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**COPENHAGEN
EDITION**

**The 51st
state is
following
USA back
to Iraq**

**War rehab
giving
radicalised
youth a
second
chance**

**Burma is
starting to
embrace
life after
censorship**



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The reluctant whistleblower

Anders Koustrup Kærgaard's personal sacrifice to expose war crimes in Iraq

THE MURMUR

DENMARK is going to war in Iraq with the United States. Again. A few years ago, this would have seemed unimaginable, particularly given how badly the last military intervention went. But this time it's different. The new enemy is the Islamic State (IS), and they're pretty monstrous. They have murdered their way through Syria and Iraq, cutting down anyone who doesn't agree with their disjointed worldview. The global community agrees they need to be stopped.

But war isn't simple, and in this issue we attempt to address a few of the key questions facing Denmark as it approaches this conflict. Firstly, what do we do with Danes who travel to fight alongside the latest addition to the Axis of Evil? There are different opinions. The government wants to strip them of their passports and prosecute them upon their return. Treating Danish Islamic fighters as the enemy might not be the best approach, however, and doesn't address the core questions of why they left in the first place. A programme in Aarhus has a different idea: rehabilitation. Steffen Nielsen, a crime prevention adviser with the East Jutland Police, says many of the fighters come back traumatised and wanting to get on with their lives. We should help them.

So why do people go there in the first place? Journalist Jakob Sheikh of Politiken newspaper happened to bump into an old friend who had just returned from Syria and supported IS' cause. The two had a similar start to life, but Jakob – who happens to write about radicalisation – explains that his friend's social marginalisation and chaotic life may have made him susceptible to becoming convinced of the IS cause. If we know what compels Danes to fight for a brutal Islamic caliphate, can we intervene in time?

It seems far too seldom that we learn from mistakes. The intervention in Iraq might not have been justified, but the true crime was the condition in which the country was left. Will we repeat our naïve errors in this new campaign? Perhaps, if the revelations of former military intelligence officer Anders Kærgaard are any indication. He exposed the failure of the Danish military to intervene when Iraqi forces abused innocent civilians, after years of denial from the military and government that the abuse had taken place. If the military is left to investigate itself, as is currently the case, can we ever trust that its armed interventions are carried out lawfully and ethically?

As we face off against a new radical enemy in the Middle East, both sides ought to remember the words of philosopher Charles de Montesquieu: "There is no crueller tyranny than that which is perpetuated under the shield of law and in the name of justice." **THE MURMUR**

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“They wanted to send a signal that if you step outside the lines and work against the system, you’ll be jailed and have your life destroyed.”

ANDERS
KOUSTRUP
KÆRGAARD

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MONTH IN REVIEW

ANAKATA IN COURT
The trial against Piraty Bay founder Gottfrid Svartholm Warg turned into a metaphysical debate about cyberlinguistics this month, as the prosecution spent a full day of the proceedings discussing the reasons for using internet aliases, and which usernames belonged to Warg. The trial concludes in October.



Photo: Facebook

Website lets Danes report Eastern Europeans
Peter Kofod Poulsen, a local politician for Dansk Folkeparti (DF), has launched the website meldenøstEUR-opaer.dk, 'Report an Eastern European', where concerned citizens can report suspicious activities and behaviour by people from Eastern Europe.
Poulsen has posted a YouTube video on the website where he claims that Europe's open borders have caused major problems for Denmark, and that increased border patrols are needed. The website carries a disclaimer, acknowledging that not all Eastern Europeans in Denmark are bandits, but goes on to state that Denmark should "not accept that mafia groups, rapists and thieves from Eastern Europe be allowed into the country."
The 24-year-old will be running for Parliament next year, and given DF's incredible performance in the polls, he should be a shoe-in. Yay.

Growth halved
The central bank has cut its growth estimate for the year 2014 by almost half, from the predicted 1.5 to 0.8 percent. The bank has furthermore raised the estimated number of unemployed by 3,000 and downgraded the growth prediction for 2015 by 0.1 percentage points.
This unexpected downswing means that the Danish economy's recovery from the 2008 financial crisis remains rickety and unstable, and that its full revival is delayed yet again.

MORE KIDS EDUCATELY PRIVATELY
Private schools in some of the most economically and socially unequal neighbourhoods of the Copenhagen have seen their popularity surge at the expense of traditional public schools.
The trend has seen children of wealthy parents, or of a minority religion, opt for private education. Over 20 percent of pupils in Høje Tastrup council are currently enrolled in private schools. New private Turkish and Catholic schools have recently opened in the area, exacerbating the development.
The number of pupils enrolled nationally in public schools dropped from 577,000 to 559,000 between 2009 and 2013, while the number of privately educated students rose from 95,000 to 108,000.

Captaining the homeless
Denmark's homeless football team was faced with the real possibility of not having the finances needed to enter the Homeless World Cup in Chile, but the classy captain of the Danish national team, Daniel Agger, forked out what was needed to allow the team to compete.



Photo: Flickr / kingkong

METRO WORKERS LIVING IN SQUALOR
Around 200 Portuguese construction workers, who had come to Copenhagen to work on the new metro lines, were illegally housed by their employer in an old industrial building in the western part of the city. The building had inadequate toilet and kitchen facilities, and the site had previously been deemed unfit for apartments due to toxic soil.

Elias Thorsson

Photo: Stemplett



The Human Library
It is now possible to do weirder things at Copenhagen's libraries than read The Murmur or try in vain to get the most recent Game of Thrones, as the city has launched the Human Library initiative, where you can rent people.
The people available represent 25 different stereotypes, including dwarfs, police officers and muslims, and visitors can discuss with them the reality of belonging to their respective groups and meet the human being behind the label. Sadly, you can't actually check anyone out.

TIGHTER ASYLUM REGULATIONS
Following an increase in refugees fleeing the Syrian Civil War, the government has introduced a new temporary residence permit for people escaping conflict areas. The permit is valid for a year, with the possibility of a further two-year extension. 7,900 asylum seekers had arrived in Denmark by September, 300 more than arrived in all of 2013.



Photo: Freedom House

Looking the unemployed part

Losing your job is a terrible ordeal for anyone, but if you have facial tattoos, or wear a niqab, things could get even worse for you: you might not be eligible for unemployment insurance.

Liberal Alliance MP Ole Birk Olesen argues that while everyone should be allowed to dress and look the way they want, they should not look unemployed if they hope to get government help.

In an opinion piece for Berlingske newspaper, he wrote: "If you want to live off money that other people have paid in taxes, there follows a duty to fit in to society in a way that shows you can be useful and earn a salary."



Photo: Nora Lives / Wikimedia Commons

RETURN OF THE TRAMS
Forty-two years ago, the last tram in the country made its final stop, putting an end to a transportation trend that had existed since the middle of the 19th century. But now the trams, deemed outdated in the seventies, are heading for the ultimate comeback, with Aarhus, Copenhagen, Odense, and now Aalborg, getting on board with this retro way of getting around. It is estimated that work on the Copenhagen tram will be finished by 2020.



Photo: Greenpeace

POLICE ILLEGALLY TAPPED COP15 DELEGATE'S PHONE
Brazilian rainforest activist Paulo Adario was under illegal surveillance by Copenhagen Police during the COP15 climate conference in 2009. Police suspected that Adario was planning to disturb the Metro and US President Obama's arrival in Copenhagen.

But according to documents obtained by Berlingske newspaper, the Copenhagen City Court ordered police to end the telephone surveillance, which lasted 13 hours.

Adario was a member of the Brazilian delegation during the conference and says phone calls between himself and top Brazilian officials may have been overheard, including former environment minister Carlos Minc.

"It's very serious [...] I believe that the Brazilian government deserves an explanation," Minc said.

Apartment prices going up
For two and a half years running, apartment prices in Copenhagen have been going only one way: up, up, up. Since 2012, the square meter price has risen 38 percent, and this past August alone, prices rose by a staggering eight percent.



Photo: Florian Plag



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NEWSMAKER

JENSEN'S GOT BEEF

Can a restaurant chain own the sole right to use a surname shared by five percent of Danes? The Supreme Court says yes. But despite defeating a local fish restaurant, **JENSEN'S BØFHUS'** triumph may only be a pyrrhic victory

COMPANIES know they're in trouble when a Facebook page calling for patrons to boycott them has more likes than their own page. That is the situation currently facing the steakhouse chain Jensen's Bøfhus after it won a verdict in the Supreme Court against a fish restaurant in Jutland called Jensens Fiskerestaurant, owned by Jacob Jensen.

The court ruled that only the steakhouse may use the name Jens-



"Big steaks, small prices." We reckon their shoes are a little small too

en's, and ordered Jacob Jensen to pay 200,000 kroner in compensation to the restaurant chain, as well as around 150,000 kroner in court costs.

The verdict led to an uproar on social media, with the steakhouse facing accusations of bullying a small businessman. Around 115,000 people have now liked a page on Facebook calling for a boycott of Jensen's Bøfhus, while its own Facebook page only has around 70,000 likes.

Since changing their name to Jensen's Bøfhus in 1990, the steakhouse chain has increased from five to 34 restaurants around the coun-

try. They employ 2,000 people and serve more than five million guests a year. Their ubiquity has made them a strong brand, which, according to owner Palle Skov Jensen, is the reason they filed suit against the fish restaurant.

"We have spent almost 25 years and millions of kroner marketing and developing Jensen's as a brand connected with Jensen's Bøfhus and our products in the service industry. That is why we have to react when someone uses the same name in violation of our rights," Palle explained in a press release.

