

Nordic Identity between “Norden” and Europe

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The European Failure of Universal Empire

The absence of a centrally controlled empire is the most basic characteristic of the European civilization. However one should not completely disregard the notion of universal empire in comparative analyses of European identity. After all, most of the world’s large groups of populations have always been organized in empires, and the empires had grown in extent at the point in the High Middle Ages where Europe began to organize space and territory in a whole new way, in sharply demarcated territorial states and nations. What really needs explaining, as regards Europe, is why a thriving empire did not evolve inside her borders after the fall of Rome. Even though it was close at times, from Charlemagne to the Habsburgs none of the great European empire-builders were able to swallow up all their competitors. Charles V’s ambitions failed in 1555 with the Peace of Augsburg, where *cujus regio, eius religio*, the principle that the religion of the ruling prince was the religion of the country, was decreed (Østergaard 1996a, 1997).

The idea of one universal empire in Europe was definitively militarily defeated with the defeat of the Great Armada in 1588. Charles V’s son, Philip or Felipe II of Spain, sent in that year Europe’s greatest force against Queen Elizabeth I of England to enfold her realm in his Universal Catholic Empire (even though, technically speaking, it was his cousin in Vienna who was Emperor). It failed, as we know, but modern archival research and underwater archaeological examinations of the ships’ outfitting have made it clear that it was pure luck that the British won. That, of course, is not how they remember it themselves – especially in the light of the victories over Napoleon and Hitler, who also lined up enormous invading armies on the other side of the Channel. But in 1588 the balance of power was even more skewed, and if the fleet had not been shipwrecked in a hurricane the Duke of Alba’s war-hardened troops would most likely have cut through England like a knife through butter. Furthermore, such a military success would have mobilized the still strong Catholic forces in England. In truth, 1588 is one of the great turning-points of European history.

Later, the Habsburgs again failed to establish a hegemony in Central Europe in the Thirty Years War – first and foremost because of intervention by the Swedish king Gustavus II Adolphus in league with Cardinal Richelieu of France in one of the unholy, interest-based cross-alliances typical of European politics since the Middle Ages. Instead of an empire with clearcut allocation of competence, Europe became a system of states in unstable balance. A system where change in one element affected the others like billiard balls. This system of sovereign territorial states with permanently

changing alliances is what is called the Westphalian System, after the peace settlement at Westphalia in 1648 when the German states were internationalized and the modern principles of relations between sovereign territorial states were founded.

This result is vital to an understanding of the industrial, technological, democratic and national revolutions that have characterized Europe's development. Indubitably, the whole of Europe was neither modernized nor industrialized at the same time nor in the same way. Leadership came and went, different regions fell behind at different times, and earlier leaders of the race fell by the wayside. After a time, however, this very backwardness allowed a few of the losers to make a crucial leap ahead. This has been convincingly analyzed by the Russian-American economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron under the headline 'The Relative Advantage of Backwardness' (Gerschenkron, 1962).

By pointing out the variations in the process of industrialization in the most important European countries, Gerschenkron made it clear that industrial laggards, precisely because of their backwardness, were enabled to develop substitutes for the conditions which characterized the British industrial model. With the help of governmental intervention or financial banks, they could cancel out the lack of capital accumulated by more spontaneous means (Marx's 'original accumulation'). Gerschenkron also hinted that it could be an advantage to be a late starter; in that a country was thus able to skip earlier stages of industrial development and go straight into the most advanced sector of its time. Gerschenkron thus contributed to understanding industrialization in Europe as variations on a theme, not identical processes or slavish copies. It was the differences that were the secret of the dynamics of European society. The industrial revolution was not planned by a political and administrative centre, as the case would have been had the same thing happened in China. Had that been the case it would have been evolution, not revolution; and Europe would not then have been 'European'.

In itself there is no reason to assume that a system of competing states should be a necessary prerequisite for permanent growth. Theoretically one would sooner think that an empire would be able to shape growth on a scale surpassing that of an incoherent system of independent states. Apparently this argument was convincing to the many disciples of centralized planning in the 1960s and 70s, in the Soviet Union as well as elsewhere. But the command economies broke down in the 1980s and discredited the principle of centralized control. And so we have repressed the original and still relevant arguments against the price of cohabitation between many completely sovereign and egoistic states.

The cost of this type of system is that it presupposes a balance of power in order to survive. And the balance must in the final instance rest on mutually recognized relative military strength. Investments in new military hardware are therefore being made at a breakneck pace. That is the logic of balance of power, and wishful thinking will not change it. The years from 1500 to 1700 were the most warlike ever in Europe with regard to the percentage of years with open conflict (95%), the frequency of war (one nearly every third year), and the average length, extent and intensity of

conflicts. Spain and France were hardly ever at peace during the 16th century, and in the 17th century the Austrian Habsburgs and Sweden were at war on average for two out of every three years, Spain for three out of every five, Poland and Russia for four out of five, and the Ottoman Empire practically speaking constantly. Contrary to the usual assumptions, the weapons race turned out to be an economic advantage – if not for the population as such, at least for the states involved. The so-called ‘new military history research’ of the 1960s and 1970s has succeeded in demonstrating how the serious administrative and logistical problems posed by the need to build fortresses and warships and recruit and equip soldiers on a hitherto unknown scale caused a revolution in the form of government, from which the modern state was born in the 18th century. The so-called ‘military revolution’ is viewed today as the definitive explanation of the development of the work-discipline, management and technological discoveries that made possible the Industrial Revolution of 1780.

In contrast with decentralization within a system of states, an empire is able to control the economy centrally. It cannot be said a priori which system is best. Europe’s example shows, however, that seen over a period of time centralization seems to be less effective. Empires normally become unstable in the long run, regardless of how stable they may seem when seen in a shorter perspective. Universal empires never made it to Northern Europe. The inscription over the southern entrance to the Danish-German castle in Rendsburg at the river Ejder between Holstein and Sleswig “Eidora Terminus Imperii Romanum (est)” may be taken as a motto for all of the history of the Scandinavian or Nordic countries since the Middle Ages. Of course, Denmark, as well as the rest of the Nordic countries, have been profoundly influenced by the successive attempts to establish overarching political structures in continental Europe. But in a formal sense they never came under the sway of the secular emperors and were thus examples of the Westphalian system of a (shifting) balance of power between competing territorial states almost before the peace of Westphalia in 1648. The Nordic monarchies gradually gave way to territorially and subsequently nationally well defined states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are today the very epitome of the (European) nation-state. This, however, has not always been the case. Rather, multinational states seem to constitute the rule and the present nationally defined states the exemption or at best a relatively short period of time from the beginning of the twentieth century.

“Norden” as a Historical Region¹ and a Mental Construct

Seen from a geographical and geopolitical point of view the majority of the Nordic countries undeniably belong to the Baltic area. At the same time they are undeniably situated in the Northern part of Europe. Nevertheless, over the last hundred and fifty years the three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden have tended to downplay the Baltic and the European component of their national identifications. Many Scandinavians,

¹ “Historical region” can be either be understood in two ways: Either as a traditional landscape or province from the period before the modern nation-states and their subdivisions or as a transnational region signalling common history for a group of nations and states. Here the term is used in the latter meaning.

social democrats as well as liberals, have perceived the “Nordic” political culture, social structure and mentality as fundamentally different from that of the rest of Europe. An indication of this attitude is the use of “Norden” instead of “Northern Europe” when talking of these countries. *Norden* is perceived as something non-European, non-Catholic, anti-Rome, anti-imperialist, non-colonial, non-exploitative, peaceful, small and social democratic. In short, the Nordic peoples have perceived themselves as having no responsibility for Europe’s exploitation of the rest of the world and have spent a good part of their international efforts trying to make up for the wrongdoings of their fellow Europeans towards the Third and Fourth Worlds. Hence the activist role played by these five states in the United Nations in collaboration with the Netherlands, Canada, the Republic of Ireland and a few others. Still today, for many Scandinavians, the secret to economic and political success in this remote and sparsely populated part of Europe lies in keeping distance to all the neighboring powers, Germany and Russia in particular. There is some truth in this lesson from history if one looks at the periods of great power confrontations, but the mentality also testifies to major naivety as to the real background of the amazing success story of the Nordic nations in the twentieth century.

It is true that Sweden withdrew from European power politics after the disastrous defeat in 1709 at Poltava and gradually replaced its imperial ambitions with those of a smaller nation-state. Yet, the state still harboured revanchist ambitions against the rising Russia which led to war in 1788-89. The resulting stalemate, however, eventually led to total defeat in 1808-09 and loss of the half of the Swedish state to Russia. Under Russian patronage this province together with eastern Karelia was reorganized as Finland. It is equally true that Denmark – the House of Oldenburg or “Kron zu Dennemarck” as the composite state was called with a Low German (*plattdeutsch*) expression – was reduced to a medium sized power in 1814 with the loss of Norway. Yet, the multi-nation-state of Denmark-Sleswig-Holstein and Lauenburg still was a player in European power politics until 1863, albeit often in a rather amateurish way. This naïve amateurism eventually led to the catastrophe in 1864 and the reduction of Denmark to the very epitome of a small state. But only then and pretty much because of its own mistakes. Even today, when Denmark undeniably is the ultimate small state, the state still has not completely relieved itself of the burdens of the former empire, the Faroe Island and Greenland. Denmark as a nation-state is at the same time Denmark the Commonwealth, representing three separate nations in the world community.

The formerly subjected nations Norway and Iceland have profited from the relative lack of great power interest in this Northern European periphery in different ways and have developed their own separate identities and successful sovereign states. Even the Faroe Islands and Greenland have been able to their own national identities and set up their separate states with home rule in union with Denmark because of the relative lack of interest by the great powers in this area. Yet, there are important exceptions to the general rule of non-involvement of the Nordic countries in European affairs. Finland has been affected by the major European conflicts to the same degree as the small Baltic countries south of the Finnish Gulf. The main

difference is that Finland has luckier, partly due to its more solid and unified social and national base backed up by a more advantageous geographic situation *vis-à-vis* Russia. Apart from the occupation in the Second World War of Norway and Denmark by Germany (and Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands by Britain and the United States) the rest of the Nordic, however, due to geography and political choices have successfully kept out of most European conflicts since they learned their lessons early in the nineteenth century.

The fortunate geopolitical situation of the Nordic countries, though, is no achievement of their own. They were left more or less alone when, after the Napoleonic wars, the major conflicts between the great powers moved to other areas. Even the Soviet hegemony in the eastern Baltic from 1945, fortunately, did not bring back the Nordic countries to the center of international politics. Because of their fortunate geographical position the overwhelming majority of Scandinavians were able to live through the Cold War without really noticing that they were involved in a major conflict. Consequently, the populations have not yet realized that they were on the winning side. If noticed at all, the new confusing state of affairs after 1989 is often deplored and many almost long back to the bad, but predictable, old days of Cold War confrontations (see Østergård 1995).

Because of this isolationist mentality the majority of Swedes and Danes, contrary to the Finlanders², have tended to ignore the Baltic character and determinants of their common history. Iceland and Norway, on the other hand, after the entry of Finland and Sweden into the European Union in 1995 have begun stressing their Atlantic character more and more. To a degree the same is the case in the Faroe Islands which regardless of its union with Denmark has stayed out of the EC and now EU. Greenland too has opted out of the European Union and presents itself more and more as foremost among the indigenous peoples of the earth. If Greenland has any geopolitical identifications apart from Denmark it seems to be with the Indians and Inuits of Canada and further west. The rise of the European Union and the fall of the Soviet empire has ended the parenthesis of approximately hundred and fifty years of nationalist blindness to the geopolitical imponderabilia in Northern Europe. This blindness has also characterized most political and cultural historians with a few notable exceptions. *Norden* still awaits its Fernand Braudel, i.e. a historian who is able to depict the *longue durée* of this European region. Maybe it will turn out an impossible task because of the geographic differences among the Nordic countries. The Baltic area can be seen as a functional equivalent to the Mediterranean. But the Baltic area is only a part of Scandinavia or Norden, albeit a very substantial part. A truly comparative history of the region should for example analyze the common characteristics of the two border areas, Sleswig and Karelia. They share a similar historical experience in the sense that both provinces have been carved out of their original allegiance and for long periods been attached to neighbours with a different

² I deliberately use the term "Finlander" for a citizen of Finland. Finland officially comprises Finnish speakers as well as Swedish speakers. The latter are a small minority of 7% but the nation is bilingual and binational. A Finn is a Finnish speaking citizen of Finland whereas a Swedish speaking Finlander normally is referred to as a "Swedish speaking Finlander" or simply and less precise as a "Swedish Finn" (see Engman 1995 and Kirby 1995).

language and – in Karelia – a different religion. Yet some traits of the original, social structures have survived and surface every now and again. Such a surfacing seems to be under way at present in the predominantly German South Sleswig. At the last two local and regional elections the party of the Danish minority has increased to a considerable degree, yet nobody wants to change the border. The rights of the Danish minority south of the border as well as those of the German speakers to the north are well established and both groups seem to be firmly established within their respective states. In Karelia the situation is much less settled. Most of the Finnish speaking, Orthodox Karelians settled in eastern Finland after 1944 and do not want to return to the former Soviet, now Russian autonomous republic of Karelia. Yet, some changes of the border mainly regarding the affiliation of the old Swedish town Vyborg might be under way as a result of the weakening of Russia (see Engman 1995).

