

The Shaping of Norden

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Abstract: *The five states of Northern Europe – the three Scandinavian countries together with Finland and Iceland – constitute a well-defined regional subdivision of the European subcontinent. This region Scandinavian calls “Norden”. Norden, is equally a geographical category and mental concept. The notion of Norden pertains to the economic, cultural and social homogeneity, and not the ethnic or linguistic one. Among many reasons facilitating the ongoing process of the Nordic integration and deciding about its special character, the geographical location and commonly shared historical experiences seem to be most valid and obvious. Economic factors come next in line. All the Nordic states are characterized by open, highly developed, modern and innovative economies based on knowledge, well-functioning services sector and technologically advanced industry.*

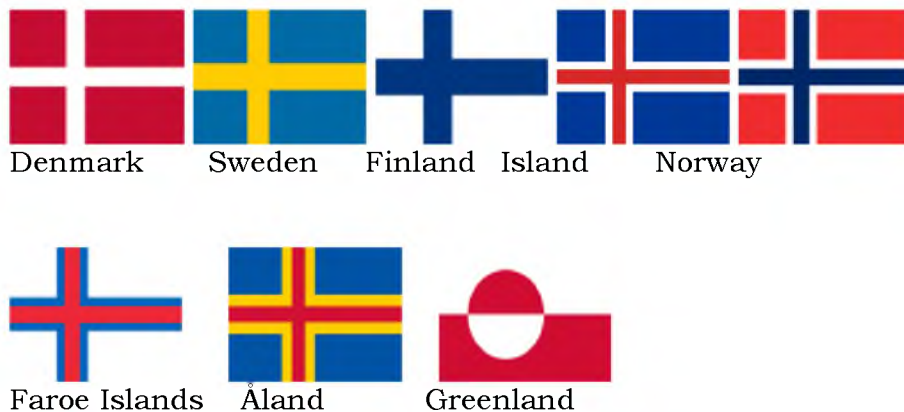
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Norden, is equally a geographical category and a mental concept. It pertains to a set of similar but separate entities. Above all, it denotes geographical closeness, historical ties and a relative cultural homogeneity of the states constituting this region (Zolkos: 2012). U. Østergård is of the opinion that the notion is associated by the Scandinavians with “something non-European, non-Catholic, anti-Roman, anti-imperialist, non-colonial, peacefully inclined, small and social democratic.” (Østergård: 2010). One could possibly add to this list staying on the sidelines of the international “grand politics” while being actively engaged in building world peace. It needs to be noted that the countries of the region are also referred to as

Scandinavian or Nordic, and in most cases all the definitions are treated as the same.

The notion of “Scandinavian” is used mostly in three cases: when referring to the Scandinavian Peninsula and the countries situated there in a strictly geographical sense; in reference to Sweden, Norway and Denmark (hence the territories where North German languages are used); and, finally, to define jointly Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, and their autonomous territories (Zolkos: 2012).

It is in the third listed meaning that the word is used interchangeably with the term “Nordic.” Such a usage is especially popular outside of the Nordic Region while in it the terms *Norden* and *nordisk* are considered most adequate as they pertain precisely to these five countries and their autonomous territories.¹



Flags of the Nordic countries and their autonomous territories.

The notion of *Norden* pertains to the economic, cultural and social homogeneity, and not the ethnic or linguistic one, which is in opposition to the terms of *Skandinavien* and *skandinavisk*. “Scandinavian” then is narrower than “Nordic” but all are used interchangeably (Törnqvist: 1998, pp.1-3).

¹ In addition, Estonia also claims to be a Nordic country. See: *Estonia as a Nordic Country*, <http://www.vm.ee/eng/nato/1210.html>; retrieved June 12, 2009.



Source:

<https://www.google.pl/search?q=flagi+pa%C5%84stw+nordyc kich&tbm>

One of the most important factors linking or even integrating these countries is undoubtedly their geographical location and common historical tradition. These two elements combined with certain isolation from continental Europe have led to their intensified contacts, and historical experiences built in this manner have positively influenced their later initiatives of cooperation.

The origins.

It is difficult to establish unequivocally when the cooperation began as throughout the ages it had been inseparably connected with rivalry. The first Scandinavian countries appeared in the early Middle Ages. All of them took

shape on the foundation of common culture, the cradle of which was the Scandinavian Peninsula. It was from there that the North Germanic peoples spread to the territories of Denmark (5th – 6th c.) the Faroe Islands (8th c.), Iceland (9th c.), Greenland (10th c.) and Finland (12th c.). The biggest expansion dated to the Viking times (See, Jansson: 1996. Roesdahl: 2001. Wooding: 2001. Wooding: 1991) (9th – 11th c.), reaching North America in the west and the Black Sea in the east. The 9th century marked the beginnings of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish statehood foundations. King Godfred² initiated the forming of the Danish statehood when faced with a threat from the Kingdom of the Franks, and in the early 10th century, Gorm the Old³ united Jutland. In Norway, the process of consolidation was started in the 9th century by Harald Fairhair. In Sweden, the unification took a slower pace and as late as the beginning of the 11th century, Olaf Skötkonung⁴ ruled over a substantial portion of the Swedish lands.⁵ In the 12th and early 13th centuries, Denmark extended its rule to the southern shore of the Baltic and Estonia, and lost the latter in 1346.⁶ In the years 1261-62, Norway took control over

² [Danish](#) king during the [Viking era](#). Gudfred was the younger son of King [Sigfred](#). Alternate spellings include *Godfred*, *Göttrick* (German), *Gøtrik* (Danish), *Gudrød* (Danish), and *Godofredus* (Latin).

