# Chapter 2

# Scandinavia / *Norden*

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## The Conceptual Cluster

The conceptualization of the North (in the Scandinavian languages *Norden,* in Finnish *Pohjola*) as a distinct region has since antiquity been vague and far from geographically fixed. In Roman times all the countries to the north of the Alps were considered "barbaric," in other words, "northern," whereas the South stood for the Roman Empire and civilization. In a more restricted sense, the North referred to the peoples of the septentrional regions, or *Thule,* beyond the boundaries of the western and eastern empires. As such, it included the present-day Nordic countries as well as northern Poland, northern Germany, the northwestern parts of Russia, the islands of Orkney and Shetland, and the present-day Baltic countries.[1] Russia was seen as a North European country well into the nineteenth century. This view changed with the breakthrough of the language of liberalism in the 1830s, which relegated Russia to a reactionary regime belonging to a backward Eastern Europe or Asia. West European support for Polish autonomy was the catalyst in this shift of meaning, and the debate on the Crimean War (1853–56) accelerated this change.

The entry *Norden* in *Brockhaus,* the German encyclopedia published in 1820, emphasized the vagueness of the concept: "extremely undetermined," which means "sometimes more, sometimes less" (cited in Kliemann 2005b, 223). The article expressed the hope that as soon as the term had been finally settled scientifically, it would be possible to lay out a more precise definition. The German historian Hendriette Kliemann (2005b) has demonstrated that this was an impossible enterprise. Many attributes were linked to *Norden* in the scholarly attempts in the decades around 1800 to define what was still an elusive term: "High *Norden,*" "Scandinavian *Norden,*" "Germanic *Norden,*"

"Extreme *Norden*" (*ultima Thule*), "Polar *Norden,*" "The North of Europe," "*Nordeuropa,*" "Nordic powers," "Nordic countries," "Nordic states," "Nordic realms," "Nordic balance," "Nordic state system." In Kliemann's taxonomy, the flexible use of the term *Norden* implied that geographic inclusion and exclusion shifted over time, and so did the substantial content of the term.

The failure to define *Norden* is a good illustration of Friedrich Nietzsche's ([1887] 1980, 820) argument that what has a history is not definable (*Definierbar ist nur das was keine Geschichte hat*), a statement that the German conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck often referred to. This should not be seen as a problem; on the contrary, it makes *Norden* attractive for historical analysis and political use. There is both a general agreement and a positive value invested in the concept, and, at the same time, disagreement about its meaning. Without an agreement about the concepts as such, there is no shared heuristic framework, language community, or communication, and without a disagreement, no politics.

The cultural and political construction of community operates with both autostereotypes and xenostereotypes—that is, with self-understandings and understandings of the Other, the latter also referred to as heterostereotype. Regional identifications are constructed from within and from without in a mutual dynamic.

Since antiquity, the external view has outlined the imagery of the North in more or less mythical terms. Thousands of speakers and writers have, in references to the North in poetic as well as academic contexts, described the exotic. The North, in this enormous body of work, is as vague and elusive as the no less numerous outlines of its opposite, the South. The borderlines lose contours in all discussions where geographic spaces from Shetland to Russia are included or excluded in a variable geometry. The North has been connected to and demarcated from the East with concepts like *Mitteleuropa,* *Ostmitteleuropa,* and *Osteuropa* in another kind of variable geometry. Attempts to outline more precise borders than those found in the mythology of the exotic have been made by many practitioners in fields such as cultural history and geopolitics, for instance.

Such external understandings of a more or less mythical North, or of more specific but not less ideological, cultural, or geopolitical demarcations, have no doubt deeply influenced the self-understandings, where there has been a much stronger interest in giving a more precise meaning to the term. The construction from within of a Nordic region has operated with much more precise concepts and definitions of borders. Our focus is on the construction of a Nordic region through an investigation of the semantics around the two key concepts of *Norden* and Scandinavia, and the complex and shifting commonalities and distinctions between them.

Ever since Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (c. AD 77–79), the term Scandinavia has been used both as interchangeable with Northern Europe and in a more restricted sense, referring, first, to the small province of Skåne (*Scania*) in present-day Sweden; second, to the large peninsula that makes up present-day Norway and Sweden; or, third, to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, which are united by a common linguistic heritage. In the Nordic countries, from the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards, the language used to denote the North has vacillated between the narrower Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, Sweden) and the wider *Norden*, with the adjective *nordisk* (Nordic) incorporating linguistically different Finland into the Scandinavian sphere, and also, from the 1918 home rule and the 1944 founding of the republic, Iceland, which was earlier a part of Denmark (Anderson 1981, 102–3; Østergård 1997, 31–32; Hilson 2008, 11–12). In terms of political cooperation, *Norden* replaced Scandinavia after 1945 as the relevant entity with an institutional setting. Since 1945, one of the main challenges to *Norden* as a region of institutionalized political cooperation has been how to define itself in relation to Europe.

