A BALTIC SEA SECURITY COMMUNITY?

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The concept of “security community” was first formulated by Karl Deutsch (1957), the rising tide of classical Realism at that time saw the very idea as a non-starter. There were some later scholars that used the term “security community”, but their theoretical inspiration was mostly sought elsewhere and Deutsch’s work did not engender a research programme. The issues have remained, however, the latest evidence being a volume, “Security Communities”, edited by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998). They see some conceptual and methodological weaknesses in Deutsch’s work, attempt to base a research programme on reconstructing the concept and to demonstrate its tenability by bringing in area specialists, conceptual innovators and experts on the interplay between theory and various kinds of empirical work. I will take there work as a point of departure for 1) discussing their basic conceptualization and theoretical framework; 2) seeing how well they fit the Nordic case, and 3) speculating about what it would take to create a Baltic Sea security community.

What is to be explained in the theory is the occurrence of groups of (two or more) states between whom the thought of war has become, if not impossible, so at least replaced by "dependable expectations of stable peace" – we must assume them to imply “between neighbouring countries”, so as not to bring in, e.g., the peaceful relations between Nepal and Paraguay.

By war statistics, peace is by far the normal situation for any pair of states, also including neighbouring ones: the risk of war in an arbitrary pair of neighbours was never more than a few per cent per year in modern times and was below one per cent in the 1990s. What is to be explained, however, is not "peace" in general, but "stable peace", various schools between neorealism and constructivism offering their explanations. The connotation of "stable peace" goes beyond a (long) absence of war to include the absence of expectations of war, apparently indicating that we should look at collective perceptions rather than war statistics. The full phrase, "dependable expectations of peaceful change", adds some uncertainty: if the word "dependable" qualifies the strength of the actors’ perceptions ("strongly expect stable peace"), nothing new is added; if it qualifies the validity of the perceptions, however, we must return to look at “objective reality”, however we assess it.

CONCEPT AND THEORY

Adler & Barnett start with the overall concept "community", which is defined by a combination of 1) shared identities and values; 2) many-sided and direct interaction; 3) a reciprocity that differs from contractual reciprocity by being long term and even altruistic. Communities, however, may as well be "war communities". The development of a security community needs an explanation and their proposal includes knowledge, learning and norms that are based on habits and practices - a governance structure. The construction of a security community is seen to consist of three tiers. The first is precipitating conditions, consisting of

various objective changes, new interpretations and possibly external threats. The second consists of power and knowledge, manifested in and created by transactions, organisations and social learning. The third is mutual trust based on collective identity.

Adler and Barnett do not share the assumption of Deutsch that some supranational enforcement agency is called for, but they do share his emphasis (with exceptions allowed for) on the potential role of powerful "core states" to use their power in the creation of security communities, while noting that power is not necessarily predominantly military or even economic. They discern three phases in the development towards a security community has proceeded, three phases are discerned: "nascent", "ascendant" and "mature".

THE NORDIC EXPERIENCE

Let me now try to collate this with the experience of the Nordic countries (Wiberg 1993, 2000; for deeper analyses of cases, see Archer & Joenniemi 2003), beginning with a thumbnail sketch of history.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden became unified states about a millennium ago; Norway, however, fell under the Danish Crown from the mid-fifteenth century until 1814, when a militarily victorious Sweden first wrested it from Denmark and then overruled the Norwegian declaration of independence to arrange a forced marriage ("the United Kingdoms") until Norway’s declaration of independence in 1905, quickly accepted by Sweden. After centuries as a free and anarchic state of emigrants from Norway, Iceland accepted Norwegian suzerainty in the 1260s and later fell under the Danish Crown, eventually getting home rule in 1918 and dissolving the union with Denmark in 1944. Finland, finally, was conquered about 800 years ago by Sweden, which had to give it up to the Russian czar in 1809; he then became its Grand Duke until its unilateral declaration of independence in 1917, which Lenin immediately accepted. The crushing of the Finnish revolution in 1918 and the revenge atrocities afterwards created deep scars, taking generations to heal; Finland also had a sometimes inflamed language debate on the relative roles of Swedish and Finnish in the Republic.