³ *Gorm the Old* (Dan. *Gorm den Gamle*) ruled the country in the years 934-958); traditionally recognized as the first king of Denmark.

⁴ Olaf, byname Olaf the Tax King, Old Swedish *Olof Skötkonung* (died 1022, Sweden), king of Sweden (c. 980–1022) whose apparent efforts to impose [Christianity](#) were frustrated by the leading non-Christian Swedish chieftains. The son of King Erik the Victorious and Gunhild, the sister of Boleslaw, the Christian king of Poland, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/426649/Olaf>; retrieved October 10, 2012.

⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, <http://www.britannica.com/>.

⁶ Legend has it that during fighting over Estonia, and more precisely during the victorious battle of Lyndanisse, a red flag with a white cross fell from the skies, which was later to become the national flag of Denmark (*Dannebrog*). The characteristic pattern (the Scandinavian cross) appears later on the flags of all other Nordic countries and territories (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, the Faroes, and Aland Islands).

See: *National Flag*, <http://www.denmark.dk/en/menu/About-Denmark/The-Danes/National-Flag/>; retrieved May 13, 2012.

Greenland and Iceland and starting in the early 14th century, Sweden brought Finland under control. The treaty with Novgorod, contracted in Nöteborg in 1323, for the first time delineated Swedish lands on the Gulf of Finland. Thus three main power centers in Northern Europe were formed (Wendt: 1959, pp.9-11).

All three countries were alike to a great degree: they shared the Viking era traditions, had similar languages, legal systems, and religion both before and after Christianization, and their rulers were all related.

The Kalmar Union

The Kalmar Union (1397-1523)⁷ was the first instance of the tendency to formalize a cooperation among the Scandinavian countries. In the years 1319-1355, Sweden and Norway were united through the person of King Magnus II but the union was broken when his son, Håkon, took over the rule in Norway by himself. In 1362, Håkon assumed also the Swedish throne, and a year later married the daughter of the Danish king, Margaret, which lay the foundations for a real unification of the three kingdoms (Kersten: 1973, pp. 79, 87-89). However, he lost Sweden to Albrecht of Mecklenburg in 1364. Margaret, after the death of Håkon and his successor Olaf, king of Denmark and Norway, ruled over these two countries as a regent, and since 1389, when the Swedes forsook their allegiance to Albrecht, also as a regentess of Sweden. The huge state, composed of three kingdoms, was finally consolidated by the coronation of Eric of Pomerania, grandchild of Margaret's sister, as king of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The ceremony took place in Kalmar in 1397 and was a formal beginning of the Kalmar Union. The creation of the union was greatly influenced by rivalry among the Nordic countries with the Hanseatic League and the German Kingdom for the domination in the North. The Union of Calmar, however, was not strongly bonded. The three states, linked by a personal union, were to conduct a common internal policy and support one another in the event of war, but they were to remain separate in terms of legal and administrative issues (Kersten: 1973, pp. 102-103). Denmark was the strongest

⁷ More on the subject at: <http://www.vovager64.com/uniakalmar.html>.

member of the Union because of the economy, size of the population, and the position of Margaret who *de facto* was the sovereign in all three kingdoms. Her strong rule brought stability to the conflicted Scandinavia but also solidified the Danish domination which a hundred years later was to be the cause of the disintegration of the Union as her successors simply did not possess her political talents. Sweden was the main source of resistance against the Danish domination while Norway, as the weakest of the three at that time, was nearly completely subjected to Denmark (Wendt: 1959, pp. 12-13).

The Kalmar Union created the biggest state entity in Europe of that time, strengthened the position of the Scandinavian countries in the international arena, and solidified the links between the Nordic countries. It was also the first attempt, with many to follow, at creating a true Nordic federation.

Disintegration of the Kalmar Union and division of Scandinavia

After death of Queen Margaret in 1412, Eric of Pomerania assumed the reign over the states of the Union. Eric wanted to strengthen the monarchical rule within the Union as well as the position of Denmark. His reign was marked by conflicts with the Hanseatic League and Swedish magnates, which resulted in dethroning of the king. The Union was kept, albeit for a short time afterwards. The Swedes elected their own king while Christian I became the ruler of Denmark and Norway. The following 70 years were characterized by Swedish-Danish struggles because Denmark wanted to include Sweden into the Union by force. The conflict reached its culminating point in 1520 when the king of Denmark and Norway, accompanied by a strong army, captured Sweden, entered Stockholm and was crowned king of Sweden. A few days later, contrary to his earlier promise of an amnesty, he ordered the slaughter of 82⁸ of his opponents who belonged to the leading Swedish nobility. The event shook

⁸ Other sources claim that ca. 100 people were murdered; see: *Kalmarunionen 1397-1523*, Institut for Historie og Områdestudier, Aarhus Universitet, http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/kalmarunionen-1397-1523/?tx_historyview_pi1:retrieved October 05, 2012.