The move from *Scandinavia* to *Norden* after 1945 should be seen in a longer historical perspective that includes the nineteenth century. From the days of pan-Scandinavianism (the movement striving for Scandinavian unification in a new nation) in the 1830s onwards, there was a tension between the terms *Scandinavia* and *Norden*. *Scandinavia* meant unification without Finland, which, having been an integral part of Sweden since the Middle Ages, became a Russian Grand Duchy in 1809, whereas *Norden* meant unification with Finland. This tension acquired geopolitical implications in the 1890s during the naval arms race in the Baltic Sea region between the Russian and German empires, which coincided with the politics of Russification in Finland. The inclusion of Finland in a scheme of Nordic unification became potentially dangerous and split the Nordic nations. The resistance against *Norden* and the argument for *Scandinavia* was particularly strong in Denmark. Sweden was split. In Norway, skepticism not only toward Nordism but also toward Scandinavianism was to be expected. Scandinavianism was seen as a potential instrument for Sweden's expansive ambitions in the hands of the Bernadotte dynasty, with the aim to add the Danish crown to its Swedish and Norwegian ones, with perhaps the aim of the eventual inclusion of Finland too. The military implications of the languages of unification threatened many not only in Norway, however, but also in Sweden. We will return to Scandinavianism later on in this chapter. The Norwegian break from the union with Sweden in 1905 downgraded the discourses of Scandinavian or Nordic unification. World War I led to growing external pressure on the Scandinavian countries, who had declared themselves neutral, and they responded to this growing

pressure by increasing political cooperation among themselves with little if any talk about unification (Stråth 2005a; cf. Hemstad 2008).

## Norden as a European Periphery

As mentioned above, in classical literature the image of the North was dominated by its position as a remote periphery described either as an unspoiled paradise in its natural state or a barbarian counterpoint to Roman civilization (Käppel 2001, 18–19; Stadius 2004, 233–35). During the Renaissance, a more positive conception of *Norden* was promoted in Continental Europe by the Swedish-born Catholic ecclesiastic Olaus Magnus (1490–1557), who was exiled to Rome after the Reformation and published the first detailed map of "the Northern Lands"[2] in Latin in 1539. This map was followed by his famous *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples) in 1555.

The earliest conceptualizations of Scandinavia/*Norden* in the Nordic countries were constructed in the form of Gothicism during the Kalmar Union, which united the Nordic countries from 1397 to 1523. To justify the supremacy of the Scandinavians among the European powers, it was claimed that the Goths originated from Scandinavia. This complacent self-image, combined with the constant warfare of the Swedish Realm, had considerable influence over the Continental European image of *Norden.* For instance, as late as the mid-eighteenth century, the Swiss historian Paul Henri Mallet stated that the most distinctive feature of the Nordic peoples was their militancy (cited in Stadius 2004, 229).

The climatic conception of the North as the dwelling place of extremely courageous, clear-minded, and freedom-loving people created by a harsh climate was popular well until the nineteenth century, promoted, among others, by Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire. In their climate theories, the Scandinavian North (*Pays nordiques*) was incorporated into a larger European north-south polarity, in which the Protestant North stood for progress and rationality, and the Catholic South for conservatism, bigotry, and religious fanaticism (Tiitta 1994, 15–18, 42–45; Stadius 2004, 235–37).

The "invention" of Eastern Europe around 1800 added a third component, the East, to the dualistic North-South scheme (see, e.g., Kliemann 2005a, 24). Accordingly, as Germaine de Staël claimed in 1810 in her work on German literature, Europe could be divided into three principal "nations" that were equated with "races": "the Latin race," "the Germanic race," and "the Slavonic race" (cited in Drace-Francis 201, 96; see also chapter 16 in this volume). This new regionalization roughly overlapped with the dominance of the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches, which equated race/nation

with religion. This religious–national (spiritual–cultural) conceptualization of Europe was especially popular during the first part of the nineteenth century, before the final breakthrough of modern nationalism.

The Romantics designed a Nordic alternative to the neoclassical search for the European Enlightenment's roots in ancient Greece and Rome. Particularly in Denmark, which was still, in the late eighteenth century, a wide-reaching North Atlantic realm (a state conglomerate in the terminology of today), incorporating Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and the Faeroes, there developed a fervent "Ossianic" interest in the Icelandic sagas and a mythical Old Norse identity. The terms "Viking" and "the Viking Age" appeared in Danish at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and were soon widely used as synonyms for the adjectives Scandinavian and Nordic. Once again, the European north–south polarity was employed, as the heroic Viking virtues were set against the guile and the decadence of "the Latin South" (Østergård 1997, 34–38; for the invention of the common Nordic Viking past, see also Roesdahl 1994). A more moderate and pragmatic form of Romantic Scandinavianism was promoted and propagated, in particular, by the influential Danish clergyman and folk educator N. F. S. Grundtvig. In a merging of romanticist, Nordic classicist, and Enlightenment ideals typical of that time, he placed special emphasis on a shared, ancient Nordic cultural heritage and Protestant spirituality, suggesting the creation of a Nordic union, stretching from Iceland and the British Isles to Finland, with Swedish Gothenburg (*Göteborg*) in the geometric center as its capital (Østergård 1997, 35–38).

