

ESCAPING SECURITY: NORDEN AS A SOURCE OF ONTOLOGICAL CERTAINTY

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Abstract

This paper contends that to date IR theory has struggled to explain the emergence of transnational communities in situations in which security as a constitutive argument and driving force behind such developments appears largely absent. By utilising ontological security as an additional interpretative tool and disaggregating ‘security-as-being’ from ‘security-as-survival’ the paper seeks to rectify this situation. This broadening and distinction is important in highlighting options that have remained mostly obscured within analyses that conflate the distinction or view ontological security as merely derivative of security limited to security-as-survival. Arguably, furnishing ontological security with autonomous standing not only sheds additional light on the restrictions present in the construction of political space and commonality once security figures as a key underlying argument; it also brings into view the existence of an outside and opens up the option of going beyond security, i.e. of devising safe identities without constantly engaging in the securitization, or for that matter, desecuritization of issues. In order to make the point that the option of escape indeed exists, and has actually been apparent over a considerable period of time, the paper returns to the question of the origins of Nordic peace. It does so, not merely in order to discuss the relevance of the case, but also to utilise its emancipatory potential in the goal of developing and pushing IR-theory beyond some of its previous limits.

Introduction

This paper is concerned with the way the linkage between identity and security has been conceptualised in International Relations. In this vein it draws its intellectual inspiration from the observations of Bahar Rumelili (2008) that the critical literature on security and identity in International Relations are embedded with different prioritisations and tend to talk past each other with some valuable insights being lost. Thus, she notes that for scholars working within the field of Critical Approaches to Security identity is predominantly depicted as simply derivative of security practices. In contrast, for scholars with a focus on Critical Approaches to Identity security is frequently depicted as derivative of particular claims to identity. The result, therefore, is twofold. On the one hand, Rumelili argues that in approaching security and identity from different angles there is a tendency in much of the literature for their co-constitutive nature to be overlooked, with each side ultimately privileging one side of the process. On the other hand, there is also a danger, particularly evident on the part of Critical Approaches to Security, to reduce questions of identity formation down to questions of security, implying there is no way of thinking about the construction of identity outside of the realm of security. A more thoughtful elaboration of the identity/security linkage is required, she claims, in order for the restrictions as well as options embedded in that relationship to be more clearly visible (Rumelili 2008).

Whether such a clear cut characterisation of work in the area is fair *per se* is, of course, a matter for debate. For our purposes, though, Rumelili's analysis neatly poses the question of the relationship between security and identity. Without claiming to have solved the riddle posed by Rumelili the paper argues that we can get closer to an answer by exploring recent openings in debates about security and identity that seek to provide more differentiated views of both concepts than are present throughout IR, including in much critical scholarship. To do this the paper seeks to develop and combine two sets of emerging literatures, which speak to different parts of the issue outlined by Rumelili.

First, the paper engages with recent attempts to further disaggregate security by distinguishing between the identity-related aspects of security and its more physical and material dimensions through employing the concept of *ontological security* as an analytical tool in international relations and political science (e.g. Kinnvall 2004; Krolkowski 2008; Marlow 2002; Mitzen 2006a, 2006b; Roe 2008; Steele 2005; Zaretsky 2002). The deployment of ontological security – with its concern with the stability or security of identity/subjectivity – has appeared as a further step in opening up the concept of security away from narrow Realist concerns with the material distribution of power. Most notable in this respect has been Jennifer Mitzen's (2006b: 342) distinction between *ontological* and *physical security*, where ontological security is concerned with the 'security of being' and physical security with threats of physical violence and the use of force.

For Mitzen (2006b), sensitivity towards considerations of ontological security can provide us with alternative explanations of phenomena like security dilemmas, which have been central to Realist conceptions of international security. Instead of viewing security dilemmas as resulting from problems of trust and the lack of enforcement mechanisms in international anarchy, Mitzen argues states may sometimes reproduce problematic relationships with others because *the very routine* of that relationship is

seen to uphold a particular sense of self, even in a situation when perpetuating the routine would seem to undermine the state's physical security. In a related manner, Brent Steele (2005) has invoked ontological security to argue that states (through their decision-makers) frequently act as a result of a desire to avoid *feelings of shame* which they would experience if they acted otherwise, despite the fact that such actions might not accord with a Realist or Liberal reading of the state's material and rational interest.¹

At the same time, the emergent literature on ontological security in IR far from constitutes a coherent approach, so while Mitzen takes much of the credit for introducing the term to the discipline, other scholars have distanced themselves from her particular conceptualisation and use of it (e.g. Krolkowski 2008). Likewise, a number of important questions about the validity of the exercise have been raised by those less enamoured with the concept. These relate to issues such as whether a concept initially developed in psychology (Laing 1960) and sociology (Giddens 1991) with respect to individuals can be usefully applied to social groups like states or nations? Or whether the idea of ontological security actually adds something significant beyond constructivist and post-structuralist concerns with identity politics in international relations. Finally – and more particularly directed at Mitzen's use of the term – it has on good grounds been asked whether distinctions between ontological and physical security can be usefully upheld. Taken together these questions point to a much broader issue of what ontological security actually is and how it should be viewed in relation to theories on identity in order for it to constitute a more pronounced, autonomous and durable contribution. In the first instance, therefore, the paper provides a sympathetic reappraisal of the literature on ontological security, drawing out a number of distinctions between how it is variously deployed, and most particularly distinguishing between ontological security as a state of being and the various ways in which actors respond to feelings of ontological *insecurity*.

Second, the paper also engages with more specific debates about identity politics in IR, in particular focusing on the role and position of difference/otherness in the constitution of subjectivity, identity and community. Inherent in a broad swathe of IR theorising from the Realist end of the spectrum right through to many post-structuralist inspired analyses has been a view that the constitution of subjectivity, identity, community, or even more specifically a sense of self-certainty on the part of actors, requires the identification of an external other such that for a 'we' to come safely into being there has to be a 'them' positioned outside a barrier premised on the existence of profound alterity. In contrast, and building on the discussion of ontological security, we argue, first, that otherness and difference need not always be constituted in radicalised terms, and second, and more importantly, that difference need not always be exteriorised in constituting identity. Indeed, the maintenance of difference and otherness on the inside can also be something to be embraced and upheld in constituting identity.

¹ For example, Steele argues that the British decision to support the North rather than the South in the American Civil War can only be fully explained by taking into account British reactions to Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation which sought to frame the war as one about slavery. Until that point the British were undecided regarding whether to remain neutral or even support the South, given particular strategic and economic interests which support of the South might foster. After the Emancipation Proclamation, however, the Civil War became a question of identity, of just what sort of nation Britain claims to be.

The implications of this position for thinking about the possible character of international and regional relations are potentially significant. To demonstrate both this and the potential analytical utility of a broader understanding of ontological security, the paper applies its theoretical framing to an empirical case study. The case in question concerns providing a revisionist account of the emergence of Nordic peace in the nineteenth century and analysing the specific role that ideas of Scandinavia(nism)/Norden played in enhancing ontological security in the Nordic nation-states at this period in time. The reason for focusing on Norden in a paper designed to make a broader contribution to debates in IR is that in many respects Norden stands out as an exceptional region of peace and stability, with many characterising it as a security community par excellence (Deutsch 1957; Archer 2003). Indeed, the idea of Nordic exceptionalism and of the region having something to teach the rest of the world about how to organise regional relations has been a positive theme for both Nordic and non-Nordic politicians for decades (see Archer and Joenniemi 2003; Browning 2003; 2007; Musial 2002). This begs the question of how to explain this state of affairs. After briefly outlining the limitations of established explanations, the paper provides a revisionist account of Nordic history focusing specifically on considerations of ontological security and the ways in which difference has been mediated in the region. Central to this, we argue, was the way in which ideas of Scandinavia/Norden were utilised to provide the nation-states of the region with a biography, a *raison d'être* and a concomitant set of interests that made possible a transformation of an established system emphasising intra-Nordic war into one emphasising more peaceful relations. At the general level our argument is that what the Nordic case demonstrates is the need for IR theorising to adopt much more sophisticated accounts of the role of difference in constituting identity and ontological security – with the Nordic experience standing out as a particularly stark example of this.