But not everyone agrees that a

fish restaurant named 'Jensen's' is likely to be confused with the steakhouse chain. In fact, the case only made it to the Supreme Court after the Maritime and Trade Court ruled in Jacob Jensen's favour earlier in the year. That court ruled that the two businesses wouldn't be confused because they serve different proteins.

Many also found it strange that the steakhouse may now be the sole business in the Danish restaurant industry with the right to use the name Jensen, since over 260,000 Danes have Jensen as a surname. There are a number of restaurants across Denmark called Jensen's, including Jensens Smørrebrød in Copenhagen and Restaurant Jensen in Søborg.

Following the verdict, Jacob Jensen called the experience "completely surrealistic" and said that he wouldn't be challenging the verdict.

"I have spent an enormous amount of time and energy on the case. I am disappointed that I wasn't born a Knudsen or a Sørensen," he told Berlingske. **M**

RESEARCH

BACTERIA TO REPLACE SOY AS PIG FOOD

Pig feed may soon be manufactured in Denmark instead of being imported from abroad. Researchers at the University of Aarhus have worked with the firm UniBio to produce a protein foodstuff from bacteria, natural gas and minerals, which could replace their current protein source, imported soya.

The new technology ferments bacteria with methane to produces a biomass high in proteins, which can be broken down into the amino acids needed for the pigs' diet.

The researchers argue the foodstuff will decrease the environmental impact of rearing livestock.

"The global population is growing and the standard of living is rising, which results in an increased demand for meat. This growing demand will also result in an increased demand for protein sources such as soya to feed the pigs, which places further pressure on the environment and climate. That's why we need to think differently," says Professor Hanne Nielsen from the Department of Animal Science.

The 1.5 million tons of soya used to feed Danish farm animals each year is grown on an area the size of Zealand, mostly in developing nations. The new protein will enable farmers to reduce the pressure to clear more rainforest to grow soy.

BIRTH WEIGHT AN ACCURATE PREDICTOR OF MENTAL ILLNESS

The risk of developing schizophrenia or autism is increased if a child is born either over or underweight. This is the result of a joint study by the University of Copenhagen and Yale University. The researchers studied 30 years' worth of statistics regarding 1,750,000 Danish babies. After correcting for all other known risk factors, they discovered a correlation between birth weight and an increased risk of developing a range of mental illnesses.

The researchers theorise that the illnesses are affected by a genetic imbalance. Some of the genes a foetus inherits are expressed dif-

ferently, depending on whether the gene was inherited from the mother or the father.

The two sets of genes attempt to invest the foetus' resources in different areas of development, but normally the different demands balance each other, and the baby is born close to normal weight and length.

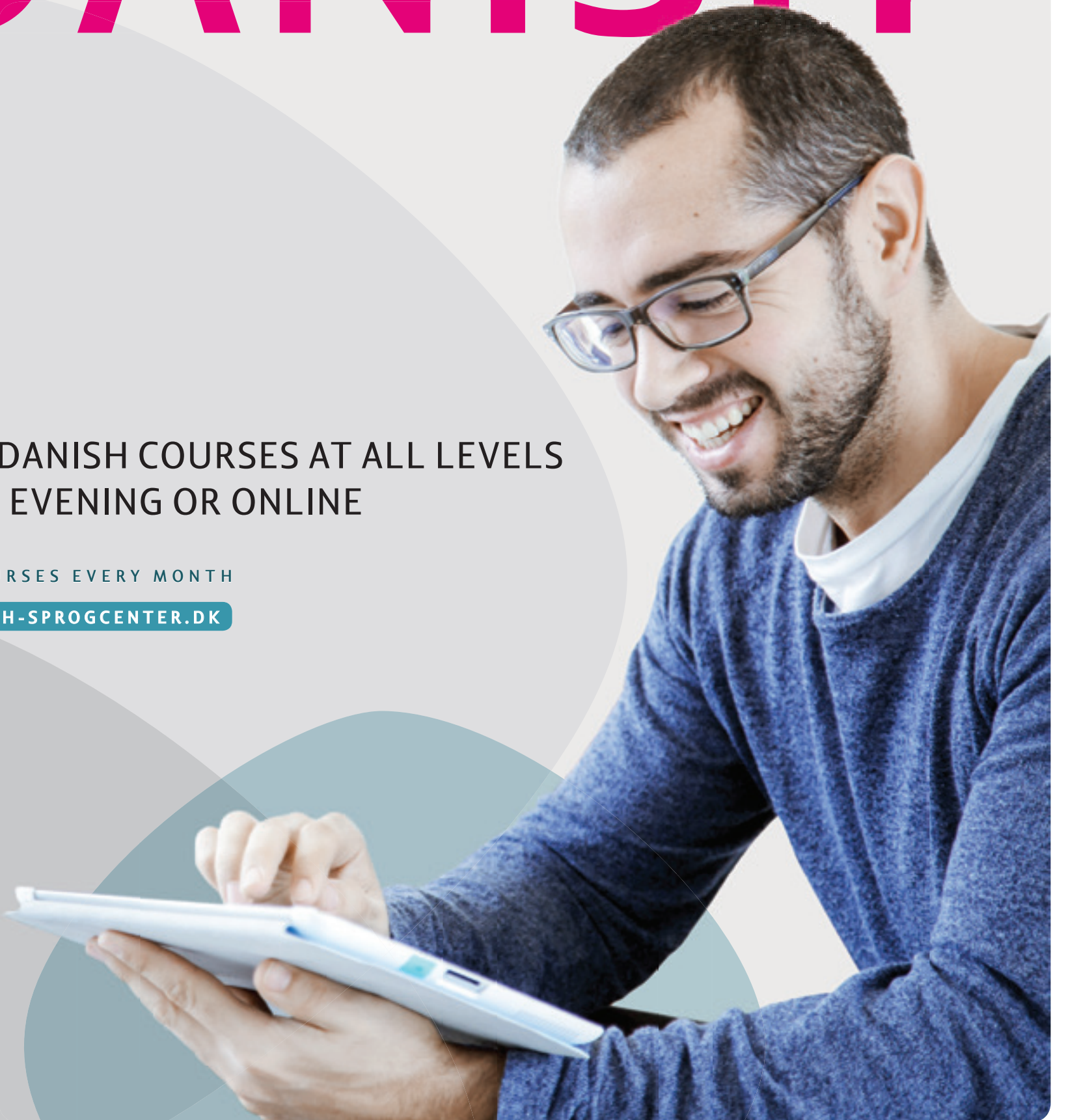
But when one set of genes is stronger than the other, the baby is either born over or underweight, and with a significant risk of developing mental illness - larger babies are more likely to develop an autism-spectrum illness, while a lower weight makes babies more likely to be diagnosed with a schizophrenia-spectrum illness. **M**

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“He had seen the light and I hadn’t. Yet”

INTERVIEW Jakob Sheikh is a journalist at Politiken newspaper where he writes about extremism. His childhood friend Amir is a jihadist. How did the two friends' paths diverge so radically, and could an intervention have saved Amir from risking his life for a brutal regime?

JAKOB SHEIKH and his childhood friend Amir have a lot in common. They both have Pakistani fathers and Danish mothers, and were brought up in a lower-middle class area in Copenhagen’s Vesterbro district. Now in their 20s, Sheikh is a journalist at Politiken newspaper, while Amir has fought for the Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

They lost contact with each other as teenagers, but bumped into each other recently on Istedgade. It took Sheikh a few minutes to register what Amir had told him, that he had travelled to Syria to fight for the Islamic State, or IS. Then he recognised a golden opportunity – Sheikh has written more than 50 stories about foreign fighters for Politiken. Now his old friend was one.

Sheikh wrote an essay – written with Amir’s consent, but on the condition his surname be withheld – about his encounter, which explored why his friend had taken the radical path, and he hadn’t.

RADICALISED WHILE VULNERABLE

Their lives weren’t identical. Sheikh was sent to a private primary and high school, while Amir stayed in the public schools before going to technical college. Amir’s life was also less stable. When he was 17, his parents divorced, he fell out with his brother, and he dropped out of school.

“A lot went wrong for Amir at the same time. He might have been OK if just one part of his life had fallen apart. But it all happened at the same time, during which he fell in with a group that hung around his local mosque, a group that ended up radicalising him,” Sheikh says.

He and a colleague recently profiled 15 Danish foreign fighters who have been killed while in Syria and Iraq – and what they found surprised them.

“They tend not to be economically marginalised; they’re not working poor. Many speak Danish without an accent and navigate safely in the Danish society. They are formed by Danish institutions and grow up in moderate families. They have average lives,

so why do they become more extreme than their parents? What we found is that they were socially marginalised and felt excluded at a time when their lives were falling apart.”

Sheikh managed to succeed despite his modest past, growing up in a neighbourhood with friends who would later become criminals. One reason is Sheikh’s private school education, which gave him insight into Danish society and prevented him from feeling socially excluded, like Amir did.

“During school I would do homework with Anton and Sigurd, and after school I’d play football with Shoaib and Ahmed. I had feet in two worlds, but sadly there are too few like me – most only really knew one world. They could see into the other, but they didn’t participate. Amir even thought I was too Danish, that I had turned my back on the group he belonged to.”

Sheikh is of two minds about Amir. On the one hand, he condemns Amir’s decision to fight for the caliphate while also returning to Denmark, where he is afforded protection and security as a Danish citizen. This hypocrisy is widespread among foreign fighters, Sheikh argues.

“I could talk to Amir about everything from football to girls, but when it came to religion, he was impervious to argument. He had seen the light and I hadn’t. Yet.”