## Political Pan-Scandinavianism

The balance of power in Northern Europe was shaken by the Napoleonic wars: Sweden lost Pomerania to the Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin in 1802 and Finland to Russia in 1809, whereas Denmark lost Norway to Sweden in 1814. The traditional bipolar order between the conglomerate states of Denmark and Sweden was broken, and Russia and Prussia rose as new superpowers in the Baltic. As a result, a more restricted conceptualization of *Norden* emerged, separating the northern region from both Slavic Eastern Europe and Germanic Central Europe. Russia, in particular, was gradually orientalized as a completely non-European, Asiatic-barbarian empire, which was considered the major antithesis of Western civilization (Engman and Sandström 2004, 16–18; see also Wolff 1994 and Turoma 2011).

In Russia, the conceptual replacement of the ancient North-South division of Europe by the new East-West demarcation was reflected in the heated discussion of "the Russian idea" or "the idea of Russia." This debate, initiated by the Russian philosopher Pyotr Chaadayev in his *Philosophical Letters*

(1826–31), was chiefly focused on Russia's national identity and geopolitical position in the East-West divide, culminating in the question of whether Russia was a part of Europe and the West, or a separate entity between the West (Europe) and the East (Asia) (see also chapter 10 in this volume). In this discussion, the North played a minor role. Russia was clearly separated from *Norden* understood as a synonym for Scandinavia, and, in this sense, Russia was not considered a Nordic country. However, "the North" and the adjective "northern" were often used as symbols for the unique national character of Russia as such, separating it from all other European countries (Turoma 2011, 163–67). In general, Russian scholars did not include Finland in Scandinavia. Especially among the Slavophile movement, Finland was seen until the interwar period as a part of the ancient territory of Russia that had been violently dispossessed and "Swedishized" by the Swedish Realm during the Middle Ages (Jussila 1983).

In the Nordic countries, the new power balance after the Napoleonic wars resulted in a development in which pan-Scandinavianism soon gained an openly political content, first emerging in student and literary circles in the early 1830s. Despite the fact that Denmark and Sweden had been rivals ever since the Middle Ages, ethnolinguistic nationalist theories now generated the idea that Scandinavia constituted one nation (*folk*) united by a common language, values, and destiny. The concurrent Italian and German national unification movements were taken as examples for Scandinavia, where the medieval Kalmar Union also contributed to the feasibility of a new Nordic political union, "a Gothicist United States" (*Götiska förenade staterna*). This intellectual Scandinavianism was vaguer about Finland, but at least in Sweden there were dreams of its reunification with the Nordic family. There was through this latent "Finland dream" in Sweden an expansive potential for Nordism in Scandinavianist rhetoric—that is, the inclusion of Finland in the imagined political community. Few realized—or wanted to realize—that 1809 for Finland meant the establishment of a sovereign Finnish nation as a Grand Duchy in a personal union with the Russian Empire, like Norway in its personal union with Sweden from 1814, and that Finns did not see a new unification with Sweden as being in their interest (see, e.g., Østergård 1997, 38–39; Sandström 2004, 143–45; Gustafsson 2007, 194–95).

One important dimension of German and Italian unification was the use of military power in collaboration or confrontation with the great powers of continental Europe at that time: France and the Habsburg Empire. The United Kingdoms of Sweden–Norway (a crown union) and Denmark were, instead, small states with weak militaries looking for ways to absorb and consolidate what was left after the heavy loss of Finland for Sweden and of Norway for Denmark. Therefore, Scandinavianism began as an intellectual movement

looking for ways to come to terms with and consolidate this new status as small states on Europe's periphery. Answers were found in an escapist construction of a bygone period of greatness, from which mobilizing visions for the future could be derived. The new role as small states was made more acceptable through memorializing past greatness. This new role also promoted efforts to put an end to the long history of wars and hereditary enmity between Sweden and Denmark. The cultural dimension of Scandinavianism emphasized shared experiences and nearness in terms of geography, history, religion, and language. A frequent icon of Scandinavianism was a tree with a common root but different branches.

Instead of plans for military unification, Scandinavianism from the 1830s onwards provided an interpretative framework for domestic consolidation through the invocation of a glorious past (Stråth 2005b). In Sweden and Denmark, after the Napoleonic wars, romantic historical dreams were formulated in the aesthetic mode of neo-Gothicism. Gothic symbols from the Viking Age, with the free peasant, the *odalbonde,* as an ideal were emphasized. The Nordic peoples shared a vigorous antiquity. Neo-Gothicism could draw on Swedish Gothicism, developed in Sweden in the seventeenth century to legitimize Sweden's military power historically, as well as eighteenth-century Danish patriotism with its interest in Danish antiquity (for Gothicism in Sweden, see Hillebrecht 1997 and 2000; for Danish antiquity, see Feldbæk 1991). In seventeenth-century Sweden, the Nordic past had been Swedish, and in eighteenth-century Denmark, it had been Danish. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this past became Nordic or Scandinavian. The national ideas involved in Romanticism reinforced the feelings of a Nordic/Scandinavian kinship.