In the conclusion, however, and in light of more recent debates in the region, we note that there is nothing inevitable about the way in which ideas of Scandinavia/Norden may contribute to ontological security in the region, in terms of how difference and otherness is mediated, or indeed whether Scandinavia is any longer seen as a source of ontological security at all. Since the end of the Cold War there has been much debate about what the Nordic is, whether it remains something normal, natural and safe or whether it should and can be re-branded, and even whether, in view of processes of Europeanisation and globalisation, it is any longer an asset. An identity marker which by the Cold War had become a foundation stone of national identities in the region, that marked the region out as utterly modern and progressive, has been under attack and sharply criticised, even at times viewed as a source of shame and even existential anxiety and ontological insecurity rather than pride and self-certainty.² Scandinavia/Norden, we argue, therefore finds itself at an important juncture, and one where, depending on what choices are made in terms of how to constitute identity and self-certainty in respect of difference, may also depend the continued viability of claims about the region's exemplary status as a region of peace.

² Carl Bildt, for one, argued in *International Herald Tribune* (24 February 1992) that “The time for the Nordic model has passed...”, while Finnish Prime Minister Esko Aho even proclaimed “The Nordic Model is Dead” (Quoted in Hanhimäki 1997: 187). Among scholars influential in the debate Wæver (1992) coined the concept of 'Nordic nostalgia' to reflect changing views towards Norden.

Differentiating Ontological Security

The first task in providing identity with a more autonomous posture is therefore to introduce and elaborate on the concept of ontological security, including responding to some of the criticisms which have been raised against its introduction into IR. As noted there has been a lack of consistent use of the concept in IR. Understood in its broadest terms there is common agreement that ontological security requires a relatively coherent sense of self or subjectivity, with this being what enables individuals to carry on with their everyday lives. Beyond this, though, understandings of what that may involve, or how it is achieved vary. In this respect it is useful to draw a distinction between ontological security as a *state of being* and the different strategies (*ontological security seeking strategies*) which actors adopt when they perceive their ontological security as threatened. This distinction is useful because in some of the literature the two positions are conflated with this easily leading to confusion as to the analytical purchase which a focus on ontological security can provide. In this section we therefore briefly outline how we might think of ontological security as a 'state of being', before analysing at greater length those strategies which actors are liable to draw upon to try and secure a stable sense of subjectivity and identity.

Understood as a *state of being*, it is useful to start with Giddens' (1991: 243) definition of ontological security as 'a sense of continuity and order in events'. At some level, therefore, ontological security is concerned with a perception of repetition and stability regarding the social world; or expressed differently, a sense of knowing what to expect. In this respect he also argues that ontological security 'includes a basic trust of other people' (Giddens quoted in Kinnvall 2004: 746), implying that ontological security is as such also the property of relationships. It is constructed intersubjectively and comes down to the question of whether or not actors expect to be treated by others in predictable ways. In contrast, existential anxiety is liable to be a product of situations when this does not happen (Roe 2008: 778, 782). Put bluntly, you might say that an ontologically secure actor is one who is able to cope with the world they find themselves in because of a developed sense of stability concerning their social environment and their position in it.

However, given the vexatious nature of social reality, where individuals find themselves in a society continually transforming beyond their individual or collective efforts to control it (Archer 1995: 2) a condition of ontological security once achieved is liable to be transient and in constant need of being reasserted through the repositioning of the individual in the face of changing events. In this respect it might be argued that ontologically secure actors are those actors possessing the abilities, capacities and resources to cope with the changing world around them in such a way that they are able to continue functioning because they can continue to uphold a sense of identity and purpose in their individual lives. At the same time, though, ontological security can be achieved in radically different ways with radically different consequences, as we indicate below. Ontological security as a concept illuminates in this context the existence of various options, constraints and contradictions in the sphere of identity-building, and reaches in this context beyond those usually highlighted and seen as central in the sphere of IR-theory as we further explain.

Central to any state of ontological security is the ability of individuals to tell convincing stories about themselves as well as others and to gain recognition for their self within intersubjectively constructed constellations. Closely connected with Giddens' emphasis on stable expectations and continuity in respect of events and the nature of relationships is therefore a focus on the role of *narrative* as a central support to individual identity and subjectivity. All individuals require a sense of who they are and where they are going and narrative is central to that process. Giddens (1991: 35-6) therefore argues that upholding self-biographies is central to achieving and maintaining a sense of ontological security. Indeed, it is such biographies locating the individual in time and space and in particular subject positions in respect of events and other actors that establishes those expectations of continuity of relationships and a sense of order over events in the first place. Without such a biography/story individuals can feel overwhelmed by events, with Laing noting that ontologically insecure individuals are often characterised by a lack of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity (cited in Giddens 1991: 53). Without such a story such individuals may feel anxiety about being obliterated, engulfed, crushed or overwhelmed by impinging events, and they may well feel paralysed in terms of their ability to respond to such events (Giddens 1991: 35-6). In short, we need a story of our life in order to be able to 'go on', and it is such stories that provide us with interests. To paraphrase Ringmar (1996: 73-6), it is only in the process of telling stories about who we are that we will be in a position to articulate what we want.

This emphasis on narrative is of course shared by much constructivist writing. However, from an ontological security perspective self-narratives are not only important in connecting identities to interests but also entail significant emotional content, an element largely ignored in much constructivist analysis (Kinnvall 2004: 748). Important in this respect is that acting in line with one's self-understandings can be important for upholding a sense of individual integrity and pride. In contrast, a failure to act according to one's biographical narrative can provoke feelings of shame (Steele 2005: 526-7; Roe 2008: 784). From this perspective, then, ontologically secure actors may be defined as those actors able to 'keep a particular narrative going' (Giddens 1991: 54) by marrying their actions with the claims they make about their identity.

The focus on narrative, however, already entails a shift towards questions of strategy, of the types of actions (*ontological security seeking strategies*) that individuals may undertake in order to uphold a sense of ontological security and continuity. In the literature it is common to argue that one way in which self-biographies can be upheld is through routinised or habituated behaviours (Roe 2008: 783; Krolkowski 2008). Routines provide individuals with a sense of continuity and certainty about the nature of the reality within which they exist, and as such enable them to bracket more general anxieties about the various dangers of social life (Giddens 1991: 37). Routines, in this sense, are a way of reasserting the biography of one's life.

However, routines are not *de facto* positive. Some actors rigidly repeat routines, while others are more open to change. As Giddens (1991: 40) puts it, blind commitment to routines is a sign of 'neurotic compulsion' and is evidence of a lack of 'basic trust' in others or in one's own abilities to adapt. This is essentially what Mitzen takes from Giddens when she argues that some states seem prone to reproducing particular ontological security seeking behaviours (routines), even when these compromise their

physical security – i.e. they get locked into security dilemmas because of a basic lack of trust in others. For such actors, breaking from routines which may actually be physically harmful to them (e.g. people in abusive relationships) causes paralysing anxiety, whereas rigidly adhering to the routine can be felt as submerging the anxiety (Krolkowski 2008) – paradoxically therefore creating a sense of ontological security at the expense of an actor's physical security (though whether this is a 'healthy' sense of ontological security is debatable).