DISCRIMINATION

But he also understands why social exclusion leads people to seek radicalised communities, and how this happens in a country like Denmark. Growing up, he was occasionally targeted for his dark skin, but got so used to it that he hardly noticed that it was happening until, in high school, his friends pointed out the unwelcome attention he received.

“They thought it was weird that when I was shouted at, I’d turn my cheek and say I don’t give a fuck. I also got used to being barred from nightclubs if I went out with my dark-skinned friends, while I never had a problem when I went out with my white friends. But I just ac-



Jakob Sheikh is a journalist at Politiken newspaper where he writes primarily about radicalisation and extremism.

cepted it, and didn’t realise it was a big deal.”

His editor disagreed, and the Politiken ran a cover story about how Sheikh and three dark-skinned friends had been turned away at five out of six Copenhagen clubs. The report led the city to crack down on nightlife discrimination and revoke licences for clubs that could be proven to practice racial discrimination.

While generally an open and tolerant society, Sheikh argues that Denmark is still imbued with structural racism against people who don’t conform to its norms.

“If people use different solutions to mainstream society, they get excluded. If you use your family to find a partner, that’s seen as weird. But you only need to go back 50 or 60 years in Denmark to find a time when marrying solely for love, without regard to your family’s interests, was frowned upon.”

As a third invasion of Iraq by Western forces gets underway – if only from the air – the world appears unified against the threat that IS poses. The Danish government recently introduced new initiatives to restrict the flow of Danes

Amir’s life was in turmoil, but if there had been a social intervention, he might have been saved.

to the region, including the possibility of confiscating the passports of those planning to travel. The UN Security Council also unanimously passed a resolution to combat so-called “foreign terrorist fighters”.

But while there is plenty of evidence that IS is a nasty organisation, Sheikh argues that the actual threat it poses might not be as severe as we think. This is important when discussing which initiatives to use to combat the group and its supporters in the west.

“The political debate about fighting radicalisation seems to be very focussed on punishing individuals that are seen as religiously radicalised. They want to combat the group’s religious aspect. But too few politicians are talking about ways of addressing radicalisation through social work. My colleague and I have written a lot about this – that even though there is a religious angle, it’s ultimately a social problem. That’s how we combat gangs in Denmark, by looking at the root causes. And we should treat these fighters the same way. Amir’s life was in turmoil, but if there had been a social intervention, he might have been saved.” **M**

Peter Stanners



In a video released last year, several Danish foreign fighters in Syria fired their weapons at images of Danes who they considered 'enemies of islam'. Several of the fighters are now reportedly dead.

Reintegrating returning foreign fighters

Aarhus authorities introduce a rehabilitation programme to give Danish fighters in the Syrian Civil War a second chance when they come home

DENMARK has the second-largest per capita contingent of citizens fighting in Syria among Western nations.

As an alternative to the harsh prosecution of 'war crimes' routinely applied across the globe, an innovative programme in Aarhus aims to rehabilitate returning Danish IS fighters and reintegrate them into society.

According to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET), over 100 Danes have left for Syria, and at least 15 casualties have been recorded. "From Aarhus, there are about 30 to 32," says Steffen Nielsen, a crime prevention adviser with the East Jutland police, and a key figure with the rehabilitation programme.

The programme is a collaboration between the East Jutland police and social services in Aarhus Council. The Aarhus model offers

treatment to returning fighters and humanitarian volunteers, including medical care and counselling for psychological trauma, as well as assisting them with finding work or resuming education.

Nielsen says the programme aims to effectively reintegrate those returning by establishing a new trust with the authorities, starting with an open line of communication.

"Often it's the family that tells us they have returned home," Nielsen explains. "The returnee then takes part in screening conversations that determine their activities abroad, how much of a security threat they might be, what they need in terms of physical or psychological treatment, and finally the location of their family and if any additional support is required."

Following the assessment,

Nielsen says those deemed immediate security threats are passed on to security services, while the locally anchored programme facilitates the rehabilitation of the 'soft targets'.

"The crucial point of intervention are people who we assess as not being immediate security threats, but who appear to have the potential. We believe we can still reach them," Nielsen explained.

"A large portion of those from Aarhus have come back. Some have been killed, but we have helped around 10 to 15."

Aarhus' method has come under harsh criticism, reflecting concerns that many returnees have acquired highly dangerous military skills that could be used to carry out terrorist attacks at home.

The Venstre Party is proposing that those returning from Syria should have their Danish citi-

zenship revoked, or face up to six years imprisonment.

Nielsen acknowledges these issues as legitimate concerns, but stresses that harsh punishment should not be so liberally applied, and that not all those involved should be treated or stigmatised as Jihadists or war criminals.

"Everybody that we talk to say they were actually involved in humanitarian work, regardless of whether they were fighting or not. We know that this is true for most of them, but yet we still don't think it's entirely harmless, as some of them will get religious schooling or basic weapons training," he said.

"However a large portion of those returning are simply horrified by their experiences and just want to return to a normal life. For some we have to dig a little deeper, to keep them from returning to Syria." **M**

Lesley Price



Mahvish Ahmad was brought up in Denmark to Pakistani parents and recently launched her own publication in the South Asian country, 'Tanqeed'

The prodigal daughter seeks out her roots

INTERVIEW Danish reporter Mahvish Ahmad talks about the trials and tribulations of relocating to Pakistan, why she believes we need to change our views of the East, and the value of using war refugees as key sources in her coverage of Pakistan's conflicts

THE IDEA that those who return to their Middle Eastern or South Asian roots are doing so to fight in civil conflicts is a common story line pitched by most media, but Danish-Pakistani Mahvish Ahmad is trying to broaden perspectives in more ways than one.

Over the past few years, Ahmad has become an established journalist, political scientist and anthropologist, and has been a driving force behind a more nuanced view of Pakistan in Nordic and Western media.

Ahmad left the blustery North and moved to Pakistan in 2010, where she began teaching political theory and feminism. She soon became a foreign correspondent for DR, Information, and TV2, as well as for international outlets such as the BBC. In addition, Ahmad wrote for a number of Pakistani newspapers and various internation-

Denmark seems to have a limited understanding of Pakistan.

Lesley Price

al publications, which resulted in her founding her own independent publication, *Tanqeed*.

TWO HOMES

Although born and raised in Denmark, Ahmad's connection to her Pakistani heritage runs deep, as she travelled there every summer as a child. Moving to Pakistan was always on the agenda for her, because of her strong relationship with her extended family and the Pakistani culture.

"If you trace back your ancestry, it's the history of that part of the world, which essentially produced you as a person," she says.

As a second-generation immigrant, Ahmad admits it can be difficult establishing an identity in-between two cultures. In Denmark, she says, there appears to be a general consensus that you can't have more than one cultural identity.

"Denmark and Pakistan are both 'home', but trying to figure out how I'm going to be in both worlds is difficult. They each have their own sets of questions and debates and very different sets of concerns," she explains.

When Ahmad left for Pakistan, she had no specific objective, except to learn.

"Denmark seems to have a limited understanding of Pakistan. They say, 'let's send 50 million kroner to Pakistan and help those poor sods figure themselves out,' but I have a problem with that kind of approach," she said. "Pakistan has a very rich history of movements and a lot of issues that never get talked about."

Ahmad began teaching at a university in Pakistan's cultural capital, Lahore. The following year, she relocated to Islamabad, where she began working as a full-time

foreign correspondent for Danish news, returning home only once a year.

In the midst of conflict reporting, Ahmad's objectives became clear when she noticed that much of the Danish press did not accurately reflect Pakistan's identity or key issues.

"The press plays into stereotypes. Either Pakistanis are totally different, or they are the same, but they can't handle a nuance between the two," she said. "There are two kinds of news stories they're interested in: one is the typical story about bombs, and the other, which is just as problematic, is about the elite. They say, 'look at these Pakistanis, they party like us and they date like us, do drugs and drink like us, and they're brown people and are Muslims.' But these people only represent about 0.5 percent of the population."

“There are lots of people who don't blow things up, that aren't on the radical right, and that don't indulge in that glamorous lifestyle, but they still criticise Western foreign policy and have lives that are different from yours,” she adds.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Her new publication *Tanqeed* was born to remedy this misconception. She teamed up with fellow journalist Madiha Tahir, who has written for The Wall Street Journal and Al Jazeera, and is currently pursuing a PhD at Columbia University in New York. *Tanqeed*, Ahmad explains, means ‘intellectual critique’ in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan.

“I actually picked up the term in a communist studies class in my first year,” she said. “The left is not very big there, so I used to attend this study circle that would hap-



Ahmad reporting for TV2 News from Pakistan

pen every Sunday next to the tea shops, and we'd talk about Marxism.”

The monthly journal, assembled by an editorial team of thirteen journalists and academics, provides a comprehensive and critical coverage of Pakistani and South Asian issues. “There's a lot of de-

bate in which people have abstract discussions about abstract ideas, but don't sufficiently include the concrete experiences of people actually living through war,” she explains.

According to Ahmad – who is currently pursuing a PhD at Cambridge University, but plans to re-

There are lots of people who don't blow things up, that aren't on the radical right.

turn to Pakistan within the year – *Tanqeed* comes from a new perspective, often reaching to the heart of issues, most notably by using war refugees as key sources in press coverage.

“There are a lot of people out in the world who say they have an opinion or expertise on the country – people who become the faces of Pakistan on panels in Europe and the US – but have never really lived there, and don't have any sense of the deeper history,” she says.