Political pan-Scandinavianism suffered a severe blow, however, during the Crimean War (1853–56). Oscar I, the Bernadotte king of Sweden, saw the war as an opportunity to reconquer Finland with the help of Britain and France against Russia. He thereby played on the "Finland dream" latent in the Swedish debate since 1809. Royal activism frightened public opinion, particularly in Norway, and strong opposition also emerged in Sweden. These royal plans were totally unrealistic and out of touch with the reality of European power politics at the time. Moreover, leading members of educated Finnish society, such as J. V. Snellman and Z. Topelius, publicly opposed any reunion with Sweden. They assumed that Finland could develop its own national character better as a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire than as an integral part of Sweden (see, e.g., Tiitta 1994, 82–85; Jalava 200, 211–14, 233–48).

In Denmark, the pan-Scandinavian movement perished as a political force in 1864, when Sweden–Norway refused to give Denmark the military aid that she expected after being attacked by Prussia and Austria. The king of

Sweden–Norway certainly wanted to intervene, hoping also for the Danish crown, but the two governments withstood him. Thus, the war resulted in a military catastrophe for Denmark, obliging it to relinquish Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia (Sandström 2004, 144–45). Ultimately, the Crimean War and the Danish-Prussian War worked centrifugally on the Scandinavian/Nordic unification project, since opinion during the two wars showed that no Dane or Norwegian was prepared to die for Sweden in order to reconquer Finland, and no Swede or Norwegian was prepared to die for Denmark in the defense of Schleswig and Holstein. Scandinavianism, with its ever more pronounced dynastic arguments, continued after the Danish defeat in 1864, but after German unification in 1871 it collapsed as a credible project of power politics. Neither Russia nor Germany was interested in competition with a Scandinavian union in the Baltic Sea region. The rise of the German Reich killed the plans for Scandinavian political unification and exposed the union between Sweden and Norway to growing tensions. Scandinavianism as a dynastic political program in the old sense became irrelevant. The king and the Swedish conservative establishment began a cultural and political orientation toward Germany, reinforced in the 1880s through trade political protectionism initiated in Europe by Bismarck. The Norwegian political elite, less aristocratic than in Sweden, preferred an orientation toward Britain based on free trade (Stråth 2005a).

Scandinavianism/Nordism continued as a cultural project with a much lower political profile. This new form of cultural Scandinavianism or Nordism was based on cooperation between civil society associations, interest organizations representing capital and labor, and professional corporations. This civil society movement for pragmatic cooperation also involved state institutions and functionaries, but not high politics. As a whole, one can see here a pattern that has repeated itself in later initiatives to create Nordic political unity. When an external threat makes itself felt, its first effect is to create high-politics cooperation with the neighboring countries, but as the threat grows, it begins to have the opposite effect. In the end, the governments in the Nordic countries gave priority to their own particular interests and Scandinavianism/Nordism again became a cultural project based on pragmatic civil society cooperation (Stråth 1980).

The growing Russian grip over Finland from the 1890s onward, in response to the German power in the Baltic area under the new Emperor Wilhelm II, further undermined the idea of Scandinavian or Nordic unity. The shadow of the big powers in the Baltic became darker. However, paradoxically, these increasing threats from the east and the south also engendered a brief wave of political neo-Scandinavianism/neo-Nordism in ideas of military Scandinavian cooperation. Nevertheless, when the military tensions between

Germany and Russia grew in the 1900s, such plans were abandoned and the inter-Nordic relationships receded to the kind of pragmatic cultural Scandinavian cooperation which emerged in the 1880s and 1890s in response to the collapse of dynastic political Scandinavianism after German unification in 1871.