In contrast, actors with a healthy sense of trust or being are more willing to adapt their biographies and routines to changing events, with this basic level of trust understood as a prerequisite allowing 'an actor to engage in complex forms of learning, processes that entail responding flexibly to new information by modifying conduct rather than retreating into habituated behaviours' (Krolkowski 2008). In this respect, Ian Craib (1998: 72) argues ontological security is not a matter of feeling safe through routine, but of being able to cope with changes in routine. Instead, the more one immerses oneself in routine the more likely one is to generate anxiety.

While routinisation is one strategy by which actors can seek to satisfy their desire for ontological security, another mechanism can be found in the assertion of collective identities. The appeal to group identities is in this sense seen as another way in which actors seek to protect themselves from feelings of existential anxiety, individual vulnerability and personal disarray (Craib 1998: 170; Kinnvall 2004: 742; Kristeva 1993: 2; Krolkowski 2008). Kinnvall (2004: 742, 759) argues that religion and nationalism hold particular appeal in this respect owing to their ability to act as core 'identity-signifiers' supplying clear and simple answers about the world and the individual's place within it, and as such conveying a picture of security and stability to those in need. Especially in a changing world, appealing to 'an imagined past by using reconstructed symbols and cultural reference points' (Kinnvall 2004: 744) is a way of reasserting a sense of continuity over time and the chaos of the present. More generally, evoking group identities is a way in which individuals can sublimate the anxieties produced by the tenuous and brief nature of individual existence by identifying the individual with the historically enduring lifespan of collective selves/identities. It is precisely such processes entwining individual into collective selves that legitimises soldiers dying in the name of the nation or that accounts for how individuals frequently speak of 'we' having experienced different events (humiliations, victories) even when such events pre-dated the existence of the individual in question (Carr 1986: 133-4).

Ontological Security, Existential Anxiety and Otherness

Although routines, self-narratives and the appeal to collective identities constitute core strategies through which actors seek ontological security it is also important to ask what happens when those routines, stories or collective identities no longer appear convincing or are challenged by 'critical situations' (Steele 2005: 526). It is also here that it becomes relevant to further explore and problematise the standard treatment of difference and otherness in much of IR theorising.

Critical situations may refer to things like the loss of a job or the breakdown of a marriage, but may also refer to broader structural transformations or world historic

events such as the end of the Cold War and the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001. Such events can create a sense of cognitive dissonance for actors as self-understandings begin to appear dangerously out of step with changing realities, while our everyday routines may begin to lose their calming effects. Zaretsky (2002: 99), for example, has explored how the trauma of 9/11 appeared to tear ‘open the fabric of everyday existence’ and was accompanied in New York (and beyond) with confusion, self-questioning and a deep sense of vulnerability. Or as Mitzen puts it:

[P]eople in the US found it difficult to do anything, go to work, cross a bridge, ride the subway. It was hard to leave the house, but it was also hard to stay at home, because the sense of uncertainty and threat was pervasive. No one knew where the threat was from or what might happen, whether you might be a target, your family, your friends. People could not cognitively organize the threat environment... (Mitzen quoted in Roe 2008: 782)

In such critical situations or in the broader context of structural transformations there is a tendency for existential anxiety to increase. In such situations actors can seek to reassert a sense of ontological security in different ways. First, an actor trying to reaffirm ontological security may fall back on the past and *reaffirm* established routines, (collective) identities and stories. Of course, if the structural change underway is particularly significant such an attempt to uphold an established basis for ontological security may in turn undermine other elements of an actor’s security. Essentially this is why Mitzen argues ontological and physical security considerations do not always seem to align.

Second, the actor may engage in processes of *re-narration* and *re-constitution* by projecting an alternative biography of the self perceived as being more suitable for the new situation and in turn establishing a new set of routines and concomitant identity claims supportive of this new position. Interestingly the established literature on ontological security in international relations – but also social-psychology (Caputi 1996; Kristeva 1991) – has a tendency to view such processes with caution. In situations of existential anxiety it is argued actors are liable to seek to *close down* their identities. In this respect Kinnvall (2004: 749) speaks of actors *securitising subjectivity* through articulating increasingly exclusionary and even fundamentalist conceptions of identity perceived as providing the desired stability. This is why, she argues, in situations of societal stress you often see the reassertion of fundamentalist/parochial accounts of nationalism and religion which reassert differences between group members and non-members, and with those non-members frequently cast in the role of an enemy (Kinnvall 2004: 754-5, 757; also Dijker et al, 1996; Karakayali 2009: 543, 556; Roe 2008: 787-8).

This stress on identity presupposing the carving out of an external Other in contrast to which one can define itself and the need of adversarial exclusion in this context has been pronounced across much IR theorising, though has been most clearly expressed by some post-structuralist writers. Chantal Mouffe, for example, has been quite explicit that collective identities can only be established in the mode of ‘us versus them’ (2000: 213). The relationship with the constitutive Other and non-me has, in her view, not only to remain *external*, it has also to be *conflictual* and *adversarial* in order for Self and Other to appear as mutually exclusive categories. Similarly, pushing along Schmittian lines Campbell (1992) has also argued that identity is primarily constituted in the face of a radicalised and external Other. The identification

of enmity, in this view, therefore comes to frame the internal space available for trust and the creation of 'safe' identities. The emphasis on such Schmittian-type enemy/friend constellations has as such tended to foreground the need to keep similarity apart from difference as the central constitutive move in the construction of identity, with such approaches to constituting ontological security in turn accounting for the rather negative view of the nature of international relations evident in much IR theorising.

Third, in contrast it seems to us there is no reason why actors have to respond to feelings of existential anxiety and ontological insecurity through securitisation, fundamentalism and bordering. Securitisation strategies for achieving self-certainty rely on turning the stranger into an enemy external to oneself and focusing on (and constituting) perceived threats to physical security. Although such approaches have become quite widespread in IR theory, and the temptation to adopt securitising practices radicalising otherness is clearly evident in world politics, other strategies are also available where the relationship to otherness and physical security considerations is conceptualised very differently. There are two possibilities worth noting in this respect. First, we can follow Laclau (1990: 39-44) in noting that while border-drawing and differentiation are necessary and inevitable ingredients for the formation of secure identities, difference can be constructed in a variety of ways. In the first instance, then, others can also be constituted more positively as friends, as better than, as exotic, or even with indifference (Hansen 2006; Said 1978), with the identification of external others in such ways resulting in a very different rendering of self-certainty in international relations. This provides ground for a different and more benign reading on the basic character of international relations in the sense that difference does not have to be equated with a threat, but can also be accommodated and contained by employing narrative resources that allow for recognition of the other as being simultaneously other and like. This is to say that the constitution of self and other is not rule-bound in translating by some necessity into mutually exclusive and incompatible categories of subjectivity.

However, a more radical position is also available that argues that identities are not simply constituted through exteriorising difference (whether in securitised or non-securitised forms), but where the maintenance of difference and otherness on the *inside* is itself also something to be embraced in constituting identity. Adopting such a view entails challenging the predisposition in much liberal and constructivist scholarship for seeing homogeneity as a precondition for ontological security and community. This is to say that most liberal and constructivist accounts of community adopt what may seem the commonsense view that communities are primarily held together by that 'which makes us common'. Arguably such accounts have focused too much on the need for homogeneity in terms of values, culture and identity in binding communities together. In contrast, tensions and disagreements over these aspects too easily become conceptualised as destabilising, as representing rupture, and as undermining the security-enhancing properties of the community, even to the extent that the existence of the community itself might be questioned.³ Thus, otherness and difference within a community tends to be theorised and represented as a source of threat to be minimised.