“A war refugee should not be covered as just someone who needs humanitarian aid, but as an entire person who has an opinion. There is an inherent racism in not letting people analyse their own situation,” she said. “They possess an analysis that is arguably more accurate than the analysis of an academic expert.” **M**

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War crimes, lies and a videotape

INTERVIEW He regrets not speaking up when he first realised Danish soldiers had let innocent Iraqis be abused. But when Anders Koustrup Kærgaard eventually did, he had to start a new life far from the military, which had defined him and his family for generations

“IT’S VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE to find a job when you’re a whistleblower. It’s the culture in Danish industry, where 100 percent loyalty is demanded. But I am intensely loyal to the army – I just knew that releasing the video was the more honourable thing to do.”

Anders Koustrup Kærgaard recollects his decision to become a whistleblower over a crackly phone line from Jutland. In 2012, the captain and former intelligence analyst released a video proving that Danish soldiers didn’t intervene to protect civilians from abuse at the hands of Iraqi security forces eight years earlier. Why did it take him so long to release the evidence proving the Danish military broke the Geneva Conventions? He never believed there would be a cover-up.

“I had blind faith in my commanding officers, and thought they would do the right thing and tell the truth. It took me a long time to realise that everyone, from the military to the ministers, were prepared to keep lying.”

In September of this year, Denmark decided to back the US, throwing its fighter jets into the campaign against the Islamic State. With Denmark returning to the region, Kærgaard warns that the military remains opaque and capable of covering up crimes similar to the one he helped ex-

I completely bought into the idea that Saddam Hussein was a bad man and had weapons of mass destruction.

pose. He also fears that we haven’t thought through the consequences of another intervention.

“We have barely finished a decade of war, but we still take no responsibility for the many refugees and wounded service members. We shouldn’t go to war until we’ve learned how to fix the last situation, but there is no political will.”

A DAMAGED MAN

His time in Iraq has taken a toll. Several close calls with roadside bombs and driveby shootings contributed to him developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When he returned he felt the need to dial up his life in order to feel alive – driving too fast and working too hard. Ultimately it cost him his marriage.

“It’s hard to live with someone who needs to live a fast-paced life. I have colleagues with PTSD who turned to extreme sports like base jumping, but I directed it toward my working life. I’ve been trying to manage, but it’s difficult. My life became extreme – fight or flight – with nothing inbetween.”

Kærgaard grew up with a grandfather who had fought in the resistance movement against the Nazi occupation. He remembers listening to his tales of subterfuge and being taught the value of the Danish military. His father was a reconnaissance officer, and

Kærgaard followed in his footsteps after high school – his systematic mind was attuned to gathering and analysing technical data in search of patterns.

“I completely bought into the idea that Saddam Hussein was a bad man and had weapons of mass destruction,” says Kærgaard, who worked in military intelligence for 15 years before signing up for the Iraq mission in 2003.

“No matter what the counter argument might have been, I would still have joined. I was duty bound to go. I didn’t question what the politicians said.”

He landed in Iraq in August 2004, thinking the mission was to stabilise the country following the US-led invasion. He soon noticed something suspicious: the intelligence Kærgaard was collecting didn’t match what the Iraqi forces were reporting.

The following November, the Danish army led Operation Green Desert, in which 1,000 Danish, British and Iraqi forces descended on the town of Al Zubair. The Iraqi forces claimed the town was harbouring terrorists, but this contradicted Kærgaard’s own intelligence, which showed no evidence for the allegations.

“The Green Desert intelligence we received was rubbish, and I said so. But we went ahead with the mission because we needed to be on good terms with the Ira-

qi forces. It was obvious, though, that we were being used in a sectarian operation to target Sunnis, whom the Shia security forces found unfavourable. We were told they were terrorists – and they might have been small-time criminals – but they certainly weren’t what we were told they were.”

PROOF OF ABUSE

When the troops returned to their base, Kærgaard watched footage showing the Iraqi forces kicking and beating civilians in Al Zubair while the Danish forces looked on. Soon after, the Iraqi newspaper Al Manarah reported the allegations, which the Danish Ministry of Defence dismissed.

It was later proven that 36 civilians were arrested by the Iraqi forces and subjected to mistreatment and torture for approximately 70 days.

The Geneva Conventions require that soldiers intervene or report prisoner abuse when they witness it, and Kærgaard claims he took the video to his battalion leader, colonel John Dalby, the same day he watched it. But Kærgaard says Dalby urged him to bury it.

Kærgaard kept the video and, over the years, continued to speak about the incident. The military refused to investigate, but the mission was always at the back of his mind.

“If I had released the video then, we could have stopped the next 70 days of torture.”

In 2011, eleven Iraqis sued the Ministry of Defence for allowing the abuse to take place.

Kærgaard followed the case in the media, and watched as the Ministry of Defence and colonel Dalby repeatedly denied that there was any evidence to support the allegations. In his home, he had the video that proved the military was lying. It was after the Military High Command brushed him off again, refusing to follow up on his claims, that he realised that they were never going to come clean.

BOMBSHELL

In October 2012, he finally released the video, which sent shockwaves through the national media. The footage clearly proved that the Iraqis' allegations were true, and that the authorities had lied.

In the video, five or six Iraqi police officers surround a group of civilians who are seated on the floor. A policeman raises his foot and kicks one in the head. A Danish soldier in the foreground watches on, then turns toward the camera.

Everyone, from colonel Dalby to the Chief of Defence, Peter Bartram, denied there was any video footage of the incident, but several other soldiers are clearly seen carrying or wearing cameras. And despite the new evidence, the Iraqis still have not received compensation. Their cases have been dismissed by the Eastern High Court both because the statute of limitations has expired, and because the Iraqis have insufficient resources to take the case to trial. An appeal is waiting to be heard by the Supreme Court.

As for Kærgaard, being a whistleblower was not without its consequences. In 2013, he was taken to court by the Military Prosecution Service, which was investigating Dalby for dereliction of duty. When Kærgaard refused to reveal who had given him the video, he was fined 13,000 kroner. The judge chose not to jail him, however, and a crowdfunding campaign by supporters raised the money to pay the fine.

Kærgaard is convinced it was the military's way of sending a message to other potential whistleblowers.

“They wanted to send a signal that if you step outside the lines and work against the system,

Iraq has become my destiny. When I returned I wanted to put Iraq behind me, but somehow it keeps me pulling me back

you'll be jailed and have your life destroyed.”

The prosecutor dropped the case against Dalby in January, citing Kærgaard's refusal to name his source. But Kærgaard argues that the military prosecutor is an inherently undemocratic institution, lacking both transparency and incentive to uncover corruption.

“The police and military are tasked with investigating themselves, so they have little incentive to uncover abuse of power amongst their own personnel. They're assisted by governments that make political trade-offs with each other: if the current government doesn't investigate the last, then the next government will also be left alone. But they shouldn't be making these trade-offs. These cases should be going to court in the interest of democracy.”

Kærgaard's video was particularly shocking precisely because so many levels of power denied that the evidence existed. He is certain that the news must have gone all the way to the top, where the order for a cover-up must have been given. But that is mere speculation, and unless Denmark introduces an independent auditor's office to investigate corruption in the military and civil services, Kærgaard

argues, cases like these will never be resolved.

“Corruption is widespread. I know of a few other cases, which I can't prove, but that is why we need the new court. My case isn't a one-off.”

RETURN TO IRAQ

Denmark recently pledged its F-16 in the international fight against IS in Iraq and Syria. While no ground forces have yet to be pledged, Kærgaard is concerned that we haven't learned from our mistakes in past conflicts in the region. The military action against Afghanistan didn't destroy the Taleban, who recently agreed a negotiated peace with the government.

The same strategy needs to be applied to IS who ought to be involved in a democratic process through political negotiations.

“I have no sympathy for IS. They are cruel and we should do whatever we can to destroy them, but we can't bomb them back to the stone age. We should return to Denmark's activist foreign policy during the Cold War, when we helped facilitate negotiation and dialogue. But this has now been forgotten, and all we seem concerned with is sending weapons and soldiers. We have forgotten

how to deal with phase two and three – cleaning up, and learning lessons.”

Kærgaard's concerns are directed at the people who have been displaced and affected by the international intervention in Iraq. 280 Iraqis were evacuated to Denmark, mostly interpreters and their families, following the last intervention. 67 have since returned to Iraq, among other reasons because they found living in Denmark as Muslim refugees a degrading experience.

But now with the rise of IS, they are under threat again, and Kærgaard is trying to help them return to Denmark. Few politicians have listened to his plea, however, and he is currently trying to secure residence permits, as well as raise funds to make a documentary about their experiences.

Kærgaard currently lives in Horsens with a new girlfriend who has helped him adjust to his new life. He no longer misses being in the army, and he has found a new purpose in his work.

“Iraq has become my destiny. When I returned I wanted to put Iraq behind me, but somehow it keeps me pulling me back.” **M**

Peter Stanners



Anders Koustrup Kærgaard at home in Horsens.

Photo: Ivan Riordan Boll

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The lingering fighter jet debate

Fighter jets allow Denmark to live up to its NATO obligations, but not everyone is convinced that buying a new air fleet is a good investment. On the opposite page we present two opposing views on the matter

DENMARK is set to buy 30 new fighter jets next year to replace its ageing fleet of F-16s. Thirty billion kroner has been earmarked for the purpose, and the government is now in the process of deciding which model of next-generation fighter jets to purchase. It's a political procurement that has sparked a heated debate – not just about which jets to purchase, but whether the money would be better spent on welfare instead of war.

