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GLOBAL HISTORY

The Nordic Peace and Northeast Asia

Approaches, Solutions, and Principles of
Conflict Transformation

Gunnar Rekvig

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For the current state of knowledge remains vague when history is not considered, just as history remains vague without substantive knowledge of the current state.

—Ludwik Fleck¹

¹ L. Fleck et al., *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), 54.

*To Bjørg S. Rekvig and Ole Petter Rekvig
With the deepest gratitude and love, for your unwavering support,
encouragement, and inspiration.*

PREFACE

The publication of this book on the Nordic Peace—and a contrast to Northeast Asia—was delayed in large part due to the COVID pandemic that upset many timelines. The main focus of the book is on the transformation the Nordic region underwent from violence to peace. It examines the development of the Nordic Peace since its onset, a peace that came about organically from *ad hoc* peaceful solutions to conflicts. The solutions were improvised to address individual conflicts as they arose. In addition, the book includes a section on Northeast Asian conflicts centered on Japan with comparative aspects that serve to highlight the accomplishments of the Nordic region, as well as to explore the obstacles to achieving a similar high-quality peace in Northeast Asia.

However, since the book was accepted for publication, the world has changed rather dramatically. Francis Fukuyama's thesis, *The End of History and the Last Man*, posited that with the fall of the Soviet Union and the spread of liberal democracy—underpinned by market capitalism and the rule of law—marked the culmination of human sociopolitical evolution.¹ He argued that the ideological conflict between communism and the West, the foundation of the Cold War, had been resolved with western liberal democracy emerging as the ultimate form of governance. History had ended.

¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Simon and Schuster, 2006).

On 22 February 2022, history returned when Russia invaded Ukraine.²

The global implications the invasion has had are multifaceted. The humanitarian crisis impacting Ukrainians is unprecedented in post-Cold War Europe. Consequently, we find ourselves in the post-post-Cold War era now. The war has upset global energy markets and supply chains, threatening food security as Ukraine is the breadbasket of Europe. The war has further caused a shift in geopolitics with a sharp division between Russia and the Western countries. Compounding this, the global system is arguably heading toward multipolarity, where countries worldwide are reassessing their security policies and, by extension, their alignments.

For the security complex that is the Nordic region, the impact of the war has resulted in closer alignment and tighter integration than that of the past. The war has acted as a driver for deeper security cooperation, and the region is undergoing a paradigm shift as it has to rethink its peace and security. Finland has joined NATO, and at the time of writing, Sweden will also ascend to NATO membership. This is a stark shift for both Sweden and Finland as they historically were neutral and non-aligned.

So what does this mean for the Nordic Peace? At present, the state of the Nordic Peace suggests a strengthening of the peace. Yet, the Nordic Peace is undergoing a transformation toward an inward-focused orientation. The peace gave the Nordic region a unique function in peace-building internationally. With all the Nordic countries in NATO, the alignment has fundamentally shifted to the West. For example, during the Cold War era, Finland played a pivotal role as a facilitator and bridge between East and West and contributed significantly to the creation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In today's geopolitical climate, replicating such a role is increasingly challenging as blocs are strengthened and the non-aligned buffer states disappear.

The Nordic region continues to show strong conflict resilience internally, while externally, the region is portraying a comprehensive securitization. In the Cold War, we implemented several policies to create a low-tension Northern Europe. This was accomplished by balancing

² Or arguably in 2014 with the Russian annexation of Crimea.

deterrence with reassurance policies of which the self-imposed military restrictions were highly effective. Today, we are moving toward deterrence alone.

“Wer Hoffnung hat, wird fähig, die Welt auszuhalten”
—Jürgen Moltmann³

Tokyo, Japan

Gunnar Rekvig

³ Translation: Whoever has hope, is able to endure the world.

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I wish to give due credit to Clive Archer and Pertti Joenniemi, as well as the contributors to their book, *The Nordic Peace*. Their important work was instrumental for me in embarking on this project.

Lastly, I am indebted and grateful to my wife, Minako Kikkawa, and our son, Arn Kikkawa Rekvig, for his ability to make a bad day not only good but great.

I am most obliged to you all.

