

# The Origin, Development and Perspectives of Nordic Co-operation in a New and Enlarged European Union

*Die Voraussetzungen für eine Kooperation im Sicherheitsbereich sollten für die nordischen Länder in vielerlei Hinsicht besser sein als für ganz Europa. Es besteht dort ein Netzwerk für Kontakte und Kooperationen zwischen Regierungen, Bürokratien, nationalen Parlamenten, politischen Parteien, Handels- und Arbeitsorganisationen. Die Vereinigung „Norden“ bezieht sich auf Solidarität, gegenseitiges Verständnis und grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Formen zwischenstaatlicher Kooperation – wie SAS, Nordischer Rat, nordische Passunion, nordische Freihandelszone innerhalb der EFTA – haben es die nordischen Länder im Bereich der Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik aber nicht zu einer ähnlich intensiven Zusammenarbeit gebracht. Das rührt auch daher, dass nordische Kooperation traditionellerweise innerhalb eines breiteren europäischen (und transatlantischen) Rahmens am besten funktioniert hat. Damit die nordischen Länder ihre Möglichkeiten innerhalb der EU besser nutzen, ist es nötig, dass sie eine entspanntere und realistischere Einstellung gegenüber der Entwicklung einer gemeinsamen europäischen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik entwickeln. Solange Dänemark, Schweden und Finnland jedoch ihre so genannte „kollektive“ nordische Zurückhaltung bezüglich Verteidigung beibehalten, wird es keine optimale Kooperation innerhalb der EU geben.*

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The word “Norden” is the customary term used when referring to the five Nordic or Scandinavian countries of Northern Europe.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the special situation of the Finnish-speaking population, language was a major unifying factor between the Nordic peoples. Religion (first Roman Catholic, since the 1520s Lutheran) proved to be another unifying factor (Bonnén/Søsted 2002). Lesser known, but equally important factors have been the shared understanding of moral values and the common set of legal principles (Wendt 1981, 11ff.). All in all, it is possible to speak of Norden as a group of nations with a common heritage. On the other hand, Denmark, Sweden and Finland have traditionally found common ground and unity through the sharing of interests in the Baltic Sea

while Norway and Iceland have always been more oriented towards the west. Denmark, Sweden and Finland have been more interested in maintaining their boundaries on land, while Norway held the Atlantic Sea as its primary area of interest.

Norden has certain distinct features in respect to issues of war and peace. The region has a long record of non-wars, i.e. opportunities in the area to wage war that have been avoided. The Nordic region is what could be characterised as a “pluralistic security community” with stable expectations on peaceful settlement of conflicts. States within a pluralistic security community possess a certain compatibility of core values derived from common institutions, and mutual responsiveness to the point where they entertain dependable expectations of peaceful change. Security communities arise out of a

process of regional integration characterized by the development of transaction flows, shared understandings and transnational values. These transaction flows involve the regular, institutionalised interaction not only of national governments but of members of civil society as well. In this view, interaction leads to dependable exceptions of peaceful change, where states believe that disputes among members of the community will not be settled by force. Security communities, however, are not defined merely by the absence of war. They are also characterised by what is called a “we-feeling” or shared identity.<sup>3</sup>

The common heritage transformed into widespread Nordic co-operation in the 19th century and reached its zenith during World War I. In spite of very different experiences during World War II, Nordic co-operation continued well into the Cold War. But the bipolar setting of the Cold War provided a rather rigid framework for the Nordic countries which curtailed any attempts to further Nordic co-operation – especially in the area of security. Despite their shared values and feelings of solidarity, Nordic countries have found it difficult to co-operate intensely in the field of security and defence policy. Whereas Norden appears as one unit linguistically and ethnically, the region is divided when it comes to security and defence issues. A telling example of this is the failure of the plans and negotiations in 1948 to establish a Nordic Defence Community. The project’s goal of a common Nordic defence arrangement proved too ambitious and, in retrospect, quite unrealistic. Soon after, the Cold War cast its paralysing effect on the Nordic and European security architecture, thus making any inter-Nordic security and defence co-operation virtually impossible for decades to come.

With the end of the Cold War, the rigid bipolar framework gradually dissolved and the expectations of enhanced Nordic co-operation resurfaced. Room for manoeuvre greatly increased and many anticipated an unprecedented degree of Nordic co-operation. Indeed, co-operation did increase in several aspects, but Nordic co-operation failed to reach expectations in the one area most envisaged. The Norden has not (yet)

fully exploited the possibilities of Nordic co-operation within the European Union. On the contrary, Nordic co-operation is hampered by continuous battles of prestige and short-sighted gains between individual Nordic countries. This situation is quite astonishing considering that there will be no better time to develop Nordic co-operation. However, changes in Nordic security must be understood in the context of broader changes in the political order in Europe. A central feature of these changes is that the privileged status of the state is challenged.

