being a good ally was seen as legitimising support for a potential US invasion of Iraq. The representative of the centre-right Hungarian Party, Attila Verestoy, referred to the strategic partnership with the United States as a customary foundation for voting in favour of support for the operation.¹⁰² He outlined the status gained by Romania as an engaged NATO candidate, and the fear of loss of trust and credibility in the case of non-support. Support was not equated with a direct participation in the war, as Romania was not supposed to send combat troops, but political support for the United States was viewed as essential. Petre Roman, member of the opposition PD party, and the rapporteur of the NATO General Assembly, stressed Romania's 'special relationship' with the United States¹⁰³ claiming that not many countries have the privilege of having a strategic partnership with them. With the potential exception of the right-wing PRM, whose articulation of national role conceptions was rather ambiguous, there was large cross-party convergence on the belief that the United States was a good ally, and not one seeking exploitation.

The Romanian parliament's decision to support the US military coalition in the case of the Iraqi government's failure to comply with UNSCR Resolution 1441 was met with praise by the US Embassy in Bucharest.¹⁰⁴ Less than a month after the invasion of Iraq, on 7 April, Romania signed the protocol of accession to NATO. On 8 May 2003, the US senate adopted a resolution with 96 to 0 to approve the accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania to NATO. In addition, a Senate Resolution was adopted on 23 October commending 'the people and government of Romania' on the occasion of the visit of Romanian president Ion Iliescu to Washington. The resolution started by extolling the country's support for the 1995 SFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the 1999 NATO mission in Kosovo, the 2001 Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan,

¹⁰⁰ Popa and Popa, 'Transnistria: A challenge for Romania.'

¹⁰¹ See the intervention by Liviu Negoită, available at: {<https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=5&sidl=1>}.

¹⁰² See the intervention by Attila Verestoy, available at: {<https://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5382&idm=5&sidl=1>}.

¹⁰³ Haugevik, *Special Relationships in World Politics*.

¹⁰⁴ Adevărul, 'Ambasada SUA saluta adoptarea de catre parlament a deciziei CSAT', *Adevărul* (13 February 2003).

and support for the Iraq mission, including the active deployment of 750 active combat troops, along with making available its airbases and space for thousands of American flights in the framework of the OEF mission, as well as during the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in the period May–July 2003.¹⁰⁵ In the spring of 2004, Romania officially became a NATO member.

The analysis of the 2003 Iraq decision in the Danish and Romanian parliaments reveals that no matter the size of the political action space, party debates from junior allies tend to focus on role demands for ‘good states’ and ‘good allies’, but that material and ontological insecurities reduce political space for contestation and debate. This is clearly illustrated by the case of Romania, for which being safe inside or staying outside of an established security order was a matter of security of ‘self’. During the vote on the invasion of Iraq, Romanian political parties, with the exception of the nationalist right-wing PRM, demonstrated compliance with expectations at the international level, most importantly with their significant other, the United States. This compliance is a continuation of Romanian post-1989 foreign policy focused on participation in the global community and membership in the West. Role compliance was both constitutive and functional. A commonality of both cases was the meaning of the Iraq War as a ‘war of choice’. In contrast to the debate in bigger states such as the United States, France, Britain, and Germany, the debate in Romania showed little concern for Iraq or the Middle East. Iraq was little more than a backcloth to a debate on Romania’s role in the world and how to comply with expectations for a good ally to the United States in order to seek protection against Russia. Similarly, in Denmark, on both sides of the debate, the Iraq War was understood as a political ‘war of choice’, and arguments about weapons of mass destruction and threats to the Danish territory, or even stability in the Middle East, played only a marginal role. Instead, it was a debate on the nature of the international order, which role Denmark was to play in this order, and what lessons policymakers should learn from Denmark’s past foreign policy history. The choice between participation and non-participation in war might have stronger leverage effects on junior allies, given their limited agency in global politics.