Denmark's current fleet of F-16 fighter jets has two main missions: to enforce Danish air sovereignty, and to participate in peacekeeping

missions. They have been involved in three wars – 1999 in Yugoslavia, 2001 to 2003 in Afghanistan, and 2011 in Libya – and have patrolled the airspace above Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which have no fighter jets of their own.

Denmark and the Baltic states are members of the intergovernmental military alliance NATO, and as such are urged to spend two percent of GDP on defence. Few countries are meeting this target, however, leading to worries that the NATO balance of power is skewed too much toward the US. Denmark is among the majority of states that

spend less than two percent, and which are now under pressure to increase their military capacity.

The government will decide which jets to purchase next year, but far-left party Enhedslisten argues it shouldn't go ahead with it at all. Instead, the money should be reinvested in Denmark to counter cuts to welfare spending.

To the right are two opinion pieces offered by the nascent political party Alternativet, which has yet to decide its position on the issue. Should Denmark live up to its NATO obligations, or would the money be better spent on welfare? **M**

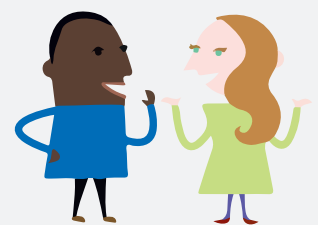
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POINT

OF COURSE DENMARK NEEDS NEW JETS

FIRST and foremost, these jets have been financed by the defence budget over many years. This is money the armed forces would have used, not an additional cost for our military. Our current jets should have been retired long ago, but the decision was postponed until now due to a funding deficit in the military. The Danish military is already one of the world's cheapest. Over the past 25 years, we have cut spending, and we currently spend far less than we are obligated to as a NATO member. The savings have had grave consequences for our military capacity. The army can no longer shoot down enemy planes, and we don't have any functioning cannons any more. Some of our ships can't sail because we have too few able sailors. In the 1990s, we had to scrap 400 tanks. Now we only have 22 that are in service.

To see how far we've come, we need to compare our situation to the Russian battle of Stalingrad during the Second World War, in which only every other Russian was armed. The unarmed soldiers had to wait until someone had been shot before they could pick up a weapon and continue the fight. Today, although all Danish soldiers have rifles, our army has been split into three parts, of which only one has its required equipment. One of the other parts has run out of spare parts for its equipment, while the third never received its equipment at all because of funding cuts.

In frustration over the lack of equipment and savings, the military's leaders are quitting a lot faster than new staff can be trained. Thirty-three percent are actively looking for work outside the military, and forty-five percent don't see themselves working for the military within two years. This is not only a waste of money (because officers are expensive to train), it also results in an unacceptable loss of skills in a field where one's ability can mean life or death.

This is not only an economic question, it's a question of our

military capabilities. We can't just bring back our fighter jets once we've cut them. It takes many years to replace equipment and expertise. These new jets will be operable for the next 40 years. It's completely impossible to predict geopolitical security that far into the future: think about the period between 1900 and 1940, which started in the middle of a long peaceful period and ended with two world wars. A jet is a multi-purpose military tool that can be used in most missions conducted by the military, from Danish matters of sovereignty, to combat missions in Libya and Afghanistan; from air policing over the Baltics, to the protection of Danish combat troops. Fighter jets help bind the Army, Navy and Air Force together, as they can support all three.

Seeing how often we use fighter jets, it's clear that we need them. Sweden was grateful when Danish F-16s deterred Russian bombers coming to rehearse the dropping of nuclear weapons over Stockholm. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are also grateful that Danish jets routinely deter Russian bombers that violate their airspace. Danish jets flew a quarter of the missions in Libya.

Russia has recently waged war against Georgia, invaded Crimea, and threatens Baltic NATO states, while thousands of Russian soldiers are positioned near the Ukrainian border. Few believe we are on the path to an all-out war with Russia, but it is often the threat of power that resolves conflicts when nations end up disagreeing. That is why the fates of the Ukraine and the Baltic states will be partially determined by how much military hardware we are willing to place in the region. If we cut our hardware, we are giving Putin the opportunity to do whatever he likes.

My personal belief is that of course Denmark needs fighter jets, as they are flexible and long-lasting tools. Denmark is weaker without jets: a nation that crosses its fingers when conflict erupts around the world, and asks others for help to protect its sovereignty. **M**

Alexander With,
air force officer

Tune Revsgaard
Nielsen, former
soldier and current
philosophy student

Provided by

ALTERNATIVET

COUNTERPOINT

NEW JETS JUST MEAN MORE WAR

DENMARK should leave the arms race and abandon the naïve idea that increased military spending and escalating war rhetoric pave the way to peace and greater security. Denmark needs to change paths. New fighter jets do not belong in the new narrative of peaceful development through which Denmark can be a better global nation

Like much of the world, Danes are culturally and historically exposed to a return of Cold War rhetoric, along with the tale that a strong defence is needed to keep the Russian (Soviet) neighbours at bay. This patriarchal and antiquated logic is particularly apparent in nationalistic arenas, and is amplified by people who don't embrace the concepts of trust and open dialogue. Russia should be put in its place, they argue. If we show weakness through trust and openness, we are lost.

The story of Denmark's 30 billion kroner investment in new fighter jets is a tale of fighting evil in the world through military might. Luckily, it's also a story that has lost its validity and relevance these days, given the many examples of the directly damaging results of our military interventions in countries around the world.

We may have removed the opposition in the short term. But stability, democracy and education have not grown in the vacuum. Experience has shown us that the opposite happens. We only ever remove the symptom. The lessons of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya are clear. Nation-building and democracy were undermined, while promising projects drowned in corruption. The extremism we hoped to fight only grew. Wars were lost, and with the defeat, so too died the hopeful expectations of democracy.

In Libya, we spent over 600 million kroner flying 25 percent of the bombing runs that led to Gadhafi's fall. But it was a catastrophe that

Denmark participated, as it sent Libya on the path to the civil war it is now facing. And it's a catastrophe that ordinary Danes – working men and women – paid for it.

We are assured that the 30 billion kroner that the majority of our so-called representatives want to spend on the jets won't be taken from our welfare budget. They will come from a military budget that has long been set aside. This is a weak argument to support the purchase. Thirty billion kroner of Danish tax money is 30 billion kroner of tax money. Does it come from a private weapons fund financed by people with a love of fighter jets and their capacities in battle? No. It is taken from the state. You are paying, whether you like it or not.

We shouldn't be talking about how to make transatlantic cooperation more balanced in order to live up to our "obligations" in NATO. We should instead be talking about how Denmark can promote peace in the world, which our NATO membership hasn't accomplished. Quite the contrary.

Global military spending is currently larger than ever. NATO hasn't opposed this development, but has increasingly promoted it. It is also clear that Anders Fogh Rasmussen doesn't want to use a reconciliatory tone with Russia. He beats the war drum at every given opportunity, and acts upset when countries in his loose alliance dare to cut defence budgets. But how can we achieve lasting peace, if the peace is only built on military hardware?

The jets don't belong to the story we need to write about our future. We want to write a story about peace, in which conflicts between countries are increasingly tackled through negotiations. But we are not naïve. We know this story can only be a reality if we take the lead. And we are not believers in a happy utopia. We know that we can only change the world by having trust in the abilities of small nations to change the world by breaking patterns and making new ones. **M**



Photo: Lance Cpl. Bryan Nygaard, U.S. Marine Corps

The 51st State: Keeping Washington happy is a Copenhagen job

In recent decades Denmark has become one the US' staunchest allies. This special relationship has brought Denmark into a number of foreign conflicts, and has permanently transformed the country's position in the world.

THEY SAY a picture is worth a thousand words, and it is doubtful that the irony was lost on anyone when, during the funeral of a man who had dedicated his life to the fight against imperialism and colonialism, three of the most active leaders of the free world made funny faces and snapped a selfie. When Helle Thorning-Schmidt,

Elias Thorsson

David Cameron and Barack Obama cuddled up for the most powerful moment of self photography in history, it was not a show of personal friendship, but evidence that the "special relationship", which has made their countries some of the most aggressive players on the international scene, is here to stay.

This reality was further emphasised late last month with the announcement that Denmark would be sending F-16s to Iraq to help in the fight against the Islamic State (IS).

"Sadly, it can be said that the longstanding Danish tradition of working with international organisations such as the UN has been

replaced with just following the US wherever they go," said Nikolaj Villumsen, defence spokesperson for left-wing party Enhedslisten.

CHANGING LANES

At the end of the Second World War, Denmark became the fiftieth member of the UN, and throughout the Cold War, its only active use of

its military involved actions performed either under the UN banner or with the approval of the organisation. The 2003 War in Iraq marked the end of a multilateral approach to international politics and (to critics like Villumsen) the beginning of Denmark's position of "you say 'jump', we say 'how high'."

Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, an expert on US and Danish defence issues at the Danish Institute for International Studies, argues that the civil war that broke out in the Balkans during the nineties was a major factor in pushing the country away from the UN and towards the US.

"The practice of supporting and listening to the UN has been weakened in recent years," said Rahbek-Clemmensen. "In Yugoslavia, there was a need to go around the UN to do the morally right thing, and with that, the UN lost some of its moral clout in the Western world. Today, the organisation doesn't mean a whole lot when it comes to Denmark's national security; it is mostly with respect to other, less important issues that it still is seen as valuable."

He further claims that this new way of interacting with the world was calculated to gain favour with the superpower across the Atlantic, and that it has even gone "further than was needed."