Sweden and went down in history as the Stockholm Bloodbath (*Stockholms blodbadet*) (Kersten: 1973, pp.115-130).

A year later, under the leadership of Gustav Eriksson Vasa,⁹ a rebellion broke out and as a result of it the Danes were expelled and Christina II deposed (also in Denmark) and exiled. Gustav I became king of Sweden. This meant the end of the Union of Kalmar which particularly in Sweden left bad memories behind. That is how two competing kingdoms were created: Sweden (with Finland), and Denmark and Norway (with Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands), the latter linked by a personal union until 1537 when Norway became a Danish province (Wendt: 1959, p. 14)

The period of rivalry between two Scandinavian countries (1523-1814)

The period of a few hundred years after the disintegration of the Calmar Union was marked by fierce rivalry for the domination and influence in the Baltic Sea Region. Initially, it seemed that Sweden was fighting a lost cause being a less developed country and cut off by Denmark and Norway from the western maritime trade routes.¹⁰ However, wise politics and reforms of Gustav Vasa strengthened the country and built solid foundations for its further development. After the Northern Seven Years' War (1563-1570), Denmark and Sweden were equal in power. At the beginning of the following century, the scales turned in favor of Sweden which became a dominating country. The 17th century was for Sweden an era of great might (*stormaktstiden*)¹¹ initiated by Gustav II Adolf who assumed the throne in 1611. Although Denmark attacked Sweden triggering the Kalmar War (1611-1613), and registered a

⁹ More on the subject at:

http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/39860,...gustaw_i_waza.haslo.html; retrieved March 02, 2013.

¹⁰ The territory of Denmark comprised the southernmost tip of the Scandinavian Peninsula (the regions of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge) which allowed the state to control the Danish Straits, i.e. all vessels between the Baltic and the North Seas.

¹¹ More on the subject at: <http://www.so-rummet.se/kategorier/historia/nva-tiden/stormaktstidens-sverige>; retrieved July 14, 2013.

victory, it was the last time Danes had the upper hand (Kersten: 1973, pp. 173, 184-185)

Both countries took part in the Thirty Years' War but each on its own. Denmark withdrew from it in 1629 having registered no success but later the same year Sweden decided to enter the war. The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the war, was favorable for Sweden and brought it substantial territorial gains which together with the earlier secured Livonia¹² and a victorious war against Denmark (1643-45) had sealed the Swedish domination in Scandinavia (Kersten: 1973, pp. 188-192).

The culminating point of Swedish domination in Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea Basin, as well as the beginning of an end to it, dates to the reign of Charles X Gustav. The attempt at making the Baltic a Swedish inland sea led to a great war with Poland (1655-60). The defeats suffered by Sweden at the later stage of the war (1657) instigated Denmark to attack Sweden again. The Danes however, overestimated their power or perhaps underestimated the military talents of Charles Gustav who after a daring march across the frozen waters of the Great Belt and the Little Belt straits settled the result of that campaign. Denmark was defeated and forced to sign a humiliating Treaty of Roskilde (1658) based on which Denmark ceded the strategic territories of contemporary south-western Sweden (Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Bohuslän), the Trondheim area and the island of Bornholm. This was the culminating point of the Swedish might and the country reached then the largest size in its history. But this success was at the same time the last victory for Sweden in the role of a European superpower. The very same year, Charles Gustav made a desperate effort to retain the position of his country and once again attacked Denmark. It was an abortive attempt at restituting a Scandinavian union, that time with Sweden in the dominating role. As the idea threatened not only Denmark but other countries, Denmark managed to win some European allies over and repulsed the Swedish attack. A further escalation of the conflict was prevented by a sudden death of

¹² Swedish Livonia became part of Sweden through the Truce of Altmark signed in 1629.

Charles Gustav in the early 1660. A peace treaty signed soon afterwards returned Trondheim and Bornholm to Denmark.

Sweden reached the culmination of its power but due to the lack of solid foundations the position soon began deteriorating (Kersten: 1973, pp. 209-2011). Denmark after the wars was heavily indebted, pillaged by foreign armies and left with a substantially trimmed territory. The attempts of Denmark at regaining Scania by force (1675-1679) proved fruitless (Czapliński, Górski: 1965, pp. 218-220).

The fears of further Swedish expansion as well as the desire to regain the lost territories drove Denmark to a consecutive confrontation. The country took part in the Great Northern War (1700-1721) on the side of the anti-Swedish coalition. Twenty-year-long conflict proved fatal for both Scandinavian countries. Sweden lost all its Baltic properties with the exception of Finland and nearly all of its German provinces, while Denmark gained literally nothing. As a result, Sweden lost its power status and Denmark did not improve its position. After two hundred years of struggle, the situation was back to the point of the departure. At that time, in the immediate neighborhood of the Scandinavian countries, Russia and Prussia grew much in power and became a growing threat (Wendt: 1959, p.15).