The British historian David Kirby has attempted to write what no Nordic historian has ever been able to do, an integrated political and social history of Northern Europe organized around the question of the dominance over the Baltic Sea (in Latin *Dominium Maris Baltici*) from 1500 until the present day (Kirby 1990 and 1995). Because of his Baltic perspective, the Atlantic half of *Norden*, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland have been omitted. This choice runs counter to the popular ideology of a common Nordic identity but makes a lot of geopolitical sense. Modestly, Kirby in the preface to the first volume, claims that he is no Braudel and primarily has written a general introduction to the history and controversies of the Baltic region. In fact, he has given us much more. At times he comes close to a Braudel with more interest than the French master for the importance of international politics and traditional dynastic politics, all consequently set against a background of solid social and economic history. There is not a lot of “longue durée” in Kirby’s analysis but an extremely interesting description of the interplay of the many different national histories of which he masters the languages, Finnish, Swedish, Danish, German, Russian and Polish. The following analysis is highly indebted to Kirby’s all embracing perspective.

One Nordic Model or Several Nation-states?

Norden (literally the North) is a concept that evokes unequivocally positive associations for almost everyone in the Nordic countries, connoting notions of a community of values that transcends boundaries of language and culture. But when did the concept of *Norden* actually emerge? What is the nature of the relationship between *Norden* as a mental construct and the geographical realities? From a strictly geographical point of view one ought to talk of Northern Europe rather than *Norden*. For Danes in particular, however, this has the major drawback of locating Denmark as a part of Northern Germany, an area from which Danes normally have tried to distinguish themselves. Despite the popular appeal of the notion of Nordic unity, the relationship between an assumed common “Nordic” identity and the sovereign nation-states of which *Norden* actually consists remains basically unclear for the inhabitants of this North European periphery.

Today, the five independent Nordic nation-states Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, together with the autonomous regions, the Aaland Islands, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and soon the Sami nation in northern Sweden and Norway perceive themselves as small, peace-loving and solidly democratic countries. Until the breakdown of the Communist block the model of the “Nordic” welfare state represented a third way between the two dominant superpowers and their attendant ideologies (see Stråth 1992 for an account of the notions of a Swedish “folkhem” and a distinct Nordic model). This is no longer the case. Indeed, one may have one’s doubts as to whether a “Nordic model” in the proper sense ever existed at all. Scandinavians have never seen themselves as representatives of one consistent and distinctive social model (Christoffersen and Hastrup 1983, 3), national differences having always been considered too great for this ever to have been the case. The notion of *Norden* as a conscious Social Democratic alternative to the continental European class struggles between bourgeoisie, workers and peasants first emerged abroad with the American journalist Marquis Childs’ classic work from 1936, and has culminated with Gösta Esping-Andersen’s analyses of the Nordic welfare states as different variations on a parallel Social Democratic strategy (1985). He distinguishes between three versions of “welfare capitalism”: the social democratic, the liberal and the conservative (Esping-Andersen 1990). The social democratic character of the Nordic welfare state has recently come under criticism by an American comparative historian of the younger school (Baldwin 1990) as well as by several contributors to this volume. Regardless of the national differences, nobody has denied the almost paradigmatic character of the universal welfare state in the Nordic countries.

Despite the untenability of the notion of a specifically Nordic model it is an indisputable fact that the Nordic countries have gone through a more harmonious process of modernization in the twentieth century than most other countries in Europe. Thanks to the compromises of the 1930s, Norway, Sweden and Denmark proved largely immune to the temptations of Nazism and fascism (Lindström 1985), a fact which holds even more true of the postwar period. Despite current financing problems the Nordic countries still provide a shining example of social order and internal democracy – exemplary not only for the insiders, but also for surprising numbers elsewhere in the world, and with good reason. The Nordic countries, irrespective of the existence or otherwise of a Nordic model, function more smoothly than the majority of societies. The problem, however, is that a majority in the Nordic countries has embraced the notion to such an extent that it appears to view the mythical notion of Nordic unity as forming a contrast to Europe. To take a realistic view, however, Nordic history and culture represents but one variation on what are common European patterns and themes, a variation which, due to a wide range of geopolitical conditions, has resulted in small, nationally homogenous, socially democratic, Lutheran states. But a variation, nevertheless, on common European impulses.

Norden (the North) and Scandinavia are by no means synonymous although are often used as if they were interchangeable. The “Northern countries” to which Tacitus referred in his treatise “*Germania*” were not

Scandinavia but the whole of Northern Europe (Lund 1993, 82 and 116). The word “*Scandinavia*” first occurs in Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia* as a misspelling of *Scadinavia*, the name given to the province Skåne, which Pliny believed to be an island. Only in the eighteenth century the name Scandinavia was adopted as a convenient general term for the whole of the region Skåne belonged to. The name is sometimes used in a limited sense for the peninsula shared between Norway and Sweden. This terminology makes some geographical sense but has very little historical meaning. Until 1658 a large part of what is now Sweden was in the Danish Kingdom, and from 1380 to 1814 Norway was ruled by the Danish king. Because of these facts the term Scandinavia is most often used with reference to the three “old” Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. *Norden*, on the contrary also incorporates Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the Aaland Islands, Greenland and the emerging Sami nation in northern Norway. If the Jutland peninsula as well as the Danish islands are grouped under “Scandinavia”, it is because what is involved is a politico-historical rather than a geographical-geopolitical category. This is evident from the history of the designations alone. Conversely, the matter of just how precise the apparently exact distinction between *Norden* and Scandinavia actually is may be a matter for discussion. The Danish historian Kristian Hvidt who dislikes the word “Northism” (“*nordisme*”) has argued that the ostensibly exact term “Scandinavia” is actually just as imprecise as *Norden*. Scandinavia is just an old name for the modern Swedish province of Skåne (Scania), etymologically referring to the shallow waters where ships may run aground, the Skanör in Øresund, whose waters in medieval times were rich in fish. When the word is so limited in its origins, in Hvidt’s opinion, it might just as well be extended to include *Norden* in its entirety (Hvidt 1994).

The North, on the other hand, also has an ambiguous history. In the eighteenth century the “Northern tours” undertaken by gentlemen of leisure usually embraced Poland and Russia, as well as Scandinavia proper. According to David Kirby journals with the prefatorial adjective “Nordische” appeared from Hamburg to St.-Petersburg – the “Palmyra of the North”. The German historian Leopold von Ranke elevated both Karl XII of Sweden and Peter the Great of Russia to a Pantheon of “Northern heroes” (Kirby 1995, 2). With the rise of an independent notion of a “Slavic” Eastern Europe”, however, Northern Europe and Eastern Europe were gradually separated (Lemberg 1985). Yet, until the reorganization of the British Foreign Office during the Second World War, Russia as well as Poland were included in its Northern Department. Whether that is the reason for the disastrous misjudgments is another thing. The fact remains that in the traditional European optic of international affairs Russia was a Northern country on an equal footing with its Swedish foe and Danish ally rather than an Eastern country until this century.

All this leads to Scandinavia may be just as appropriate as *Norden*. Yet, the argument meets with resistance, particularly Finland. As in Norway, where the very mention of the word union calls to mind suggestions of the period 1814-1905, the Finlanders recall the last century when they were a part of the Russian Empire and completely forgotten by the rest of the

“Scandinavian”, i.e. Swedish, North. Likewise, neither the Icelanders nor the Faeroese feel included by the term Scandinavia. For these reasons it would seem to make sense to maintain the established term *Norden*, even if it does present major problems in English and touch the wrong chords in German. “Nordisch” was the term used by the pan-Germanic dreamers of the last century in reference to the “true”, unspoiled Germanic peoples of *Norden* and was later utterly discredited by Nazism. Today, younger German scholars refer to their subject by way of opposition to the Germanic ideology as “Skandinavistik”, despite the fact that the discipline also incorporates the study of Finnish and Icelandic language, literature and society. The question of where to place Greenland and the Greenlandic language, not to mention Lappland and the Sami, remains unclarified at the major universities outside *Norden*. Only in Canada has the study of Greenland been accorded independent status as the hitherto only example of the people of a so-called “fourth world” country having established their own nation-state with its own language, flag and other symbols. If this success continues for Greenland, then the Nordic bond will, viewed rationally, inevitably be weakened in the long term.

If the applied designations are ambiguous, the historical sense of community between the countries is no less ambivalent. If one is to be honest about it, the major part of Nordic history is characterized by conflict and attempts by the one country to dominate the other(s), just as has been the case in every other part of Europe. Nonetheless, or perhaps even for this very reason, a conception of *Norden* as a potential great power able to engage even Russia and Germany did thrive for a brief period in the middle of the last century. This Scandinavianist vision was materialized in a somewhat perverted form in the shape of a museum in Stockholm bearing the auspicious name “Nordiska museet” (“Nordic Museum”), though the imposing name conceals little more than a Swedish local-heritage museum with a smattering of Swedish royalism and anti-Danish sentiment thrown in. In the entrance hall the visitor is confronted by an enormous and intimidating granite statue of Gustav Vasa, the call to “Warer Swenska!” (“Be Swedish!”) carved unambiguously into its base. The obvious intention was to strengthen the Swedish nation-state, but nothing less than “Nordiska” would do in an age in which what was at stake was the unification of the Nordic states (minus Finland) and, primarily, the consolidation of Swedish supremacy over Norway. The same thing would have happened with respect to Denmark had the Scandinavianists in the 1850s succeeded in their plan to place the Swedish king on the Danish throne. As it turned out, nothing came of the plan, the Danes eventually preferring a king of German descent. Moreover, the Swedish-Norwegian state was to keep well out of it when the Danish-Schleswig-Holsteinian multi-nation-state under its amateurish National Liberal leadership got itself messed up in a war with the German Confederation in 1864 (Møller 1948). A war which, incidentally, occasioned the rise not only of the modern nation-state of Denmark, but also of modern Germany.

The process of creation of the modern Nordic nation-states led thereby in a direction Nordic peoples today have become used to regarding as inevitable and “natural” and which they all, albeit in slightly differing

versions, learned almost by rote in school. The union between Sweden and Norway was dissolved relatively peaceably in 1905. Finland was established as a separate entity in 1809, gaining full independence in 1917. Iceland broke away from Denmark in two phases in 1918 and 1944 (during wars in which relations were suspended, effectively preventing Denmark from placing obstacles in the way). The Faeroe Islands gained their autonomous status in 1948, Greenland its in 1979, and the Sami will no doubt soon follow suit. The Åland Islands were by international ruling accorded status as a self-governing part of Finland in 1921 as compensation for not having been allowed to join Sweden. It will appear from the above that *Norden* consists of independent nation-states all with their own quite different histories. From where, then, does the conception of a common identity transcending national boundaries originate?