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Introduction

This book analyses the Nordic Peace from its onset, transformative phase from conflict to peace, and the subsequent transformation to a sustainable stable peace. This is accomplished by examining the transformative phase of three historical conflicts from which the solutions will elucidate the principles upon which the Nordic Peace stands. These solutions and principles enabled trust-building in the region in addition to safeguarding the countries from returning to their former state of conduct that stimulated violent conflict. The region has seen the creation and establishment of a security community—a zone of high quality peace. This denotes that the countries of the region are neither under threat of civil war nor interstate war. However, the establishment of this high quality peace proved to be a challenging endeavor in the Nordic region largely because of a shared history of contentions, irredentist conflicts, and territorial disputes. These and other conflict causing issues frequently led the region to engage in interstate wars. The Nordic countries are furthermore situated within the European regional complex that comprises several great powers with their own history that have an abundance of conflicts and wars, often fought within the Nordic region. Thus, the Nordic countries repeatedly became party to the wars in the greater European sphere either as proxies or direct belligerents. Yet, for all the violence, and the many wars in which the Nordic countries fought each other, the belligerence came to an end in

1814. Since this year, a year that marks the onset of the Nordic Peace, the Nordic countries have built a legacy on regional non-violent conflict resolution that has manifested the region in a state of high quality peace; a state that represents what the region has become renown for internationally. The foundation of this state is primarily built on the experiences and the accumulated knowledge based in the solutions and subsequent principles that concluded the intra-Nordic hostilities. Moreover, the Nordic region stands arguably at present, as an example presenting a possibility for other regions that are in protracted and deep-rooted conflicts of various causes. Yet it merely represents possibilities dependent on a desire to seek solutions. A desire the Nordic countries came to ultimately pursue and maintain.

1.1 THE NORDIC REGION AS A ZONE OF HIGH QUALITY PEACE

The Nordic region is geographically situated in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic. The Nordic countries make up a region nurturing an endogenous stable high quality and resilient peace. Although this peace has been long established and has become an integral part of the region, its backstory and outset was in the geo-political chaos of Europe towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars. This peace is manifest both internally and externally.¹ Internally, the peace encompasses the countries and the peoples down to the individual level with freedoms such as cross-border movement predating the Schengen visa free travel scheme,² integrated shared institutions between the countries, and the safety-nets that the social welfare systems provide. Thus, enabling an absence of fear for the peoples in case of sickness, loss of employment, or by giving access to free education for the coming generations. Thereby the region has established a population without strong internalized anxieties, which in turn is a population at peace with itself and that is reflected realpolitically in the Nordic polities. This internal peace then becomes externalized.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, *Nordic Foreign Ministers Discussed Cooperation in the North and Baltic Sea Region* (2007).

² The Schengen Area is made-up of 26 European countries that have implemented open borders enabling the freedom of movement across borders. 22 countries are European Union (EU) member states, and the remaining four, non-EU countries, are the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states.

The Nordic Peace enables a capacity for, and more importantly facilitates Nordic engagements in international conflict transformation with long-term commitment³; despite the fact that peace for the Nordic peoples has a violent backstory.⁴ As a result of this transformation, the countries are mostly similar politically and co-exist under a shared identity. The former Foreign Minister of Norway, Jan Petersen, summarized this notion as such:

The Nordic tradition of peaceful resolution of conflicts is based on a shared set of values—human dignity, human rights and democratic ideals. We feel that we have a moral obligation to pursue peace and stability when—and where—we can.⁵

At present, the Nordic region represents a sustainable comprehensive pluralistic security community. It is sustainable because a pattern of clear preferences for peaceful solutions has formed and become a norm in the Nordic polities; it is comprehensive because there is no threat of civil war or strife in the region; it is pluralistic as the countries are independent of each other—not under a federal system, while having attained regional integration; and the security community denotes that there is no threat of interstate war in the region. Thus, within the region, social cohesion and interstate cooperation is the norm. The region has progressed to the point in which, as the term implies, a community amongst the countries has formed.⁶ Across the region, there are five different main languages. While the three Scandinavian languages are mutually intelligible, Icelandic and Finnish are not.⁷ The region also shares a common identity, and a shared historical narrative that is not in dispute regionally: interstate politics of trust has been established in the region. Accordingly, the transformation

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *A Policy of Engagement. Norwegian Peace Policy*, by Jonas Gahr Støre (Oslo (NO): Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007).