This pragmatic Scandinavianism was thus a kind of countermovement to the centrifugal forces of nationalism and protectionism triggered by the economic crisis of the 1870s and by the increasingly polarizing rhetoric in Sweden and Norway. The ambitions of Scandinavian industry and business, as well as of the labor movements, to develop inter-Scandinavian networks and regular meetings were central to this movement of pragmatic Scandinavianism. The Swedish Social Democratic leader Hjalmar Branting argued for a future union of the Scandinavian peoples as opposed to the crown union of Sweden and Norway. Serious proposals for a Scandinavian customs union were made, albeit with little prospect for success, given the economic crisis. In the spring of 1899, the Nordic Association (*Nordisk Forening*) was established in Copenhagen, with Poul La Cour as its first president. He repeatedly emphasized the nonpolitical character of the association. According to him, the Scandinavian peoples should develop a system of mutual support and help for moral reinforcement and passive resistance against external violence. Indeed, numerous adherents of the neo-Scandinavianist movement considered cultural cooperation as a step toward military cooperation. Scandinavian cooperation was seen by some politicians with close connections to Germany as primarily directed against Russia, while for others it meant rejection of any thought of dealing with the Great Powers (Lindberg 1958, 140–54). The name of the association implied a vague intention of including Finland as an independent country, unlike in the earlier "Finland dream," based on Swedish imageries of reunification with Sweden. The association had a liberal Danish profile, rather than the conservative or reactionary Swedish profile that had gained in influence in the union conflict with Norway. *Nordisk Forening* demonstrates that the distinction between pragmatic civil–society cooperation and high–political cooperation with institutional and military implications was not necessarily very sharp. Occasionally, depending on the foreign political and military situation, there were considerable overlaps between the two approaches to Scandinavianism/Nordism.

Neo–Scandinavianism at the turn of the century experienced a short heyday, but it could not prevent the final triumph in 1905 of the forces working for the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway. With the liquidation of the Union, the preconditions of Scandinavian cooperation changed dramatically. One example was the first Congress of Nordic Historians in Lund, Sweden, which occurred in 1905 with mainly Swedish and Danish

participants. The Norwegian historians stayed at home. A few Swedish-speaking historians from Finland participated, but the majority of Finnish-speakers stayed at home in 1905 too. This can be interpreted as a general anti-Swedish protest, because its targets were both the Swedish-speaking academic minority in Finland and the "Swedes of Sweden" (*rikssvenskar*), who were loyal to them in the ongoing power struggle in Finland. With the outbreak of World War I, the trend changed again but now in a unifying direction (Stråth 2005b).

As industrialization, economic development, and pragmatic inter-Nordic cooperation really took off in the Nordic countries at the turn of the century (1900), a new conception of *Norden*/Scandinavia emerged in Europe. Instead of old militarist images or the idea of *Norden* as the poor periphery of Europe, the Nordic peoples and societies started to be represented as friendly, peaceful, democratic, cooperative, and hardworking, able to overcome their peripheral small-state status with technological and sociopolitical progressiveness (Stadius 2004, 229). In interwar agrarian populist visions of East Central Europe and the Balkans, Scandinavia in general was depicted as a "third way" that offered an alternative to both Western liberal *laissez-faire* capitalism and socialist collectivism. Scandinavian cooperativism was used to oppose the political pressure of Germany and Soviet-Russia (Dimou 2014; Trencsényi 2014). In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the case of Finland was of special interest because of its similar geopolitical position on the northwestern borderland of the Russian Empire and its lack of previous history as an independent state (see, e.g., Ščerbinskis 2011, 132–35).

## Regional Alternatives to Norden/Scandinavia

Before World War II, the most enthusiastic exponents of pragmatic Nordism were the Danes and the Swedes. In Norway, Nordic cooperation was overshadowed by the crisis over the union with Sweden, which had resulted in the dissolution of the union in 1905. In Finland, in addition to the Russification program that started in the 1890s, the language dispute between the Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedish-speaking minority harmed Nordic cooperation until the mid-1930s. Finnish-speaking nationalists tended to emphasize their Finno-Ugrian identity, and, after the independence of Finland in 1917, many of them prioritized collaboration with the Estonians and the Hungarians, striving for a pan-Finnic Greater Finland (see, e.g., Saarikoski 1993, 111–20). On the governmental level, the Nordic orientation made its final breakthrough in Finland only in 1935, when the weakness of the League of Nations had become all too obvious and the threat of Soviet occupation was increasing (Kaukiainen 1984, 215–19).

For those interwar scholars who wanted to connect Nordism with pan-Finnicism, Fennoscandia turned out to be an apt concept. The term had been introduced in 1898 by the Finnish geographer Wilhelm Ramsay, who had organized a scientific expedition to the Kola Peninsula a decade earlier. According to this conceptualization, Norway, Sweden, and Greater Finland (including the Kola Peninsula and what was called in Finland Eastern Karelia) formed a clear-cut geographical, zoological, and botanical entity with so-called natural borders between the West and the East. While this idea allowed the Finns to anchor Finland in its traditional Nordic context and Western cultural heritage, it also justified Finnish expansion in the borderland between Finland and Soviet Russia (see, e.g., Voionmaa 1919, 34–37, 271–75; Tiitta 1994, 160–61, 347–49).