Denmark seemed to have learnt the lesson of the ravaging wars and until the end of the 18th century tried to abstain from them as much as possible. Considerable Russian influence was then noted in both Denmark and Sweden. Sweden waged two wars against Russia (1741-1743 and 1788-1790) which weakened the former even more and heralded a loss of Finland in the century to come. Russia skillfully exploited the arising feelings of national identity among the Finns and fueled their separatist sentiments based on a grudge against Sweden for treating Finland as a "second class" province. The Finnish bitterness was aggravated even more by the fact that their lands were much too often a theater of wars waged by Sweden. Representatives of Finland complained at the session of the Riksdag in 1746/47 that throughout the 600-year-long Swedish reign not even a quarter of a century was free of war (Cieślak: 1983, p. 110).

The enfeebling rivalry between the two blocs of Scandinavian countries died down. All it led to was making

both countries mere shadows of themselves; the former power and glory were gone, and they had to mind more the opinions of foreign powers. The Napoleonic wars completely ruined the structure of both Scandinavian countries, changed the power distribution in the North, and made Denmark and Sweden withdraw from active participation in the “grand politics” in Europe of that time.

The period of Napoleonic Wars and their influence on the power balance in the North.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Sweden and Denmark found themselves in two opposing military alliances. The Swedish King Gustav IV Adolf, a fanatic defender of the old order, dragged his country into an anti-French coalition in 1805. Denmark for some time managed to stay neutral but the Treaty of Tilsit changed the situation. England attacked Denmark, bombarded Copenhagen and destroyed the Danish fleet, which automatically put the Danes in the ranks of French allies. When Russia attacked Finland in 1808, Denmark was also dragged into a war against Sweden (Czapliński, Górski: 1965, pp. 251-252). Sweden lost the entire Finland and the Åland Islands to Russia, and the extremely unpopular king had to abdicate. Peace treaties were signed with Russia, Denmark, and France, and in 1810, since there was no successor to Charles XIII, the French Marshal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte (Elgklou: 1978) was elected king, assuming the name of Carl John. The Swedes in that way hoped to assure French assistance in regaining Finland but were sorely disappointed as Bernadotte had no intention whatsoever to enter into a hopeless war with Russia. He intended to compensate the loss of that territory by taking Norway which was a completely new concept for the Swedes (Cieślak: 1983, pp. 130-131). Sweden switched sides one more time and joined the anti-French coalition while Denmark still remained in the Napoleonic camp. After the defeat suffered by Napoleon at Leipzig, Denmark was forced to sign the Treaty of Kiel in 1814 and to give away entire Norway. The Norwegians, however, did not accept such decisions regarding their territory and elected the Danish Regent Christian Frederic king of Norway. More fighting ensued and quickly afterwards an agreement was signed on the basis of which Norway gained

broad autonomy and became united with Sweden by a personal union (Kersten: 1973, pp. 304-305, Libura: 1992, p. 14).

The Napoleonic Wars have completely ruined a few centuries old bonds among the Scandinavian countries and utterly changed their structure. The centuries old status quo in the Nordic Region was now a thing of the past. Anti-Swedish and anti-Danish sentiments were prevalent in Finland and Norway. Inspired by Romanticism, a movement to rebuild national feelings was born, and the two countries gained wide autonomy as a result of political changes.¹³ National identity also became important in Iceland (Wendt: 1959, pp. 19-21).

Scandinavism

Scandinavism,¹⁴ or a movement of solidarity and collaboration among the Scandinavian countries, appeared for the first time in the contacts between Sweden and Denmark in the first half of the 19th century. It was a phenomenon analogous to the movements appearing then all over Europe, among others in Italy and Germany. Both Sweden and Denmark, after centuries of devastating rivalries, fruitless wars and unfavorable territorial changes, began looking for a mutual understanding and agreement. These were usually grassroots initiatives inspired mostly by academia. The Scandinavian rapprochement was facilitated by Romanticism and the accompanying increased interest in history and national tradition. By awakening the feelings of national uniqueness, Romanticism propagated also the awareness of common and shared historical past together with cultural, linguistic and civilization-related closeness of the

¹³ Norway gained it through a military resistance against the Treaty of Kiel forced upon it, while Finland through favorably inclined towards the idea Tsar Alexander I who wanted to gain supporters in the region.

¹⁴ "Scandinavism is a political and cultural movement which supported closer cooperation among Scandinavian countries, initiated in the 1830s; its radical wing demanded creating a political union and was most active during the Danish-German war over Schleswig and Holstein, and basically died out after 1864; the cooperation among the Scandinavian countries dated to the 20th c. was partially related to the idea of Scandinavism, as well as was establishing the Nordic Council in 1952." <http://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/3975776/skandynawizm.html>; retrieved December 12, 2013.

Scandinavian countries (Klepacki, Ławniczak: 1976, pp. 18-19).

Starting in the 1830s, meetings of students, artists and scholars were the main manifestations of Scandinavism in its intellectual form. Those prepared the foundations for the political version of Scandinavism of which the community of interests of the Scandinavian countries was the essence, together with strengthening their position through joint actions and unification in the further perspective. Political Scandinavism had also an anti-Russian dimension, particularly in Sweden, anti-Prussian in Denmark and a liberal democratic one (directed against reactionary governments) (Quirico: 2012).