The security problems of the states were inextricably linked with each other. In 1389-1523, Scandinavia alternated between unification under the Danish Crown and division after successful Swedish rebellions. Recurrent warfare continued between Denmark and Sweden (which eventually took over the role as major regional power), whether bilateral or by belonging to opposed alliances. The five centuries up to 1814 saw about 60 wars within the states, between them or with neighbours. After that year, an initial period of reconciliation soon emerged and was followed by a process of cooperation that gradually became sufficiently solidified to constitute a security community, military force no longer seen as a potential means in conflicts among Nordic countries. The twentieth century then saw a long series of marked non-wars, where disputes that often lead to wars (autonomy, territory, language) were resolved peacefully. They include:

1) Norway unilaterally leaving the union with Sweden in 1905; there was some Swedish sabre-rattling, but the politically stronger forces in both countries were against any use of military means, and 2-3 months of negotiation were enough to reach an agreement.

2) In 1918, the largely Swedish population of the Aaland Islands showed a vast majority for joining Sweden rather than Finland; the dispute went to the League of Nations and the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague. Its arbitration, accepted by both states, gave Finland sovereignty over Aaland Islands but guaranteed their continued Swedishness.
3) An international treaty in 1920 gave Norway sovereignty over a permanently and completely demilitarized Svalbard (Spitzbergen) and all other signatories the right to exploit natural resources (only exercised by USSR/Russia).

4) In 1931, Denmark and Norway accepted an arbitration by the same court awarding Denmark some 100,000 disouted square miles in Eastern Greenland.

5) Iceland's home rule in 1918 was defined by a treaty peacefully negotiated; its unilateral declaration of independence in 1944 was covered by this treaty.

6) In 1946, a referendum arranged by the population of the Faroe Islands gave a (scant) majority for independence from Denmark; the issue was settled by a compromise on home rule after Faroese elections giving slightly less than half the seats to pro-independence parties.


There were several other cases, including the very generous solution of the language issue in Finland around 1930. Negotiated solutions or agreement to "freeze" the issue were found in long series of post-WWII conflicts about economic zones, fishing rights, etc. between Scandinavian states and dependencies - and neighbours, Iceland's "Cod War" with the UK being the legendary case. In the 1980s, Sweden and Denmark had a dispute about oil drilling rights in the waters between them, both governments using a heated language. The opposition leaders in both countries, while supporting in principle the stands of their own governments, protested also in mass media in the other state-that their governments were too loudmouthed and inflexible in the conflict; the compromise that was eventually reached favoured Denmark.

Many of the issues above are normally political dynamite, so this series of non-wars is impressive. Peaceful secession from a neighbouring state, with no connection to war, is rare; until the 1990s, the only parallel to the peaceful Norwegian secession in 1905 was Singapore leaving Malaysia in 1963. All these cases of arbitration and agreement by negotiation are also long term successes: the issues were never reopened. (That between Norway and some major Svalbard signatories concerns how to interpret the treaty regarding the economic zone to combine extrapolation of Norwegian sovereignty and their exploitation rights.)

One lesson from the Nordic case is that building a security community takes time. Exactly how long time depends on how we date the different phases that Adler and Barnett count with. Obviously, the nascent phase began in the 1820s, but when it moved to the ascendant one is a trickier issue. By a rigorous interpretation, the mature phase comes after 1905, but one could also date it half a century earlier by noting that this was the only case after 1814 where the use of force seemed even remotely possible in a Nordic conflict and that even in 1905, "remotely" should be emphasized, no shot being fired, no explicit threats of that being made and a political majority in Sweden being clearly against that.

Let us now consider the "First Tier" of Adler & Barnett. In the nineteenth century, there were certainly great changes, demographical, economic and others. External threats, however, becomes a matter of interpretation; for while each Nordic states has always seen some external threat, the location of the threat has sometimes changed, and it has never been (almost) common before the Cold War, which thus came one century too late to serve as an explanation. The most drastic example is in the early 1940s, when Finland was "brother-at-arms" with the same Germany that kept Denmark and Norway under occupation.