By showing that junior allies tend to focus on role demands for ‘good states’ and ‘good allies’ rather than the nature and aim of the military operation, our study casts considerable doubt on the validity of power-based explanations of small state security policy. By extrapolating assumptions of great power choices to small states and junior allies, these explanations tend to overstate the importance of balance of power considerations and underappreciate both the domestic contest between political parties with expectations on what constitutes the proper purpose (constitutive roles) and functions of the state (functional roles) and how ontological insecurities combine with material factors to reduce political space for contestation and debate. Neither Romania nor Denmark participated in the Iraq War because of Iraq. In contrast, debates among political parties, not an imminent military threat, provided the ‘plot’, the rationale, for military action, as parties articulated expectations of what constituted the proper purpose and functions of a good state and a good ally within a political space delineated by ontological and material security concerns.

Role conceptions regarding countries’ choices in foreign and security policy depend on relative, absolute, and cognitive factors.¹⁰⁶ The conceptual utility of role-based explanations and our contribution to role theory is that we incorporate, among the multitude of material and cognitive factors, a distinct factor: referentiality to a significant other. The relationality aspect is important because it illustrates how roles can be constituted by both current ‘others’ and historical ‘others’, such as formative or traumatic experiences. In the Danish parliament, the debate disclosed how different significant others follow from the different generalised others. For all parties, Saddam Hussein was a bad significant other and the vigilante that international society needed to respond to. However, for the pro-participation parties the United States was the good significant other, as the defender of the liberal international order, while for the parties against Danish participation, the good significant other was the UN as the defender of the rule-based international order. In the Romanian parliament, the Iraq debate showed a near consensus among Romanian political

¹⁰⁵Cf. US Senate Resolution S13148, 23 October 2003.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Ewers-Peters and Baciú, ‘Differentiated integration’.

parties on Romania's constitutive role as a liberal democratic member of the West (including its core institutions, the EU and NATO) and on its functional role as a good ally complying with US expectations in order to seek protection against Russia, revealing how relationality to historical others, such as the memory of the past, can shape convergence in party decisions. The relational dynamics involved in the two countries' decision to support the US-led coalition of intervention in Iraq demonstrates how national role conceptions are shaped by an assemblage of agreed standards for how a state should act given its perceived place in the international order.¹⁰⁷ In debates on troop deployments, political parties contest what count as ontological and material security challenges and how to meet these challenges in ways that are both effective and legitimate. In doing so, they help shape national role conceptions. Parties' conceptions of roles can be different from the national conception of roles; for example, parties might agree about a country's role as an active internationalist but disagree on how to play that role, as the case of Denmark revealed. As a pivotal finding, this study has illustrated how junior allies tend to focus on role demands for good states and good allies, no matter the size of the political space for contestation, and how parties matter differently than previously understood.

Conclusions

Important conclusions on the party politics of junior allies deciding to participate in multinational military operations follow from our analysis. Our study illustrates when and how party politics matters for junior allies' decisions. In both the Romanian and Danish cases, domestic rules demanded parliamentary involvement. For this reason alone, political parties were important. The political nature of the war exacerbated this importance. If military action is not the response to a clear and present danger, the politics of military engagement increase in importance. Consequently, in both cases, debates among political parties, not an imminent military threat, provided the 'plot', the rationale, for military action as parties expressed their expectations of what constituted the proper purpose and functions of a good state and a good ally.

The primary focus of both parliamentary debates was the future of the junior ally in the international order, not the military threat from Iraq or the future of the international order itself. This is an interesting difference from bigger allies, which discussed evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the potential threat posed by Iraq to stability in the Middle East and the wider international system. It is also an interesting corrective to the traditional Security Studies literature arguing that choices to join military coalitions and alliances should be understood as attempts to balance threats or power. Romanian and Danish political parties showed little interest in balancing Iraq, and weapons of mass destruction played only a marginal role in the parliamentary debates in the two states.