Invention of a common Nordic Identity in the Nineteenth Century

Today, the terms Viking and the Viking Age are as good as synonymous with Scandinavian or Nordic. Only the Finns have avoided the dubious honour of being reckoned among the pillaging and plundering hordes who, in the period leading up to the turn of the first millenium, rendered the greater part of Europe unsafe, but who nevertheless still make national hearts beat proud. According to the Danish Viking expert Else Roesdahl, the word may be traced back in Danish to the beginning of the nineteenth century when it was introduced by national-romantic philologists cognizant of its existence from the Icelandic sagas (Roesdahl 1994, 159). It was at this time, too, that the many compound words containing the word Viking began to appear in Danish, eg. “vikingefærd”, “vikingesånd”, “vikingeskib”, “vikingetid” (Viking raid, Viking spirit, Viking ship, Viking Age in English), the latter appearing as late as in 1873 with the publication of the archaeologist J. J. A. Worsaae’s popular little book entitled *De danskes Kultur i Vikingetiden* (“Danish culture in the Viking Age”). Until well into the nineteenth century, however, the so-called legendary age as delivered in Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum* comprised a more important object of national identification than did the Viking Age of AD 800-1050.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the golden age for the collection of the Icelandic scripts. Unlike the work of Saxo, these had been written in Old Norse and comprised a goldmine of knowledge as regards language, literature and thought in Denmark and the rest of *Norden*. It is from these scripts that the concept of Nordic as an umbrella term for the common Scandinavian culture derives. The defeats inflicted by the Swedes during the seventeenth century and the consequent cession of major territories notwithstanding, Copenhagen was still the capital of a wide-reaching North Atlantic empire incorporating Norway, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands. For this reason, as good as all the Icelandic scripts ended up in collections here. Among the most famous buyers was the philologist and theologian Arni Magnússon (1663-1730), who in his capacity of librarian of the University of Copenhagen and keeper of the State archives organized an almost complete collection of the scripts, a collection which was later to bear

his name (“Den Arnamagnæanske Samling”) and which for the most part has now been restored to Iceland.

The collection was to provide the basis for a flood of text publications, translations and interpretations during the eighteenth century. The historian P.F. Suhm (1728-98) in particular was to depict the early history of Denmark as an alternative to the Greco-Roman history that so dominated the curricula of the Latin (i.e. grammar) schools. Under the national-patriotic government of 1773-84 led by Ove Høegh-Guldberg the conception of a distinctly Nordic past was actively promoted on behalf of the multi-national “Kron zu Dennemarck” also called the Dual Monarchy of Denmark, Norway and the duchies. The Nationality Act of 1776, restricting government jobs to men born within the frontiers of the composite state, was but one manifestation of this policy; Ove Malling’s extensive work *Store og gode Handlinger udført af Danskere, Nordmænd og Holstenere* (“Great and noble deeds performed by Danes, Norwegians and Holsteiners”) from 1777 another (see Feldbæk 1991-93). Malling’s book was commissioned to furnish the Latin schools with patriotic teaching material, but it also made its impact on the conceptions held by the artistic community about the past. The sculptor Johannes Wiedewelt (1731-1802) thus translated Malling’s work into a minimalistic, neo-classicist sculpture park at Jægerspris, which to this day may still be visited. Nevertheless, later conceptions of horn-clad, lure-blowing and sword-brandishing Vikings raping, pillaging and engaging in other forms of tourism were still light years away.

The interest for a distinctly Nordic past exhibited during the Age of Enlightenment grew into a veritable escapism fuelled by the dreams of the Pan-Scandinavian movement and the many national and political disasters *Norden* was to experience, eg. in 1801, 1807, 1809, 1814, 1848-50 and 1864. National and Nordic moral rearmament was to a large extent to compensate for political action. In Denmark, Adam Oehlenschläger’s tragedy of *Hakon Jarl*, first performed in 1808 on the occasion of the king’s birthday, was to acquire a particularly crucial importance for the conception of Old Norse identity. The piece deals with the clash between paganism and Christianity in the Norwegian Viking Age, the heroic Viking virtues being played out to the full and set up against the guile of “the South”. Somewhat paradoxically, the values of “the South” are represented by the Christian underminers of the “healthy” life enjoyed by the Nordic community. N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872), who himself contributed importantly to the Nordic wave, felt compelled to speak of what he termed “mythological intoxication” (“*Asarusen*” in Danish). According to Else Roesdahl, however, it was the young archaeologist J.J.A. Worsaae (1821-85) who definitively introduced the Nordic Vikings to a Nordic and European public. His first book, *Danmarks Oldtid, oplyst ved Oldsager og Gravhøje* (“The Primeval Antiquities of Denmark”, English 1849), was originally published in 1843. At the time Worsaae was just 22 years old and profoundly moved by the national conflict concerning Schleswig. His introduction reads as follows: “A nation which holds itself and its independence in high esteem cannot possibly stop at a consideration of its present state alone, but must in addition and by necessity turn its gaze upon

bygone days.” As Else Roesdahl comments, “the past was not only to be explored, but also utilized, and the Vikings were to prove particularly serviceable.” (Roesdahl 1994, 165).

In 1845 the young Worsaae delivered the opening speech at the great “Nordic Festival for the Commemoration of the Ancestral Fathers”, at which the National Liberal elite assembled for the purpose of promoting the idea of a united North. The scene was elaborately set with suitably “Nordic” decorations completed in just four days by the young artists Lorenz Frölich, Johan Thomas Lundbye and Peter Christian Skovgaard. Eleven huge, neo-Nordic representations of the gods adorned the walls and were a tremendous success, so much so that they were later published as a special edition booklet that was to gain wide circulation. Grundtvig was present, and the speakers drank tirelessly in turn from the so-called “*Bragisbæger*”, a silver drinking horn specially made for the occasion. In particular Frölich’s many illustrations of historical and archaeological works were later to make their indelible mark on how *Norden* was perceived. His renderings of the zoomorphic ornamentation of the Viking Age were to inspire the so-called dragon style that was to gain popularity in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Examples of this style can be studied in the buildings around Holmenkollen in Oslo. Another expression of Nordic longing was the establishment at the University of Copenhagen in 1845 of a professorial chair in Old Norse language and mythology. Even the first Danish steam locomotive in 1846 was named Odin!

By the mid-nineteenth century, the notion of (Old) Norse tradition had become firmly established in Denmark, and in Sweden-Norway too. Ironically, the style may be traced back to the Düsseldorf School in the threateningly “Germanic” Germany. This has been pointed out by Inge Adriansen in her excellent work on the (German) artistic background to the “Mor Danmark” (Mother Denmark) figure and other mid-nineteenth-century “Nordic” manifestations (Adriansen 1987). The manifesto of the Nordic national style was provided by Niels Laurits Høyen’s 1844 lecture *Om betingelserne for en skandinavisk nationalkunsts udvikling* (“On the Conditions for the Development of a Scandinavian National Movement in Art”). Høyen was proposing a programme for a new patriotic Danish school of painting, a programme which was later to be translated into practice through his work at the Academy of Fine Arts. On Thorvaldsen’s Nordic virtues Høyen wrote:

“The noble simplicity, the honesty, the innocence that belongs to their (i.e. Thorvaldsen’s works) finest quality has its root deep in *Norden*. Many a youthful work by Nordic artists bears the mark of the same kinship.” (Høyen 1844, 354). His programme for the Nordic national artistic movement read as follows: “It is not for the idle, yawning populace that the work of art is to be produced, but for compatriots who await a lively understanding of what resides in their hearts. It is not idle curiosity that pursues this new subject-matter, but a sacred feeling for the native land and the forefathers. Untrodden and arduous is the path we implore our artists to tread. All around the Danish islands and flatlands, and in the highlands of Norway and Sweden, too, they should now make preparations and acquaint themselves with the pursuits of the ordinary folk and the proceedings of

daily life. We do not send them on their way in order later to find ourselves presented with mirror-image prospects and costume paintings, but because we hope that their minds and eyes may be opened to momentous Nature, even there where she reveals herself so solemn, so inhospitable even as on the open heath or among naked crags; it is our hope that they shall prove eminent in capturing the original stock features in ordinary life and manners so that these may step forward to greet us. The inhabitant of *Norden* must first be understood in all his singularity; the senses must first be sharpened to the augustness and familiarity of the nature that surrounds us before we may even hope to achieve an art form that is both popular and historical. Until this has been accomplished, the feasts and ancient legends of Scandinavia must wait in vain to reveal themselves in form and colour.” (Høyen 1844, 360-61).

In parenthesis it may be remarked that Høyen’s main achievement was to systemize the concept of regional dress, the so-called “national costumes”. The national-romantic programme rejected the Age of Enlightenment’s interest in classical history and Southern Europe. The canvasses of the Nordic movement were to be filled only with Nordic landscapes, Nordic history and Nordic life, and preferably in a distinctively “Nordic” style. Owing to the political climate this form of national romanticism was to mark a rejection in Denmark in particular of the very same German culture that had spawned the ideological programme and the artistic form in the first place (diverse contributions in Kähler & Hansen 1981). That the artistic form was by no means something inherent in nature is evident from the differing developments in style of *Norden* Schleswigan painters after 1864. Some oriented towards Germany, others towards Copenhagen (Ostwald 1994). This is but one of many paradoxes in the conception of Nordic unity. Another is the notion of Pan-Scandinavianism as a state project.

Pan-Scandinavianism as a Political Movement

The political idea of a common Nordic “Scandinavia” first emerged in quixotic student and literary circles in the 1830s, providing occasion for the emptying of a by no means modest number of punchbowls and the singing of innumerable songs, some of which are even remembered to this day. It was at one such gathering in 1842 that the poet-politician Carl Ploug (1813-94) dashed off the words of the unofficial national anthem of Scandinavia, “Længe var Nordens herlige stamme” (“Long was *Norden*’s magnificent stem”), containing such memorable turns of phrase as the following: “Long was’s magnificent stem divided in three languishing shoots; the might once able to master the world did pork from foreigners’ tables chew. Once more the divided now intertwines, in time to come to be as one. Then shall the free and mighty North lead to victory its peoples’ cause!” (Holmberg 1984, 178).

Interestingly, this song, learnt by heart by generations of Danes and Swedes, has now disappeared from the pages of the Danish national song book, the *Højskolesangbog*. The Swedish historian Åke Holmberg, author of a seminal work on the Pan-Scandinavian movement, ponders over the fact that Swedish youth should have been coerced into learning a Danish (!)

song by heart and gives over an entire paragraph to explaining this quite unrivalled state of affairs (Holmberg 1984, 178). In the pan-Scandinavian perspective all instances of historical discordance between the Nordic states as well as attempts at imperial dominance were eliminated. The discordant historical truth was actually portrayed eminently more accurately and far less nebulously by Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75) in his idyllic and idyllizing patriotic song of 1850, "I Danmark er jeg født, dér har jeg hjemme" ("In Denmark I was born, there I have my home"). The third verse of the song begins with the stanza: "Engang du herre var i hele Norden, bød over England – nu du kaldes svag" ("Once you were master of all the North, held sway over England – now they call you weak"). The fact that the song continues with the obligatory lilliputian Danish feeling of superiority and pride over the extent of our achievement in the face of all odds with the words: "et lille land, og dog så vidt om jorden end høres danskens sang og mejselslag" ("a little land, and yet so far around the world still resounds the song and hammer-blow of the Dane") can do nothing to impinge upon the unsentimental nature of Andersen's rendering of the militant historical realities. Conversely, it is characteristic of the great majority of Nordic programmes and schoolbook purges that the historical facts have often been subject to displacement rather than having been the object of contemplation (Østergård 1992).

The manifestos indicate that the Pan-Scandinavian movement was a counterpart of the contemporaneous Italian and German national movements, the only difference being that Scandinavianism did not succeed in allying itself with a militarily strong state as was the case in Italy and Germany with Piedmont and Prussia respectively. Where there were no interests "from above", there could be no national unity "from below". Patriotic Danish elements hoped of course that Sweden could and would play the role of Piedmont in their attempt to separate Schleswig from Holstein, with whom Sweden for centuries had made common cause both economically, politically and, to a certain extent, culturally. The fact that Sweden had its hands full in Norway and anyway saw Russia as its primary foe was overlooked. The unions that took place in Germany and Italy were not to be repeated in Northern Europe for sound geopolitical reasons, despite a short-lived interest in the idea on the part of Bernadotte's successor on the Swedish throne, Oscar I, who ruled from 1844 to 1859 (Holmberg 1946).