As for the Second Tier, the Nordic security community also deviates a bit from their ideal type. Even if we date the maturity phase to begin a bit after 1905, it remains true that virtually
all institutions and organisations belonged to active non-governmental movements; their accelerating creation at government level comes well after the security community. It was not built up around any form of military cooperation; from that point of view, Norden is a continuous "failure". Denmark’s two wars about Schleswig-Holstein (in 1849-52 and 1863-64) attracted thousands of Swedish and Norwegian volunteers, but when Charles XV had promised the Danish king to get Sweden into the war, his government said no in 1863. Ideas of a defence union with Finland were promoted by political actors in Sweden in 1938-39, including the Social Democrat foreign minister Richard Sandler, but rejected by the government, which, after the attack on Finland in November 1939, went no further than declaring Sweden non-belligerent (rather than neutral), thus being able to give or lend Finland great amounts of military equipment and permit many thousand Swedish volunteers to join Finland’s forces. Neither Sweden, nor Norway would permit British-French military assistance to Finland through their territories in early 1940 (but, albeit as a once-only exception, Sweden granted the transition of a German division from Norway to Finland in 1941). Discussions about a Danish-Norwegian-Swedish neutrality defence union appeared in the 1920s and 1930s; when the security environment gradually worsened, they petered out, and in 1937 the Danish Premier Stauning wrote them off. In 1945, Denmark, Norway and Sweden were all back in their pre-war policies of isolated neutrality and they entered negotiations in 1948-49 on a neutrality defence union. They failed, however, much due to the Atlanticist wing in the Norwegian Labour party, to whom such a union was only of interest if being a first step towards NATO. Denmark then failed to interest Sweden in a bilateral defence union between them and then finally followed Norway in opting for NATO (as did Iceland). Sweden keeping its doctrinal "non-alignment in peace aiming at neutrality in war" (NATO membership rapidly became a non-issue) and Finland concluding its Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Aid Agreement with the USSR in 1948, the Nordic area was now more split than ever in terms of military arrangements. To the extent any cooperation has occurred, it has either been top secret (Sweden’s coordination with NATO via Norway) or quite informal and based on all countries taking each others’ security concerns into account in their own policies and having a joint interest in keeping the strategic importance of, and tensions in, the Nordic area and surrounding waters as low as possible. The "Nordic balance" may be best described as a balance of latent possibilities. The creation of the Danish-German Baltic Approaches Command in 1961 was seen as a threat by the USSR, which asked for consultations with Finland in accordance with their Agreement. Norway then hinted that closer coordination between Finland and the USSR might lead to a revision of the Norwegian policy on foreign bases, after which President Kekkonen persuaded Premier Chruschchev not to press the call for consultations.

Nor can the Nordic security community be said to be built up around any institutions for economic cooperation. The most that was achieved in the early phases was a customs union between Sweden and Norway, which was furthermore dissolved in 1896. Repeated negotiations about a free trade area or a Nordic Economic Zone in the post-WWII period failed. The reasons seem to be parallel to the failure of all military grand plans: the five Nordic countries simply did not have sufficiently much of common interests and were looking in different directions, both in terms of main threats and attractive major partners - in addition, some saw the grand plans as an end in themselves or as a substitute for joining bigger military or economic arrangements; others saw regional plans as a first step to joining the bigger ones. All joined EFTA in 1960, when there seemed to be a choice to make between Great Britain and continental Europe. Once this changed with the former entering the EC, Denmark quickly joined them (the Faroe Islands did not, however, and Greenland soon left the EC after gaining home rule in 1979), but no other Nordic country did. In the next round
by the mid-1990s, the Nordic division remained, but the pattern changed by Finland and Sweden joining, while Norway and Iceland stayed out.

In terms of the trade component of interaction, the Nordic countries seem to provide another anomaly in respect to the theory. Traditionally, the other Nordic countries together took some ten per cent of each country’s trade; this figure only grew after the creation of the security community. After a rapid growth during WWI, it sank to a somewhat higher level than before, this was repeated during and after WWII, the eventual level - after a further growth period beginning around 1960 - growing to 20-25 per cent, which made the other Nordic countries, taken together, more important than any other single trade partner. In the 1970s and 1980s, the relative development of their trade with each other and with the EC did for a long time show little relation with who joined the EC or did not. Furthermore, the higher level of trade has not led to a higher degree of political integration, at least not if that is taken to mean the creation of supranational bodies that can oblige member states. Neither the Nordic Council (parliamentarians) from 1953, nor the Nordic Council of Ministers from 1970 have that character and there is no Nordic court.

Let me add one final Nordic anomaly by comparison with the theory: it is difficult to see the Nordic security community as built-up around any core state. Throughout the post-Napoleonic period, Sweden’s main claim to being a core state would lie in being the militarily strongest state; but that does not seem relevant. During the formative nineteenth century of the Nordic security community, it was clearly Denmark that was the richest state in terms of GDP per capita, even getting a considerable Swedish labour immigration; it is only a bit into the twentieth century that Sweden takes over that position, recently losing it again. In terms of political development, finally, it is rather Norway that is pioneering, its parliamentarianism coming a generation before it was firmly established in Denmark and Sweden around 1920; and Finland was first with universal (including female) franchise in 1906. Occasional Swedish attempts to play a leading role were just as likely to be self-defeating as successful.

