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The Nineteenth Century Norwegian-Swedish Border

Imagined Community or Pluralistic Security System?

ABSTRACT The aim of the article is to study the border between Norway and Sweden during the nineteeth century on the basis of Karl Deutsch's theory of "pluralistic security community" from the 1950s and modern international border theory and research literature on nation building processes.

The establishment of a non-violent border relationship including the development of a shared Norwegian-Swedish belief that political problems must and can be resolved by processes of peaceful change, was an issue that Deutsch dated to the years after the peaceful dissolution of the political union between them —in 1905. Confronted with an overview of the history of the border during the union period from 1814 to 1905, the article claims that the demilitarized union zone was established already in the 1820s. The border was gradually solidified as a consequence of the development of modern cartography, but its significance was weakened as a result of the industrialisation during the nineteeth century. On the emotional level it seems possible to find expressions of bad feelings based on bad historical experiences having political consequences, up till today.

KEYWORDS border studies, Scandinavian history, Scandinavian studies, peace and war studies, the Scandinavian union, Scandinavian regionalism, security systems

Introduction

In 1953 Karl Deutsch presented his theory on "pluralistic security communities" in international politics (Deutsch 1953: 17): regions in which large-scale use of violence had become unlikely or even unthinkable. The term was extended to become a tool for describing groups of people who shared the belief that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of peaceful change, that is without resort to large-scale physical force. Furthermore, people within a pluralistic security community shared sympathy and trust towards each other (Deutsch et al. 1957).

While Deutsch's original example of a "pluralistic security community" was the demilitarized US-Canadian borderline in 1819 (Deutsch et al. 1957: 34 f.), his most famous case was the establishment of the Scandinavian non-violence state system after the dissolution of the Norwegian-Swedish union in 1905. Later Scandinavian researchers have accepted and confirmed his theory on the establishment and the content of the Scandinavian "security community."[1]

In this article I will question the dating of the so-called *Scandinavian non-violence border system* by confronting it with some observations from Scandinavian border history. I will also discuss the relevance of Karl Deutsch's concept by comparing it to recent border theory as well as nation building theory mainly from the point of view of Norwegian historiography, in order to increase our understanding of the union and of "security communities."

In my opinion there are examples of armed threats related to Norwegian-Swedish border disagreements several years after the dissolution of the Scandinavian union, and the disarmament of the border between those two countries was established almost ninety years before 1905. In my view—and in concordance with modern border research—the development of the Scandinavian border was jeopardised by contradictory circumstances during the nineteenth century, but the dominant feature was that the border tended to become an ideological force for the construction of national identities in Norway, while its function as an armed defence line against foreign invaders gradually decreased during the peaceful ninety years of union with Sweden.

The border, the union and the sentiments

The nineteenth century started with political turmoil in Scandinavia. In 1814 Denmark lost its 434-year-old Norwegian province. Sweden was authorized by the great powers to capture it, but in the interim period between Danish and Swedish rule, the Norwegian elite seized the opportunity to convene a

constitutional assembly in which they adopted a constitution and thereby established a sovereign kingdom. Many of the articles in that constitution and its preliminary work had the character of being "instruments of quasi-international law" ("et kvasifolkerettslig instrument," Michalsen 2008: 14). They thereby strengthened the boundary towards Sweden.

The Swedish king had either to accept Norwegian sovereignty or to conquer Norway by force. He chose a combination of these options. First he invaded Norway. Then he accepted a cease-fire on the conditions that the Norwegian constitution was adapted to accommodate a union with Sweden and that the Norwegian parliament elected him as the new Norwegian king. In so doing he accepted the maintenance of the Swedish-Norwegian border. Nevertheless, the long-term Swedish plan was to erase the boundary to establish a new Scandinavian "peninsula-state" under Swedish rule, a "natural state," protected behind the Baltic Sea, The North Atlantic Ocean, and the wilderness in the high north. This was the dream of Crown Prince and later King Karl Johan of Norway and Sweden and his successors until the Norwegians forced the dissolution of the union in 1905 (Berg 2001; Berg 2005a). The main question in the account of the union by Bo Stråth (Stråth 2005) is why the integration project—and consequently the erasing of the border—failed.