Swayed by the liberal ideas and calls for revenge over Russia of Scandinavianist student circles, Oscar I was to abandon his father Charles XIV John's conciliatory approach towards the great powers. In 1845 at a student's gathering in Lund he thus could recite his poem "Finland!" with calls for the recapture of the country that had been lost. When, in the spring of 1848, German-oriented Schleswig-Holsteinian nationalists rebelled against the National Liberals' declaration of the complete union of the two duchies with Denmark, Oscar obtained the support of the Swedish Riksdag to send 15,000 troops to the aid of the sister country. 4,000 reached the Danish island of Fyn, the rest were to remain in Skåne. However, when hostilities recommenced in 1849 Oscar was less inclined to become actively involved, although a Swedish army consisting of 4,000 men did hold North Schleswig

occupied for a period during peace negotiations as surety for the ceasefire. Oscar's dream was to succeed the weak Frederick VII as king in Denmark, but although he gradually was to alter his political course in a more conservative and cautious direction he nevertheless proposed in the spring of 1857 a defensive alliance with Denmark at the Swedish expense. Frederick VII, however, declined the offer, sensing perhaps that something was afoot. When Denmark nevertheless resumed negotiations later the same year it was too late; Oscar died and his successor, Charles XV (1826-72) pursued a more cautious foreign policy than that of his father (see Linton 1994, 83-84). Denmark was thus forced to stand alone against Prussia and Austria when foolhardy politicians, reneguing on international agreements, annexed Schleswig. The resultant debacle was to mark the end of political Pan-Scandinavianism, a fact that was clearly recognized by the Danish historian Carl Ferdinand Allen (1811-71) when in 1864 he published the first volume of his work *De tre nordiske Rigers Historie 1497-1536* ("History of the three Northern kingdoms 1497-1536"). In the introduction he somewhat disillusioned stated:

"The grounds for a unified treatment of the history of the North are, as stated, to be found in the very nature of the said history and the natural bonds that exist between the countries and their peoples. The effects thereof, and their influence upon the individual, may be supported by what are called Scandinavian sympathies. Such support is unnecessary; the historical interest alone will suffice. Indeed, it is fortunate that this is so, for after the bitter experience of our time it would seem that, as the evil spirit of discord in days of old, so in the present the frigid egoism and the narrow-hearted, myopic and heinous spirit of calculation shall prove the curse of the "Scandinavian idea" and quell her with its might when she means to rise." (Allen 1864, II-III).

But why did the unification of the Nordic countries not occur already in the Middle Ages or early in the modern period, as was the case in Spain, Britain and France? Actually, this is a question that has always puzzled the Danes, even if they are now too well-bred in pacifism ever to raise the issue in public. As Hans Christian Andersen wrote, Denmark, after all, was "once master of all of *Norden*". One can only retort that the spirit, certainly, was more than willing. Characteristic of the High Middle Ages and most of the late Middle Ages are the concerted efforts of the Danish monarchy to achieve mastery of the entire Baltic region. "Dominium mari Baltici", as the slogan ran. In order to win a position for themselves in Europe and compensate for their humble population figures, the relatively impoverished states of Denmark-Norway and Sweden established themselves, each in its own particular way, with a state apparatus that was "heavier" than was the norm elsewhere in Europe (Anderson 1974, 173-91). The degree of centralization and the extent of taxation is still evident in the magnificence of the monumental buildings in the two capitals, Copenhagen and Stockholm.

It was this exploitation of the population in its entirety that was later to be depicted by "anti-colonialist" Norwegian, Finnish, Icelandic and Faeroese historians as Danish and Swedish national oppression respectively. This, however, was not the case. Danish and Swedish peasants were broadly exploited on an equal footing, as it were, with Norwegians, Schleswigers,

Holsteiners, Icelanders, Faeroese, Finns and Sami. Denmark had long been the most populous of the three monarchies, and its efforts to achieve sole supremacy failed only because the Danish nobility prior to its defeat in the seventeenth century refused to be tamed by a strong monarchy. Further, the transnational nobility with landed estates in both Sweden and Denmark also failed in its attempts to bring into being a real aristocratic republic under elected kings, as had happened at the same time in Poland-Lithuania. Instead, Sweden acquitted itself so well that between 1630 and 1709 it was able to not only take over the hegemonic efforts of Denmark-Norway in the Baltic and Northern Europe, only with much greater success. The only reason Denmark survived as a state at all between 1658 and 1660 was due (as was again to be the case in 1864 and 1870) to the interest the great powers had in sharing control of the approach to the Baltic. The Netherlands came to the aid of Denmark in 1658, just as Britain and Russia later were to lend Denmark their support for fear of finding themselves faced with a single great power at the entrance to the Baltic (the Sound).

From Scandinavianism to Nordism

The Pan-Scandinavian movement was to undergo complete transformation during the 1860s, becoming as it were decentralized after Sweden and Norway were forced to keep a low profile as regards both the new German Empire and the newly consolidated Russian Empire that had risen up following the humiliations of the Crimean War in 1854-1856. The high-political vision of political Pan-Scandinavianism was superseded by cultural collaboration at the civil level. Interestingly, this activity was to a large extent borne by the self-same Scandinavianist student circles, whose members now were able to work together by virtue of the positions they held as public servants, teachers and artists. Scientists, lawyers, engineers, educationalists, painters and writers were all able to maintain connections at Nordic meetings and through Scandinavian journals. These networks functioned more efficiently and were far more effective than the Romantic political visions of before, precisely because of the limited, realistic goals that had been set. This period, however, has not attracted the attention of historians on anything like the same scale as the pan-Scandinavian movement of the period 1842-57. While numerous works have been published in Danish and Swedish on high politics and the Pan-Scandinavian student movement in the nineteenth century, and while there also exists a certain amount of literature on the period leading up to the establishment of the Nordic Council in 1952 (particularly Frantz Wendt's authoritative summary from 1979), the period between 1864 and 1920 remains largely untreated and is recalled only in the occasional keynote address or in jubilee essays in obscure professional journals.

On the whole, Scandinavian collaboration was able to thrive without the help of public subsidy or encouragement. This was true of the artists' colony at Skagen as well as of the modern literary breakthrough led by the brothers Georg and Edvard Brandes, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, etc. Despite the innumerable toast speeches in celebration of the "true" Nordic folk whom these artists instinctively believed they understood, the fact of the matter is that they were actually

rather elitist. The subjects chosen by the Skagen painters bear witness to just how great the gulf was between the sophisticated, urbane parties of the avantgarde and the constant grind of the “primitive” fishing communities they portrayed. The reality of the matter was that here was a case of a cultural and economic “colonization” of Jutland compensating for the loss of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, though the process tends to be presented under the more positive banner “Outward losses must be made up for by inward gains” (“*Hvad udad tabtes skal indad vindes*” see Frandsen 1993). Cultural modernism merged with political thought and became, under the name of “cultural radicalism”, an independent Nordic ideological phenomenon that was to pave the way for a quite particular development at the social level in the twentieth century (Löfgren 1991, Nilsson 1994). The many artistic bonds paved the way for a flourishing cultural journalism in a rapidly expanding press and led to the establishment of a veritable Nordic common market aided by the collaboration of the great publishing houses of Gyldendal, Bonniers, etc.

Alongside these purely cultural Nordic circles flourished more unassuming, popular movements. The Danish folk high school movement established by Grundtvig quickly spread to the other Nordic countries via high school gatherings in Norway and Sweden. Similarly, regular educational conferences were held by teachers at the Nordic level from the mid-1870s (Backholm 1994). Interesting, too, in this connection are the efforts, fruitless though they proved, of Nordic philologists to establish a common written language as early as in the 1860s. Outside of this cultural core area may be registered an active policy of cooperation at the economic level, leading to the adoption of a common monetary union on December eighteenth century, 1872. Parallel to this collaboration were the Nordic conferences of the legal profession, which among other things resulted in the elaboration of joint company legislation. The most spectacular result of the cooperative policy, however, was the series of Nordic industrial, agricultural and art exhibitions that were held, first in Copenhagen in 1872 and 1888, and later in Stockholm in 1893 and Malmö in 1914 (Hvidt 1994).

During and following World War I, cooperation was to be extended to include a variety of areas, gradually taking on the character of a popular movement. The series of meetings between the three Nordic kings in the period leading up to World War I received particular attention. While these were not to have any long-term effects as regards collaboration on foreign policy, the opposite was true of the personal connections that were to be established as a consequence of the wholly overlooked collaboration of parliamentarians within the union of Nordic parliamentarians. Lasting from 1907 until 1955, the union was ultimately to prepare the way for the creation of the Nordic Council, which was consummated by the admission of Finland in 1955 (Larsen 1984). Increasingly closer political ties were also established between the Nordic workers’ movements.

The Association for Nordic Unity (“Foreningerne Norden” in Danish) was created in 1919 and was to gain increasing membership during the 1930s as a result of the general fear of Germany and the Soviet Union. Sweden’s support of Finland, in the form of volunteers and equipment, during the Finnish-Russian War of 1939-40 (the so-called Winter War) led to

a growing orientation on the part of the Finns towards *Norden*. This new orientation was greatly aided by the consensus between Reds and Whites that had been established on the basis of the common war experience. After the civil war of 1918, the Swedish workers' movement in particular had come to look upon Finland as a bourgeois dictatorship of the working classes. Conversely, Finnish nationalists regarded Nordic orientation as an unmerited boost to the Swedish speaking minority and thereby as a case of treason against Finland. Karl-August Fagerholm ran into trouble after having delivered a speech at the Association for Nordic Unity in Helsinki. Only after 1944 Finland definitively opted for membership of the family of Nordic welfare states.

All these practical instances of Nordic cooperation have, as already mentioned, been largely ignored by Nordic historians. That this should be so is surprising. However, there is less reason to be surprised by the fact that few Nordic historians have asked themselves why efforts towards unification failed. Seen from a national-historical perspective, the answer is self-evident. Ever since the breakthrough of modern, professionalized historical research, all Nordic historians have for a variety of good reasons taken a nation-state perspective in seeking to illuminate the history of their respective countries (Engman 1991, Østergård 1992). This has mainly resulted in investigations of Nordic cooperation from a foreign policy perspective, rather than as elements of domestic or other forms of policy.

Historians and political scientists have seldom posed the question of why no state exploited the Pan-Scandinavian movement in the same manner as Prussia and Piedmont did the German and Italian national unification movements in the mid-nineteenth century, with the establishment of the united German Empire and the liberal Italian monarchy respectively as the result. The same national, not to say nationalistic, perspective is the reason very few scholars have analysed why the Kalmar Union of 1395 failed when similar unions succeeded in the British Isles. The United Kingdom began as a personal union between England (including Wales) and Scotland in 1604 and later developed into parliamentary union in 1707. Spain came into being in 1492 with the unification of Castile and Aragon, with Catalonia first being formally incorporated in 1714. It would thus seem relevant to compare developments in the Nordic countries with Spanish, British and French history, not only with the aim of gaining a better grasp of the history of *Norden*, but also in order to understand better the major polities which are most often accorded prominence as classic examples of the nation-state (see Kearney 1991).

Stranger still, however, is the fact that no scholar before Svein Olav Hansen has pointed out the simple fact that contemporary Nordic cooperation is a consequence of the nation-states rather than their alternative. The Association for Nordic Unity was established in 1919, i.e. after Norway had gained its independence in 1905, Finland its in 1917 and Iceland its in 1918. The basis of cooperation across the national boundaries at the popular level is provided by the inviolable national sovereignty of the countries involved. Hence the particular character of the cooperative activity, which is so successful at grassroots level precisely because it abstains from interfering in the high politics of economics, security matters

and external affairs. The Nordic Council, as the former Norwegian Minister for Nordic Cooperation, Bjarne Mørk Eidem, rather pointedly has put it, is almost to be understood as an “executive organ of the Association for Nordic Unity”.

However, this also provides us with a definition of what the Nordic Council is not. It is not a government, but a supplement to the national parliaments, providing advice and posing critical – and thereby often annoying – questions across national boundaries. As is often stressed, the fact that the parliamentarians of one country in this way are able to pose questions to the ministers of another is a quite unique state of affairs. At the same time, however, it is precisely the cross-national nature of the activity that provides the reason why it can never become supranational or gain legislative character. This distinctive characteristic has, however, been subject to a gradual erosion following the creation of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971 and of its 1959 predecessor, the Committee of Nordic Ministers. The Council of Ministers is a far more traditional form of state cooperation between governments and bureaucracies. Concurrently with increasing internationalization there is a need for a reconsideration of the relationship between the two cooperative organizations lest the special Nordic working relationship be squandered in deference to an “effectivization” that could be better achieved within the stronger European community, whether it be within the EU itself or simply the expanded free trade area, the EEA. These dilemmas present themselves even more acutely after Sweden’s and Finland’s entry to the European Union.

As the Norwegian historian Stein Tønnesen so correctly underlined, Nordic identity is consistently represented as consisting of the individual national-political identities: Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Icelandic.”It is surprising how the key wordings of the five Nordic manifestos confirm national stereotypes, with Norway »as Norwegian and only Norwegian«, Denmark as »Danish in Europe«, Iceland as the island of the learned, Sweden (until recently) as »Nordic in Europe, with a capacity for self-criticism and tolerance towards immigrants«, and Finland as »hard-working advocates of human rights, equality, international understanding and peace«.” (Tønnesen 1993, 367). The Faroe Islands and Greenland, too, have gradually won the right to be recognized as independent national variations on the Nordic commonality. Only the Sami identity is represented as ethnic, though this will in all likelihood hold only until the Sami are recognized as an independent nationality with their own seat on the Nordic Council.