However, given their common cultural heritage and past experiences this lack of co-operation seems puzzling and raises several important questions. Why has the potential for Nordic co-operation not been fully exploited, and what barriers exist towards Nordic co-operation within the European Union? Even if Nordic co-operation does not function optimally, what steps towards co-operation have been taken, and how does Nordic co-operation within the European Union function today? What approach from Nordic countries can we expect in the future? Is there going to be an extension of co-operation or have we seen the best of it because Norden has played its role? These are the main questions this article will address. On the following pages, we will analyse the historical background with special focus on Nordic co-operation during the World Wars and the Cold War in order to establish a framework for discussing Norden in the post-Cold War system and Nordic co-operation in the new European setting. This article argues that Norden as a (sub-) region still has a role to play and can arguably become a model when it comes to stabilizing and extending informal regional co-operation. Before addressing these and other questions, it is critical to first examine the historical background and how it relates to the current situation in and among the Nordic countries.

## **2. The common Nordic heritage**

In spite of close links of culture and kinship, the centuries immediately after the Viking period witnessed the emergence of three states,

which soon began to compete for influence within the Nordic region. The three states were Denmark, which at that time also included the southern region of present Sweden (Skåne, Halland and Blekinge); Norway, including areas which later became parts of Sweden, as well as the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland; and finally, Sweden together with Finland. For centuries, the frontiers of these three states were fluid and serious conflicts between them were surprisingly minimal despite numerous minor wars. In 1380, Denmark and Norway – including the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland – were united under one king, a situation that lasted until 1814. In 1389, the Danish born Queen Margrethe of Norway, who governed Denmark and Norway after the death of her son, King Oluf, took over Government in Sweden at the request of Swedish nobles.

For the first time in history, the entire Nordic area, which eight years later came to be known as the “Kalmar Union,” was united under a single political leadership. The Kalmar Union lived on for 134 years. After the end of the Union in 1523, the Nordic area was divided into two primary states. The Danish-Norwegian king, who governed from Copenhagen, ruled over the areas of Denmark, Norway, the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. The Swedish-Finnish king in Stockholm ruled in the remaining territories. The rivalry between Denmark-Norway and Sweden-Finland led to a number of clashes covering approximately two centuries of conflict. Initially, Denmark-Norway was the stronger of the two political units. However, by 1615 a more even balance between the two blocks became evident, and in the following decades the balance of power shifted in Sweden’s favour.

A series of wars between Nordic countries ensued. During the rule of King Gustav II Adolf (1611–1632) and his successor Queen Christina (1632–1654) of Sweden, there was pressure to expand the frontiers of the kingdom. The first conquest occurred during the Thirty Years War in the Baltic region. On two occasions, Sweden conquered territories from Denmark, first in 1643–45 and then in 1657–1660, both of which squeezed Denmark-Norway out its dominant

position in Norden. The result was the Scandinavian War 1675–1679 that ended indecisively, and equally little was achieved when Denmark-Norway in 1709 entered into an alliance with Russia, Poland and Prussia, Sweden’s neighbouring rivals. When peace finally came in 1721, the kingdom of Sweden-Finland lost a good portion of its territories, but surprisingly Denmark-Norway had not regained any of its previously lost lands. Subsequently, Denmark never again regained to the same extent its influence within the Nordic region.

Ironically, in the years that followed there appeared no alternative to these former rivals but to engage in active co-operation. If the Nordic countries wished to maintain some form of independence in the larger European political arena, they had little choice but to settle their differences through peaceful means. The Danish-Norwegian Foreign Minister of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, A.P. Bernstorff, once remarked, when commenting on the co-operation agreement reached by the two powers, that “[e]verything that brings Sweden and Denmark closer to each other is natural; all that separates them is unnatural and unreasonable” (Bernstorff, quoted in Bonnén/Søsted 2002). Still, the two countries fought on opposite sides during the Napoleonic wars. Denmark, forced by political and economic circumstances, forged an alliance with the French while Sweden allied itself with Britain for similar reasons. Russia came together with France in the Treaty of Tilsit (1807) and occupied Finland since Sweden maintained its alliance with Britain. In 1809, Finland became part of the Russian Empire as a “Grand Duchy” with extensive internal autonomy. After Napoleon’s defeat at Leipzig, Sweden forced Denmark to sign the Treaty of Kiel (January 1814), under which the King of Denmark ceded Norway to the Swedish King. Following a short rebellion, Norway finally became a separate kingdom under the Swedish Crown.

In the 1840s and 1850s, partly influenced by German romanticism, many people, especially students and liberal circles in Denmark and Sweden, expressed sympathy for a Scandinavian Union. Up to the 1860’s there was talk about a defence union as well, but the death blow to such

plans was dealt in 1864 when Sweden and Denmark came into disagreement over the defence of the southern border of Schleswig. In the war against Prussia and Austria, Denmark was left alone. Along with the areas of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg, Denmark also lost any faith it had held in a common Nordic security identity. Indeed, there was a divergence in perceptions of security needs between Sweden and Denmark over the German threat, with Denmark far more concerned with the menace due to its territorial proximity. In June 1905, the Union of Sweden and Norway came to an end, bringing independence to Norway at last (Weibull 1993, 108f.).