The Norwegian-Swedish border is one of the few European state boundaries that have not been repositioned during the twentieth century (Wiberg 1996: 328) and thereby one of the oldest international borders still in existence. Its southern part was demarcated in 1661, and its northern part, up to the Varanger Fjord, was surveyed in 1751. However, the entire boundary demarcation was not accomplished until in 1897 when the so-called *Three-Country Cairn* (Norwegian *Treriksrøysa*, Swedish *Treriksröset*) was erected at the intersection between the two Scandinavian kingdoms and the Grand Duchy of Finland (Kjellén 1899: 300; Berg 2005a). At sea the border was still unclear when the union vanished in 1905. A lobster field, the Pig Skerries at the entrance of the Oslo fjord, caused numerous conflicts between Norwegian and Swedish fishermen. After exchanges of military threats between the two countries, the question of jurisdiction over these sunken rocks was turned over to international arbitration in 1909 (Berg 2005a: 191 f.).

The history of the Norwegian-Swedish boundary is in other words long and eventful. And although the borderline was stable during the nineteenth century, the memory of mutual armed border conflicts was vivid. In 1814 it was less than hundred years since the Swedish warrior king, Karl XII, fell at the Norwegian border fortress Fredriksten in a campaign to conquer Norway. During the union period that fortress, as well as that of Kongsvinger, became sacred in Norway as symbols of Norwegian resistance against any

foreign—that is Swedish—invader (Berg 2005b). There are good reasons to trust the many Swedish reports on Norwegian bad feelings towards Sweden at the beginning of the union period, exemplified by a leading politician, Gustaf Hamilton, in the 1820s: "The Norwegian nation hated the Swedes, as is usual between peoples who share the same border."[2]

Borderline and nation building

The Norwegians had good reasons for their fear that Sweden wanted the obliteration of the border. Their union partner also had the means to erase the border.

During the first fifteen formative years of the history of the Scandinavian union the highest state official in Norway, appointed by the king, was the governor (Norwegian *stattholder*). He served as both chairman of the government and as supreme commander of the army. He was appointed from the ranks of public servants in Sweden. This was an obvious indication of lack of royal confidence in his Norwegian subjects (Berg 2001: 82 f.).

During the first ten years after 1814 the governor carried out the disarmament of the border by shutting down a number of fortresses and even demolishing others. As all fortresses in question had been erected against Sweden and had been used as attack platforms as well as defence in many Danish-Swedish wars, this was hardly surprising (Berg 2001: 30 f., 35–41). But it is interesting that the pacification of the Norwegian border defence implied that from the beginning of the 1820s the border *was*, what Karl Deutsch observed it *to become* after 1905, without effective military fortifications. Already from the beginning of the 1820s the military installations between Sweden and Norway were removed or disarmed. The dissolution of the union in 1905 and the demolition of some new (and insignificant) border fortresses that had been erected from 1901 onward did not mark the beginning of peaceful neighbourliness, but a return to normalcy after a few years of militaristic sentiments around the turn of the century. The demilitarization of the border took place around 1820, not after 1905.

Although the Swedish army did invade Norway in 1821 to force the Parliament to political concessions (Berg 2001: 67–70), the liquidation of the border by military means was out of the question after 1814. It is however an important point in political science that boundaries between states are ambiguous entities. They can be both demarcation lines and integration belts simultaneously (Schack 2002). Their *significance* can (and does) vary from time to time and from case to case (Tägil 1977; Prescott 1990).

The significance of the Scandinavian border was first and foremost dependent on the development of the history of certain sciences during the nineteenth century, primarily geographical science.

The famous theory of the nation state as an imagined community was invented by Benedict Anderson, who also has identified the map, the census and the museum as key factors behind the creation of nation states (Anderson 1991: 163–185). The professional and scientific mapping of national territories was—like the collections of more or less national items in museums and the development of the profession of the historian—expressions of the development of modern nationalism. The mapping was "loaded with political significance," especially in the turbulent Napoleonic period (Short 2001: 15). Geography was especially important in the construction of national identity in "the fledgling nations" (Short 2001: 15) such as the USA, were the "boundary makers" "personified the intimate tie between mapping and politics" (Wilford 2000: 205, 228). From 1838 the American map-makers were even organized in an elite branch of the Army, the Corps of Topographical Engineers (Wilford 2000: 227). In general this military dominance in the development of cartography can be illustrated with the fact that as late as 1867 about half of the delegates at the European congress for measuring the longitudes, were officers (Widmalm 1990: 119).