The matter of Schleswig was to become a real test for the political dimension of Scandinavism. The lands of Schleswig and Holstein, situated in southern Jutland, were a bone of contention in the Danish-German dispute. On the wave of the events of 1848, the German majority inhabiting these duchies started an uprising supported by Prussia. Sweden then extended a helping hand to Denmark. As a result, Schleswig, partially inhabited by Danes, remained with the Danish crown while the German-speaking Holstein was taken over by Prussians (Czapliński, Górski: 1965, pp. 275-281).

Scandinavism went through the period of its full bloom after the Crimean War. In the year 1853, Denmark and Sweden issued a joint declaration of neutrality. The program of Scandinavism included also Finland. There were projects of a dynastic union of Sweden and Denmark as the Danish king left no successors. King of Sweden, Charles XV, a little hastily promised Denmark (without consent of the government and/or parliament) a military assistance should it come to war with Prussia. Denmark realized too late that it was an empty promise and so it had to face the Prussian-Austrian army alone (1864). As a result of the war, it lost Schleswig as Sweden did not provide any assistance which was a blow big enough to bring a total defeat of Scandinavism at that stage. The ultimate end to the dreams of a Scandinavian dynastic union came when France, so counted upon for help, was defeated in the war with the united Germany (1871). The

Scandinavian countries were too small and weak then to bring such a project to life (Stråth: 2013).

The consecutive years brought growing nationalism, particularly in Norway and Sweden. It was not synonymous, however, with a complete severance of the cooperation but heralded a change in the approach. Long-term political and dynastic plans collapsed but they were replaced with a practical approach toward the cooperation in law, economy, education and the job market. The result of meetings and consultations was, among others, the establishment of a Scandinavian monetary union in 1873 which functioned until 1914 (Wendt: 1959, pp. 24-26).

This new and pragmatic face of Scandinavism had led to establishing consecutive contacts and solidifying the existing ones on a social level. The developing cooperation was not stopped even by the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union in 1905.¹⁵ Since that date, all three Scandinavian countries have collaborated among themselves as equal partners.

Scandinavia during WWI and in the inter-war period.

WWI intensified the cooperation among the Scandinavian countries. All three declared their neutrality and steadfastly presented the same attitude towards the attacks of the parties at war on Scandinavian merchant vessels or any intrusion into their trade and commercial policy. The political attitudes were to be decided at meetings of kings, heads of government and ministers of foreign affairs of the three countries. The cooperation strengthened when war was coming to its close and combat was fiercer than before. The submarine war waged by Germany, unlimited in its scope, and the tightening of the blockade by the Entente Powers forced the Scandinavian countries to solve provisions problems among themselves (Weibull: 1997). As a result, trade volume among

¹⁵ The growing differences between the two countries and the Norwegian independence drive brought the union to a close through peaceful negotiations in Karlsbad. Oscar II resigned from the throne of Norway. After the dissolution of the personal union, the second son of the King of Denmark and a Swedish princess became the Norwegian monarch and took the name of Håkon VII.

those states doubled in comparison with the period before the war.

The end of WWI created two more Nordic countries. Finland gained independence in 1917, taking advantage of the revolution in Russia, and Iceland received broad autonomy in 1918. The latter became a separate state, linked with Denmark which was responsible for foreign affairs and defense policies (Wendt: 1959, pp. 27-29).

Sweden proved somewhat flexible in its neutrality when it allowed a passage through its territory of the Finnish soldiers trained in Germany, but refused any other assistance to Finland in the civil war against communists. Later, the Åland Islands, inhabited by the population of Swedish origin, became a disputable point as Sweden claimed the rights to them. Even though the population of the islands expressed their will to be adjoined to Sweden, the League of Nations settled the dispute in favor of Finland. The outcome, however, had not affected the Swedish-Finnish relations to follow (Cieślak: 1969, pp. 80-81). The Danish-Norwegian dispute concerning Greenland was solved in a similar way – the Norwegian claims to it had been rejected (Czapliński, Górski: 1965, p. 362).

Following WWI, the Nordic countries did not manage to maintain the close economic ties established before as they were forced to focus more on their internal affairs. In addition, Finland started leaning more towards cooperation with the Baltic States. At the same time, new possibilities for the Nordic cooperation appeared in the form of the fora of international organizations such as the League of the Nations or the International Labour Organization where these countries were able to work out common positions and strengthen mutual contacts (Wendt: 1959, pp. 30-31).

The 1930s brought a revival of the cooperation due to the Great Depression effects, Hitler assuming power in Germany and the growing threat of war in Europe. The meetings and consultations among ministers of foreign affairs were resumed and in the politics of Finland a turnabout was noted towards the Scandinavian model of neutrality. The Nordic states desperately tried to avoid being dragged into a possible German-Russian conflict. These two powers were so much against strengthening the Nordic cooperation that they

forced the Scandinavians to abandon the Danish plan of signing a defense treaty and a Swedish-Finnish idea of rearmament of the Åland Islands (Stråth: 2013). After the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938, the Nordic states unanimously announced their neutrality. In 1939, all these countries, apart from the directly threatened Denmark, rejected Hitler's proposal to sign bilateral non-aggression pacts (Wendt: 1959, pp. 33-34).