### **3. The two World Wars and Nordic co-operation**

Bitter experience taught the Nordic countries that armed conflict only brought disaster and economic instability, and that Nordic unity could only be achieved through co-operation and negotiation. During World War I, Nordic co-operation extended into new areas resulting in a greater public awareness of the situation. In many instances, the Nordic area appeared as a single socio-political and economic unit to many observers in Europe and North America. In 1918, Finland and Iceland respectively became sovereign states, and could thereafter make their own contributions to furthering Nordic co-operation.

In the early post-war years, this co-operation was strengthened even further. A high-level network was established for contact and co-operation between governments, officials and national assemblies, and partially between political parties and large trade union organizations. One of the best indications of this co-operation was the practice of reserving a seat in the Council at the League of Nations for Nordic countries, which was filled in rotation. Since 1919, on a popular level the “Norden” association contributed to solidarity, mutual understanding and co-operation across the frontiers, by means of exchange and sister-town projects (Bonnén/Palosaari 2002).

A new phase of Nordic co-operation began in the early 1930s as a result of the global economic crisis, the Nazi takeover in Germany and the growing fear of war in Europe. Meetings of foreign affairs ministers, as well as ministers for social welfare, commerce, justice and education became regular events among Nordic governments. An important feature of this activity was a growing Finnish participation in Nordic co-operation in the field of foreign policy. The outbreak of World War II only heightened this type of co-operation. Despite fears that different reactions and subsequent enforced affiliations of various Nordic countries during the war would sever all ties between them, the result was quite opposite. For example, Finland was not abandoned when the country was attacked by the Soviet Union. During the severe months of the Winter War, support for the Nordic cause grew deeper and stronger than ever before. Large collection drives were started in all Nordic countries, despite the fact that military aid in the form of troops could not be provided. However, many volunteers went to Finland to fight in the Finnish army.

With the German attack on Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940, Nordic co-operation and relationships in general were abruptly severed. External conditions for individual Nordic countries differed widely, with Denmark and Norway being occupied by Germany, the British occupying Iceland and the Faeroe Isles, while Sweden remained neutral. For its part, Finland allied itself with Germany from 1941 to 1944 against the Soviet Union. However, despite the many obstacles imposed by the war, Nordic solidarity flourished as never before. The emotions generated by the war provided fertile soil for Nordic activities in the post war years.

### **4. The Norden and the Cold War**

All the Nordic countries realized that the difficult war period made co-operation more necessary than ever. The attempts to create a Nordic defence alliance and keep the region out of the incipient Cold War failed. Due to their experiences during the war, Denmark and Norway

joined NATO in 1949, Sweden and later Finland pursued a “neutrality policy.” Finland was bound by the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance from 1948 with the Soviet Union, which introduced some limitations on Finnish foreign, security and defence policy. The possibility of a Finnish inclusion into the Soviet system of bilateral, all-inclusive political and military affiliation via the treaty was perceived as a threat to Swedish, Norwegian and Danish security. Nevertheless, the Nordic region developed a unique political identity in the bipolar European security order (Lodgaard 1992, 283). In contrast to the rest of the Cold War system, Nordic countries tried to pursue foreign policy orientations which modified confrontation, essentially limiting Soviet Union involvement in Finland and US involvement in Norway (Wiberg/Wæver 1992, 23ff.).

Iceland’s accession to NATO in 1949 required neither the establishment of an Icelandic armed force, nor the stationing of foreign troops in the country during peacetime. However, the towering Soviet threat and growing world tension caused Iceland’s leaders to think otherwise. Icelandic officials concluded that membership in NATO was not a sufficient deterrent and, at the request of NATO, Iceland entered into a defence agreement with the United States. The level of tension was therefore lower in Northern than in Central Europe and the Nordic area tried to shield itself from recurrent conflict manifestations on the Central Front. In the Nordic region there was a high enough degree of co-operation, common cultural traits and “We-ness” to legitimise the full use of the term “security community” (Deutsch 1957; Palosaari 2001). The standard explanation of the Nordic case derived from this view has also had an impact on Nordic self-understanding (Joenniemi 1997, 193ff.). In contrast to the rest of the system, Nordic countries tried to pursue a foreign policy orientation, which represented a modification of confrontation, often referred to as the Nordic Balance, essentially by limiting Soviet involvement in Finland and US involvement in Norway.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time it is worth noting impediments to closer Nordic co-operation that were not related to the Cold War system in Europe.

Old, controversial questions appeared from time to time concerning the union between Denmark, Norway and Sweden that were still able to mobilize and divide public opinion. Several decades after 1945, disputes over records continued between Denmark and Norway, especially over the traditional and agreed upon Norwegian fishing and hauling rights in Greenland (Bonén/Metzsch 2002a). In addition, Norwegian-Swedish relations focused on past military and political glories and accomplishments. This was not only due to differing security policies of the two countries but also to the repercussions from ethnic and state tensions during and prior to World War II. As for the former relationship between Norway and Finland, Norway viewed “the Finnish Danger”, associated with the sizeable Finnish settlement in Finnmark and Troms during 1850–60 as a point of contention. Instead of soothing fears, Finland further aggravated the situation by openly calling for certain frontier rectifications on the basis of nationality.