Norway offers an excellent case for the development of politicized cartography. The land surveying competence was situated in the army until the middle of the nineteenth century (Berg 2001: 91–98). It was an obvious part of the physical nation building. The process of the political mapping of Norway in order to reinforce its boundaries can even be dated with great accuracy.

In 1836 the Norwegian parliament demanded that the army—under solely national command since the death of the last Swedish governor—should draw up a national plan for the military defence of Norway. This plan was delivered by the military specialists in 1840. It disregarded the official geographical and geopolitical justification for the Swedish-Norwegian union, namely the theory of the "peninsula-state" defended by the surrounding seas and bound together by the mountain range, Kjølen, in the middle. Instead of this official doctrine it launched the idea that the two union states consisted of several geographically independent defence districts divided by the Kjølen mountain range. The western districts grew out of and originated from Norwegian rivers, running from the valleys north of Oslo and south into the Skagerrak and the North Sea. The Norwegian rivers made up an independent water system, according to the Norwegian defence planners, while a major Swedish river, Klarälven, and the Swedish lakes south of its mouth were another independent water system. In other words, the unionist geographical peninsula perspective was challenged by a national-geographical and topographical border concept based on the watershed between the drainage basins and the outlets of the different rivers (Berg 2001: 121–124). Thus the border was consolidated.

The scientific reasons for this cartographic consolidation were based on the idea that borders between states as a rule ought to follow watercourses and rivers. This theory originated from German cartography in the 1820s. It challenged an older French geographical theory that claimed that mountains, not watersheds, were the elements for natural borders. Swedish cartography belonged to the French camp in this geographical struggle (Widmalm 1990; Kjellén 1899: 326 f.). Furthermore, the scientific split between the Scandinavian map-makers reflected and reinforced the political split.

As Norwegian and Swedish cartographers were ordered by their common king to draw a Scandinavian map, they failed to carry out their order due to their inability to compromise on the key question of where to define the meridian of the union (Widmalm 1990: 363 f.). The Norwegian cartographers demanded that the Scandinavian map should be rooted at a meridian in Norway—in Kongsvinger with its national connotations (Berg 2001: 108–110; Slagstad 2008: 22). Their Swedish colleagues wanted the common meridian to run along the middle of Scandinavia, in other words in Sweden. Thus with two meridians, the union map became inaccurate. Both maps actually became misleading as a result of this first (and by no means last) Norwegian-Swedish struggle for national prestige with political implications. The geography was politicized as a result of political fear of amalgamation. The significance of the border was enhanced due to the Norwegian opposition to Scandinavian integration.

The fight over the meridian was—as well as the opposing views on rivers and mountains in map constructions—an international struggle within the geographical profession. The Americans, for instance, preferred Philadelphia and later Washington as prime meridians, while the British insisted on Greenwich. The latter turned out to be the winner. But as late as in 1881 there were still fourteen different prime meridians in use in international cartography (Short 2001: 15, 189; Wilford 2000: 257 f.).

The American geographer, John Short, has labelled the map as a prime ideological apparatus for the education of the citizens in the field of national consciousness during the nineteenth century (Short 2001: 11 and passim). It obviously provided some important premises for Frederick Jackson Turner and his thesis on "[t]he Significance of the Frontier in American History" and the alleged specific American attraction to the undiscovered, the "wilderness." The same might be said of Norwegian internal expansionism into the Sami wilderness in the High North in the second half of the nineteenth century. One consequence of the expansion into the Northern wilderness was that the border between the two kingdoms in the union, Norway and Sweden, was stiffened. At the same time the penetration into the High North both in Norway and in Sweden was a manifestation of the advance

of modernity in the period of the industrial revolution, boosted by the great upheavals in European great power politics that originated from the German unification.

In the long run the borderline was not strengthened, but softened as a result of an ideological struggle between the "Scandinavianists" and the Norwegian and Swedish nationalists respectively during the nineteenth century. The background to this struggle between competing nation building versus region building projects was the impact of the German unification processes and the imperialist scramble between the great powers which made the minor states feel threatened in an international fight for survival of the fittest. The Scandinavian solution was regional integration: either Swedish-Norwegian state building or Nordic unification, the latter meaning the unification of the two union states plus Denmark. Such contemplations had considerable political attractive force during the middle period of the union years and especially within liberal circles. As Ruth Hemstad has shown, the Scandinavianist alternative to Norwegian nationalism did not disappear even in the harshest nationalistic atmosphere prior to the dissolution of the union in 1905 (Hemstad 2008).