³ For example, note recent debates in Europe over the relative merits of assimilationism over multiculturalism, or in the US context Huntington's (2004) concern that Hispanic immigration is threatening the fundamental character and survival of America.

In contrast, we argue that while elements of sameness and homogeneity can be important, communities are also critically brought together by their differences and by the existence of complementarities between different identities *on the inside*. The suspicion here is obviously that underlying such complementarities will be a broader foundational identity shared by the community's members, so difference will only be embraced so long as it complements or accepts this broader identity. The EU's slogan of 'unity in diversity' resonates with such a view; such that despite various national and regional differences, there is still something deeper and more abstract that binds all together as 'Europeans'.⁴ In this respect, it is important to note that embracing difference does not require embracing all difference, thereby slipping into the advocacy of cosmopolitan universalism. The point is rather to assert that difference can exist both within a community as well as being that which defines one community from another. Relations of difference between those within a community might be usefully conceptualized in terms of relations between 'neighbours', whose difference is known from the start and not *de facto* constituted as an anomaly threatening to evolve into some form of external and binary otherness that threatens the community epistemologically (Joenniemi 2010). Put differently, such neighbourly otherness is known to us, does not frighten us, and can rather comfortably be incorporated into broader conceptions of 'we-ness'.

At the same time, accepting that a deeper synthetic identity must underlie differences within a community in turn raises the question of whether communities that constitute themselves through their openness to difference are actually in turn impelled to still rely on moves of (radical) othering. In other words, is it not the case that the above argument simply defers the issue since communities still need to draw boundaries between the deeper shared identity of a community and those outside, such that without doing this they would lack any sense of community? Abizadeh argues such a view is problematic as it erroneously assumes that what may be the case for individuals is also necessarily the case for collectives. While individual identity is inherently particular, collective identity is not – even if collectives do frequently constitute themselves in such ways (Abizadeh 2005: 47). Following Hegel and Charles Taylor, Abizadeh notes that individual identity is inherently particularistic because the attainment of individual self-consciousness is only possible in relation to external others. The role of external others at the individual level is in providing recognition of the self's existence.

This is because either (1a) to see myself as a self I need to be recognized by an external other I also recognize as a self (Hegel), or (1b) my sense of self is only developed and clarified dialogically with external others (Taylor) (Abizadeh 2005: 48).

The problem comes, however, in then arguing that individuals can only identify with a collective that in turn excludes other individuals, and that more particularly constitutes its identity in exclusion to other collectives. The point is that at the collective level the recognition that is required for the constitution of an identity need not come from those located on the outside, but can be provided by the collective's members themselves (Abizadeh 2005: 48). What we indicate in the case study is therefore that core narratives of Nordic communality have often been rather

⁴ We are indebted to Stefan Borg for this point.

indifferent to that lying outside. Instead, Nordic communality has been the product of an internal dialogical process in which individuals and groups throughout the Nordic countries set about recognizing each other as kin, and doing so without necessarily relying on arguments radicalizing those deemed as lying outside the community, or even focusing overly on defining the community's borders in the first place. Following Abizadeh we also argue that one reason this has been the case is because for the most part Scandinavianism has been constituted outside of the language of sovereignty, with the problem of sovereignty in this respect being the extent to which it requires demarcating clear borders between inside and outside (Abizadeh 2005: 49-50).

Combined then, allowing for external difference to be constituted in more benign and even positive terms, and allowing for the community enhancing aspects of embracing difference on the inside, enables us to see how in times of anxiety options exist of reaffirming ontological security beyond that of the securitisation and radicalisation of otherness. In this respect, we therefore note that other than securitisation, strategies of *de-securitisation* and *silencing* are also possible.

Desecuritisation refers to practices where the focus is on overcoming the conflicts and identity discourses of the past instead of on the reproduction of adversarial relations embedded in the constant presence of threats. As a concept desecuritisation has received relatively little attention (though see, Huysmans 2006) or development in terms of what it means in practice as a potential strategy of conflict resolution. Recently, however, Wæver (2008) has fleshed out the concept in more detail, in particular seeing it as an appropriate response to long term conflicts where the initial causes of the conflict are contested, have been forgotten or transmogrified such that the conflict has transformed into a 'self-producing' 'form of life' sustaining specific social identities. Such conflicts, he argues, are rarely 'solved' through finely tuned compromises over the competing aims of the parties, but when the relative status of the conflict in peoples lives is downgraded and the parties move on 'to being preoccupied with something else'. Desecuritisation, he argues, is a way to achieve this through a gradual process of promoting identity transformation. Wæver (2008) envisages desecuritisation as a three phase process. In phase one attempts are made 'to remove the immediate and intense [sense of] existential threat', for example through internally tackling 'extreme interpretations of the other side' and showing them to be misguided. Phase two, he argues, requires providing time to allow identities to evolve and change, with the role of desecuritisation being to aid this process by emphasising the 'importance of creating new agendas that produce new identities'. In other words, the focus is not on solving the conflict, but shifting attention to strengthening self-identity through processes that set the conflict aside. Phase three, he argues, can only come after this 'period of interaction and identity re-definition' following which the sense of existential threat is no longer present and as a result of which the other is no longer seen as a threat at all. By phase three, he argues, desecuritisation becomes a case of emphasising a different reality characterised by different activities and different conceptions of other selves. The classic example, which he has analysed elsewhere (Wæver 1998), is European integration which was characterised by a process of recognising the catastrophic consequences of constant securitisation and using that as a point of departure to try and explore ways of downgrading the impact of securitisation. The approach therefore relies on the ability of the parties to comprehend the adverse effects of constant securitisation and to

gradually begin to re-read and relocate themselves in order to begin to problematise established security narratives, with the ultimate aim of devoting less attention to issues of security.

Desecuritisation, therefore, is to be understood as a transformative, gradual and phased process. In contrast strategies of *silencing* are much more dramatic and refer to situations when established security/securing scripts are ignored, even obliterated, as constitutive arguments from the outset. As we argue below, the Nordic story is much better understood as a process of silencing than desecuritisation, since the Nordic societies appear to have been able to set aside the past from the outset (for why this was so, again see below). What we argue the Nordic case highlights is that it is not necessarily the case that the limits on identities imposed by far-reaching securitisation require that one has to stay within the confines of the dominant and security-gear story. Instead, there may be times when much more openness is apparent even to the degree that the very story can be escaped and substituted by another one void of security-related concerns. In such situations there is less reason to be concerned about whether the parties are aware of the negative consequences of securitisation or have the competence to promote gradual transformation. The crucial question is instead whether competence exists to articulate alternative stories in which difference is not converted into similarity but prevails, but this time in a benign form. From the *silencing* perspective the limitations to transforming identities imposed by securitization are not as constraining as implied in Wæver's account of desecuritisation strategies. Put differently, with identity understood as constructed there is no particular reason to focus merely on the constraints and openings provided within dominant security discourses, rather than to set about constructing a different story from the outset that dismisses security in general as a form of closure and restraining factor.