Many factors contributed to ambivalence among Nordic countries, which in turn hindered development of a common security and defence policy. One reason for this was that states in a way pulled out of such Nordic activities and “Nordicity” was set free for more popular endeavours such as Nordic associations. The failure of the Nordic defence co-operation provides a telling example. It was the final common state-oriented security effort for years to come. Different foreign policy traditions, military and economic differences, and the different geopolitical positions of countries were to make Nordic defence co-operation unthinkable for a long time (Wahlbäck 2000).<sup>5</sup> Nordic countries limited themselves to co-operation on matters relating to economics, the labour market and other aspects of “low politics”.

## **5. The alternative or limited Nordic co-operation**

Co-operation between members of the Nordic parliaments dates back to the establishment of the Nordic Interparliamentary Union in 1907. This was largely a club without any decision-

making powers or rules for admission (Baldersheim/Ståhlberg 1999, 5). The Nordic Council was established in 1952 with members of parliament from Denmark, Norway and Sweden as well as Iceland. In contrast to the “supra-national” European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) which was founded at about the same time on the continent, the Nordic Council was clearly established as an “inter-state” body (Sundelius/Wiklund 2000, 325).

Finnish members of parliament joined in 1955/56, after the Soviet Union agreed to return the Porkkala military base (near Helsinki) to Finland and thus give the country more leeway in its foreign relations. In explaining the decision to parliament, the Finnish government declared that the Nordic Council would deal mostly with administrative, social and economic questions. Should the Council – against its established practice – debate military questions or discuss statements concerning the conflict between the superpowers, the Finnish representatives would not participate in such debates (Andrén 2000, 281). The Helsinki Treaty of 1962 based the Nordic Council on an international agreement. The reason for establishing a legal basis was the attempt of Denmark and Norway to join the European Economic Community. The Helsinki Treaty should secure the achievements of Nordic co-operation (see Wiklund 2000). In 1970, the self-governing areas of the Faeroe Islands and Åland got their own representatives in the Council, while Greenland got them in 1984.

The Nordic Council consists of 87 elected members, appointed each year by the parliaments of member countries and the people’s representations of the autonomous areas. The delegations are composed according to the parliamentary strength of the political parties in their respective countries. Ministers of the Nordic countries can participate in the meetings of the Nordic Council, albeit without the right to vote. The Nordic Council is not a body with independent powers of decision-making, its main tasks are the exchange of information and ideas among Nordic members of parliament. It enables parliamentarians to take initiatives that are then voted on in the Council and forwarded

to the governments of Nordic countries. In order to become effective, the recommendations have to be enacted by parliaments of the respective countries.

It took some time before the governments of the Nordic countries established a formal co-operation body. The Nordic Council of Ministers was established as late as 1971 as an inter-governmental body. The Council includes ministers from the five Nordic countries and the three autonomous areas (Greenland, the Faeroe Islands and Åland). The Nordic Council of Ministers meets in some 20 different formations according to the topics debated (the ministers for education, culture, environment, agriculture, etc.). Each country has appointed a government member, known as Minister of Nordic Affairs, who is directly responsible under the Prime Minister for the co-ordination of Nordic issues in their country and for the Council’s activities. Decisions made in the Nordic Council of Ministers result in accords, conventions or other forms of communal Nordic decisions, which, most of the time, must be ratified in the member countries’ parliaments.

Some of the achievements of this intergovernmental co-operation include the abolition of passport controls between Nordic countries and the establishment of a common labour market that has incorporated the harmonization of social and labour legislation. Legislative harmonization has also included family law and inheritance legislation as well as regulations concerning commercial transactions. Nordic citizens have also been granted the right to vote in local elections if they live outside their home country. In cultural areas, a number of joint Nordic institutions have been established and programs to encourage co-operation between national institutions have been set up. For scientific co-operation, a separate Nordic Research Council exists, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Baldersheim/Ståhlberg 1999, 5f.).

As was the case with co-operation on defence policy in 1949, the good intentions for economic co-operation were destroyed at the end of the 1950s. In particular, Norwegian industry opposed any attempt to create a Nordic customs union. The Nordic countries instead participated

in the creation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) founded in 1960 as a response to the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) by those countries that could not or did not want to join the EEC.<sup>6</sup>

Another attempt at deepening economic co-operation was made between 1967 and 1970, after French President Charles de Gaulle twice vetoed British entry into the single market and with it the membership applications of Denmark and Norway. Whereas in earlier situations it was divergences between the Nordic countries that prevented co-operation, this time it was external circumstances that rendered impossible enhanced regional Nordic co-operation and the goal of a customs union.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to issues of “low politics,” such as trade and the free movement of people, foreign affairs as well as security and defence policy had traditionally been considered off limits at Nordic Council meetings and in the Nordic Council of Ministers during the Cold War. An exception to refraining from sensitive foreign policy issues has been the co-operation of the Nordic countries in the United Nations where they attempted with considerable success to co-ordinate their voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly (L. Wiklund 2000).