The idea of Scandinavian cooperation and even political amalgamation did represent a threat to the border and certainly had the effect of undermining its significance. But it was particularly the expansion of communications and industry during the nineteenth century that weakened it.

The most spectacular tool for modernization during the nineteenth century was probably the railway. At least, it revolutionized the Scandinavian union as a viable state unit. The first railway line that knit together the two capitals in the union—Oslo and Stockholm—opened in 1871 (Østvedt 1954: 171), reducing the travelling time from five to six days to 17 hours during summer season in the 1890s (Berg 2005a: 187). It is said that the railway abolished time. It certainly reduced the relevance of the border.

The railway technology also expanded into the High North and eased the access to the Northern "internal America" (Sörlin 1988) in Norway as well as in Sweden for the immigration of smallholders and industrialists alike. When the railway was completed between the Swedish mountain tableland and westward and down to the deep sea harbour town of Narvik in 1903, this fact accelerated the process of erasing the border as a barrier between the two countries (Berg 2005a: 186) by providing an outlet for the Swedish iron ore export in the heydays of industrialism. However, the railway in the north also alarmed the two military establishments in the union so much that in 1904 the Norwegian and the Swedish general staffs signed an agreement on joint defence along it—secret, of course, in the atmosphere of jingoism at that time—in case of a Russian attack (Berg 2001: 269–272).

Unavoidably and independently of the clandestineness, the border lost significance and was weakened.

During the whole period from its foundation until present time the Scandinavian boundary was only of theoretical interest to one type of industry in the north, namely the trans-national reindeer husbandry in the areas where Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Russian interests opposed one another (Niemi 2005: 388). The Fennoscandinavian reindeer-herding Sami could have been seriously hurt by the border treaty of 1751, but they were not. The border convention had a codicil, the Reindeer Grazing Codicil, that guaranteed the continuation of the grazing pattern: on the (Swedish) highland in the winter, and at the (Norwegian) coastline in the summer. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the reindeer grazing guarantee was endangered as a consequence of the Norwegian and Swedish agricultural and industrial penetration into their "internal America" and of a general Scandinavian russophobia in the High North (Niemi 2005: 390–401). Traditional reindeer grazing districts were partitioned up and allocated to the land clearers from the south, especially on the Norwegian side. From the 1870s several projects of land clearing had the explicit aim of securing the border areas by a solid and ethnically Norwegian smallholder population (Niemi 2005: 403). And the dissolution of the union in 1905 reinforced the tendency towards the weakening of the Sami culture, a tendency that was not halted until the 1970s (Berg 1995; Pedersen 2006; Lundmark 2008).

One particular source for potential resource competition was Klarälven. It originates in Norway, named *Trysilälva*, and has its outflow in Sweden after a long journey down one of the most fertile Swedish valleys. It continues into the biggest Swedish lake, Vänern, which in its turn supplies another river with water that reaches the ocean in the second largest city in Sweden, Gothenburg. Klarälven in other words was of decisive importance to Sweden. Those Swedish politicians who negotiated the dissolution of the union in 1905, were aware of that importance (Berg & Jakobsson 2006). As the upstream state, Norway had the power to disturb and even terminate the flow of water in Klarälven. This would seriously harm logging, agriculture and, not least, the "industrialisation of the river," as Eva Jakobsson has labelled it, driven by the hydro-power lobby that during the first decade of the twentieth century conquered both rivers and river legislation (Jakobsson 2002). Out of these considerations, Sweden, as a precondition for the dissolution of the union, claimed that Norway should guarantee not to change the trans-boundary watercourses. The Norwegians accepted this claim on the realisation that a refusal of doing so would imply such grave risks for Sweden that its acceptance of the peaceful dissolution of the union was doubtful. The non-violent outcome of the dissolution thus became the

victory of nature over politics. And the border became irrelevant by the Norwegian-Swedish river convention of 1905 (Berg & Jakobsson 2006).

The 92 years of border guard during the union period ended with the erasing of it in certain important areas: the water would run unhindered across it. The railway in the north and the military along it became so integrated that the border was next to nullified.