The nation-states of today, then, are the configurations through which the common Nordic identity manifests itself. As these nations have achieved the recognition of the surrounding world, so too have they come to appear as “natural” entities. But although Danes and Swedes have difficulty appreciating it (see Stein Tønnesen’s impressions from a Nordic conference on national identity held on the Faeroe Islands, Tønnesen 1989), this has far from always been the case. These two nationalities today administer the legacy of two multi-nation empires, which for centuries contended for supremacy in Northern Europe. Or rather, the two states do not administer this legacy, but act, on the strength of their long, unbroken history, as

though they nevertheless possess a quite natural right to their independent existence. This is to a much lesser extent true of the other Nordic countries, which for periods have been subject to Swedish and Danish rule respectively. Hence the insecurity that until recently made Norwegians, Finlanders and Icelanders assertively emphasize their national character, to the mild astonishment of the Danes and Swedes at what looked (to us) like gratuitous nationalism. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, it is so long since anyone reigned supreme over anyone else, that the majority of Scandinavians can freely converse on an equal footing – with the exception of the Faroese and the Greenlanders with the Danes. But if anything this makes it even more important to recall the difficult, and far from inevitable, genesis of the Nordic states. The active entities, however, are states and countries, not a diffuse Nordic identity.

The designations for countries such as Norway, Denmark and Sweden appear at an early stage in history. However, the names employed do not refer to clearly defined national-territorial states. Thus, Norway (Norwegian “Norge” or Noreg), known from Ohthere’s contribution to King Alfred’s universal history, literally means, as the English designation suggests, “the way North”, i.e. the trade route to the distant regions below the Arctic Circle where fish and otherwise rare skins were readily available. The origins of Denmark and Sweden, though, are more obscure. We know that the names refer to the “mark” (that is March, i.e. the boundary area) of the kingdoms of the Danes and of the Svear respectively. But just who these peoples were, where they came from, and what boundaries their kingdoms had remains lost in the mists of the Great Migration. Perhaps the Danes came from Sweden, as Benny Andersen so caustically suggests in his poem “Skabssvenskere” (“Closet Swedes”):

“Is there anything so Danish as a potato? The potato comes from South America. Is there anything so Danish as the *Dannebrog* itself? It fell from heaven a long time ago in Estonia and brings to mind the flag of the Swiss. Does anything ring more truly Danish than the music of a German making diligent use of Swedish folk tunes? Pay attention now, for now it gets trickier: Is there anything more Danish than the Danes? The descendants of the Danes, a group of peoples in Sweden, invaded our country some time in the year 300-and-something, while the original Danes, the Heruli, those noble and valient Heruli, being inferior in number, were driven away by the cruel Swedish Danes and forced to roam the Europe of old, homeless, for hundreds of years, until a few thousand of these aboriginal Danes eventually succeeded in reaching Sweden, there to settle under the dubious name of Swedes. Here’s the question once again; think carefully before you answer: Is there anything more Danish than the Danes? The correct answer is: Yes! The Swedes! They are the real, authentic Danes. Like the Jews in the desert, they are forever drawn towards the Promised Land that flows with beer and bacon, but which for seventeen hundred years has been occupied. By whom? By the Swedes! By us!” (Andersen 1991).

The present external boundaries of Denmark date back only as far as 1920. In fact the whole history of Denmark revolves around the problem of defining the Danish domain. The same is true of Sweden, which began as an

east-west polity on both sides of the Gulf of Bothnia. Present-day Sweden is a later construction, emerging only after the incorporation of the Danish provinces of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge and the Norwegian Bohuslän. It was in reaction to these two kingdoms that Finland, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and latterly Greenland were to establish themselves as independent nations. But whereas the creation of the Danish and Swedish nations may best be understood as a counterpart to the classic Western nation-states of France, Britain and Spain, the other processes are best perceived as variations on themes well-known from the establishment of Bohemia-Moravia and other Central and East European nations, to which were added ingredients from the anti-colonial liberation movements of the postwar era. This is most clearly seen in the case of Norway.

The Invention of Norway

Is Norway a European country? This question was posed by the Norwegian historian Stein Tønneson at a conference in 1992. Tønneson reached the conclusion, on the basis of having read through a number of Norwegian and foreign encyclopaedias, that the idea that Norway might belong to Europe had not even occurred to the authors of the Norwegian reference works. What, then, is Norway exactly? The successful opponents of joining the EEC in 1972 were able to evoke an alarmist vision of a Norway dominated by international capitalism and American culture. The more candid among them will admit today that their worst nightmare visions have been surpassed many times over, particularly in oil-industry centres such as Stavanger and in the capital city of Oslo. Not that the big, bad EEC has managed to sneak in through the back door and reconstruct Norwegian legislation, but the world market and trends towards cultural internationalization have nevertheless struck directly at the diminutive nation-state in the wake of the wealth generated by the abundance of oil. Many critics of the time now characterize Norway as a combination of Saudi Arabia and California, with just a hint of Norwegian local-heritage museum incorporated into the state framework.

Not surprisingly, the explanation for these Norwegian paradoxes is to some extent to be found in conditions of economics and geography. First and foremost, however, they are the result of the nature of the process by which the Norwegian nation was built. An excellent analytic description of the construction of the Norwegian nation-state in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was provided in 1986 by the Norwegian political scholar, Øyvind Østerud, as part of a composite work on Norwegian society. According to Østerud, “Norway” at its point of origin consisted in the programmatic conception of a political and intellectual elite, a historical and literary idea, which was first developed in Copenhagen and later in Christiania. What is more, the concept in its written form was worded in Danish (Østerud 1987, 51)!. The rediscovered “national” heritage of local culture had in many cases been imported via the towns from abroad some two or three generations previously. For it is the case that cultural nationalism is kindled only when the cultural base to which it appeals is no longer a matter of course. Its paradoxical features thus result from it constituting the ideological response to a crisis of identity.

During the Middle Ages there existed a strong and relatively centralized Norwegian monarchy with its centre of gravity located to the West. According to Grethe Authén Blom's authoritative study, the kingdom that was passed on by Haakon V Magnusson in 1319 was one of the strongest organized in the whole of medieval Europe (see Blom 1992). One common law applied to the entire kingdom: a law of succession regulated the order of succession; administration, instead of being delegated along feudal lines to the aristocracy and the church, lay firmly in the hands of the crown; local self-government was supervised by royal officials and the judiciary. Ironically, it was the very centralized nature of the kingdom that made it easy for a foreign dynasty, the Danish, to seize power and rule Norway for 400 years. There is now broad agreement among Norwegian historians not to refer to this period as "the 400-year Night" or "the Danish Period" (Bagge and Mykland 1987, 8-9). Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that Norway was to take its place as a loyal province alongside other provinces under the Danish crown. Today Danes politely refer to the state as the Dual Monarchy, even though there were other provinces in this multi-nation kingdom besides Norway and Denmark. The tone of the day, however, was not quite so polite. Following the introduction of the absolute monarchy in 1660, the realm was to be termed "Kron zu Dennemarck". Norway, like the rest of the kingdom, was to be administered directly from Copenhagen, although there was to be a governor in Oslo, or Christiania, as the city was called from 1624 until 1925. The Norwegians may well have been fully aware of their Norwegian character, but it is uncertain whether they thereby distinguished themselves from other provinces such as North Jutland, Schleswig and Holstein. Recent studies of eighteenth and nineteenth century history have shown that regional awareness was far more widespread than research hitherto has supposed (Frandsen 1993).

In Norway, as in so many other places, it was a case of the nationalistic ideology providing the basis of the creation of the nation, rather than the nation merely "awakening" and finding articulation in a national movement. Norwegian nationalism arose in the wake of a political shock following the signing in Kiel on 14 January 1814, of a treaty, whereby Frederick VI was obliged by the anti-Napoleonic coalition in Europe to surrender Norway to the Swedish crown (Nørregård 1954; Varenius 1938). The Norwegians rebelled, making the Danish heir, Christian Frederick, king (he had been governor in Norway during the war). On 17 May of the same year, a hand-picked assembly convening in Eidsvoll adopted a constitution and proclaimed an independent Norwegian state, a state that was to be built on the sovereignty of the people, as opposed to both the former constitution of 1661 and the Treaty of Kiel, both of which were founded on the sovereignty of the highest nobility (Linvold 1965). Since World War II, modern Norwegian historiography has largely agreed that it was this chain of events that gave rise to a Norwegian nationalism in opposition to the union with Sweden. Jens Arup Seip, the grand old man of Norwegian historical research, puts it as follows: "The national movement was not a prerequisite of 1814, but a product of what happened. Within a few months, a fellowship had arisen and a national movement was created." (Seip 1974, 52).

This interpretation has recently been challenged by the medieval historian Kåre Lunden, building on a neo-nationalistic position designed to legitimate his rejection of the European Union (Lunden 1992). Lunden attacks the all too narrow source basis of the modern concept, but it is difficult to rid oneself of the suspicion that it is the political motive that determines the dating of Norwegian nationalism. Perhaps we shall be wiser after the completion of the two major projects researching into the Norwegian national identity, those of Øystein Sørensen and Ole Feldbæk. For the present, one must in Feldbæk's case note that the articulation of a distinct Norwegian identity prior to 1814 was an extremely limited phenomenon restricted to the elite and was to all practical intents and purposes only ever aired in the multinational environment of Copenhagen (Feldbæk 1994). In this situation it seems wisest to follow the interpretation of Seip, Østerud and Mykland.

According to recent research by the the project on Norwegian identity at the University of Oslo directed by Øyvind Sørensen, the distinctive national character was partly derived from folk culture, partly postulated by the nation-building intelligentsia. The struggle to introduce an artificially constructed language based on the dialects of southwest Norway (the so-called "*nynorsk*" i.e. New Norwegian) is a clear example of this. However, cultural nation building was by no means a Norwegian invention. Political and cultural boundaries seldom coincide, and it was a combination of state boundaries and dynastic conditions that eventually made Norway a national entity traversing regional variations and in opposition to the neighbouring states of Sweden and Denmark. Under different conditions, the general mythology of nationalism could have found an equally natural candidate in a single Norwegian region or in Scandinavia in its entirety. The "autochthonous" population (i. e. the farmers of the mountains and the people of the villages) cultivated by the ideologists of Norwegianness were actually adverse to the idea of a Norwegian nation-state.

Furthermore, and conversely, the national idea was articulated and promoted by people who themselves were descended from immigrant officials and merchants of Danish, German and British extraction. Nationalism as a cultural programme was identity shaping and as such pursued the distinctive in common roots. It cultivated folklore, historical heritage and "national" antiquities. National romanticism presupposed distance from an ethnographic national raw material. As the Czech historian, Miroslav Hroch, has demonstrated in his study of national movements in Europe, nationalism was most often kindled in areas that were exposed to a medium degree of social change (Hroch 1985). It did not occur in traditional farming communities, which were too unaffected by new conditions for nationalism to be able to replace local identity, and neither did it occur in areas that were economically advanced and independent. In Østerud's view, the path of development of Norwegian nationalism in the nineteenth century fits neatly into this pattern, with the urban intelligentsia as promoters of the national ideology, sallying forth into the country with their Hardanger fiddles and telemarks and – following severance from Sweden in 1905 – a Danish prince who cast off the slough and turned into a "Norwegian" king, demonstrating the transformation by appearing on the slopes in full

Norwegian ski attire. Today, one can study the construction of the new Norwegian mythology at the Museum of Skiing beneath the jumping hill at Holmenkollen, the most Norwegian of all Norwegian museums (see Horne 1984, 167).

The concept of nationality also has a more precise, sociological meaning. Nationalism redefines political and cultural identity, linking it to the territorial framework of the nation-state. Historically, this represented a break with the cosmopolitan orientation of the aristocracy, as well as with the geographical and cultural deep-rootedness of the peasant farmers. It was those who had moved out or who had grown up on the fringes of village life who cultivated this culturally distinctive character and who lent it national importance. The common educational system in particular became the central mechanism in the process of cultural socialization, the place where “national” knowledge and values were instilled and where the written language was standardized (Østerud 1987, 57-58). The fact that the written language was subject to standardization in several competing versions is a unique aspect of the Norwegian nationalization process, though it changes nothing as regards the general nature of the process: all the New Norwegian dialects have the ambition of attaining the status of national language and are precisely therefore not dialects. The whole discussion is meaningless in terms of linguistic analysis because it is impossible convincingly to distinguish between national languages and dialects. In fact, linguists have now decided to let history and the states themselves be the deciding factor. One widespread definition is that a national language is a dialect with an army and a navy! According to this view, it is the possession of political power that determines which linguistic norms are codified in dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Such an extreme functionalistic definition cannot of course stand alone; of decisive importance to the constitution of linguistic nations is, for example, the question of when the Bible was translated. As a basic rule, however, the functionalistic provocation is useful to keep in mind.