MAINTAINING LOYALTY

But not everybody sees the "special relationship" between Denmark and the US as a bad thing. Conservative MP Per Stig Møller, who served as Foreign Minister during both the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, maintains that being active in support of US goals around the world is key to maintaining Denmark's national security.

"The two countries have a very



Photo: Magnus Frøderberg

As foreign minister between 2001 and 2010, Conservative MP Per Stig Møller was a key figure in shaping Denmark's current relationship with the USA.

good and loyal relationship with each other," he said. "It is important for both Denmark and Europe to maintain a strong bond with the US, because without their support we would be unable to withstand a push from the south or from the east."

Møller, who along with current NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen was one of the key figures in forming this new, activist way of approaching foreign policy, remains clear on why the change happened, and why it should continue.

"We expect loyalty from the US, so therefore we should be loyal to them. Loyalty has to go both ways, or it doesn't exist," said Møller.

This line of thinking seems to be found across the political spectrum in Copenhagen, as the 2011 change in government from left to right – which critics had hoped would mark a change in policy – only resulted in the creation of a tweaked version of the policy of military activism.

"I had hoped that with a new majority in parliament, we would see a new way of approaching foreign policy," bemoans Villumsen. "But as we saw with Syria, where we were the only country in Europe that was ready from the get-

go to conduct bombing campaigns, this hasn't changed. I feel that our politicians have not learned nearly enough from our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan."

THE NEIGHBOURS

The Iraq War was important in more ways than one for Denmark, as it established an approach that was inherently different from its closest neighbours, Germany and Sweden. Both nations refused to be part of the 'Coalition of the Willing', and did not participate in the invasion of Iraq.

"The main thing with Sweden is that they have a very different culture from us when it comes to these kind of decisions. They have maintained a position of neutrality for a long time, which we have not done," said Rahbek-Clemmensen. "But it is true, we could have done the same as the Germans, and chosen not to be so involved in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq, but we didn't."

The reason why Denmark felt the need to follow the US into Iraq, while larger countries such as Germany and France chose to stay away, can, according to Rahbek-Clemmensen, be explained both by the smaller stature of Denmark, and the domestic political situation.

"In Germany and France, you had social democratic governments, and they felt they could score political points by refusing to participate," he explained, "while the decision fitted well with Venstre and Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's political perspective. They saw this as something inherently moral that should be supported."

There can be little doubt that the use of the military in recent decades has changed the way the world perceives Denmark, and has thrust Denmark firmly into the in-

"We expect loyalty from the US, so therefore we should be loyal to them. Loyalty has to go both ways, or it doesn't exist."

CONSERVATIVE MP PER STIG MØLLER

ternational limelight, for better or for worse.

"There have been studies that show that goodwill toward Denmark in the US has increased due to our actions, and the same seems to go for Britain," said Rahbek-Clemmensen. "In regards to the security situation, however, our activist stance has undoubtedly put us on the terror map and made us more likely to come under attack."

Furthermore, in 2005 Denmark was elected into the UN Security Council, and in 2009 Anders Fogh Rasmussen left his position as Prime Minister to become Secretary General of NATO; both choices were linked to the country's increased stature on the world stage.

THE ROAD TO THE FUTURE

Today, Afghanistan remains frustratingly unstable, chaos reigns in Libya, and Iraq stands on the brink of a full-scale civil war. Nonetheless, Denmark is yet again willing to commit resources to foreign conflicts with no direct impact on the nation's borders. And even Møller, who eleven years ago was key in launching the nation into the uncertainty of Iraq, remains convinced that "the decision was correct." And now with the government committing F-16s to the fight against IS in Iraq, there is little reason to expect a change in course, a reality that people like Villumsen fear.

"It is incredibly frustrating that the current situation seems to revolve around who can be the fastest to repeat whatever Obama says," said Villumsen. "If he just says the word 'war', then we are ready, and I fear that the majority in Parliament will continue to send soldiers into impossible, incomprehensible wars, and that we will keep on making the same mistakes again and again." ■

From Bosnia to Iraq: The History of activist foreign policy

Since the end of the Cold War, Denmark has remained active on the world stage and contributed to seven international conflicts across the globe

WITH THE END of the Cold War and the downfall of the Soviet Union, Denmark’s military focus changed from protecting the nation’s borders to international operations. Since then the country has deployed around 30,000 servicemen to seven overseas missions across the globe – a sizeable number considering that Forsvaret, the Danish Military, has a total capacity of 24,509 active service members.

Most of those early missions were carried out as a part of a UN peacekeeping force, but following frustration with the organisation’s perceived inability in dealing with crisis zones, the focus shifted towards increased unilateral actions, carried out in tandem with allied nations lead by the United States.

THE UN ERA

The first post-Cold War mission Denmark was involved with was the 1990 Desert Storm operation, aimed at driving Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Denmark contributed with a single warship, the HDMS Olfert Fischer, which assisted in maintaining the UN imposed trade embargo on Iraq.

Although the contribution was very limited, it was a watershed moment in the country’s involvement in international affairs, as it was the first time since the colonial era that Denmark had deployed warships outside Europe. Internally this also led to the for-

mation of the International Brigade, which until it was disbanded in 2009, had a force of up to 5000 men, who carried out operations around the world.

Two years after the Gulf War Danish troops joined a UN peacekeeping mission during the Bosnian War. This time the country contributed with ground troops, armoured vehicles and fighter planes. During the conflict six Danish soldiers and three humanitarian aid workers lost their lives.

In 1999 the army returned to the Balkans to take part in the Kosovo War, with planes taking part in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavian targets, and ground troop participating in the peace keeping force following the end of the conflict, where they remain to this day.

THE WAR ON TERROR

These operations were, however, very diminutive when compared to the country’s involvement in the post-911 War on Terror. In January 2002 the first Danish troops arrived in Afghanistan and, shortly after, parliament voted unanimously to take an active part in the US-led coalition. Just two months after the vote the first Danish soldiers died in the country, when, during a disarming operation, an antiquated missile exploded, killing three members of a combat engineer detachment.

At the beginning of the Taliban insurgency the following year, par-

liament decided to increase the effort in Afghanistan and prolong its stay in the country. This time around, nine MPs from left wing Enhedslisten and SF voted against the resolution. In the following years parliament decided four more times to increase the war effort and extend the time Danish troops would remain in the country.

The most important of these was the 2006 decision to send combat troops to the Helmand province, which meant that for the first time since the Second World War the country had troops actively engaged in fighting. The last of those left earlier this year, finally putting an end to a 12 year long military involvement in Afghanistan, which cost 43 Danish soldiers their lives.

IRAQ

The Iraq War marked another major turning point for the country’s foreign policy, and brought an end to a political consensus that had existed since the early nineties. For the first time in modern history Danish soldiers took part in an invasion of another country, a stark contrast to the multilateral peacekeeping mantra of the previous decade.

Involvement in the conflict was from the beginning controversial, and while the government led by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen lobbied aggressively for the use of force, the parliamentary minority remained averse to this drastic change in policy, which disregarded the UN and the Security Council. In March 2003 the resolution for sending troops to join the US-lead invasion was passed with the narrowest of majorities and in July that year the first military battalion arrived in Iraq.

Danish troops remained in the country until 2007, when parliament decided to pull out of the conflict, which had remained controversial and hotly debated throughout. Eight Danish soldiers lost their lives during that time, with dozens more injured.

Timeline for Danish military involvement

Persian Gulf
1991

Bosnia
1992-2003

Kosovo
1999-present

Afghanistan
2001-2014

Iraq
2003-2007

Libya 2011

Iraq
2014-present

NO BOOTS ON THE GROUND

The unpopularity of the Iraq War created an aversion both among the public and politicians to commit ground troops to conflict areas across the globe. Pictures and news of young men dying in wars – which had no direct impact on the country – had been hard to take for the public, and when news broke that the weapons of mass destruction, the main reason behind the war, had never existed, opposition grew fiercer.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who had been key to forming this new militarist direction, had left the government to become the 12th Secretary General of NATO. However, Danish military jets, and support personnel were deployed in the strategic airstrikes on Libyan targets, with all parties voting in favour of the resolution.

This marked the beginning of a new consensus, which was formed around the idea that Denmark should remain active on the world stage, without the risk of getting dragged into another long, persistent conflict. Like its ally the US, from the Libyan operation onwards, parliament has followed the line of limited, tactical response from the air.

This new approach both harks back to the more limited response of the nineties, while continuing the unilateralism of the Iraq War years, as even before the US had decided on a course of action in Syria, defence minister Nicolai Wammen had expressed willingness to commit planes and support personnel to the fight against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

Following the strategy that causalities, while still showing force, parliament has now approved to send F-16s, cargo planes and supplies to support Kurdish and Iraqi forces fighting the Islamic State in the Middle East, once again showcasing Denmark's willingness to carry on as one the US' most active and eager allies. **M**



A protest in 2005 against Denmark's involvement in the invasion of Iraq

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Elias Thorsson



I'm a Danamerican: Where's my passport?

I AM AN AMERICAN. I don't have a green card or a blue passport to prove it, but I am. I am also an Israeli, a Ukrainian and a Finn. I am an Estonian and a Spaniard, a German, an Indian and a Turk. Human on a good day, so to speak, I feel unity with most of the places on the planet where I have been welcomed with open arms, had good times, and met shining, inspirational people.