Another interwar alternative to *Norden*/Scandinavia was Baltoscandia. This term was introduced by the Swedish geographer Sten De Geer in 1928 as an expanded version of Fennoscandia. In addition to Finland and Scandinavia, it also included Estonia and Latvia. The concept was further elaborated by the Estonian geographer Edgar Kant, who promoted the idea of Baltoscandia as a "natural" geographical and cultural unit, based on race, the Lutheran religion, and a common cultural heritage. The Lithuanians were not happy about their exclusion, and the Lithuanian geographer Kazys Pakštas soon included Lithuania in Baltoscandia by expanding his arguments even further into the political and cultural sphere. His objective was to create one political unit around the Baltic Sea, a large Baltoscandian Confederation. The obvious driving force behind these regional conceptualizations was the threat posed by the Soviet Union and Germany and a subsequent attempt to overcome small-state status by uniting with neighbors in a similar position. However, World War II and the Cold War put an end to these visions, at least temporarily (Lehti 1998, 22–26; see also chapter 3 in this volume).

The debate among geographers about the borders implied by concepts such as Scandinavia, *Norden,* Baltoscandia, and Fennoscandia had already emerged in other academic disciplines in the nineteenth century. Archaeology, comparative linguistics, and physical anthropology emerged, defining what fell inside and what fell outside such concepts on the basis of prehistoric findings and graves, language families, physical appearance, such as skulls, and genes. What was presented as scientific and objective knowledge had a strong political undertone. The scientific source material offered rich possibilities for combining and constructing borders between insiders and outsiders in different ways: Scandinavia as German or non-German, Finland as Nordic or non-Nordic, the Baltic peoples as Nordic, Finnish, or German, and so on. The academic debate underpinned the various projects of identity construction. Arguments from the academic debate could also be used in various

ways for or against the various political unification schemes (for comparative linguistics in this respect, see Nilsson 2012).

After World War I, there was also some interest in Finland in "the Europe Between" (*Väli-Eurooppa, Zwischeneuropa*), the macroregion comprising the new small states that had emerged after the collapse of the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Romanov, and Ottoman Empires. In English, there is no exact equivalent to this concept because Central Europe and Middle Europe include Germany, whereas "the Europe Between" excluded it (Vares 1997, 110–11.) This region was described by the Finnish historian Väinö Voionmaa (1919, 63) as "the precarious zone" (*vaarallinen vyöhyke*) of Europe, reaching from the Balkan peninsula along the Danube and the Vistula all the way to the Baltic countries and Northern Finland. The same "peculiar zone of small nations" was identified, for instance, by the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš G. Masaryk, who in 1916 baptized it "the Central Zone." Similar to his Finnish contemporaries, he felt that this region was harassed both from the East (Russia, Turkey) and the West (Germany, Austria, France), and its small nations had been time and again overrun by their more superior neighbors. Thus, closer political and economic cooperation was a reasonable option (cited in Drace-Francis 2013, 163–67).

From the Finnish point of view, however, Czechoslovakia and the southern countries of "the Central Zone" were not geopolitically important, because Finnish interwar foreign policy considered the Soviet Union Finland's only real threat. Therefore, Finland, particularly in the early 1920s, sought cooperation with the states on the coast of the Baltic Sea, that is, with Poland, Estonia, and Latvia, whereas Lithuania's territorial disputes with Poland kept it out of this "border state alliance." Even in this very restricted sense, however, "the Europe Between" soon withered away. The main reason was Poland's tendency to interpret *Zwischeneuropa* as a counter-concept to Central Europe because of Poland's antagonistic relation with Germany, whereas Finland cherished good relations with the latter. In practice, Finland had distanced itself from the border state alliance already in 1925. Cooperation with Sweden, the Baltic countries, and the League of Nations became the cornerstones in security policy (Kallenautio 1985, 86–91.)

Although Finland had obvious similarities with the new countries in Central and South Eastern Europe, the Finns were adamant that they were the bastion of the West—they were not Eastern and definitely did not want to resemble the Slavs (Vares 1997, 138; Vares 2003, 248–50, 254–62). The Balkans were actually used as a negative counter-concept in Finnish identity-building, sometimes further connected with the othering of the Turks and Islam (see, e.g., Schoultz 1884; Neovius 1897; Rosberg 1905). In the Nordic countries in general, particularly after World War I broke out, the Balkans came to stand

for the turmoil of disorganized small countries fighting each other, and political neutrality was cherished in order to avoid "a new Balkans in *Norden*" (see Dahl 2001, 30).

The late nineteenth century also saw the emergence of a more sinister kind of Nordism, based on racial classifications and typologies that were produced by academic disciplines such as physical anthropology, race biology, and comparative anatomy, combined with archeological and philological findings. These quasiscientific racist theories were further mixed with Old Norse mythology and pan-Germanic ideals. This mishmash led to the idea of a common Aryan/Germanic/Nordic blood, "the Nordic race," and its racial superiority (Musiał 1998, 6–7; Østergård 1997, 32). In the Nordic countries, racist pan-Germanism was mostly supported by small factions among the conservative upper classes, and it was often connected to the movement for racial hygiene and eugenics (see, e.g., Dahl 2001, 23–30). In addition, the Left cultivated eugenics for the creation of a strong and healthy people. In broad strata of the populations, the academic construction of racism promoted racial thought with stratification and demarcation between races.