Taken together, though, what accounts of desecuritisation and silencing highlight is that there is therefore no reason why ontological security cannot be achieved through an openness towards difference and an emphasis on inclusion (Roe 2008: 788). Indeed, as will be noted in the empirical case below, this is one thing of particular interest about the Nordic case and the role of Scandinavianist ideas in this process. Put differently, if an actor's identity-narratives previously have been constituted in rather open and inclusive terms there seems no *a priori* reason why stress and anxiety brought about by structural transformations or critical situations need lead to a closing down of identity as opposed to a reassertion of that openness and inclusivity. That is to say that if we accept claims made by Giddens (1991: 64-9; also see Steele 2005: 526-7) that one of the core disciplining elements of ontological security lies in how the values to which we ascribe in our biographies, collective identities and routines come to circumscribe our behaviour through mechanisms of shame brought about by cognitive dissonance when we fail to live up to our internalised and projected vision of our ideal self, then it may also be that the identified tendency to close down identities in times of stress may also be shame-inducing and a cause of further anxiety (at least on the part of some individuals/societies).⁵

⁵ Although framed in a different theoretical idiom Smith (2008) makes a similar point in his argument concerning the extent to which democracies have an 'obligation to include' those not directly a part of the society.

The Question of Levels

Before turning to the case study one final issue needs to be dealt with, which concerns responding the question of whether it is possible to extrapolate ideas about ontological security from the individual to the collective level? In answering this we need to be careful in determining the relationship between the individual and collective level, as the obvious charge is one of anthropomorphising collective identities/actors and of treating them like persons. Critics argue that collectives like states and nations simply do not have the same psychological needs as persons and we should therefore be cautious of any approach which seeks to treat them as such (McSweeney cited in Roe 2008:785). There are, however, two responses to this that preserve utility for a focus on ontological security at this level.

First, while collective actors like states do not have psychologies as such they are constituted by and seek to promote certain values (Roe 2008: 779). This is to say that collectives like nations and states do have biographies, which are emotive and contested, and which policy leaders acting in their name are aware of and seek to uphold. The values and identities projected in such biographies constrain policy makers in their deliberations. As Steele (2005: 529-30) puts it: 'At a minimum then, states experience identity commitments, and challenges to these identity commitments (either to self, collective, or both) violate the ontological security of a collective state'. As such, we can talk about collectives like nations experiencing shame concerning their failure to live up to their identity/values, or anxiety about their ability to respond adequately to events.

Second, states can also be understood as providing for the ontological security requirements of their citizens. In other words, fundamental to the role of the state and its legitimacy is the ability of the state to mediate people's anxieties by providing for basic individual and social needs, in terms of providing order and physical and economic security, but also in terms of providing reassurance about the nature of the world and the continuity of one's self identity as seen through the collective (Krolikowski 2008; Marlow 2002: 247; Roe 2008: 785). Understood this way it is important to be clear that discourses and practices sustaining a sense of nationalism, for example, act to reinforce the ontological security of the individuals that consume them, rather than the ontological security of the nation (or state) as such (Krolikowski 2008), though at the same time create a rationale for looking at collective level practices as the site of core debates about ontological security.

To conclude the theoretical discussion we have argued that it is useful to distinguish between ontological security as a 'state of being' and various 'ontological security seeking strategies'. On this second point we have noted that ontological security can be a product of the adherence to routines, the upholding of a particular self-narrative, or be the result of a process of finding oneself within a larger group identity. In times of existential anxiety, however, actors may respond in different ways, either by holding on to the identities and routines they know, or by adapting them in ways they believe fit better to the new situation. Adaptation can also take different forms, including the closing down of identities through the 'securitisation of subjectivity', or alternatively resisting such temptations through practices of 'desecuritisation' or 'silencing'.

In this context, it is worth reaffirming that different strategies and practices for achieving ontological security are also liable to entail different implications and possibilities for the construction of political and regional orders, borders and the nature of political space more generally. Put differently, different responses to feelings of existential anxiety and ontological insecurity will entail very different consequences for thinking about appropriate policy responses and the effects which such policies are likely to have in constituting the broader security environment beyond considerations of ontological security.

Ontological Security and Nordic Peace

The need for separating processes of identity from those of security and, in that context, for sensitivity towards issues of ontological security and a re-theorisation of difference in constituting identity, can be highlighted with regard to attempts to account for what is often viewed as the exceptionally peaceful relations existing between the Nordic states. In this respect the Nordic case calls out for analysis given that it indicates a rather dramatic transformation from earlier periods when Scandinavia/Norden was wracked by war. However, as indicated by Wæver (2008), instead, the utterly peaceful nature of the region has become viewed as self-evident with this ‘retroactive normalisation obscur[ing] the analytical puzzle’.

This is not to say that explanations accounting for Nordic peace are absent, but we would argue they remain trapped in traditional IR logics and as such have failed to understand what is special about it, and why the case may be of broader relevance. Various historians and political scientists, for example, have adopted structuralist perspectives to account for the demise of the previous war system in the nineteenth century and its replacement with more peaceful intra-Nordic relations. According to such views Nordic peace has been largely consequent upon the way in which changes in the balance of power among the European great powers have impacted on the region and the ability of Nordic decision-makers to utilise such structural transformations to the region’s advantage. For example, the specific great power settlement after the Napoleonic Wars, or during the Cold War the idea of the existence of the so called ‘Nordic Balance’ according to which the continuance of Nordic peace was a consequence of convincing the great powers that if the Soviet Union put more pressure of Finland it would be met by NATO strengthening its relationship with Denmark and Norway, and vice versa (Arter 1999: 279-87; Noreen 1983). As such Nordic peace is less to do with the qualities of the region or events within it per se, as about the Nordic periphery abiding to the dictates of the broader European system of power politics, with its various and fluctuating balances and alliances between the great powers. From this perspective there is nothing unique about the region as such, since explanations for Nordic peace are to be found as much outside the region at the broader structural level, as within it. Such approaches, however, are problematic. First, the very durability of Nordic peace across diverse structural contexts from the early nineteenth century through to the present is arguably difficult to explain. Second, while the focus on structural factors may help explain cooperation between the Nordic states for strategic interests at specific points in time, it is unclear that a structural analysis can take us very far in explaining the move from cooperation to the emergence of a strong sense of community and solidarity in the

region. Our argument is rather that understanding Nordic peace requires stepping outside the traditional great power script.

A second set of explanations assume that the previous war system was eventually tamed by the gradual implementation of desecuritising measures, the result being the emergence of a new and less war-prone security regime in the region, though one that did not challenge the overall European system. According to this view Nordic peace is in part the product of a number of facilitating conditions (compatible values, shared language, religion and culture, economic and social ties) which were further strengthened through increasing degrees of institutionalisation and communication, which in turn helped foster a sense of regional community (e.g. Archer 2003). It is such views that support claims that the region should be considered a prime example of a Deutschian security community (Deutsch et al. 1957). Again, there are a number of problems with this approach. First, empirically the focus on growing levels of intra-Nordic communications, institutionalisation and economic interdependencies tends to downplay the fact that these things were already well developed during periods when Nordic war, rather than Nordic peace, seemed to have the upper hand in the region. Second, the emphasis on commonalities again exhibits a view that the existence of difference and otherness is as such a limiting factor in the construction of community and common identity(ies). Without suggesting that a focus on commonality was unimportant in discourses of Scandinavianism what we argue below is that this has only been part of the picture, and one which fails to account for the importance of the preservation and valuing of internal difference. Third, contrary to the claim that the Nordic security community resulted from systematic processes of desecuritisation, we argue that processes of silencing were historically much more significant. Nordic peace and community, we argue, has never been particularly inscribed with project-like features of overcoming a regional security dilemma in the same way that European integration is often understood and justified (Wæver 1998).