## **6. Norden after the Cold War**

The end of the Cold War removed the obstacles for foreign policy and security co-operation. At the same time, it eliminated one of the barriers regarded in the past to thwart both “neutral” Sweden and Finland to join the EU as full members. In October 1991, the impending economic crisis in Sweden caused the government to abruptly change its integration policy and to announce an imminent application for EU membership. Its Nordic partners were not informed in advance and, especially in Finland, negative comments on the lack of Nordic solidarity were made public (Luif 1995, 216). Finland and Norway later also applied for EU membership. Norway as a NATO member having no political hurdle to pass, was nevertheless barred from accession to the EU when a small majority of

its population rejected (as in 1972) EU membership. Thus, there remained two Nordic countries (Iceland which had not applied for EU membership and Norway) outside EU integration, whereas from January 1995 Finland and Sweden joined Denmark in the Union.

The membership applications and subsequent accessions to the EU had repercussions on Nordic institutions. At a special session of the Nordic Council in November 1991 it was decided that Nordic countries should try to actively influence the developments in Europe. In 1995, a thorough reform of the Nordic Council was initiated. Nordic co-operation was regarded as a “bridge” between the Nordic EU members and outsiders. “Norden” would not be an alternative to “Europe”, but a part of European co-operation (Johansson/Larsen 2000, 223).

An example of the influence of Nordic co-operation on the EU policy of Nordic member states concerned participation in the Schengen Convention, which granted the free movement of persons (abolishment of border controls) for those EU countries that had signed and fully implemented it. In May 1994, Denmark applied for observer status in the Schengen regime since it feared that controls at its border with Germany could become an obstacle for the free movement of people. This led to a series of administrative and political contacts between the other Nordic countries. At the session of the Nordic Council in Reykjavik, February 1995, the Nordic prime ministers decided that in order to maintain the Nordic passport union, all Nordic states should participate in the Schengen regime. In June 1995, Finland and Sweden applied for membership in Schengen, both like Denmark with the condition that the Nordic passport union should be maintained. Iceland and Norway indicated their interest in participation in the Schengen regime as well. All five Nordic countries became observers in Schengen from 1 May 1996. Denmark, Finland and Sweden signed the Accession Treaties on December 1996, on the same day Iceland and Norway signed Co-operation Agreements with the Schengen countries.

Thus, the three Nordic EU members became full participants in the Schengen regime, whereas Iceland and Norway can fully partake

in the preparations for decisions, but cannot participate in the decision making as such. With this arrangement, the Nordic passport union was preserved (Andersson 2000, 237f.; Scharf 2000, 38). Finally, the “Schengen acquis” was put into force (and passport controls abolished) between the five Nordic countries and the other EU member states (except the Great Britain and Ireland) on 25 March 1991, after the Nordic states had implemented all relevant rules and regulations (Hellberg 2001).

Another significant example of Nordic “co-operation” in the EU could be observed during the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) that led to a consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), negotiated in Amsterdam in 1996. The Nordic countries had similar interests in the IGC, all focusing on the environment, openness and the overall goal of preparing for enlargement. But rather than appearing as a united bloc, several Nordic voices were heard saying essentially the same thing (Tallberg 2002, 460). The voices were emphasizing different details, so that they would not thwart each other’s interests. Even if both Denmark and Sweden gave openness high priority, they went their separate ways: Denmark’s preparations focused mainly on making Council meetings open to the media, whereas a Swedish paper focused on access to documents (Johansson/Svensson 2002, 352f.).

Good personal relations between negotiating teams meant that Swedish and Finnish negotiators co-operated rather closely at the IGC. In addition, the social democratic background of both foreign ministers led to a joint proposal on the so-called “Petersberg tasks”, the only exception to the rule of mere co-ordination among Nordic countries at the IGC. When the French and German foreign ministers presented a paper at the IGC where they suggested an inclusion of the Western European Union (WEU) and with it a military solidarity clause (Article 5) into the TEU, the Finnish and Swedish foreign ministers put forward a memorandum, suggesting the insertion of only military crisis management (called Petersberg tasks) into the TEU. As a consequence, they succeeded in preventing the inclusion of a common defence clause in the

TEU that would have been detrimental to their neutrality (Luif 2002, 65).

During the IGC, there was also co-operation with the aim of influencing the negotiations among nongovernmental actors, including organized interest groups and political parties. There have long existed cross-national networks of interaction between such actors in the Nordic area, where regional and local authorities have established links across borders (Johansson/Svensson 2002, 351; Sundberg 2001).