The main concern for Romanian politicians was securing access to the Western international order; their biggest fear being left alone in no-man's-land with a belligerent Russia. Euro-Atlantic integration unfolded as the new strategy to maintain security in the Black Sea region,¹⁰⁸ but also as a source of military modernisation to be better equipped in a context of turmoil and uncertainty that has unfolded since the end of the Cold War.¹⁰⁹ A Russia in search of a lost empire, demonstrated in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union through the 1990–2 war in Transnistria, was seen as threatening both in terms of material security (the territorial integrity of the state) and ontological security (Romania as a member of the Western community), and this united Romanian political parties in favour of military engagement. Participation in the US-led coalition was viewed as being a good state in the West and therefore worthy of NATO membership.

¹⁰⁷ Morin and Paquin, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, p. 271.

¹⁰⁸ Asmus et al., 'A New Euro-Atlantic Strategy for the Black Sea Region'; Peterson, *Building a Framework of Security for Southeast Europe and the Black Sea Region: A Challenge Facing NATO*.

¹⁰⁹ Andreea R. Olteanu, 'Romania: NATO relations. Three decades of dialogue and transformation concerning security', *Strategic Monitor*, 75 (2020), pp. 7–24.

The main concern for Danish parties was how to enact the role of an active internationalist within the international order. A NATO member since 1949, Denmark was already firmly embedded in the Western order, and party members saw no threat to Danish material security in the foreseeable future. This left a bigger space for domestic contestation over military engagement. Romanian politicians did not care much if the order was primarily 'liberal' or 'rule-based'; they just wanted to be part of it. For Danish politicians, this became a major point of contestation. The major parties agreed that this was a political war of choice, but they disagreed in their interpretations both of which politics characterised the war and of which choice was the right one for Denmark.

Our analysis has further implications for understanding the responses of European states to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Sweden and Finland rushed to apply for NATO membership in the wake of the invasion, fearing to be left alone with Russia outside NATO's security shelter (like Romania in 2003). For Sweden, in particular, this implied a role conflict between its traditional role as good state promoting détente and cooperation and demonstrating Sweden's intentions and ability to be a good NATO ally. Russia's invasion war in Ukraine also illustrates the applicability of our framework to larger allies. German debates on how to respond to the invasion can be understood as a role conflict between the country's traditional role as a good (civilian) state and a good (military) ally. A changing security order with contested norms of international society and a weakened US leadership is likely to lead to continuous questions over what makes a good state and a good ally in most European countries and a prominent role for political parties in answering these questions.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2023.33>.

Acknowledgements. Previous versions of this article were presented at the ISA Annual Convention in Montréal, the IR Research Workshop at the University of Copenhagen, and the EISA 14th annual conference (virtual). The authors would like to thank to Falk Ostermann, Lene Hansen, Maja Zehfuss, Peter Marcus Kristensen, Maria Mälksoo, Sibel Oktay, Jonathan Luke Austin, Kristin Anabel Eggeling, and Duncan McCargo for tremendous comments that helped improve the article.

Cornelia Baciú is Researcher at the Centre for Military Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. She is researching security organisations, foreign policy, and norms. Recent publications include *Foreign Policy, Memory and Changing Imaginaries and Practices of Neutrality in the Second Republic* (2023), *Interpolarity: Re-visiting Security and the Global Order* (2022, Special Issue with Delphine Deschaux-Dutard), and *From Kabul to Kyiv: The Crisis of Liberal Interventionism and the Return of War* (2024, Special Issue with Falk Ostermann and Wolfgang Wagner).

Anders Wivel is Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. His research interests include foreign policy, small states in international relations, peaceful change, and power politics and IR realism. His recent books include *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations* (2021, co-edited with T.V. Paul, Deborah W. Larson, Harold Trinkunas, and Ralf Emmers) and *Polarity in International Relations: Past, Present, Future* (2022, co-edited with Nina Græger, Bertel Heurlin, and Ole Wæver).