Nationalism seems to be a necessary but not sufficient precondition for democracy, i.e. nationalism does not lead to democracy. Nationalism stresses national unity, calls attention to the distinctiveness of the nation, motivates the self-assertion of the national fellowship, and is desirous of government by “compatriots”. It presupposes that the regime is rooted in the nation, but not necessarily that it is democratically elected. As such, nationalism is neither liberal nor authoritarian, neither leftist nor rightist. These political antitheses have as their source other forms of social contrasts than those in which the national idea rises, but in certain circumstances representative government and national consolidation may merge into one political movement. This was how the principle of nationalities worked in Norway.

In a series of classic essays from the 1960s the late Norwegian sociologist Stein Rokkan described the national movement as resulting from a gulf between the centre and the periphery, between culture and counter-culture (now collected in Rokkan 1987). The growth of the nation-state confronted the national majority with the sub-national minorities, and the church with the power of the state; the industrial breakthrough shaped the

incongruity between workers and employers and between primary and secondary trade. In Rokkan's perspective, the political dividing lines solidified concurrently with the extension of voting rights and the mobilization of the electorate in the latter part of the nineteenth century. National consolidation thus occurred by way of a "mobilization of the periphery". The Norwegian national movement was a part of a periphery-based counter-culture, and national consolidation was in reality to manifest itself in the dilution of this counter-culture, paradoxically enough just as it was beginning to think the battle had been won with the introduction of "*nynorsk*" and the ban on alcohol.

At first glance, the analyses of Østerud and Rokkan would appear incompatible. Whereas Østerud stresses the ideological manipulation by the urban elites of the peasant farmers, Rokkan instead views the process as a genuine case of popular uprising. The seeming discrepancy, however, is merely ostensible and depends on which aspect of the phenomenon one chooses to focus on. If one's interest lies in gaining an understanding of the historical roots of the national ideology, it is impossible not to have to deal with the "artificial" or invented character of the phenomenon. What is purported to be "primordial" turns out in fact never to be primordial or traditional, but becomes so only after having been through the alienated ideal worlds of urban cultural spheres. However, seen from a functionalistic sociological perspective such as the one adopted by Rokkan, the question of the origins of the concept is of secondary importance. What matters is their mobilizing effect.

The popular counter-culture, with its geographical centre of gravity in the south and west, and with Norwegianness, Christianity, "*nynorsk*" and the temperance movement forming its programme, arose as a reaction to the bourgeois, Danish-dominated culture of the towns, but was never to have any nationally unifying effect. Instead, it came to settle as a line of conflict within the party system from the end of the nineteenth century, but never really succeeded in its role as a provider of national identity at state level. In Rokkan's conception of nation-building, and in his description of national consolidation, the nationalistic premisses are gone and a purely political concept of nation is reintroduced. The nationalism was genuine enough, but the "national" idea was an artificial construct, created, defined, and delimited on the basis of mythological conceptions and an ethnographic raw material that was susceptible of many interpretations. The fellowship of state, nationality as a political conception, provided the starting-point, a framework that nationalism would fill with spirit, soul and uniqueness of identity (Østerud 1987, 62).

The framework of the new political nation was laid down by the Constitution of 1814, on the basis of which public policy in Norway was able to create an institutionally, economically, and culturally uniform and coherent society. That this was so was a partially unintentional effect of the conflict between the class of officials and the Swedish king concerning the distribution of power within the framework of the union; – what Jens Arup Seip has referred to as "nationalism as a substitute motive" (Seip 1963). In this conflict the concept of nationality became both cement and justification at the same time; thus it was that Norway was to achieve a distinctive

national identity in the nineteenth century, one that to this day still holds, impelling rural Norway to reject all talk of Europe, even though it would in all likelihood stand to gain economically from membership. Today, the Norwegian nation-state continues to thrive splendidly, perhaps even too much so, despite being founded on a rather late and utterly contrived “primordiality”. The Norwegian nationality thereby shares the conditions of all other national identities, in the Nordic countries as well as in the rest of the world. This is most notably true of Finland.

The Emergence of Finland

In December, 1992, Finland celebrated its 75th birthday as an independent state, a fact which reveals nothing, however, about the age of the Finnish nation. In the national history books one may, not surprisingly, read that the Finnish nation has always existed, first under Swedish, later under Russian rule. This anti-colonialistic perspective was quite predominant in the nation-building Finnish historiography of the nineteenth century and has since been reiterated again and again in the twentieth century in the darkest hours of Finland. The nationalistic Finnish historiography of the nineteenth century and the greater part of the twentieth century, too, has portrayed the Finns as the country’s original inhabitants, who were later to suffer oppression at the hands of a colonizing Swedish aristocracy. This is a conception that has been embraced, quite without problems, by a strong political Left. In the 1970s there circulated a leftist cartoon-film version of this colonialistic myth, which lacked none of the modish features incorporated into the parallel portrayals of Christian Europe’s violent conduct in America, Asia, and Africa. Brutal, horse-riding Swedish aristocrats clad in suits of armour and coats of mail were shown mowing down the innocent and unarmed Finnish peasants in their hundreds, baptizing by force those who remained and compelling them to work under them as day labourers.

With the exception of the pseudo-Marxist language employed, this image is identical with the one created by the Finnish-national historians of the nineteenth century, first and foremost by Yrjö-Koskinen (1830-1903) in his principal work of 1869, *Finlands historia från den äldsta tiden intill våra dagar* (“The history of Finland from the earliest times to the present day”). Koskinen’s work is typical of its genre in its attempt to depict the Finnish peasant farmers as oppressed, despite the fact that, viewed realistically, together with the Swedish peasant farmers they enjoyed a more liberated status than was to be found anywhere in the world, more liberated, certainly, than that of the Danish peasantry of the same period. As an individual, too, Yrjö Sakari Koskinen, ennobled in 1884 as Yrjö-Koskinen, was symptomatic of the Finnish official nobility. Originally, he bore the good Swedish name Georg Zacharias Forsman, but like so many others during the nineteenth century he was to adopt a Finnish name when the Finnish nation emerged as a political cultural phenomenon.

As often emphasized by revisionist historians Matti Klinge and Max Engman in particular, but also by the Nestor of history as a discipline, the agrarian historian Eino Jutikkala, the truth of the matter is that Finland actually constituted a Finnish speaking half of the original Sweden. The Gulf of Bothnia, rather than keeping two different peoples apart, bound together

a kingdom consisting of provinces surrounding Lake Mälaren and extending through the southwestern part of present-day Finland. Rightly considered, “Finland” first emerged in 1809, when Tsar Alexander I established the Grand Duchy of Finland at the diet in Borgå (Porvoo), moved the capital from Åbo to Helsinki in 1812, and annexed the Karelian territories to the new state almost as far as to the city boundaries of St.-Petersburg. Up until that point the “Finns” had been Finnish speaking inhabitants of Sweden. Now, however, owing to changes in the external situation, they could no longer remain Swedish. According to one apocryphal tale, the Swedish speaking aristocracy refused to “be Russians” and therefore decided to “become Finns”. It was logical that a number of the most “Finnish” individuals in the new state be recruited into the old Swedish speaking aristocracy. They exploited the new situation to place themselves at the forefront of their own nation-state, culturally, economically, and, eventually, politically. Many chose to mark this by replacing their Swedish family names with Finnish ones.

This was to mark the beginning of a national process that was to succeed precisely because it took place within the framework of a multinational empire. An independent Finnish nationality would have experienced much inferior conditions for growth within the old Swedish state, despite the fact that the civic freedoms accorded by the constitution there were far and away greater than under the despotic tsarist regime. At the same time, there existed greater opportunities for the Finnish aristocracy as officers, officials, and merchants within the far-reaching Russian Empire, which was sorely lacking in Western expertise. The idea of a Finnish speaking nation was to go from strength to strength during the nineteenth century and was finally to be crowned in 1906 with the introduction of universal suffrage. As a consequence of the reformation of the Russian Empire following the Revolution in 1905, Finland gained, as the first of the Nordic countries, the franchise for both men and women. A partially unintentional effect of this was to weaken the position of the Swedish language, which until then had prevailed in three of the four classes, i.e. the clergy, the bourgeoisie and the nobility. Only the peasantry had been Finnish speaking. Now, at a blow, the new, democratically elected parliament was Finnish speaking and the Swedish speakers had been reduced to a minority.

After the military defeat of Russia in World War I and the consequent revolution, Finland declared itself independent in December, 1917. This led to a bitter civil war being fought out between the so-called “Whites” and “Reds”. The Whites were recruited from the Swedish and Finnish middle-classes, but the plain, Swedish speaking population of the south and west also ranged themselves solidly behind the White Guard, whose core comprised German-trained “commandos”. The armed, revolutionary workers were supported by large numbers of rank and file from the Russian army, which was still present in the country, prompting Germany to take direct military action in favour of the Whites (see Paasivirta 1988 for an account of the events). Despite this violent confrontation of class and political observance, a surprisingly swift and successful Finnish Swedish compromise was reached that made Finland a bilingual country. Such is the

status of Finland to this day, the relationship between the two languages recently exhibiting such co-equality that it was possible for a Swedish speaking (female) candidate, Elisabeth Rehn, to win support among the Finnish speaking majority and finish runner-up in the presidential election of January 1994. Today, the two groups are distinguished by referring to the Finnish speaking community as Finns, while all nationals, be they Finnish or Swedish speaking, are termed Finlanders. A Fenno-Swede is thus a Finlander and not a Finn, no matter how convincing his or her command of the Finnish language may be.

The Finnish declaration of independence on 6 December 1917, was one of the first reactions to the October Revolution, that is to say that an independent Finland was the result of a Russian, rather than a Finnish or Nordic, evolutionary process. In Max Engman's interpretation, the new Finland was to lead a somewhat chequered existence, with a civil war, an authoritarian dictatorship in democratic garb, two wars against the Soviet Union, the much discussed issue of Finlandization in the 1950s and 1960s, an unprecedented level of economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s, and a subsequent and abrupt downturn after the disappearance of the Soviet market in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse. A dramatic history that since the mid-1950s, has now pretty much assumed its form following the incorporation of Finland into the Nordic family of small, peaceable, and undramatic democracies. That Finland today belongs to the Nordic world is beyond doubt, particularly compared with the sad and problematic plight of the Estonian cousins south of the Gulf of Finland. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that "Finland" and "the Finns" had been Swedish for 600 years.

Repression of the Common History of Finland and Sweden

The idea of a "Sweden proper", which during the nineteenth century began to emerge in Swedish historiography as the core meaning of all Swedish history from the dawn of time, was only one way of dealing with the loss of the Finnish part of the kingdom in 1809. At the same time, the designation was useful in that it could also be employed to convince the Danish inhabitants of Skåne that they, viewed "objectively", were really Swedes who were simply living "un-Swedishly" having been exposed to the temptations of the loose-living Danes. In reality, modern Sweden was first to emerge between 1809 and 1814, though it can only be said to have been definitively established with the dissolution of the union with Norway in 1905. After the loss of the eastern half of the kingdom to Russia in 1809, Sweden sought compensation in Norway under a newly adopted heir to the crown, the French Bonapartist marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte (Varenius 1938). This was achieved in 1814, albeit in the form of a somewhat loose union, which for the first time since the Middle Ages allowed Norway to surface as an independent nation. For this reason, the Swedish nationalism of the nineteenth century oriented itself exclusively towards the Sweden that had emerged with the conquest of Skåne and the loss of Finland. Identification of this new state with "Sweden proper" required a repression of historical facts of even greater magnitude than occurred in Sweden's neighbouring countries. It is for this reason that one should turn to the

Finnish history books (e.g. Jutikkala and Pirinen 1968) for a correct interpretation of Swedish history prior to 1809. The Swedish empire of the so-called Age of Greatness has found its own historian in the British scholar, Michael Roberts, who, from his base in Belfast (and latterly South Africa), has produced a flood of books on the subject; thus, Sweden, in contrast to Denmark, is accorded its relevant significance in comparative analyses, even if it does take a non-Swedish historian to analyse the empire in its entirety rather than as a mere defective episode in comparison with the nation-state of the present century.