The region is important, therefore, not as an example of how the security environment of a peripheral part of Europe has been the product of changing power balances and machinations between the great powers, or as an example of a security community which has sought to keep the broader structural pressures at bay while remaining firmly entrenched within the broader system. Rather, it requires attention because of how the region appears to have broken through the traditional requirements of security and power politics as understood in IR. That is to say that the emergence of a new cooperative security regime appears to have taken the form of a rupture escaping the former security system entirely and without relying on measures of desecuritisation identifying a particular security problem and attempting to fix it gradually. The fact that this took place quietly and without a sense of open revolt against the broader European power political system no doubt accounts for the lack of attention the case has received and the fact that its anti-structural aspects have yet to be systematically identified.

To demonstrate the salience of the Nordic case and what a focus on ontological security can provide, in the following we therefore focus on explaining the emergence of more peaceful regional relations and sense of shared Scandinavian community and identity during the nineteenth century. As such, the focus is on exploring how ideas of Scandinavia(nism) and Norden served to provide for a sense of self-certainty and ontological security in the region, with these in turn shaping the development of the

regional security environment. By limiting the analysis to the nineteenth century we are not suggesting that narratives and routines established in this period have remained unchanged through to the present. To the contrary, we would argue that the role of ideas about Scandinavia in the achievement of ontological security has transformed across time. In this respect, ontological security can never be fully achieved as identity always remains contingent, in process, constructed and not given, and hence basically insecure. As such, our claim below that in the nineteenth century the Nordics succeeded in constituting a sense of commonality different from that generally accounted for in IR theory, by breaking the usually rather self-producing linkage drawn between a safe identity and strict border-drawing with 'threatening' others/difference, does not imply that this state of affairs is here to stay. Indeed, as we indicate briefly in the Conclusion, today change may be in the air. To extend the analysis beyond the nineteenth century in a more systematic way would, however, require more space than is available here and is part of the broader research agenda of which this paper is a part.

From Gothic Dynasticism to Scandinavian Nationalism

Our aim, then, is to provide a revisionist account of the shift from Nordic war to Nordic peace during the course of the nineteenth century. During this period we argue practices of securitisation could still be identified, however, processes of silencing emerged which broke the totalising nature of securitising discourses, ultimately creating space for a new approach to constituting identity and regional relations. To emphasise, however, silencing entailed shifting to a new narrative framework, as opposed to a desecuritising approach which would have entailed systematically engaging with previous securitising narratives in order to destabilise them. Fundamentally the analysis focuses on the shift from dynastic states to nation-states in the nineteenth century as a result of which ideas about Scandinavia became tied to discourses of nationalism and sovereignty. In this process new Scandinavian myths were introduced to provide a basis for legitimising 'new' national identities and 'peoples states', new in the sense that they were neither predicated on a strict differentiation between self and other, nor did they call for difference to be collapsed into far-reaching similarity.

Prior to 1815 it is often argued that the region was dominated by traditional security concerns of war, conflict and attempts by the Nordic kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden to dominate each other and neighbouring lands (Østergård 1997: 32). In other words, intra-Nordic relations were dominated by issues of threat and the balance of power. Ontological security in this context was largely a product of practices, discourses and routines securitizing subjectivity in the face of threatening and external otherness.

An important constitutive component of identity discourses prior to the early nineteenth century were narratives of an ancient Gothic Scandinavian society, which were used to legitimise dynastic rule and imperial ambitions (Henningsson 1997: 98). Gothic narratives, such as those of Olof Rudbeck, writing in the seventeenth century, proclaimed the political and moral superiority of northern (particularly Swedish) civilization and as such were designed to support Nordic dynastic, and in this sense pre-modern, ambitions in respect of European power politics (Henningsson 1997: 101-104, 116). Gothicism provided a deep historicised biography of the origins of society

and the position of different actors within it. Internally it served to justify a stratified social order and distribution of power, while in terms of foreign policy it supported wars of conquest and imperialist adventures.

After 1815, however, these adversarial discursive structures began to unravel to be challenged and eventually replaced by narratives and routines in which ontological security was to be achieved in much less securitised and exclusive terms and where the emphasis on enmity was replaced by more benign and inclusive understandings between the Nordic neighbours. Space for a new as well as differently bordered framework and reconceptualisation of Scandinavian ideas and identity, in the first instance, was provided by the structural changes associated with the outcome of the Napoleonic wars, which saw Sweden cede Finland to Russia and lose regions in northern Germany, while Denmark was forced to cede Norway, which after a brief period of independence of several months, entered into a union with Sweden. Ultimately this changed geostrategic perspectives in Sweden and Denmark, with both being compelled to accept that their dreams of becoming major actors on the European scene had collapsed. As Sørensen and Stråth (1997: 15) note, “In Denmark and Sweden, the predominating crisis mood turned not in the direction of military revenge but towards domestic consolidation within their new territories”.

This change was accompanied by the transformation of internal power relations within the Nordic kingdoms as dynastic absolutist rule was challenged by ideologies of national awakening, seeking to locate sovereignty *in the people* rather than the monarch. The idea emerged of the peasants as lying at the heart of the nation as the “carriers of freedom, equality, and education”, with this myth becoming crucial in constructing national communities after 1815 (Sørensen and Stråth 1997: 14; Hilson 2006: 195-9). This valorisation of the peasants as the folkish others helped further in leaving the divisive and highly securitised past behind. Put differently, space was created for viewing past conflicts and the states’ grandiose ambitions as being the result of a now moribund dynastic politics, with intra-Nordic wars being understood as the wars of kings/nobility rather than peoples. Indeed, throughout the period a connection between the ‘people’ and ‘peace’ became sedimented with the view being that the people should have much more say over foreign policy, with the Swedish activist Klas Arnoldson claiming in a book entitled *Lov – ikke Krig mellom Folkene* (1890) (‘Law – not war between peoples’) that it was monarchs that desired conflict, not peoples (Leira 2010). Indeed, as Leira (2010) notes, in Norway by the turn of the twentieth century the argument was being clearly made by influential commentators, like the poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, that the aim should be to reject the European system of power politics entirely and to give up on ‘foreign policy’ as traditionally defined in terms of the governmentality of *realpolitik*. The key point, however, is that understood as not being ‘our wars’ such intra-Nordic (and indeed extra-Nordic) conflicts could be forgotten in favour of new stories of legitimation and identity. In other words, structural change was not met by strategies of securitisation, or even of desecuritisation (in so far as there was very little talk of the need to overcome past conflicts and escape history, with this as the foundational glue driving new claims to subjectivity and identity forward), instead the past was simply shamed and therefore also ignored or forgotten as in some sense not being our past or our conflicts, and

therefore unimportant. Silencing was the order of the day when it came to devising new narratives.⁶

With the end of pre-modern or even anti-modern dynasticism the Gothic narratives legitimising state power and foreign adventures no longer worked, or were no longer viewed as appropriate for the emergent order. Instead, new Scandinavian myths aimed at creating a shared sense of community better in line with incoming modernity were introduced to provide a new basis for legitimising 'new' national identities and 'peoples states' (folkhem). What was at stake was therefore the ontological security of the different national projects, with Scandinavian narratives, routines and practices primarily being invoked for that purpose. The Scandinavian as such became a means to nationalist ends (Henningsen 1997: 116).