On the other hand, there are important areas where the Nordic development seems to provide good support for the framework proposed by Adler & Barnett; these mainly have to do with communication and with cognitive and normative developments. Migration made citizens from another Nordic country the biggest, or even two biggest, group(s) of non-citizens in each Nordic country, and each country has a sizable group of its own citizens with more than superficial knowledge on other Nordic countries by having returned from them.

Language and religion made communication easier, inter alia by providing for a common construction of meanings and values. There is much of a language community, although this is part real, part imagined. Danish, Norwegian and Swedish are understandable to each other with some effort and good will (and English as reserve option); Icelanders tend to master some Scandinavian language; the Finland Swedes constitute one link to Finland, and educated Finns can mostly communicate in Swedish. Protestant culture is largely shared by all, secularization having made little difference in this respect. National romanticism from the first half of the nineteenth century involved rediscovering or inventing older national history, e.g. by going to the Icelandic sagas for inspiration. This meant that much national mythology, such as the Viking myths, became common to Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, making for more of a common narrative. In both cases, commonality rather than content seems crucial: Protestant countries in general hardly have a record of being especially peaceful, and the common myths were to a large extent just the opposite.
The reconciliation movement from around 1830 created a common ideology, initially called "Scandinavianism" and much later renamed "Nordism" (to signify that Finland had become a "family member" of equal standing). This ideology was initially carried by a movement of academic teachers and students; it then spread to influence broader middle class groups and finally, towards the end of the nineteenth century, to encompass working class organisations as well, eventually becoming one of the factors preventing the Norwegian secession in 1905 from leading to military encounters. If this movement can be seen as a major reinterpretation of relations, the same is true for another ideology that was for a long time intertwined with it: neutralism. Swedish neutrality started as a purely pragmatic policy after 1814; only later did it get an increasingly principled and programmatic character, thus becoming an "ism", remaining a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy with a dual anchoring in Realpolitik and idealism. During the half-century before World War I, neutralism also grew strong in Denmark and Norway, where it was also intertwined with Nordism and pacifism. The Scandinavian countries managing to stay out of World War I strengthened the neutralist tradition, and it remained predominant until World War II; only after that did the Nordic countries enter different paths as described above, with the security community firmly established long ago.

Scandinavianism may also have served as a midwife for another structural tradition of long standing: Nordic NGOs. Whether we speak of trade unions, scientific associations, sports organisations, etc., there is often a Nordic association with its recurrent activities extrapolated between the national ones and the European or global ones they may be associated with. In this respect too, the early development of civil society with its development of shared identities preceded - and promoted - cooperation at a governmental level. This calls for a final remark: identities have indeed been important, but there is an important difference one may make between "shared" and "common" identities. By "shared" I mean that some elements of identity are common, whereas others are not. In this respect, the Nordic countries certainly exhibit shared identities; but this definitely does not mean that all identities are shared. The "Nordic" has not become a substitute for Danish, Norwegian, etc. identity; the point is rather that it is compatible with them all and that there is no conflict between them. The nations are still there and, as the narrow majorities for or against in all the Nordic EU referenda may be taken to demonstrate, many see them as threatened, whether by Europeanization and globalisation thinning out the protective shell defined by the state or by Others immigrating. In some discourses, it may be interesting to discuss whether the nations - and the threats - are "real" or "imagined"; when studying the development of security communities, we may rather see them as real because of being imagined. One particular strength of the Nordic security community is that Nordism has never been seen as a threat to the nations and Nordic migrants have not been seen as Others for several generations.

FROM NORDIC TO BALTIC?

When Deutsch discussed security communities half a century ago, there were not many good examples: the Nordic countries were one example, the Benelux countries another, and he saw NATO as moving in that direction. What later became EU was just being created and was not yet considered. The EU seems to have out-paced NATO, however, for a variety of possible reasons. One of them may be that the EU has done far more of institution building in many areas, including far more of common norms (the acquis communitaire, etc. Another may be the higher level of economic integration of the EU as compared to NATO. Yet another reason may be the differing logics of membership recruitment: to simplify, an important motive force of the EU was to prevent future war inside itself by cooperation, by contrast to NATO trying
to prevent future external war by deterrence. This made for political homogeneity in the EU, where no member was ever a dictatorship, whereas NATO included a long period of that in Portugal as well as one or more shorter periods in Greece and Turkey. Today, however, both alliances are selective in more similar ways, excluding states with unresolved boundary conflicts as well as states with serious domestic tensions.