Swedish counterparts to Yrjö-Koskinen and the Finnish nation builder, the Hegelian philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881), are historians such as Erik Gustaf Geijer (1783–1847) and Martin Weibull (1835–1902). Their conception of the Swedish nation-state had precious little in common with the historical “Sweden”, but was an idealization of the new Bernadottean state that had been established at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. Geijer proclaimed this new “Sweden of old”, as it were, in 1816 and proceeded unconstrainedly to expound upon the notion in his three-volume work of 1832–1836, *Svenska Folkets Historia* (“History of the Swedes”, 1845). The Lund historian, Martin Weibull, was to write of the significance of 1809: “With the loss of the conquered territories across the Baltic, the Swedish nation emerged, complete within its natural boundaries, from the great, disintegrating shell.” (Weibull 1906, 372). As early as 1881 Weibull had referred to this national entity as “det egentliga Sverige” (“Sweden proper”), a term that has stuck ever since, meaning Sweden in the form it assumed following the capture of Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Bohuslän, Jämtland and Härjedalen from Denmark–Norway in 1658 and the colonization of Norrland in the late nineteenth century – in other words, a geographical entity reaching from the Finnish town of Haparanda in the north to the Danish town of Ystad in the South. The same anachronistic understanding of history produces statements such as “in the year 1668 Sweden established its second university at Lund”, ignoring the fact that in 1640 the Swedish realm included, besides the ancient university at Uppsala, seats of learning at Åbo, Reval (Dorpat), and Greifswald, before Lund was conceived as a place of education for those members of the clergy who were to renationalize the Danish peasantry in Skåne.

“Primordial” Sweden consisted of the provinces of Svealand, Götaland, and Finland (Klinge 1983). With this centre as a starting point, Sweden was to capture the peripheral areas on both sides of the Gulf of Bothnia, Småland, Dalarna, Norrland, Västerbotten, Österbotten, Savolax, and Karelia. Kexholm Län, present-day Karelia around Vyborg, which some in Finland now venture once again to call Finnish, was first incorporated into Swedish Finland after the Russian conquest in 1809. A programme for a collective history of the Nordic countries ought to contain a collective analysis of the nationality struggles in Schleswig, Skåne, and Karelia. Such a project must be the task of future works. Karelia, however, represents in many respects a particular challenge to the study of Nordic identity in light of the fact that the region was home to a Finnish speaking population and that the Finnish national epic, “*The Kalevala*”, builds on legends compiled here at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After 1944, the majority of

Karelians emigrated to Finland and settled among their Lutheran linguistic companions. This explains why today's visitor to the central and eastern regions of Finland may still chance upon the golden, onion-shaped cupolas of the Orthodox community among the Lutheran churches. Although the integration of the Karelians has been a surprisingly painless process thanks to the prevailing climate of economic growth, sociological investigations nevertheless reveal that the Karelian community still very much constitutes a group with its own distinct identity within modern Finland.

The Finnish speaking subjects of the Swedish king were to make a valiant stand against the superiority of the Russian forces in the war of 1808, as one may read in Runeberg's *Fänrik Ståls sägner* of 1848 and 1860 ("The Songs of Ensign Stal", English translation 1925):

"But Döbeln rode his tall war horse at walking pace through the white sand along the front, and nothing was hidden for his keen eye; each and every division he saw, and each and every man. And clear it was to all, to Swedes as well as to Finns, that the man had great things in mind; he weighed his plan more privately than was usual; often he smiled and found a word to say to many a weather-beaten veteran.

Such a man stood in von Kothen's ranks, his right foot clad in a tattered shoe of bark, the left one bare, torn by the thorns of the hedgerows, cut by the broken stones of the road, dirty and bloody. It was the old standard-bearer, the Corporal. The General halted by his file and for a while considered the man sadly, until eventually he spoke: "You used the bayonet at Kauhajoki and on the Lappo plain for Finland's Victory; are these the wages you received?"

"Sir," replied the veteran, "here I have the rifle, you yourself gave to me. As yet, the barrel is faultless, see, and the cock fires as before if I only press the trigger. No-one will pay heed that I am poorly clad. Well-clad is he who resembles his own, and clothes do not make the man. Shoed or not is of no consequence if only we gain release from running here like hares. Provide for this, and I'll warrant we'll get by without shoes." (Runeberg 1848, 136-38).

The introductory poem, "*Vårt Land*" became Finland's national anthem in 1848, in spite of the fact that Runeberg, in contrast to many of his Swedish speaking compatriots, refused to give up his Swedish culture. Although he accepted completely his new "Finnish" identity, he did so only under the banner of "two fatherlands" (Klinge 1983). In the longer term, however, there was to be no place for such a standpoint in the ethnic-nationalistic era of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A majority in Sweden as well as in the now independent Finland believed, that with Swedes and Finns being accorded their own political nations, language and history too would have to be divided between them. Hence the now deep-rooted and nationalized historical myths concerning "Sweden proper" and "Finland proper".

At the Landdag in Borgå in 1812, Tsar Alexander I solemnly proclaimed the elevation of the Finnish peoples to the rank of nation. For the Finnish speaking peasant majority, the transition from Swedish to Russian rule passed relatively unheeded. The peasant class was characterized by a deep-rooted Lutheran view of society and was to a greater extent than

the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the clergy staunchly loyal to the Swedish crown. Yet it was precisely this orthodox outlook on society that made it easy for the peasantry to transfer their loyalty to a new grand duke, providing this took place under legal forms. Conversely, a problem of identity was to arise within the Swedish speaking upper class, which was under the influence of the Romantic imperative of identity of language, political nation, and people. Hence the persistent efforts to find, or create, a Finnish identity. There is therefore nothing illogical about the fact that it was a provincial physician bearing the good Swedish name of Elias Lönnroth who, in 1835, published the Finnish national epic, “The Kalevala”, based on an adaptation of songs from Karelia that he had collected on numerous expeditions. Characteristically, the work was eagerly discussed by the learned scholars of the day in the Finnish Literary Society of 1831 – in Swedish! One of its members related in his memoirs how in 1854 the newly appointed professor of Finnish language, Elias Lönnroth, as something quite new, began to conduct the Society’s discussions in Finnish, and even had the minutes recorded in the Sami language. As soon as discussions became lively, however, the participants habitually switched to Swedish even in this Fennoman stronghold (Lind 1989, 57ff.).

The history outlined above has for nationalistic reasons been suppressed and forgotten in Sweden as well as in Finland. The reasons for this were manifold as long as the mighty Soviet Union was lurking across the water. But now, with interest centering around the discussion of preconditions for a common Baltic identity (Neumann 1992; Wæver 1992), it is important to get beyond the anti-colonialistic misrepresentation of history. Historical falsification with a view to the establishment of Swedish and Finnish identity is no longer called for, rather it provides an obstacle to an understanding of the common past within the Swedish empire – and, for that matter, within the Danish empire before that.

Denmark and Sweden

Why do the Danes look upon the inhabitants of Skåne not as lost Danes, but as Swedes? This renunciation appears perplexing to outsiders because the landscape of Skåne to this day positively exudes “Danishness”, if one only abstracts from the application of a thin coat of Stockholmian state–Swedishness. After the Swedish annexations in 1658–1660, and especially after the check-mate situation of the War of Skåne in 1675–1679, radical measures were taken to extort an orientation of the Skånian population towards Sweden. What is remarkable from a European perspective is not these efforts in themselves so much as the fact that they were successful. As the Danish historian Knud Fabricius has shown in his excellent exposition, Skåne constitutes just about the only known example of such a massive policy of indoctrination having succeeded (Fabricius 1906, 3–16). Whether this may be attributed to the skill of the Swedish state or to the realism (or weak national identification) of the Danish peasantry may be left open. What is worth noting today is that Swedish–Danish antagonism in Skåne has since in effect been buried. Of course, there are still wide clefts between Danes and Swedes, but these are due not to the wars of the past

but to the fact that the Swedes until quite recently have been fortunate enough to hold the patent on modernity (Ruth 1984).

The demand to bring Skåne home to Denmark is stone dead and has been so now for almost 300 years. That this is true is to the great credit of the Danes in particular and serves only to confirm Piet Hein's statement that Danes are the most modest people on earth and outshine all others in self-satisfaction. The reason for this massive repression of history goes back to the realignment of the Danish state following the defeats at the hands of Sweden in the mid-seventeenth century. The relinquishment of Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Bohuslän, Herjedalen, and Jämtland in 1658 led to the introduction of the absolute monarchy in 1660. This implied an administrative reorganization or "modernization" of the state, but also a geopolitical reorientation towards Schleswig and Holstein, whose incorporation into the core of the kingdom was now increasingly sought. This constituted a realignment of almost the same magnitude as the simultaneous transformation of Sweden from an east-west to a north-south axis. The Danish monarchy was to prove unsuccessful in its attempts to regain the provinces lost to Sweden in the wars of revenge of 1675–1679 and 1709–1720, but the aim of increasing the power base of the crown was to be otherwise achieved with the annexation of the Oldenburg regions of Schleswig in 1720.

During the war of 1675–1679, ducal Schleswig was occupied by Danish troops, though no lasting result was achieved, and in 1689 the king was forced to accept the reinstatement of the Duke of Gottorp. In 1700 it once again came to war between Denmark and Sweden, each in union with separate European great powers. Following the Swedish defeat at Poltava in 1709, Denmark was given its revenge, and in 1720 the Danish king finally succeeded in gaining acceptance from Sweden, France and Britain for the annexation of Gottorp, later to be enshrined in the Act of Incorporation of 1721. According to this, the Act of Succession of 1665 was extended to apply to the whole of Schleswig. Administratively, however, together with the royal portions of Holstein, Schleswig remained under the German Chancellery, which in process developed into what one slightly anachronistically could call the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs".

Thus did the monarchy live up to its official name, the Low German "Kron zu Dennemarck". By this designation was meant not merely the kingdom of Denmark north of the Kongeåen, but the crown's possessions in their entirety – Norway and the Norwegian dependencies, the Faeroes and Iceland, as well as the royal portions of the duchies of Holstein and Schleswig. All in all, this multi-nation-state comprised a medium-sized European power on the level of Prussia, and, thanks to Norway, was able to boast the third largest navy in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century (if one includes the merchant fleet). In 1767, an exchange was agreed with the Gottorp heirs, whereby the Danish king gained unchallenged possession of all Holstein. The move was effected in 1773, making the united monarchy a tangible reality within the framework of the Danish–Norwegian Dual Monarchy. Thus, the outer framework was laid for the great reform process pertaining to the inner relations of the dependent countries at the end of the eighteenth century, reforms which incidentally were to be led by

representatives of the German speaking aristocratic elite within the Dual Monarchy. This elite, however, saw no reason to make any adjustments to the administrative division of the realm, so that the Danish speaking regions in Schleswig were to continue to be administered together with Holstein, as was stipulated in the “Treaty of Ribe” of 1480, by which the Danish king had promised to keep the two duchies “up ewig tosamende ungedeelt” (forever undivided; see Gregersen 1981).

The reason for the tight organization of the state stemmed from the 1670s and 1680s, when the absolute monarchy as a form of government was reformed after the French pattern. The all-encompassing bodies of laws, the “Danske Lov” of 1683 and the “Norske Lov” of 1687, modernized, systematized, and made uniform the many varying medieval provincial laws, and a chancellery was introduced in the European mould (Horstbøll and Østergård 1990). The central administration was built up on the Swedish–European model as a system of colleges. The administration of the army and navy was the first to be modernized. Then followed the administration of finance, whose college was made up of four nobles and four burghers. That the path to a government was opened up career in this way for persons not of noble birth was something quite new. The old regional administration of state territories in the Danish and German Chancelleries respectively was incorporated into the college system as “domestic” and “external” administration, and by the end of the seventeenth century the territorial domanial state had gradually been replaced by a tax-based “*Machtstaat*” (“power-state”; see Ladewig Petersen 1984). The reforms of the late eighteenth century pivoted upon two central points; a civil law reform, which ended the personal dependency of peasants upon landowners, and a reform of the system of cultivation comprising abolition of the common field system, the fencing-in of individual holdings, as well as other modifications. In 1805, serfdom was abolished, a move which alienated the landed aristocracy of Holstein and made them the embittered opponents of the Danish monarchy they until then had more or less supported.