WW II and the cooperation in the post-war years.

The outbreak of WWII was received relatively calmly in the Nordic states which believed that the declared neutrality would save them from being dragged into the conflict just like it worked out in WWI. However, only Sweden managed to accomplish that.

The Soviet Union's attack on Finland on November 30, 1939 was a great shock for the Nordic countries. Although they refused to abandon their neutrality and provide direct assistance to Finland, they did help to a great degree (particularly Sweden) through a financial, material, humanitarian and diplomatic aid, and also by not discouraging volunteers who wanted to fight in the Finnish army. After the war ended, Finland made an attempt to sign a defense alliance with Sweden and Norway but the USSR scuttled the deal.

In April 1940, Denmark and Norway fell victims to the Nazi aggression. Iceland and the Faroe Islands were taken over by the British troops. Sweden preserved its neutrality at the expense of substantial concessions to Germany¹⁶ while Finland joined Germany in its attack on the Soviet Union. The situation froze all the contacts among the Nordic countries then.

Nevertheless, the traumatic WWII experiences have contributed to the growing feeling of solidarity among the Nordic countries which in turn solidified the conviction that an intensified cooperation in the post-war years should be initiated.

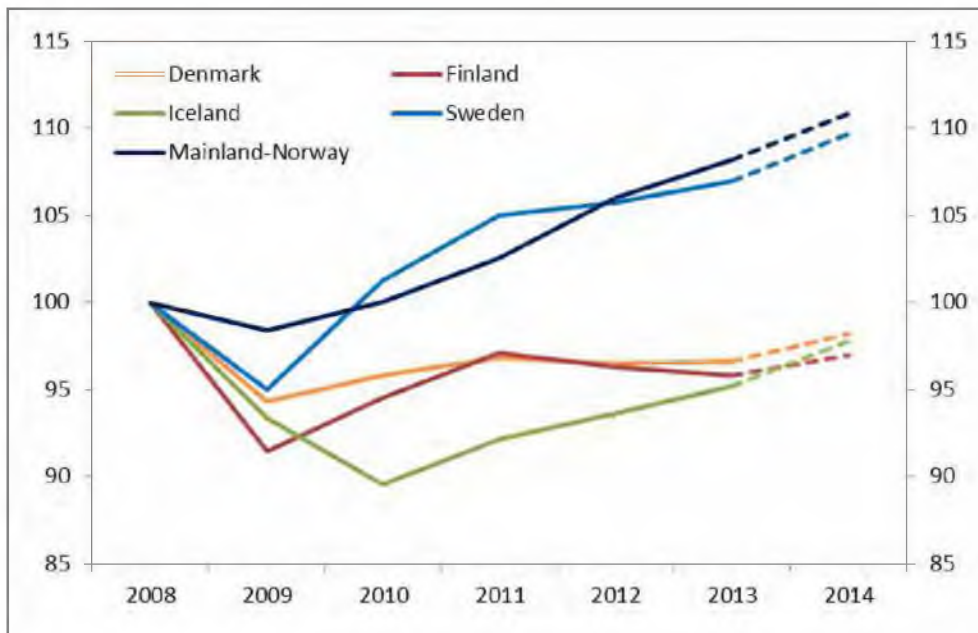
¹⁶ More on the subject in: R. M. Czarny, *Die Neutralitätspolitik als Sicherheitsproblem des Königreiches Schweden*, Kielce 1988,

Defense and economy became the two most important fields in the post-war cooperation among the Nordic countries. Finland, being politically dependent on the Soviet Union, did not participate in it at all. Sweden offered Denmark and Norway to establish a defense alliance (1949) but the precondition for it was neutrality understood as remaining outside of the two politico-military blocs. However, for Denmark and Norway, which after the war had practically no defensive capabilities, it was obvious that such a union would not assure security for them if not supported by the United States. As a result, the plan was abandoned and Denmark, Norway and Iceland joined the NATO while Sweden continued its policy of neutrality (Czerny: 1998) termed by F. Wendt the "armed neutrality" (Wendt: 1959, pp. 34-38). One could also suppose that the failure of the concept of a defensive union has become one of the important factors in intensifying the cooperation in other areas.

- Premises for the Nordic cooperation.

Among many reasons facilitating the ongoing process of the Nordic integration and deciding about its special character, the geographical location and commonly shared historical experiences seem to be most valid and obvious. Economic factors come next in line. All the Nordic states are characterized by open, highly developed, modern and innovative economies based on knowledge, well-functioning services sector and technologically advanced industry.

Figure 1. GDP in the Nordic countries. Indices 2008-2014. 2008=100.



Source: Economic Outlook in the Nordic Countries 2014, The Nordic Working Group of Economic Trends Review, autumn 2013, TemaNord 2013:585, Nordic Council of Ministers , Copenhagen 2013, p. 11.