In April 1997, the Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, suggested in a letter to the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, that the EU develop a “strategy for a Northern Dimension”. The main aim of this initiative was to create peace and stability in the North of Europe, with one of the objectives being the strengthening of (economic) relations between the EU and Russia. In contrast to Finland, Sweden supported more schemes with a focus outside the EU, such as the activities of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). These different approaches illustrate that there still exist differing attitudes towards European integration among Nordic EU member states. Finnish politicians are much more open to a more federal EU structure, whereas in Sweden the ruling Social Democrats strongly support intergovernmental decision-making procedures (Luif 2002, 68f.). Nevertheless, the Northern Dimension and the CBSS are also expressions of the Nordic countries’ activities in the Baltic Sea and their efforts for an early EU membership of the Baltic states.

One notable area of co-operation between Nordic countries has been in the United Nations. The five states largely succeeded in “speaking with one voice” in the UN General Assembly, the exception being disarmament and nuclear weapons questions, where the three NATO members and the two neutral countries often had different positions. With the end of the Cold War, even these divergences disappeared. When Finland and Sweden joined the EU, both countries adjusted their voting behaviour to the mainstream of the EU. Only in questions where there was no EU consensus a distinctive stance among Nordic countries could be established, e.g. con-

cerning the reform of the UN Security Council.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the traditional informal co-operation among the Nordic countries has remained confined to the United Nations.

An important element of co-operation among Nordic EU member states which is not readily seen in the public, are the daily informal contacts among civil servants in the different ministries. These broad and deep “transnational” and “transbureaucratic” interactions have always been a significant basis of Nordic collaboration (Sundelius/Wiklund 2000, 327). A research project on “EU negotiations in networks” found that Swedish civil servants first seek contact with their colleagues in Denmark, then in Finland and in Great Britain (Johansson 2002, 87).

The issues that still have not found their full place in the discussion among Nordics are security and defence matters. In 1997 the Nordic Council decided to allow defence ministers to participate in its meetings and let one of the ministers report on these issues. But despite several initiatives, the defence ministers still cannot meet officially in the context of the Nordic Council of Ministers (Andrén 2000, 297).

## **7. Norden in a new and enlarged Europe**

With this experience of Nordic co-operation both outside and within the EU in mind, one can make several conclusions regarding sub-regional co-operation among EU member states. First, it is important to understand the character of the EU in relation to its member states. The EU is multifunctional and discussions engage a broad range of questions with varying degrees of importance. In addition, many issues are of a highly practical nature. Therefore, it is very difficult for subgroups of EU countries to permanently agree on different issues, either because they do not have a common, consistent view of the issues at hand; or because the countries do not agree on the importance of the single issue, or because the cultural heritage is not regarded as that important.

Turning to the more Nordic specific reasons as to why permanent co-ordination has not materialized, it is of primary importance to note

that the Nordic region is not fully represented in the EU. This means that Nordic countries are split as a bloc, each with its own interests and approaches towards the EU. There is no consensus as to the overall picture of the EU and this makes it difficult to co-ordinate policies. Adding to this situation is the fact that there are significant differences between Nordic countries themselves. Having some basic common heritage does not mean that the countries have developed alike in all aspects; quite the contrary, they have some very divergent characteristics. For example, the Swedes see themselves as a traditionally great power that should have influence on the European scene, whereas the Danes have more of a small state approach towards European co-operation. Sweden has traditionally relied on its own military might to achieve security, whereas Denmark had sought security through alliances. In the same manner, both Sweden and Finland are countries made up of relatively few, but rather large and influential companies whereas Denmark is characterized by a great number of small and middle-sized industries.

The consequence of these disparities is a divergence in their perception of European co-operation. This is amplified by differences in national attitudes towards European integration as such (Hansen/Wæver 2002). Nordic EU co-operation could also be understood as provocation by non-Nordic EU member states – there could be the fear of a “Nordic bloc”. Yet another reason why Nordic countries have not reached a higher degree of co-operation has to do with another fact, namely that Norden has become a vehicle for co-operation vis-à-vis the external world. Having previously been almost exclusively focused on internal questions, Norden has not been transformed into a centralized, political and state-governed entity. One of the factors that have made it difficult to intensify or deepen co-operation is perhaps the political and economic dynamic of the European Union. Undoubtedly, this is an emerging challenge that will increase given the fact that Norway is not a member of the EU.

Denmark’s, Finland’s and Sweden’s membership in the EU means that more Nordic coun-

tries have focused their attention on European co-operation; however, it does not render superfluous continued Nordic co-operation (Bonnén/Metzsch 2002b). Despite the different political affiliations and interests of the Nordic countries, the member countries have considered it a strength and an advantage to exchange information and, if possible, to co-ordinate their policies. Perhaps more than ever for Norway, as a non-EU member, the Nordic Council has become an important vehicle as a means of influencing the affairs of the EU (Bonnén 2001b, 22). Although co-operation functions outside the EU framework, it is also important to recognize that co-operation does not function optimally within the EU framework itself (Bonnén 2001c, 111).