Difference within Unity

The new nineteenth century emphasis on Scandinavianism had various elements to it. Across the region the idea of Scandinavia played an important and unifying role for nationalists engaged in processes of national awakening and creating new legitimating narratives to replace those that previously supported dynastic rule. In this context, nationalists across the region to different degrees appealed to a Scandinavian/Nordic heritage as a way in which to enhance the ontological security of their own nation, even while simultaneously they frequently sought to demarcate territorial and identity related national borders in direct reference to each other. Thus, intra-Nordic othering in the constitution of national identities saw Finns defining Finnishness to a significant degree in opposition to Sweden, Norwegians differentiating themselves against Swedes and Danes, and Danes and Swedes differentiating themselves against each other.

Interestingly, though, in this process of constituting distinct national identity narratives, even in opposition to each other, appeals to Scandinavian myths also implicitly drew the different nations together, locating the *different* emergent peoples-nations as part of the *same* historical heritage. Commonality, kinship, solidarity and difference were accepted as part of the story and were predicated on highlighting commonalities in terms of language, religion, climate and geography, while at the same time avoiding the imposition of homogeneity on the community. As Stråth (2005: 209) notes, a common icon of Scandinavianism was a tree with shared roots but different branches. Difference, therefore, did not translate into otherness in the sense of an anti-self. Instead, the construction entailed a strong sense of 'difference within unity' as it was accepted that the Scandinavian/Nordic could be told and appropriated in different ways. Accepting that the other nations might constitute their national identities in respect of the Nordic was not problematised, even if sometimes nationalists competed to define their nation as the true inheritors or purest manifestation of the original Norse people (Hilson 2006: 206). Hence, the idea of

⁶ A comparison with European integration is potentially illustrative at this point in that, unlike the Nordic case, World War II was clearly understood as a war of peoples (not simply leaders). In this respect, it simply could not be 'forgotten' and discounted through silencing. Instead, integration was part of a broader strategy of desecuritisation aimed at undermining entrenched enemy images and pervading hostilities in Europe. This link between integration and security remains evident today and can be seen in the oft-repeated pronouncements of European leaders that if the integration process falters Europe may begin to unravel with parochial nationalism once more raising its ugly head.

what the Nordic was remained relatively open, constituted differently in different national settings and yet simultaneously forming a unifying framework. Ultimately this had important effects in terms of the constitution of the broader political and security environment, as the new emphasis on Scandinavianism entailed a notable dose of intra-Nordic community building explicitly premised on breaking down former internal and previously rather adversarial divides.

Temptations of Sovereignty and the Failure of Pan-Scandinavianism?

In its most developed form this process was evident in the ambitions of the so-called *Scandinavian Movement*. A largely bourgeois enterprise (Nilsson 1997: 216) the Scandinavian Movement explicitly sought to create space for viewing intra-Scandinavian and Nordic borders in connective rather than divisive terms. Central to this ambition was the routinised practice of meeting the other as a brother through various border transcending encounters – parties/speeches. The most ambitious in the Movement conceptualised Scandinavianism in terms of a pan-Scandinavian nationalist political project (Østergård 1994: 13-14; 1997: 39). In other words, for them temptations of sovereignty and more generally a modern reading of international relations entered the frame with Scandinavianism incorporating self-deterministic elements akin to the nationalist movements seeking to unify Italy and Germany at the time. In this rendering of Scandinavianism rather standard aspects of statist discourse remained evident – with Scandinavian identity/community being constituted in part through securitizing practices in regard to other European powers. The idea was to embark on a Schmittian process of asserting self-certainty through closure by reducing radically the categories of identity available in order to bring about a united and hence also increasingly homogenous Scandinavian nation-state, i.e. a polity that would once more be able to compete on the stage of European power politics. Such securitizing and exclusion-oriented discourses constituted Norden in regard to threatening external others such as Germany or Russia (see Holmberg 1946: 282-3), or in a softer form demarcated Norden as democratic, Protestant and progressive, in contrast to a Catholic, conservative and capitalist Europe (Stråth 1994; Kliemann 2005: 227-34).

In the end, however, this form of Scandinavianism premised on customary discourses of political space, and challenging the sovereignty of the existing states and the aspirations of nationalists in Finland and Norway for self-determination, failed. As Stråth (2005: 210) notes, whereas in Denmark and Sweden there were those who aspired to create a Scandinavian nation-state, in Norway Scandinavia was always seen as secondary to the national project, supportive of it and linking Norway into a broader family of nations, but not something that might potentially digest the nation into a broader sovereignty-centred project. It is for this reason that various commentators have emphasized that the invocation of the Nordic has for the most part *not been* in the cause of postulating the existence of a supranational Nordic community (i.e. the aim of pan-Scandinavianists), but has rather been invoked as part of the ‘cohesive mortar’ of nationalist ideologies (e.g. Sørensen and Stråth 1997: 15, 19, 22; Thorskilden 1997: 142). This also helps explain why processes of institutionalisation only emerged once the building of nation-states had also been carried out in Norway (1905) and Finland (1917), but also why continuing institutionalisation has never been understood as central to the preservation of a Scandinavian identity or community in the way it has with the EU. The key year for

the defeat of pan-Scandinavian dreamers, however, was 1864, when despite promises of help Sweden ultimately decided not to come to Denmark's assistance in a show of Scandinavian brotherhood in its war against Schleswig-Holstein (supported by Prussia and Austria) (Hilson 2008: 17-8; Østergård 1997: 40). In essence, then, the Swedes refused to bring the question of security-as-violence into the discourse on Nordic commonality, following which the Danes lost their faith in any overarching Scandinavian national project.

Although one way of interpreting 1864 is as the failure of Scandinavianism (certainly as a nascent and essentialist project of national self-determination designed to usurp the existing states) a different reading is also possible. After 1864 political discourses of Scandinavianism were replaced with an emphasis on locating solidarity in the cultural sphere. Instead of Scandinavianism being a project aimed at abandoning the established Scandinavian and Nordic states in favour of a new common Nordic nation-state, it instead developed as a complement to ongoing nationalist projects in the region.⁷ Difference internal to the configuration constructed thus became easier to accept as something enriching the Scandinavian/Nordic unity. Combined with this there was also less focus on divisive lines *vis-à-vis* an exterior viewed as hostile and threatening.

The failure of pan-Scandinavianism therefore resulted in a rather non-homogenous and loosely bordered configuration where arguments of othering associated with sovereignty, or demands for eradicating difference within the community, largely dropped out. Indeed, Henningsen argues that Nordism survived precisely because of Sweden's decision in 1864 not to follow a rather standard way of viewing nordicity and international relations at large. As he puts it, after 1864 the idea of a Scandinavian unified political subject became impossible. Instead, a construction based on cultural and emotive identity became dominant, with this identity notably being one that "did not need to withstand any political test" (Henningsen 1997: 117; also Stråth 2005: 221) owing to its basically non-instrumental and non-essentialist nature. In our view, this helps explain why since the nineteenth century security has failed to dominate discourses regarding the essence of intra-Nordic relations, instead remaining at the fringes of the debate.

In summary, then, in the nineteenth century the Nordic was largely constituted in regard to the unity of difference in internal relations. The issue was not one of leaving the past behind (desecuritisation). Instead, ontological security emerged through routines of forgetting the war-infested aspects of the past in favour of focusing on the new – in the form of the various nation-building projects. In this context 'Scandinavia' existed as an idea, or cultural and emotive resource, which the different nationalists across the region drew upon in processes of building up national identities. Although the central themes changed to some extent over time and there were those in the Scandinavian Movement who favoured a pan-Scandinavian political project premised on great power politics, these latter aspirations received little popular support while arguably the rejection of the initial discourses pertaining to dynasticism in favour of peoples-states in turn also made it harder to narrate Scandinavianism through the identification of clear enemies as previously. In short, despite variations

⁷ The distinction between political and cultural Scandinavianism is discussed by Hemstad (2008: 22-5) and Thorkildsen (1994).

in the way both unity and difference as a part of that unity were constructed, the constitutive discourse never turned into something calling for unity and homogeneity in regard to some external and threatening otherness which would thereby have opened the gates for decisive moves of securitization.