In 1806, the duchy of Holstein was annexed to Denmark, a consequence of the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire. However, with the establishment of the German Confederation in 1815, Holstein was reestablished as an independent duchy, following which the Danish king participated in the Federal Assembly in his capacity as Duke of Holstein. As punishment for the alliance with France, the Danish king was compelled to cede the kingdom of Norway to Sweden, “in return” for which he received the tiny duchy of Lauenburg (Nørregård 1954). With that, the Dual Monarchy ceased to be a reality, and talk turned instead to the notion of the “*Helstat*” (*Gesamtsstaat* or United Monarchy). This consisted of the kingdom of Denmark (North Jutland to the Kongeåen and the islands) and the duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg. The latter, no larger in size than the minor Danish island of Lolland, retained its independent status and its particular institutions. Furthermore, the realm comprised the dependencies of Iceland and the Faroe Islands, and the colonies of Greenland, the Danish West Indies, Tranquebar and Guinea – in short, a multi-nation polity in the mould of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. As was

the case with the Habsburg Empire, however, the multi-nation-state was to be torn apart by two antagonistic, national programmes, one Danish–Swedish and one German–Schleswig-Holsteinian.

Denmark between Europe and “Norden”

The demand for the creation of a national state with a written constitution was first formulated in minority liberal circles in the first half of the nineteenth century and primarily among students and officials. In Denmark and Holstein, the move away from international or supranational liberalism to national liberalism occurred with a vengeance between 1836 and 1842 (Wåhlin and Østergård 1975). Up until that point the liberal movements in Copenhagen and Kiel had been allied in their resistance to the almost unlimited power of the absolute monarchy, which continued to prevail even after the introduction of the consultative assemblies in 1834. Being so few in numbers, the official bourgeoisie alone was in no position to shake the despotic regime. Had this not been apparent before, it certainly became so following the accession to the throne of Christian VIII in 1839. The liberals had placed their faith in the new monarch on the basis of a naïve idea that he would transfer the free Norwegian constitution of 1814 to Denmark. It quickly became apparent, however, that Christian, being the astute man he was, nourished no desire whatsoever to curtail his own power and deliver himself into the hands of the increasingly nationalistic liberals. In these circumstances the two liberal reform groups in the capitals of Copenhagen and Kiel each entered into their own strategic alliance. In Denmark, this was to take the form of an alliance with the peasant farmers, an alliance which in 1846 was crowned by the establishment of a political party, “*Bondevennerne*” (“Friends of the Peasants”). In Holstein a more informal alliance was established with the landed aristocracy that later developed into the Schleswig–Holsteinian movement. The confrontation of 1848 was the result, not primarily of the situation in Schleswig, but of the fact that neither of the two national liberal groups was able to gain power without such polarization over an abstract ideology (Wåhlin and Østergård 1975).

The nationalistic radicalization of the language employed led to war in several relays and ended with the dismemberment of the Danish United Monarchy after the self-inflicted defeat of 1864. Denmark survived as a sovereign nation-state only by the skin of its teeth, though not without help. Again it was the interest of the great powers, first and foremost Russia and Britain this time, in maintaining a neutral power at the entrance to the Baltic that saved Denmark as a sovereign state. Had this not been the case, the country would have become either German or Swedish (the latter eventuality being termed Scandinavianism). Today Danes have grown used to considering this development as both inevitable and positive. The reason for this is the swift exploitation by popular movements of the exceptional situation of a whole sovereign state having been rendered so weak that it allowed firstly the peasant movement and later the workers’ movement to gain absolute control of power. Such popular movements were not altogether uncommon within an international context, but it was quite unrivalled that they were in this way able to gain a cultural, economic, and eventually political hegemony within a sovereign state. This is what the

slogan “Outward losses must be made up for by inward gains” came to mean for the Danes in the period following on from 1864.

The programme for a romantically, ethnically, and historically motivated definition of the nation was, as previously noted, formulated by the National Liberal “party” – party here in inverted commas because the liberals in principle did not recognize political parties at all, only representatives of the whole nation, the nation’s finest or “best”, motivated alone by their own convictions. This conception, however, was out of synch with the political and social realities. The period 1830–1848 saw modern political ideas being developed in Denmark, and Danes themselves were already during this period beginning to organize themselves according to their own interests. In the liberal view, the members of a society ought to organize themselves on the basis of ideas and compete for political power with the aid of free elections (though it was the liberal conviction that only those who understood how to govern should be accorded the vote!). But this was all theory.

In practice it was to become apparent even prior to the political upheaval of 1848 (the Danish version of a bourgeois revolution) that the dividing lines ran parallel with social or class-based affiliations. Liberal academics, officials, and other pillars of the liberal community sought to conceal this by shrewdly elaborating appeals in the name of “the people”. The means to the creation of this alliance that was to cut across class divisions was the so-called “national revival” (or, more aptly, nationalistic incitement) concerning the status of the duchy of Schleswig within the national framework. The strategy worked fine for a number of years, pretty much until the National Liberal collapse following the abortive attempt to annex Schleswig in November 1863. But then things went seriously wrong. Stubborn and intransigent quibbling on the part of the responsible Danish National Liberal politicians and their misjudgement of the international situation made it possible for Bismarck to establish a united Germany without Austria under Prussian dominance (Nielsen 1987). The international political climate and international agreements notwithstanding, the National Liberals made demands for the creation of a Danish nation-state within the historical framework, a move that would have resulted in a large German speaking minority. Instead, Prussia and Austria took both Schleswig and Holstein.

This led in 1871 to the proclamation of a new German empire. The presence in the middle of Europe of this unstable and all too domineering major new power provoked in its turn a national unification in Denmark, as well as in other neighbouring countries. In Denmark this was achieved in a quite exceptional manner by means of a combination of outside pressure and initiative from the centre of the population, i.e. from the class of peasant farmers. It was on the basis of this conscious demarcation as regards Germany and all things German that the modern, popular and democratic Denmark was to emerge, i.e. everything Danes today celebrate as particularly Danish about Denmark and the Danes (Østergård 1984). During the 1870s, the opposition successfully engaged in a “*Kulturkampf*” with the conservatives and the town liberals concerning who was to have control of the schools and the church. The struggle over the schools was to have far

greater importance for the establishment of a cultural hegemony than the better-described conflict of literary cultures during the 1880s (Stangerup 1946). The latter has always been the subject of attention from social-liberal intellectuals owing to the quality of the contributions from the brothers Brandes, Viggo Hørup, and the rest of the “Europeans”. Despite the brilliance of these names and their apparent victory with the founding of the newspaper *Politiken* in 1884, the cultural hegemony they sought was not forthcoming. The popular movements, the Grundtvigians and their religious opponents in the “Inner Mission”, however, were more successful. From their efforts ensued an hegemony that was later to be taken relatively painlessly on board by the social democratic workers’ movement in alliance with the successors to the European Left.

It took a long time and involved almost superhuman efforts on the part of courageous and far-sighted individuals such as H. P. Hansen Nørremølle (1862–1936) to bring about the necessary change in the Danish political line in order that the vital national compromise could be achieved with the great neighbouring state south of the border. One of the prerequisites was the building of new self-confidence within the population. An important element in this process was a reorientation away from Europe and towards “*Norden*.” Whether the shift from European to Nordic culture has been worth the cultural price that was paid is up to the individual to determine. However, it is incontestable that in the short term it involved major political advantages in the shape of the creation of a homogeneous and self-important nation-state that was able to stick together, even when surrendering almost without firing a single shot, as was the case in 1940.

What is “Norden”?

Geopolitical contrasts have always been the constant in the history of the Nordic countries. But after 1814, common interests were enough to keep each other in check, so that the Nordic countries, with the exception of the occasional threat to Denmark and Finland, were not exposed to any direct threat. During the Cold War period in particular, the Nordic countries remained peaceful and quiet owing to the well-established iron curtain that ran through the Baltic. At the time the Nordic countries were unaware of just how safe they were, but this was to become apparent for many following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain in 1989. What in reality was the peaceable and predictable character of world politics explains why popular enthusiasm for the Nordic alternative was greatest in the years between 1945 and 1989. During this period Sweden was able to play the neutral card, while Denmark quite free of charge was able to come out on the winning side of NATO. The exception among the Nordic countries is provided by Finland. This small state demonstrated a determined will to survive in 1939–1944 and thus escaped the tragic fate of Estonia and Latvia.

This era of peace, however, has not lasted very long and appears today as little more than an historical parenthesis. Viewed in the long historical perspective, the Nordic countries differ not nearly as much from the European countries as Northist ideology and all the talk about the Scandinavian model would have us believe. They are, however, Lutheran.

Not from the Reformation of 1536, but from some time in the eighteenth century, the Pietist revival movements, later to become political and economic in nature, began to win ground among the Nordic populations (Wåhlin 1987). It is possible that the background to the Nordic welfare state is to be found here, this construction owing less to the existence of a distinct Nordic social structure than to the fact that the states are homogeneously Lutheran. Other Lutheran communities form a constituent part of major polities (Germany and the United States) or have been subject to other states (Estonia and Latvia). The connection has not been systematically studied, but from a perspective of a history of mentalities it would seem plausible. Should it be shown to be correct, the consequence would be that the social democratic parties, regardless of what party programmes and generations of party members have said, are the products of secularized Lutheranism rather than democratized socialism.

The Nordic countries of today all share the Lutheran monarchical heritage, even if two of them formally are republics. This common heritage is demonstrated by the Christian cross in eight of the nine national flags of the Nordic countries. The peripheral position of the countries with regard to Europe has made it possible to realize socially democratic potentials that less fortunate smaller nations such as the Czechs have experienced more difficulty realizing. But this fortunate history owes much less to home-grown “Nordic” merits than is normally assumed. The primary reason lies in the optimal geographical situation of the Nordic countries with regard to foreign policy as well as in relation to both economy and communications. The Nordic countries were each in their own way useful as suppliers of raw materials to the industrial centres and have moreover been able to profit from a favourable relationship between low transportation costs and high manufacturing costs in the world economy. It was this stroke of cyclical good fortune that rendered the welfare states of the twentieth century possible, despite some unfavourable climatic conditions.

The Nordic countries, then, happened to be in the right place at the right time. To the extent that this is no longer the case, it will become increasingly difficult to live on the Nordic myths and copious outpourings of yesteryear. Much would seem to indicate that the Baltic is about to regain its former position as the economic and civilizing pivot of Northern Europe (Neumann 1992; Wæver 1992). To the extent that this occurs, it will prove difficult to build bridges across the crucial antithesis between the Atlantic sea-facing North on the one hand and the land-based, Baltic North on the other. The Norwegian ethnologist Brit Berggren has stressed this important constancy in the mental geography of *Norden* in one of her contributions to a collection of essays on Nordic identity (Berggren 1992). The historical lesson is that there are no objective laws binding the people of the North together in a common destiny. But there is a historical and cultural raw material on which such an identity may be built – providing, of course, that this is what the Nordic peoples want.

If it is the case that no economic or geopolitical laws are at work, then the politico-cultural possibilities are much greater. In a cooperating Europe it is important to maintain those strengths at the civil level of society that the Nordic collaboration actually comprises, not only in order that they may be

appreciated, but also lest they otherwise be lost in some misguided attempt to turn the Nordic countries into a state proper or an association or confederation of states. Economic and political collaboration has always failed at the major level but succeeded at the minor level. A prerequisite, however, is that the unfortunate opposition of European and Nordic civilization that characterizes the present political discussion in all the Nordic countries be transcended.

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SUMMARY

The Nordic or Scandinavian countries represent variations on general European patterns of state and nation-building and political culture. Denmark and Sweden rank among the oldest and most typical of nation-states together with France, Britain and Spain and should be studied with the same questions in mind. Today, however, a sort of trans-state common Nordic identity co-exists with independent national identifications among the Scandinavians. Nordic unity is regarded as a viable alternative to European culture and integration by large numbers of the populations. There has never existed a "Scandinavian model" worthy of the name "model". Because of a series of changes in great power politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the major conflicts in Europe were relocated away from Northern Europe. This resulted in a virtual "neutralization" of the Scandinavian countries north of the Baltic Sea. Today, the much promoted "Nordic identity" reveals itself only through the nation-states. The "Association for Nordic Unity" (*Foreningerne Norden*) was set up in 1919 only after all five Nordic countries had achieved independent nationhood: Norway in 1905, Finland in 1917, and Iceland in 1918 (the latter only as home rule to be followed by independence in 1944). The very different roads to independent nationhood among the Nordic countries have been investigated and the idea of a common Nordic identity traced back to its beginnings in the nineteenth century.