For a long time, there has not been any institutionalised co-ordination among Nordic EU countries, such as the use of preparatory meetings that take place between major EU countries (most often France and Germany) and the Benelux countries. By the same token, it has not been possible to identify any common understanding nor a joint Nordic voice in European discussions. Nordic countries seem to pursue different agendas based on different perceptions of interest without any reference to their common Nordic heritage. It took several years before the three Nordic EU member states undertook major attempts in co-ordinating their positions before the most important EU meeting, that of the Heads of state and government, the European Council. There used to be preparatory “breakfast meetings” in which the upcoming agenda was discussed, to avoid any unnecessary “surprises” for Nordic partners (Sundelius/Wiklund 2000, 342).

The first serious effort at co-ordination was the meeting of the Nordic Heads of state and government that took place on 12 October 2001, in preparation for the informal meeting of the Heads of state and government in Ghent, 19 October 2001. At the reunion in Helsinki, 4 March 2002, the Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen, the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson and the Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen prepared the European Council in Barcelona (15–16 March 2002). The three

prime ministers agreed to send a letter to the Spanish Presidency wherein they not only demanded a fair, general deregulation of the energy markets, but also emphasized traditional Nordic topics such as sustainable development and gender equality in the EU (Månsson 2002). Yet again, one could also notice the differences among the three Nordic EU member states. Lipponen and Rasmussen stressed the importance of strengthening the European Commission to protect the smaller European states against the demands of larger members, whereas Persson supported a larger role for the European Council and thus more intergovernmental co-operation and less supranational integration.

As more and more decisions are made by qualified majority in the European Council, the voting weights of the Nordic countries are significant. Since 1995, they together have exactly the same voting weight as Germany. This situation will change with the Nice Treaty, wherein the voting weights of the three Nordic countries will diminish vis-à-vis Germany. But provided that Norway and Iceland one day will become members of the EU, the five Nordic countries with a population of 22 million people would probably have 34 votes while Germany with more than 80 million inhabitants would only possess 29. This greatly increases the prospect of Nordic influence within the European Union (Bonnén 2002).

## 8. Concluding remarks

Having focused on some of the barriers to Nordic co-operation it is of value to discuss the prospects for Nordic co-operation as well. As we have seen, the Nordic political leaders are now aware of their potential for co-operation. The next EU enlargement (decided at the Copenhagen European Council, 12–13 December 2002) will bring new challenges as there are, for example, prospects for a system of group presidencies. This would enhance the benefit of sub-regional co-operation and could be a catalyst for more Nordic co-operation, which has not yet reached its full potential. As mentioned earlier, in the League of Nations the Nordic coun-

tries shared a permanent seat in the Council based on an agreement of rotation among them.

If the intention is to strengthen co-operation, the substance and the forms of co-operation shall undoubtedly need to be changed and adjusted according to the ongoing economic and political changes in Europe and to international developments in general. We have witnessed a long period in European affairs that has focused primarily on widening and deepening the EU. The main challenge for Nordic countries seems to have been how they could be integrated into the new pan-European web of institutions, instead of building a political identity by being different from other European states or regions. Nordic co-operation traditionally functioned best within a broader European (and transatlantic) framework, and not in a specific Norden-centric sphere. For Norden to take advantages of its opportunities within the EU, the Nordic countries also have to take a more relaxed and realistic attitude towards the development of a common European security and defence policy. Today the Nordic countries have an opportunity that is far from utilized. But as long as Denmark, Sweden and Finland perpetuate the so-called “collective” Nordic reservation on defence, optimal co-operation within the EU will be long in coming.

However, the European security architecture needs not only the support of the Nordic countries, but also support from the surrounding region, which inevitably includes the Baltic states. In relation to this region, Nordic co-operation has an important role to play as a source of inspiration and as a role model in the development of a coherent Baltic framework. The Baltic Sea has traditionally been pivotal to the whole region and the great powers of the given time, whether it was Denmark, Sweden, Germany or Russia. After the Cold War a window of opportunity has opened for a more permanent ordering of the region by co-operation in the CBSS.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, CBSS benefits from the fact that it has focussed on security issues from the beginning. It has a top-down logic much in line with that of the European Union, a central player in setting the dominant thinking of today’s security co-operation in Europe.

The correlation in logic between the Baltic Sea co-operation and the EU as well as the opportunity to settle security issues around the Baltic Sea are the reasons why Nordic countries have pushed so vigorously for the inclusion of Baltic states into the EU. Estonia was included even in the first small round of enlargement negotiations agreed upon in Luxembourg in 1997, so the challenge for Nordic EU members was to expand the negotiations to include Latvia and Lithuania. Denmark stubbornly pushed for Latvia to be promoted in the first round of enlargement at the European Council meeting in Vienna in 1998. The attempt was not successful, but continuing pressure from the Nordic EU member states contributed to moving the matter forward, when the European Council agreed on the budget at the Berlin summit, just as the Kosovo crisis demonstrated that only the prospect of EU membership could once and for all stabilise the boundaries of the Union (Friis 2000).