As a matter of fact, I usually feel welcome everywhere but Denmark – the one country where I can actually prove my nationality with an official beetroot-coloured Danish EU passport. The feeling is mutual. Like most other Danes, I don't really like my country, let alone my fellow countrymen. Mostly because I know us so well, and because our collective efforts and capabilities really should make us behave better, think more freely, and share more readily. It's a sort of misanthropic reaction to a high degree of idealism, one might say: bitterness resulting from shattered hopes and unfulfilled high expectations.

I get that attitude a lot whenever the USA is the topic of dinner-time conversation. Disappointment. It is also pretty clear that there is an inverse relationship between how harshly the en-

tire North American civilization is judged – usually on its corporatism and foreign relations – and how little first-hand knowledge of the country and its people the critics usually have. Whenever someone – usually (and to my great sorrow) on the left – tells me that he or she hates America and all that it stands for, I always ask whether they have been to America. Almost always, the answer is no.

But I have. In the nineties, I spent a year studying at the University of California at Santa Barbara, a prestigious party school on the west coast, and later in the same decade, I worked at the UN Headquarters in New York for a time. I have since visited both the East and Northwest Coasts more than a handful of times as a performing poet and artist, but I have only scratched the surface of the huge nation.

I might have managed to crawl under its skin at certain easterly and westerly points, but there is still so much left to explore. Just as there is everywhere on the globe, even in the petite nation of Denmark. But I am getting ahead of myself here. Let's return to foreign affairs for a while.

Is it fair to judge an entire nation based on its foreign relations, past or present? Can a country's

When it comes down to basics, we are all pretty much the same, even though we are different.

Claus Ankersen

political administration be equated with its population? The answer is, of course, a roaring NO. Seriously, who wouldn't detest being equated with and judged by the actions and politics of the political administration here? Danes are racist. Danes are warmongers. Danes are market fundamentalists. Are we? You might ask yourself, dear reader. Am I? Again, the answer is no.

No more than the Americans, the Israelis or the Finns. Germans are not Nazis, even though they had a hugely popular Nazi regime for some years. Sadly for the global state of governance, the elected administration of a country does not necessarily mirror the population. Bummer for the political system, lucky for mankind. When it comes down to basics, we are all pretty much the same, even though we are different.

This sameness is an excellent foundation for exploring fruitful and dangerous differences alike. On the West Coast of the USA, I sense the same pioneering spirit as in any artist, any nomad and any exploring sojourner – in any Viking, if you will. The further north you move, the wackier, more artistic and alternative the people seem to be. If you are anything like me, go there. I promise, you'll love it.

In fact, a lot of good things are the brainchildren of that Northwest Coast, from California to the Canadian border. On the East Coast: the farmer, the consolidator, the old money, the brazen bull of Wall Street. Out of this completely different kind of energy, fast, dense and dark, emerges the miracle of the Gaian salad bowl: the momentous, peaceful and mostly trouble-free co-existence of every shape and colour of two-legged human under the sun, strolling the avenues of the Big Apple. Fear-based or not – if you haven't been there, hurry up and bite it.

On the east/west axis, here is a lesson or two for us Danes: observe and respect your fellow man in the East. Follow your dream in the West. We Danes are not really good at either. In fact, we are steadfastly attempting to become what Americans used to be: protectionist, unequal and market-ruled. But then again, we've got bicycles, renewable energy, and really, really good-looking people. Americans like that. Everybody does. In this sense, I am also an American. A Danmerican perhaps. And now that the Danish government has allowed dual citizenship, I'm just waiting for the US embassy to send me my new blue passport. **M**



Elusive Danish multiculturalism

A YOUTUBE VIDEO of an Egyptian talk show blares on the computer by the till. Above the monitor, a gilt frame hangs; the gold Arabic lettering it surrounds honours Allah. Ahmed is handy with a razor, skilfully chiselling a sharp haircut from my head of hair.

At first glance, I could be in a barbershop in Beirut, Agadir or Cairo, but Ahmed speaks fluent Danish, and I pay in kroner, not diram or lira. I am in the northern Copenhagen neighbourhood of Nørrebro, where cosmopolitan Denmark has emerged over the past twenty years.

A PROUD HISTORY

Unlike the United Kingdom, the United States, France or Australia, Denmark is not considered a multicultural society. Although Eastern European Jews migrated to Copenhagen early in the 20th century, Denmark remained relatively homogenous until the 1970s, when Turkish guest workers settled in the country.

Danish national identity is a strong cultural force, forged through centuries of fighting the Swedes, long-established democracy, and a strong Lutheran tradition. Denmark dabbled in colonialism (with footholds in the Caribbean, West Africa and India) but never built empires like the British, French or the Portuguese.

Denmark has a proud history of refugee protection, and contributed to the establishment of the in-

ternational refugee regime. Dane Knud Larsen was chair of the Geneva conference that drafted the 1951 Refugee Convention, which remains the most authoritative expression of international refugee law. Denmark was the first country to ratify the Convention, on December 4, 1952.

Since then, Denmark's generous refugee settlement program has seen Palestinians, Lebanese, Serbs, Ethiopians and Somalis become permanent residents, though in modest numbers. Today, Denmark is increasingly multicultural.

In 1993, refugee policy brought down the government. Following an ombudsman's explosive investigation, then-Prime Minister Poul Schlüter was forced to resign when it was revealed that his government had been dragging its feet on processing Tamil family reunification applications.

Refugee protection in Denmark is not without its problems, however. While Denmark's contribution to the UNHCR's resettlement program is meritorious, its annual intake of 500 refugees per year is diminutive compared to Australia, Canada and Sweden.

Denmark stands alongside other European countries facing significant asylum challenges, with migrants fleeing conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa attempting to reach Europe by sea. Southern European countries like Greece and Italy form a buffer between northern and western Euro-

Multiculturalism holds that all cultures co-exist under the law, and no culture – dominant or otherwise – is outside it.

Nik Tan

pean states and the 78,300 people who had arrived in the EU by the end of July this year.

In particular, Sweden's exemplary refugee policy poses challenges for Denmark. Stockholm recently announced that the country would provide permanent protection to all Syrian refugees in Sweden. This is expected to amount to around 100,000 people in 2014 alone. It would be in the best tradition of Danish refugee policy to provide protection alongside their Nordic neighbour – but will it be forthcoming?

MULTICULTURAL INTEGRATION?

On the settlement side, Denmark maintains a policy of integration – language that sounds clunky and anachronistic to my Australian ears. Even more jarring, immigration is managed under the Aliens Act. These titles could perhaps be dismissed as mere semantics, and yet language is important to defining national policy and culture.

A policy of integration presumes that migrants and refugees – labelled 'new Danes' – should fit into the existing dominant culture, a process that may well entail loss of traditions culture and identity. On the other hand, it is argued, high taxes and a strong welfare state require a certain level of cohesion, perhaps best achieved through integration.

This is not a zero-sum game, however, as multicultural policy combined with robust state sup-

port can produce successful citizens committed to contributing to Danish society, bringing their own skills and knowledge to bear in a new context.

Multiculturalism, long established in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia, for example, provides for the co-existence of cultures side-by-side. Multiculturalism does not hold a particular culture to be superior to others, but rather emphasises equality and non-discrimination between cultures.

While conservatives often argue that multiculturalism leads to radicalism or extremism, the policy does not allow for unlawful activity. Multiculturalism holds that all cultures co-exist under the law, and no culture – dominant or otherwise – is outside it.

This is not to say that multiculturalism is without its problems. But there are thriving cosmopolitan societies in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, where diversity is a strong source of national pride.

In Australia in particular, acceptance of and engagement with migrant cultures have enriched national identity to a point where diversity itself has become a key characteristic of what "Australian" means.

Back in Nørrebro, I am feeling more and more at home. A migrant myself, I test out my fledgling Danish alongside Middle Eastern and African recent arrivals. **M**

ARE YOU AN ACCOMPANYING SPOUSE IN PURSUIT OF A CAREER AND RESIDING IN COPENHAGEN?

COPENHAGEN CAREER PROGRAM WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO AN INFORMATION MEETING IN INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, GYLDENLØVESGADE 11, 2nd FLOOR - 1600 COPENHAGEN V.

Monday the 27th of October at 10 am - 12:30 pm

At the meeting you will receive information about:

- Danish courses
- Measures promoting employment such as internship, employment with salary subsidy, mentor at the work place and upgrading courses.
- Job seeking courses.
- Recognition of international qualifications.
- Unions and unemployment funds.
- Where to get information about starting up your own business.

Please register for the meeting by sending an e-mail with your full name and address, latest on Friday the 24th of October, to:

cphcareerprogram@bif.kk.dk

Coffe/tea and cake will be served during the meeting.

Copenhagen Career Program is based in Jobcenter Copenhagen International in International House, Gyldenløvesgade 11, 2nd floor. Jobcenter Copenhagen International is responsible for administrating the Integration Act in the municipality of Copenhagen.

www.facebook.com/copenhagencareerprogram

COPENHAGEN
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A poorly closed oil well creates a spill in the middle of the Komi forest. Despite being a UNESCO World Heritage Site, oil companies operate with impunity and are unafraid of leaving branded materials as evidence.



A Greenpeace volunteer observes an oil well that had recently malfunctioned and sprayed 3000M2 of forest with oil. To hide the damage, the oil company allegedly chopped down the trees and covered the ground with sand.

CAPTURED

Oil companies have been drilling in the Komi Republic, Russia, for 40 years. Greenpeace alleges that the companies have used corruption and intimidation against the region's administration to drill – and pollute – with impunity. Words and photos: Alban Grosdidier



A Greenpeace expert and volunteer document a leaking pipeline in the middle of the Ussinsk oil field. Leaking pipelines spill 5,000,000 tons of oil and oil products in Russia every year.