Finally, although pan-Scandinavianism failed to capture the popular imagination one side effect of the utilisation of ideas about Scandinavia in support of the national projects was the more general emergence of a Scandinavian identity and affiliation and the initial emergence of a Scandinavian transnational community built around a search for kinship, revalorising history, and emphasising the common folk. In an era of sovereignty, therefore, one of the interesting things is how ideas of Scandinavia were utilised in order to uphold and assert the sovereign aspirations of nations, while simultaneously emerging ideas of a broader Scandinavian kinship therefore escaped the confines and strictures of sovereignty. Openness to internal difference was therefore part of the ontological security producing routines and narratives from the beginning.

Conclusion

The case of nineteenth century Norden is one which we have argued challenges the link drawn between security and identity in much IR theorising. On the one hand, it does this by demonstrating that the relationship between identity and difference/otherness is often much more complicated than often assumed. In this respect bringing in debates about ontological security has enabled us to show: firstly, that security is not always about physical security concerns and questions of survival more broadly and; secondly, that a sense of self-certainty and stability around identity can be achieved through a variety of ways of relating the self to difference. Put differently, community does not always require emphasising (moves towards) homogeneity, just as upholding identity need not be premised on securitising otherness. On the other hand, the case also demonstrates that the way out of securitised situations of conflict need not only rely on processes of desecuritisation focused on systematic attempts to challenge and undermine established narratives and routines demonising the other and via which reasserting the lack of trust in the other becomes a way of carving out boundaries and asserting a sense of identity. As the case highlights, it may actually be that in some situations systematic processes of desecuritisation can be circumvented with a ‘silencing’ approach via which the conflicts of the past are either forgotten or seen as disconnected from a new situation and not ‘our responsibility’. Which approach is most relevant is liable to be dependent upon the specific historical situation. In the Nordic context the shift from dynasticism to peoples-states enabled the past to be rejected and left behind rather easily, with previous conflicts depicted as those of kings and not peoples. By contrast, to the extent to which the Second World War was viewed as a war of peoples, of ‘our’ nation fighting ‘their’ nation, and within which negative stereotypes and mistrust of the other was somewhat firmly entrenched, then desecuritisng strategies have arguably been much more relevant as Wæver has indicated.

In conclusion, however, one final point that needs to be reasserted is that since identity is inherently contingent there is nothing fixed about how ontological security is to be achieved. Hence, just because in the nineteenth century the emergence of

Nordic peace entailed a considerable dose of silencing and of openness to internal and external otherness does not mean that this has been determining in terms of how Nordicity has been narrated and contributed to a sense of ontological security subsequently. In this respect the story has been a developing one. In terms of continuities it might be noted how during the Cold War it became common to represent the region as exceptional in its peacefulness, rationality and progress towards modernity (Browning 2007; Musial 2009: 288-90). Although the story entailed clear distinctions from a 'conflict prone' and 'backward' Europe securitisation was avoided. Norden was presented as an example to be copied; thus although temporally in the lead the message was that the border between self and other was one which over time could dissipate.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, the status of Norden/Scandinavia as a source of ontological security has been challenged. As Wæver (1992) noted in the early 1990s, the end of the Cold War led to a considerable amount of soul searching in Norden. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the Nordic recipe of third way reconciliation between East and West no longer appeared as progressive as previously, while the collapse of the communist planned economies shook faith in the Nordic economic model. In this respect modernity's future appeared to have shifted more in favour of Anglo-American economic liberalism (for a critique see, Patomäki 2000). Consequently the 1990s were a period when for some, at least, established understandings of Scandinavia/Norden became viewed as anxiety-inducing and a source of ontological *insecurity*. Proclamations of the death of the Nordic model were, for instance, made at the highest levels.⁸ In this context, Scandinavia/Norden had become conceptualised as a burden and as something to be escaped, and in nations like Finland and Sweden by the mid-1990s it rather appeared salvation was to be found in Europe instead (Browning 2008: 221-58). At the same time, the last decade has also seen the rise of more exclusionary forms of nationalism in the region, in particular in the form of populist anti-immigrant (especially anti-Muslim) sentiment also indicating that openness towards internalised difference is closing down with a growing focus on emphasising homogeneity in drawing the boundaries of identity.

Alternatively, today it is also possible to identify a revaluing of Norden in more positive terms and as a continued source of confidence and ontological security. The question in this instance, though, is what type of Norden is envisaged. In this respect, what is perhaps most notable has been the return of ideas reminiscent of the goals of the pan-Scandinavianists of the nineteenth century, whose sovereignty-centred plans ultimately came unstuck after 1864. Gunnar Wetterberg (2009), for instance, recently floated a proposal for a Nordic federation with joint foreign, security and economic policies, including a common figurehead with the current Danish Queen Margarete II as the prime candidate. The idea of a Nordic federation appears to enjoy some support among the public, albeit key political decision-makers have been less enthusiastic. There is, however, also movement to be detected at more official and state-related levels. Most notably, the Nordic foreign ministers recently invited the former Norwegian Foreign and Defense Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg to prepare a report on the future Nordic foreign and security policies. The report brought security to the fore

⁸ Carl Bildt, for one, argued in *International Herald Tribune* (24 February 1992) that "The time for the Nordic model has passed. ...", while Finnish Prime Minister Esko Aho even proclaimed "The Nordic Model is Dead" (Quoted in Hanhimäki 1997: 187). Among scholars influential in the debate Wæver (1992) coined the concept of 'Nordic nostalgia' to reflect changing views towards Norden.

as a common theme calling for increased internal coherence in view of perceived shared external threats. The foreign ministers accepted a number of the recommendations concerning issues such as rescue at sea, joint surveillance of sea areas in the North and improvements in the ability to deal with accidents at sea, although they notably shelved more far-reaching proposals for joint security guarantees in cases where “a Nordic country would be subject to external attack or undue pressure” (Stoltenberg, 2009: 34). Thus, security was once more explicitly drawn into debates on the nature of Nordic community. This desire to establish a more authoritative sense of self through cooperation in the field of security again has parallels with 1864 – not least because for the time being the call has been rejected in its full extent. As a form of decisionism, however, what all these proposals point towards is a significant potential decline in intra-Nordic borderlines and an emphasis on homogenisation in that the proposals would reduce the power and standing of the existing nation-states.

As we can see then, there is nothing inevitable about how ontological security can be achieved. In the Nordic case ideas about Scandinavia have tended to draw the Scandinavians together into a rather peaceable and open transnational community. While similarities between the Scandinavian nations have been noted, so too have differences, yet these differences have not been radicalised into enmity and outright otherness. However, there is nothing inevitable about this and as such the continued viability of claims about the region’s exemplary status as a region of peace are dependent on the outcome of contemporary choices regarding the construction of identity and self-certainty in respect of difference. The bigger point, however, is that Norden demonstrates how deferring or postponing Scmittian type decisions regarding the bounds of community need not be a source of ontological insecurity as implied in much IR theorisation. To understand this, however, requires opening up the relationship between security and identity and rethinking the relationship between identity and difference.

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