All these countries very quickly (and relatively late) have gone through the transformation from rather poor agricultural states to the modern and industrialized ones.¹⁷ The Scandinavian countries have high indicators of HDI (*Human Development Index*) and their economies are one of the most competitive ones throughout the world.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Business and the economy*, <http://www.norden.org/en/the-nordic-region/business-and-the-economy>; retrieved November 23, 2010.

¹⁸ In the ranking of 2009, Denmark was listed as number, Sweden 6, Finland 9, and Norway 11, *IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook*, <http://www.imd.ch/research/publications/wcy/upload/scoreboard.pdf>; retrieved August 06, 2010. It should be noted that the data did not account for the results of the economic crisis of 2008.

Figure 2. Select indicators for the Nordic countries.

Indicator	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
GDP (Mill. USD)	331,008	256,912	14,609	510,983	557,919
Gross domestic product, PPS per person (USD)	59191	47232	45536	100318	58162
Annual GDP grow. 2014, Q1	1.5%	- 0.5%	3.9%	1.8%	1.8%
Population	5,591,000	5,439,407	322,000	5,096,000	9,592,552
Labor unemployment	6.5 %, May 2014	8.8% June 2014	5.1% May 2014	3.3% April 2014	7.8% May 2014
Corruption Index (2013)	91	89	78	86	89
HDI (points) (rank in the table of 176 countries published 2012)	0.901 15 th	0.901 21 st	0.892 14 th	0.955 1 st	0.916 8 th

Source: structured by author on the basis of <http://countryeconomy.com/countries>

Although the statistics may present *Norden* in a very diversified way, it is possible to make a positive generalization based on the data which prove that at least three out of the five Nordic states systematically occupy top positions in the

rankings of leading countries of the world while the remaining two position themselves in the top fifteen or twenty leaders.¹⁹ It is striking the more so as the rankings consider prosperous countries²⁰ with stable and consolidated democracy, a disciplined and pro-state civic society.²¹ One may also add that these are the countries with the strictest possible standards in human rights which have the lowest corruption indicators and the highest indicators of innovativeness,²² and where education and Internet access are ranked top in the world. In addition, Denmark and Sweden once again were found leaders of information technology in the world.

Figure 3. The Global Competitiveness Index 2013–2014 rankings

Country/Economy	Rank (out of 148)	Score (1–7)	Rank among 2012–2013 economies	GCI 2012–2013
Finland	3	5.54	3	3
Sweden	6	5.48	6	4
Norway	11	5.33	11	15

¹⁹ See, for example: UNDP *Human Development Index*, GDP indicator per capita; see also comparisons presented in : Ch. Ketels, *Global pressure...* op. cit., pp. 14 - 29.

²⁰ See: Progress, Innovation and Cohesion: Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy, Danish Government, Copenhagen 2007, Finland in the Global Economy: Competence, openness and regeneration as Finland's globalization strategy, Finnish Government, Helsinki 2004, Productivity Growth in the Nordic Countries, TemaNord 2005:549, Nordic Council, Copenhagen 2005,

²¹ Compare: *7 Nordiska Berättelser*, "Norden," 2008, Rapport og publikationer, www.norden.org/pub/sk; retrieved August 01, 2008.

²² See: *Knowledge driven Growth: An initial report* by the Globalisation Council, Ds 2007:38, Swedish Government, Stockholm 2007, or *Nordic Innovation Monitor 2013*, Norden, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen 2009, pp. 2-32.

Denmark	15	5.18	15	12
Iceland	31	4.66	31	30

Source: structured by author on the basis of http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2013-14/GCR_Rankings_2013-14.pdf.

According to the ranking by the World Economic Forum, “*The Global Information Technology Report 2014*,”²³ the Nordic countries were found among the best. Finland is ranked number one in the world (6.04), Sweden is third (5.93), Norway fifth (5.70), Denmark thirteenth (5.50), and Iceland occupies the nineteenth place (5.30). The Report emphasizes that good educational fundamentals and high level of technological capabilities, together with the focus on innovativeness make a very solid basis for overcoming the current economic crisis. The World Economic Forum, who commissioned the report, stresses that the Nordic states owe their success to concentrating their national goals on perfecting education, innovativeness and broad access to information technology and techniques. One can surmise that at least partially it may be the consequence of the discussions and findings of the conference “Quality and Development in Nordic Higher Education” which took place in Iceland on April 16–17, 2009. Already then, it was found out that the Nordic countries belong to the world leaders in terms of assuring and coordinating international standards in higher education. This found its reflection in all the results of joint activities of all the states of *Norden* as well as in the joint programs (e.g. the Nordic Masters Programme co-financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers) regarding evaluation of the quality of education. The Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education

²³ According to: Networked Readiness Index 2014 w skali (1-7), <http://www.weforum.org/global-information-technology-report-2014-data-platform>: retrieved July 25, 2014.

(NOQA), assessing the programs as the name suggests, is responsible for this field. The system has been further supported by the countries' own university evaluation programs which allow, among others, for the mobility of students, joint acceptance of curricula and their impact on assuring the quality of education.