In Nazi Germany, "the pan-Nordic idea" (*allnordische Gedanke*) was espoused by some powerful Nazi figures, such as Heinrich Himmler and Alfred Rosenberg (Werther 2010, 70–71). Although the number of convinced Nazis in the Nordic countries was small, the number of Germanophiles and Nazi sympathizers was larger, and after 1933 it became difficult to distinguish these groups from each other (see, e.g., Hansson 2003, 191–94). Thus, it is safe to say that all Nordic countries had significant communities—mostly academic and military—that supported a German-Scandinavian-Nordic rapprochement on the basis of their racial brotherhood, although this did not become the established conceptualization of *Norden* (Musiał 1998, 6–7).

## The Nordic Model of the Welfare State

While ethnic-racial Nordic conceptions were discredited after World War II, the idea of the Nordic or Scandinavian welfare state soon became the dominating conceptualization of *Norden* both in its xenostereotypes (foreign images of *Norden*) and in its autostereotypes (Nordic images of themselves). The origins of this conception can be traced to the mid-1930s, when the relatively swift recovery of the Scandinavian economies after the Great Depression, achieved without the abandonment of parliamentary democracy and the market economy, gained foreign attention. In international media, travel reports, and scholarly publications, Sweden in particular was elevated to the status of a model for others to follow, resulting in the image of Scandinavia as the avant-garde of modernity (Musiał 1998, 1–9).

One of the earliest publications to promote the welfare state was the American journalist Marquis Childs's *Sweden, the Middle Way,* published in 1936 in an attempt to convince the American public of the New Deal type of state interventionism. In Europe, among the pioneers promoting the progressiveness of *Norden* were British journalists as well as German and Austrian political exiles, such as Willy Brandt, Herbert Wehner, and Bruno Kreisky, who had lived in Scandinavia during the war. However, it should be noted that the very concept of "the Nordic model" only became widely known in the 1980s, whereas "the Swedish model" had established itself as a concept already by the 1960s. It should also be noted that, when they advocated a form of Nordic welfare, Brandt, Wehner, and Kreisky were met with considerable skepticism well into the 1960s. The racial abuse of the term "Nordic" in Nazi Germany was a heavy legacy, which locked out *Norden* as a point of reference at universities, for instance, until the student radicalization of the 1960s, when interest grew in a Nordic alternative based on welfare as opposed to race (Stråth 1993, 56–58; Musiał 1998, 24–30; Hilson 2008, 19–20; O'Hara 2008, 91–98).

During the Cold War, the Nordic countries were able to enjoy a lower level of tension than many other parts of Europe, which boosted the image of *Norden* not only as the most egalitarian and progressive region in the world, but also as an exceptionally peaceful, antimilitaristic, and largely disarmed region. The image of cooperation was reinforced by the establishment of the Nordic Council in 1952 as an interparliamentary body, with the task of advising and making recommendations to the Nordic governments; the Nordic passport union in 1952; the joint labor market in 1954; the harmonization of laws, such as the Nordic Convention on Social Security in 1955; and the establishment of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971 to provide a forum for intergovernmental cooperation. Moreover, during the 1950s, concern for the plight of the developing nations entered Swedish popular consciousness as an additional aspect of the Swedish model of society, generating the idea in the 1960s that the country had become "the world's conscience." This attitude was adopted by other Nordic countries, resulting in a self-image of benevolent helpers and outsiders in relation to colonialism, which fed a certain sense of moral superiority (see, e.g., Wæver 1992, 77–79, 84–87; Browning 2007, 33–35; Palmberg 2009, 35). In short, in the Nordic countries, *Norden* functioned as a demarcation from the rest of Europe and sometimes also from "Europe" as such: a democratic, Protestant, progressive, and egalitarian North against a Catholic, conservative, and capitalist Europe as well as a totalitarian Eastern bloc (Sørensen and Stråth 1997, 22).

At that time, *Norden* acquired the status of an archetypical example of a *Geschichtsregion* (historical region). To cite the sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1965, 220–21), "There is no region in Europe and few exist in the world

where culture, tradition, language, ethnic origin, political structure, and re-
ligion—all 'background' and identitive elements—are as similar as they are
in the Nordic region." The particularity of the Nordic countries was further
consolidated by the expanding field of welfare-state research in the social sci-
ences. Among the most influential publications was the Danish sociologist
Gøsta Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990). In-
spired by the economic historian Karl Polanyi, Esping-Andersen used the de-
gree of "de-commodification" as the decisive measure of the degree to which
social rights in a given society permit people to achieve a decent standard of
living outside the sphere of pure market forces. On these grounds, he de-
fined three distinctive types of welfare regime: the liberal (Anglo-Saxon), the
conservative-corporatist (continental European), and the social democratic
(Scandinavian). Although this typology immediately became the subject of
intense debate (see, e.g., Kvist and Torfing 1996), "the Nordic model" as such
was considered a standard concept in international welfare-state scholarship.