This difference also meant that the end of the Cold War was no threat to the EU, which did not have to invent new purposes for itself. It was to NATO, since grand alliances usually dissolve when no longer called for.

Both the EU and NATO contained some security communities from the very beginning: Benelux in the both cases, with that of USA and Canada, later also USA and Great Britain, as well as a part of the Nordic one added in the case of NATO. On the other hand, the EU has no counterpart to Greece and Turkey, whose relations for a long time disqualified NATO as a whole from being a security community even if they qualified NATO as a peace maker.

Around the Baltic Sea we have bits and pieces. There is the old Nordic security community, here represented by Denmark, Sweden and Finland. That is (around the Baltic Sea) included in the EU security community, with Germany added and all others except Russia to join it soon. NATO, to which we may refer as almost a security community (Turkey and Greece being anyhow far away), complicates the picture, with Poland already a member and others soon to come, whereas the great opinion poll majorities against membership in Finland and Sweden (strengthened by recent wars) make them unlikely candidates within foreseeable future.

With nine riparian states, there are altogether thirty-six bilateral relations to consider, many of which have been discussed by scholars in the area (Kiel, Copenhagen, Uppsala, Tampere, etc.). Six of them are already in the EU-cum-Nordic security community, to which we may add two more by the common NATO membership of Denmark, Germany and Poland. That leaves twenty-eight: eight between Russia and others, six among other post-communist states (who in many other respects have less in common than the Nordic states have) and fourteen across former bloc boundaries.

No attempt will be made to go through these twenty-eight one by one; if—only if—we assume that common membership creates a security community, the number will soon be drastically reduced anyhow. In the best cases, we have nascent security communities in these pairs or at least prospects for that; in the worst cases, not even that, but active threat perceptions. Some overall features can be discerned however.

One of them is expressed by the German term “Einbindung”. Before WWII, a small state essentially had three options, all of them quite risky, as history demonstrated: satellite relations to a threatening great power, isolated neutrality or joining a great power opposing the one seen as a threat. The postwar period created a third alternative: to make the potentially threatening great power less so by joining an organisation (EU, NATO, etc.) where it belonged together with others. This was adopted, sometimes with enthusiasm by Germany’s neighbours in the West and, more important, by Germany itself, no matter what government it had: they all wished to have Germany tied in by obligations in common organisations, so as to remove the fears of Germany—and German fears—that had repeatedly spiralled into European catastrophes.
It is here that perceptions seem to vary considerably when we look further East. It is not easy to see any similar logic in the neighbours of Russia: no enthusiasm for Russia joining the EU and NATO, nor much for organisations where it is a member, such as the OSCE, the UN or for that matter the PfP.

This may have different reasons. Russian membership in the EU and NATO may be seen as so unrealistic anyhow that there is no point in rooting for it. A more important reason seems to be varieties in security thinking, in securitization and de-securitization of issue areas. The more recent debate goes beyond the traditional expansion of the conceptualization of “security” from one level (state, usually called “nation”) to several levels and from one sector (politico-military) to several. It also studies by what processes issues get securitized or desecuritized (or, to put it in a different way, how they get or lose status as defining threats) and investigates what factors affect the development of these processes. Hence there is no permanent “security” to study: the connotation of the term is shifting all the time, depending on the relative strength of different “securitizing actors”, as is dramatically illustrated by the development after 11 September 2001.

Traditional politico-military security thinking still looms large in the post-communist states, for understandable reasons. Yet they have resulted in an unusual distribution of roles: Germany, Russia and the Nordic countries trying to de-securitize military relations in the Baltic, Poland and the Baltic states pulling in the opposite direction and therefore seeking security guarantees. It can be argued, however, that this kind of de-securitization is in everybody’s interest: the alternative in Russia is to inescapably see the enlargement of NATO as a serious threat - which that of EU is not. And this reasoning from Western states seems to have persuaded the Baltic states to mollify their earlier expressions of perceived security threats in their formulations of doctrines. One of the important things determining how much chances there may be for a future Baltic Sea security community is precisely how “security” is conceptualized by whom.

LITERATURE