Photojournalist Denis Sinyakov and documentarist Juliet Lamont chatting on the train from Ussinsk to Moscow. Sinyakov is a member of the Arctic 30 and was among those illegally arrested and jailed by the Russian authorities.

FOREIGN

Laughing at the sun

Locked for decades under a brutal and restrictive military regime, Burma's artists and writers are now exploring a tentative new freedom, as censorship laws are relaxed under the country's nascent political reforms

BEYOND THE LURID YELLOW and red signs of the corner teashop, the bustle of shouted conversations, and the thick smell of hot, sugary tea. Up a dank, crumbling corridor, and two flights of mildew-eaten stairs. There is an unremarkable wooden door on the left. Sandals and umbrellas lie scattered in a heap on the doorstep, the only indication that this may be more than a home.

Inside, a man reads from his poem *Hug* in a narrow sky-blue room, standing in front of chairs arranged three abreast between a wall and a bookshelf. A crowd of eager faces—Burmese, French, Italian, German, English—listen solemnly, some nodding at particular verses. Later, a young woman sporting a Black Sabbath t-shirt stands up to read a short story from 1937. "Please give me a little time, about 15 or 17 minutes, to know what the author wanted to say, and what the author wanted to mean," she says with a shy smile.

As the evening progresses, talk comes round to politics. Someone asks about censorship.

"Under the censorship, we had to use all kinds of methods to avoid being political," answers Zeyar Lynn, a celebrated poet and writer. "We knew that we were taking a huge risk, because we were liable to be put in prison. But at the same time, we self-censored. We knew how far we could go."

"A lot of us learned to write anti-government poetry as love poems," he says with a grin, and the audience members smile and chuckle.

"But of course, Saw Wai," he says, pointing to a Burmese gentleman sitting at the back of the room, "he was imprisoned for two years for writing that kind of poem. But he was bad, he wrote it very directly," Zeyar Lynn laughs,



Writer and President of PEN Myanmar, Dr Ma Thida, speaks at a PEN Myanmar literature event

and the room laughs with him.

Later, I sit with Saw Wai.

Why, I ask, was he jailed? He answers that the poem criticised the military leader General Than Shwe. Saw Wai was arrested immediately and imprisoned in Burma's notorious Insein jail for 2 years and 4 months. He was released in 2010.

I am silent, because the enormity, the brute reality of this fact overwhelms me, and makes words suddenly seem trite. In the end I say, feebly, "That is outrageous."

To my left, Htein Lin, a performance artist known for his uncompromising paintings and installations, nods quietly. "Yes," he says "That is the right word. Outrage. It is an outrage."

We are at a literature evening hosted by PEN Myanmar – the recently formed Burmese wing of the global PEN movement, dedicated to freedom of expression.

The organisation's president, Dr Ma Thida – an eminent writer, journalist, surgeon, human rights activist and recipient of numerous international human rights awards, who spent almost six years imprisoned in Insein Jail –

"We knew that we were taking a huge risk, because we were liable to be put in prison. But at the same time, we self-censored. We knew how far we could go."

ZEYAR LYNN, POET AND WRITER

Dani Patteran

sits poised and elegant, describing to me the steps it has taken to establish PEN Myanmar. She is visibly proud of what they have achieved: a gathering, or an organisation, like this would have been unthinkable in previous years.

The first quasi-democratic elections were held in Burma in 2010 and, as part of a widely trumpeted reform process, the government has begun to relax its draconian censorship laws. Artists do not have to explain every line, every dot and every colour choice on their paintings; publishers are no longer required to submit articles or books to the junta's 'Press Scrutiny Board' before publication, which would return pieces with words, sentences or entire pages blacked out.

Under this tentative new freedom, there has been a quiet blossoming of Burma's creative arts. There is the pop-up conceptual art gallery 'ts1', opened in early 2014; a new and hugely popular open mic night 'Jam It', where punk, hip-hop and rock bands perform to a rapt audience; a young woman has even dared to write poetry about her sexuality. Artistic hub and gallery 'Pansodan' hosts poets' and writers' unions, discussion groups, and boundary-pushing exhibitions.

Yet it is not just censorship that artists face, but a barrage of hurdles that make it almost impossible to imagine how there are any independent creative arts at all. A gutted education system means that there is little formal training, and artists and writers are often self-taught. In a country that still ranks amongst the poorest in South East Asia, making a living creatively is a tall order.

As the literature evening draws to a close, D. Lugalay, a sharp, eager young man with a haze of unruly curls, tells me conspiratorial-

ly over sweet tea, "You know, I am actually a lawyer." I look at him, surprised. To earn a living, he explains – then waves the thought away with an impatient hand. He fixes me with an intense stare. "Really," he says, "I am a poet," and breaks into a broad, cheeky grin.

It would be terribly naïve to assume that the rolling back of the military dictatorship heralds a blissful golden era for Burma's artists. Censorship laws, though eased, still retain the power to condemn or imprison those who stray too far. Self-censorship continues.

As poet, journalist and news editor Min Htet Maung explains, "it is like an umbrella....OK – freedom of expression. OK – you can write, you can publish. And after that, they watch. They just watch. So yes, we [are] afraid."

Perhaps the most extraordinary fact is that—despite intimidation, violence and stifling restrictions, without money and without training—Burma's artists, writers and poets refuse to be cowed. With seemingly irrepressible creativity, they continue to question, to criticise; continue to imagine and to create.

And Burma's artists also continue to do that most simple of things: to laugh at the absurdity of it all.

"We could not use the word 'sunset'," explains Min Htet Maung, "because in Burmese, sun is 'ne' – the first name of dictator General Ne Win."

"So I changed my idea and changed one of my poems, and I [wrote] 'There is an orange without wings, flying to the Western horizon'."

He looks at me, flaps his hands and says, "You get it? An orange without wings!"

Then he leans back in his chair, and laughs and laughs and laughs. **M**

COLUMN

Prejudice, tolerance and the labour market

The state should never exclude people from benefits simply because they deviate far from socially accepted norms and traditions

GETTING your face tattooed is bloody stupid. When I see young people whose faces are adorned in permanent ink, my heart drops and I wince. I wonder why they go to such extremes to set themselves apart, their beautiful bodies forever mutilated.

And when I see women dressed head-to-toe in black garb at the height of summer, their eyes invisible behind a mesh, I get annoyed. What is there to hide? You've got nothing to fear, I think. We've seen it all before, your body is no different from anyone else's.

I can feel repulsed when norms are broken. I am provoked by decisions people make that I cannot relate to. I would never have made their decisions. I know so much better.

These feelings conflict with the tolerance I've been brought up to exhibit toward my fellow human beings. I know that feeling prejudiced is normal, and you can't blame yourself for feeling what you feel.

So I judge silently, while trying my best to treat people who provoke me with the respect they deserve. It can sometimes be hard, but I almost always end up being surprised. Only the fewest people are genuinely bad. Most have a reason for being the way they are.

But if I owned a toy store, and a man with facial tattoos asked for a job, would I give it to him? If I managed a bank, and an educated Muslim woman wearing a veil applied to be a teller, would I give her an inter-

view? I'm challenged by the thought. What would my customers think? Would they exhibit the same tolerance I did by offering them the job?

Liberal Alliance (LA) MP Ole Birk Olesen believes these people are unemployable. Their decisions deviate so far from acceptable norms that they shouldn't expect to find work. And to some extent, I agree. Tolerance doesn't mean anything goes. Some prejudices are valid. I would expect my staff to be well dressed, groomed and clean. We accept that these conventions send positive signals to customers and colleagues, and ought to be abided by.

Body language and facial expressions are integral parts of human communication. A person with facial tattoos can appear frightening and intimidating. A disembodied voice speaking behind a veil deviates too far from the norms a customer expects when communicating with a person to whom they have to entrust their money.

I feel that these are fair prejudices within the culture I inhabit. But they are still prejudices. Facial tattoos remain a rite of passage in some cultures, while other cultures require women to remain covered to preserve their modesty. I still don't find facial tattoos pretty, and I think women shouldn't have to protect their faces from the male gaze.

My tolerance does not extend to stupid ideas, however. Olesen, for example, argues that people who



Unemployable? Two women from Burma's Chin minority with traditional facial tattoos.

Photo: Flickr / dany13

Lots of people make stupid decisions that limit their employability – I got a degree in philosophy

Peter Stanners

make themselves “unemployable”, by wearing a veil or sporting facial tattoos, should not expect to be afforded unemployment benefits of any kind.

Lots of people make stupid decisions that limit their employability – I got a degree in philosophy – but where should we draw the line? Should people with criminal records never expect to work again? I studied philosophy at university, which is essentially useless in the labour market. Should I also not expect to be given benefits?

Olesen's idea is clearly misguided. People who make mistakes or live well outside accepted norms are still human beings that deserve respect from the state. He's also a hypocrite, as his party's libertarian

ideology opposes the state's intervention in the private affairs of the individual – it's not the state's role to judge us.

The fact that his column was so widely reported on actually demonstrates a worrying collusion between the media and politicians. LA is a tiny party with no realistic chance of implementing the idea. But it was precisely because of the proposal's unreasonableness that it made such fantastic media fodder. So, the press jumps all over it, serving us story after story asking us “do you think this is fair?” in the hope of outraging us. They get a ton of clicks, and LA gets a ton of publicity.

It's a win-win. But the people – tattooed or not – lose. **M**

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE CULTURE SECTION, TURN OVER FOR THE NEWS SECTION