The imagery of the Nordic model was an instrument in the Cold War that
placed *Norden* on the Western side, although two of the Nordic countries
were neutral in military-political terms. State-generated welfare—the basis
of the Nordic model—connoted democracy as a counterpoint to the people's
democracies in the East. However, as the British journalist Roland Huntford's
polemical *The New Totalitarians* had already illustrated in 1971, the Nordic
welfare model could also be pictured as an overpowering monolith that acted
as a brake on economic productivity, efficiency, and flexibility, subordinating
citizens to intrusive state control—a view that started to gain more popularity
in the Nordic countries after the 1970s oil crisis, the increasing bureaucrati-
zation of Nordic state machinery, and the rise of conservative governments
with neoliberal programs in the 1980s in most countries in the Organization
for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). From the late-1970s
onwards, morally dubious features of welfare-state ideology became subject
to public discussion, such as the eugenicist laws that were in force in all main-
land Nordic countries from the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s and the forced
integration of the Sámi and Romani minorities (Hilson 2008, 102–14).

## The Post-1989 Norden

After the collapse of the Eastern bloc in 1989–91, which coincided with an
international economic recession, the conceptualization of *Norden* once again
entered a new phase. First, the postwar Nordic balance had been largely based
on the competition between capitalism and communism, which anchored the
Nordic countries between the superpowers, although, as stated above, on the
democratic Western side. In military-political terms, the in-between situation

was split: Denmark and Norway belonged to NATO, whereas Finland and Sweden were neutral. After 1989, relations to Europe and to the superpowers could be described as confusing and insecure. Second, "the third way" in international politics had been linked to a "middle way" in social policy, which ended in a crisis due to the Nordic welfare states' inability to pay for their extensive welfare programs. In the politics of decolonization, with competition between the superpowers in the developing countries, a Nordic shared approach replaced the previous military-political split in the Nordic region. The developing nations became an arena for Nordic Third Way politics with development aid.

At the turn of the new millennium, one could also notice a significant attempt to reconceptualize *Norden.* Promoted by scholars of international relations and political sciences, a broader concept of the North was reinvented—described as the shift "from Nordism to Baltism" or "the return of Northernness." As these slogans indicate, the Nordic countries oriented themselves in the 1990s toward the Baltic and Arctic regions, which signified potentially a conceptual enlargement of *Norden* (Wæver 1992, 101; Joenniemi and Lehti 2003, 136–37). In Russia, the Northern dimension, particularly the Arctic, also gained a new strategic importance given the territorial losses in the South after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Turoma 2011, 163–64). On the organizational level, a notable element of this new orientation was the restructuring of the Nordic Council to advance cooperation with the Baltic and the Arctic (see, e.g., Browning 2007, 41). The latest arrival in the new Nordic "blended family" is Scotland. There the nationalist movement has cherished a Northern identity, not only to separate Scotland from England and to oppose the London power bloc (the South), but also to prove its viability as a Northern small-state (see, e.g., MacLeod 1998, 850–51).

However, these enlargements have hardly led to a shared Baltic or Northern regional identification or conceptualization. Instead, there has been a broadening of the concept of *Norden* as an identity-promoting space. In the case of Russia, the Ukrainian-Crimean crisis that started in the spring of 2014 has rapidly weakened relations with the Nordic countries. In the most recent economic crises in the European Union, antagonism between Northern and Southern Europe has been particularly strong in Finland, which is the only Nordic Eurozone country. In the two other Nordic European Union member states, Sweden and Denmark, which have not introduced the euro as their currency but maintained the crown, the euro debate has been observed from a distance and with a certain satisfaction from being outside the Eurozone.

Finally, in some visions of future region-building, the old idea of a Nordic Federation (*Förbundsstaten Norden*) has been reinvented to increase Nordic influence in the world in general and in the European Union in particular

(see, e.g., Wetterberg 2010). This suggestion has been labeled by most Nordic politicians and scholars as highly unrealistic, however, and the primary arguments in the debate have emphasized Nordic cooperation as a model within the European Union and as an instrument for greater Nordic power in Europe (Strang 2012; Grüne 2014; see also Wæver 1992, 94). Nevertheless, the present situation highlights the fact that national and regional identifications are complex processes, and even if it might seem that the meaning of *Norden* has expanded recently, the narrower vision as an alternative and a superior model for the rest of Europe is still lurking in the background.

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## Notes

1. The noun *septentrion* refers to the seven stars of the Big Dipper asterism (Septentrion), which dominates the skies of the North and which contains a pointer to the North Star (Polaris); see Kirby 1995, 2, and Kliemann 2005a, 23.
2. In Olaus Magnus's *Carta marina* (1539), the Northern Lands (*septentrionalium terrarum*) included present-day Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden as well as the north-western part of Russia and the present-day Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

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