The river convention of 1905, the peninsula railway, and the general staff agreement in 1904 may be classified as more important in the perspective of Karl Deutsch than some fortresses along the border. Their strength was dismissed by Norwegian as well as Swedish officers in 1905 (Berg 2001: 287–289). In general the risk for belligerency in connection with the dissolution of the union in 1905 has been characterized as solely a myth (Åselius 2006: 37, 40). As a matter of fact war was out of the question even as a theoretical speculation, as the Norwegian negotiators realized that the trans-boundary watercourses had such relevance—as we know from numerous international conflicts—that they accepted the continued free flow independent of some borders that had been drawn in a situation when Scandinavia was a war zone. From the 1820s the border between the union partners had ceased to be a war zone as a result of their demilitarisation and therefore as a result of the union.

The union and a sustainable peace area

The British ambassador to Norway summed up the Scandinavian relations during the First World War in rather gloomy words:

> [T]he Scandinavian races [...] have fought, oppressed, hated and distrusted each other, and, judging by their history, with good reason for doing so. They dislike and distrust each other still, and will doubtless continue to do so (Findlay 1922).

This observation might be shocking to modern Scandinavians who tend to forget that the land strip between the Baltic and the North Atlantic has been a scene of bloodshed for hundreds of years some few generations ago. The borders in these parts of Europe were what Malcolm Anderson categorizes as the original form of borderline between states, a "zone in which one faced the enemy" (Anderson 1996: 9). So obvious was this interpretation of the border by the beginning of the union, that Gustaf Hamilton defined what he understood as the Norwegian *hate* towards their forced union partners as *normal* "between peoples who border each others."

Karl Deutsch dated the disappearance of hate as a motivating factor behind neighbourly relations along the Scandinavian border to the demoli-

tion of the Norwegian border fortresses after 1905. In this article I have argued for going back to the formative years of the Norwegian-Swedish union to trace the abandonment of the border as a war region. The demilitarization of the Norwegian war tools in the 1820s seems more relevant than the demolition of some forts after 1905 that nobody evaluated as effective means for stopping an enemy or for waging war. And while the development of geographical research served as a means of consolidating the border as a practical way of building the nation and the national identity, modern infrastructure technology drained the border of its importance as an obstacle to peaceful interrelations during the nineteenth century modernization process. The river convention in 1905 seems to be the ultimate proof of the irrelevance of the border and the most important triumph for the will to establish a true "pluralistic security community" with the character of a non-armed security system.

On the other hand the conflict over the Pig Skerries was so grave *after* 1905 that it could not be solved without years of negotiations, accompanied by military threats, and not without international arbitration (which Norway lost). That certainly is an indication of continued mistrust between the neighbouring people after 1905.

In the referendum on the European Union in 1994 a Swedish newspaper interpreted the Norwegian "no" as an echo of 1905 (Berg 2000: 155) and thus a manifestation of the survival of rancour from those days. Though violent options for conflict resolution were ruled out once and for all by the free flow water agreement in 1905, the memories of animosity as a political factor apparently lived on.[3]

NOTES

[1] Raymond Lindgren adapted Deutsch's theory as a key to understanding "alternatives to war as a method of settling international disputes," which he declares in the introduction to his monograph on the Norwegian-Swedish union (Lindgren 1959). Bengt Sundelius took his point of departure in Deutsch' theory in his studies on European foreign policy making processes (Sundelius 1982). Iver B. Neumann related Deutsch and his Scandinavian case study to a discussion on European regionalism (Neumann 1992). I applied Deutsch in my studies on the Nordic cooperation during the First World War (Berg 1997). And in 2000 Magnus Ericson discussed the Scandinavian social democrats on the basis of Deutsch's theory (Ericson 2000).

[2] "Norska nationen hatade svenskarna, såsom vanligt är mellan folkslag, som gränsa intill varandra" (Carlquist 1921: 85).

[3] In this article I have only looked close at the Swedish-Norwegian border. But even Karl Deutsch's dating of the establishment of the North American peace system along the US-Canadian border, 1819, seems to be obscured by the bloodless though serious enough Pig War between Great Britain and the United States over the final sticking points along

their Northwest boundary in 1859, thirteen years after they had agreed upon the rest of the boundary line north of the Oregon Country. A battleship threatened infantries a period of time at one of the smaller islands in the border basin in this last outburst of American violence between the Anglo-American brother states. The outcome of that small but belligerent incident was the last completion of the boundary line between the two states—after decades of negotiations and finally after mediation from the German Kaiser—in 1872 (Vouri 1999).

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