

---

# Joint workshop with the Iraqi Defence University for Higher Military Studies and the Royal Danish Defence College

*Policy brief from the workshop on May 3 2023*

---

## **Introduction**

On May 3 2023, the Strategic Studies & Research Center (SSRC) at the Iraqi Defence University for Higher Military Studies (DUHMS) in concert with the Centre for Stabilisation (CFS) at the Royal Danish Defence College's (RDDC) Institute for Strategy & War Studies (ISW) held a joint online workshop titled "*Strategic Thinking in Security Studies*".

## **Purpose and key elements**

The main objective of the workshop was to serve as a joint platform inspiring academic dialogue and shed light on research regarding "strategy and application of theories of strategy in military research" from a Danish and Iraqi perspective. The workshop was one of several online workshops and webinars, which have been organized by the SSRC and CFS as part of the Danish Peace- and Stabilization Fund's Program for Iraq & Syria. The program is supported by NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) and NATO's Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP). Attending the workshop was researchers from SSRC & RDDC supplemented by program officers and NMI advisors. The workshop was moderated by SSRC's research director Dr. Hayder Taha Askar.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

1. Strategic thinking is considered as a way of preparing a solid operational plan.
2. Strategic thought is individual and perceptual and requires education as well as experience.
3. A success criterion for strategic thinking is keeping in mind "*that everything is dynamic,*" which calls for a more flexible approach to strategy development.
4. Models of security strategies as Elliot Cohen's *Ends, ways, and means* can be applied in order to systemize research and make it comparable
5. Strategic starting points depends on a countries size and geopolitical situation, which needs to be a starting point for all research on national strategy development.

## **Key takeaways from the workshop**

The workshop's first presentation was held by researcher S.BG Ali Hado, whom focused on the topic strategic thinking from a literary and philosophical point of view. S.BG Ali Hado Radi argued that military strategy should be viewed perceptually and largely depends on the individual strategist's habitus. S.BG Ali Hado Radi regarded the "Strategic Thinker" as an individual with distinct characteristics and traits. Including, for example, the ability to think, plan, analyze and act strategically. This framework were highlighted as a collective set of experiences that the "strategic thinker" gathers throughout his or her life and military career.

Ultimately, the concept of strategic thinking was defined as an analytical process that involves deliberate and rational methods of analyzing advantages and vulnerabilities in all aspects of a military decision or operation in terms elements that can “affect the pursuit of a particular goal to reduce the severity or number of conflicts”.

The workshop's second presenter Dr. Peter Viggo Jakobsen outlined his presentation organized with an agenda of 4 points:

- 1) Conceptual clarification,
- 2) Application of Danish military strategy in a current context of the War in Ukraine
- 3) Danish military strategy post the War in Ukraine
- 4) Questions for clarification.

Dr. Peter Viggo Jakobsen initiated his presentation by highlighting sum and substance of military strategy based on the definition of political scientist and previous counselor in US Department of State Eliot

Cohen. Cohen sees strategy as the "art of choice” binding means with objectives. Dr. Jakobsen presented a consideration of assumptions, ends-ways-means, priorities, sequencing a Danish theory of a successful strategy. As an overarching element Denmark’s relationship with and contribution to NATO is per definition a corner stone in Danish strategy. A factor that clearly separates Danish and Iraqi maneuver room in strategy development.

Dr. Peter Viggo Jakobsen argued that each state should know its own limitations in order to produce realistic assumptions and achieve success. In the case of Denmark, the state, in acceptance of its size, has recognized the crucial importance of a NATO alliance as this by the end of the day remains Denmark’s security guarantee.

In conclusion, Dr. Peter Viggo Jakobsen stated that Danish armed forces are at breaking point due to large force contributions to international missions. However, due to the war in Ukraine, US’ pressure on allies to spend and do more has affected the line of thinking among Danish decision makers and more recourse will be allocated to the defence in the coming years.

The workshop was concluded with a joint Q&A. The discussion session formed the basis of relevant and interesting exchange of insights focusing on the application of strategy theory in SSRC research. SSRC stated that it would consider such an application in parts of its studies in order to approach research on strategy in a more systematic manner.