One lesson learned from the Nordic case is that the absence of conflict and tension in politics regarding security issues makes informal sub-regional co-operation in Europe possible. It is also important to remember that, for the Nordic countries, internationalisation begins in the Nordic region itself. Therefore, it must be a main priority in further European co-operation that Nordic ideals are projected towards and promoted in neighbouring countries. Time and history have proven that these commonly shared beliefs and values form the very core of all Nordic policies. Undeniably, co-operation being the most celebrated virtue of them all.

## NOTES

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- land. Thanks also to Goran Pesic and Robet Momich for their most important assistance in contributing material to this article.
- 2 Of the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have been inhabited by the same Nordic-Teutonic race of peoples from the early beginnings of recorded history. During the main period of the Viking expansions, Norse settlements were founded dating to 900 A.D. on the Faroe Islands and Iceland, in the North Atlantic. About a century after the birth of Christ, peoples of quite a different race with a distinct ethnic origin and language began to move across the Gulf of Finland and into the Baltic countries (Bonnén 2001a).
  - 3 The standard explanation of the Nordic case derived from this view, known as never-ending Nordic peace, has also had an impact on Nordic self-understanding. This view of security community, accompanied with the lack of clearly perceived security threats, has been so prevalent, dominant, rigid and all-encompassing that some analysts have noted that there actually is no need or room to investigate alternative explanations on this issue (Deutsch 1957, 58).
  - 4 The concept of the Nordic Balance has been developed in Norden as an analytical tool for the observation of security relationships pertaining to the Northern European region. The most common understanding of the Nordic Balance differs from normal balance-of-power concepts. Compared to central Europe or the Danube region a direct balance of power between any of the Nordic states did not exist. For the same reason the Nordic Balance referred to a balance in the limitation of application of political or military power. According to Arne Olav Brundtland (1966, 491ff.), the definition of the Nordic Balance can be explored further. It can also be considered as a dynamic term, rather than a static one only. In the dynamic approach one asks whether there is any dynamic linkage between the security policies of the Nordic countries or not. That such a dynamic inter-relationship had existed has been observed in several crisis situations.
  - 5 The negotiations on Nordic defence co-operation in 1948-49 were initiated in response to the tensions between East and West and a Soviet thrust against the North. In Eastern Europe the countries had entered into bilateral military agreements with the Soviet Union and in the West there were serious considerations on a regular defence alliance among the Western European countries and the United States and Canada. Unlike Finland – with its friendship agreement with the Soviet Union – Denmark, Norway, and Sweden faced the choice of allying with the West or remaining non-aligned. Iceland had more or less solved its security issues by accepting the presence of British troops on her soil in 1940 (Bonnén/Palosaari 2002).
  - 6 Through EFTA, a free trade area was created among the Nordic countries. EFTA had a strong stimulating effect on Nordic trade.
  - 7 First, Charles de Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, in 1969 opened up the prospects of expanding the EC. Second, Great Britain had pointed out that closer Nordic co-operation within EFTA was not possible, and third, Finland had announced that it could not and did not wish to participate (Brundtland 1969, 11ff.).
  - 8 The UN representatives of the Nordic countries meet every week at the level of ambassadors in New York to discuss matters of common interest. The three EU members inform Iceland and Norway on the positions of the EU member states. The meetings enable the representatives of the EU outsiders to introduce their own ideas into the EU debate. In addition, elections for positions in the UN are still co-ordinated among the Nordic countries. For the non-permanent seats in the Security Council there exists an informal "rotation scheme" among them and as a consequence almost every other two-year period there is a Nordic country represented in the Security Council (L. Wiklund 2000, 256).
  - 9 The CBSS has a role to play as the catalyst of a security community much like Norden.

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## AUTHORS

Preben BONNÉN is a Research Analyst at the Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark, who specialises in the fields of European and Nordic Security and Ballistic Missile Defence. Temporary institutional affiliations: 1998 University of Aarhus (Denmark), 1999 University of Hamburg (Germany), 2001 Austrian Institute for European Security Policy in Vienna, 2002 University of Aarhus. Recent publications: “Die Deutsche Einheit und Deutschland – Eine ausgebliebene Einheit?”, Regensburg 1997; “The United Nations – From vision to reality?”, Aarhus 1999; “Towards A Common Defence Policy for Europe – The Ways and Means To Make It A Reality”, Hamburg 2003. Furthermore, Bonnén has published numerous articles in prominent international journals dealing with European and Nordic security and defence issues.

Michael SØSTED is a student at the Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus in Denmark, and currently working on his Master paper. He specialises in the fields of Europe’s Security Architecture and Nordic Co-operation. Recent publications: “Norden – From wars to community”, Jyllands-Posten, Indblik, Aarhus 2002; “Norden in the European Security architecture – Perspectives and challenges, Aarhus 2003 (co-editing with Bonnén).

Contact address: University of Aarhus, Department of Political Science, Bartholins Allé, DK-8000 Aarhus C;

email: preben.bonnen@mail.tele.dk and michaelsoested@hotmail.com.