It should also be noted that one of the most significant resolutions made by the prime ministers of these five countries is to modernize the higher educational system to achieve not only the increase of own students and their approval but also the level of the "Ivy League" universities in the USA.²⁴

- Summary.

All the Scandinavian countries have developed comparable social systems based on similar values: liberal democracy, welfare state, equality, human rights and freedoms, and special environmental care. Scandinavians have a long tradition of democratic political culture the roots of which date as far back as the tribal times (Davies: 1998, p. 331). General participation in public life, transparency in public administration, pluralism and observance of civic rights make them rank as some of the most democratic countries in the world (Szumlewicz: 2009). Scandinavians understand the notion of equality not only as "equal chances" but also as an active process of erasing all disproportions, to which they pay particular attention. The Scandinavian model of society is built on the combination of liberal democracy, human rights and welfare state based on the principle of equality (Zolkos: 2012).

Hence a recipe for the success of the Scandinavian states is a unique combination of strong market economy, equality and common societal participation. For a great many years, these countries have been a model of welfare states serving as examples of active engagement of state structures in the social issues of their citizens. The Scandinavian "people's home" (*folkhemmet*) has been a successful attempt at a compromise between freedom of individuals and their equality, and between individualism and collectivism. Welfare state has eventually become a symbol of a democratically governed

²⁴ *Norden som vinnarregion, Nordisk Råd og Nordisk Ministerråd*; from the debate: "Norden som global vinderegion", København, debatbog 2006, p. 12,

society which assures jobs to all people as well as a high standard of living.

All these countries are characterized by high taxes, large expenditure on education, much extended state and public sectors, and a highly qualified and educated information society.

As far as human rights are concerned, the Scandinavian countries put much emphasis on the right to live in peace, and the clean natural environment. All share the conviction that they must actively participate in building world order and peace, as evidenced, among others, by numerous mediations conducted by representatives of these states. International opinion has it that honesty, impartiality and a compromise-seeking attitude make Scandinavian politicians magnificent mediators. The Nordic states act on behalf of world peace also by their active support extended to the developing countries. According to the data of the Commitment to Development Index 2014, Denmark ranks the first in the world (6.8), Sweden – 2 (6.6), Norway – 3 (6.2), Finland – 6 (5.9).²⁵

The territorial proximity, common historical experience, similarity of national characters and social processes, shared culture and value systems and, finally, close resemblance of legal systems and organizational structures are the factors bonding the Nordic states and also deciding about the specificity of the region. Moreover, of extreme importance is the regional identity and the awareness of belonging to a broader Nordic community (Piotrowski: 2006, p. 5). Very interesting traces of this mentality can be found in the national anthems of Sweden and Norway hailing from the 19th century. The Swedish anthem says: “No, I want to live, I want to die in the North” – “/: *Nej, jag vill leva, jag vill dö i Norden!./*”; (*i Norden* – not in Sweden), while the Norwegian one has the lyrics stating: “Now we three brothers stand united”²⁶ – “*nu vi står tre brødre sammen*”). The President of Finland, Tarja Halonen, put it most succinctly when she made the following statement: “We live like a family. We are very much alike and share the same values” (Sadowski: 2004).

²⁵ <http://www.cgdev.org/initiative/commitment-development-index/index>; retrieved July 20, 2014.

²⁶ This is a clear reference to the three Scandinavian countries.

SYNOPSIS

Among many reasons facilitating the ongoing process of the Nordic integration and deciding about its special character, the geographical location and commonly shared historical experiences seem to be most valid and obvious. Economic factors come next in line. All the Nordic states are characterized by open, highly developed, modern and innovative economies based on knowledge, well-functioning services sector and technologically advanced industry.

Social relations in Scandinavia are based on understanding and consensus. The inclination to avoid conflicts and to harmonious cooperation goes hand in hand with such characteristics as rationalism, pragmatism, utilitarianism, methodicalness, regularity, solidity, effectiveness, and respect for the law. Characteristic is the drive to create an ideally organized social environment (Lewandowski: 2005, pp. 107-130).

A relative similarity of legal systems is of significance. It is related to a common historical tradition and derives from similar perceptions by the Nordic peoples of moral principles and concepts of justice, acceptance of similar laws and relatively a relatively small influence of the Roman law (Klepacki, Ławniczak: 1976, p. 14).

All these countries are linked by common culture, tradition, religion (Protestantism) and partially the language. Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are similar enough to be intelligible for all three groups. Danes and Norwegians understand Swedish better than Swedes the Danish or Norwegian languages. Icelandic and Finnish²⁷ are not comprehensible for other Scandinavians but because of the historical bonds between those countries and Denmark and Sweden, Danish is quite commonly known in Iceland, whereas Swedish is in Finland. Commonality of languages is a very important integrating factor as it allows for the cooperation to

²⁷ The Finnish language has different roots (similarly to Estonian and Hungarian) but 6% Finns are of Swedish extraction and Finland is officially bilingual.

be easily communicated and shared on every level without resorting to groups of specialized diplomats.²⁸

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²⁸ H. Branders, *Scandinavia as a cultural unity*, UNESCO 1966, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001454/145486eb.pdf>; retrieved December 10, 2010.

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