⁴ Marko Lehti, “Nordic Approaches to Peace Mediation. Research, Practices and Policies,” (2014).

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, *Nordic Peace Diplomacy: Looking Back, Moving Forward*, by Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Petersen (Bondevik II Cabinet, Government of Norway, 2005).

⁶ A.S. Dahl and P. Järvenpää, *Northern Security and Global Politics: Nordic-Baltic Strategic Influence in a Post-Unipolar World* (Taylor & Francis, 2013).82.

⁷ The official languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish; Iceland has compulsory education in one Scandinavian language (Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish).

that took the Nordic region from one of conflict to one of stabile peace, has created and maintains a system at present that is viewed and lauded as a model of good practice. This regional system thereby exists, built on a long history of not only transitioning from conflict to peace, but also in forming a regional complex that constitutes a zone of high quality peace from which lessons can be drawn. These lessons are drawn from the endogenous solutions and principles that make up the Nordic Peace and that are reflection of the Nordic Peace both internally and externally.

Therefore, in order to identify the principles upon which the Nordic Peace stands after 1814,⁸ this book will detail the Nordic solutions from three historical cases to show how in seemingly deadlocked circumstances, the region turned from war and towards a preference for peaceful resolutions in dealing with conflict causing issues. This has enabled the establishment of a socio-political environment conducive to interdependence and cooperation, and has established a region that maintains this as a pattern accordingly.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book will be comprised of the following chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the problem statement, methodology, and the objectives of the book.

Chapter 2: The Nordic Security Community

The second chapter will discuss what fundamentals are necessitated in forming *zones of peace* and *security communities*. As zones of peace and security communities often go hand in hand, they represent the end results for regions that have made the transition from a low to high quality and resilient peace. The Nordic region will then be related as an area that has the makeup of a zone of high quality peace and as such represents a security community.

⁸ This year marks the end of the Napoleonic Wars for the Nordic countries. The ensuing peace followed the 1814 Treaty of Kiel, now commonly known as the Peace of Kiel.

Chapter 3: The Nordic Peace: Current State and a Belligerent Background

The third chapter will comprise an overview of the contemporary state of the Nordic region. It will further succinctly cover the history of the region from the fourteenth century up to 1814. This time period represents the region in its belligerent phase of intra-Nordic wars in which conflicts did not see non-violent solutions. This violent era culminates with the Peace of Kiel in 1814 which in turn marks the point in history after which no Nordic country has fought another. This chapter will finally set the stage for the following three chapters that make up the three historical cases which will be examined.

Chapter 4: Case One: Norway-Sweden—Unification, Union, Disunion, and the Legacy of the Peace of Kiel 1814–1905

The fourth chapter, and the first case, comprises the unification and the dissolution of the Union of Sweden and Norway. As the Napoleonic Wars of Europe were approaching their end, Sweden, which was part of the anti-Napoleonic alliance fought the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway, an ally of Napoleon. Sweden, party to the victory over Napoleon, took Norway as a spoil of war in 1814; an act in which no Norwegian was consulted. Norway initially tried to declare independence when it became known that it would be handed over to Sweden. A new constitution was written, a new king elected, and Norway sent envoys to the European powers to gather support for independence while refuting the Swedish claim. However, due to guarantees made to Sweden to join the war against Napoleon by the very same European powers Norway was lobbying, the unification of Norway and Sweden was a foregone conclusion. Norway entered a personal union with Sweden in 1814, but not before Sweden accepted the newly written liberal constitution. The union in reality gave Norway domestic powers over itself, while being represented by Sweden in matters of foreign affairs. In 1905, after numerous contentions, the dissolution of the union became a reality when Norway voted almost unanimously for independence in a plebiscite for secession from Sweden.⁹ The plebiscite was a prerequisite by Sweden to show this was not an act by parliament, but the will of the people, and more

⁹ Robert A. Young, "How Do Peaceful Secessions Happen?," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 04 (1994).

importantly for Norway, Sweden respected the outcome. The border between Norway and Sweden became demilitarized and neutralized. After an interim period, the relations would normalize again.

Chapter 5: Case Two: Denmark-Germany—The Schleswig-Holstein Issue: Two Wars, a Loss of Territory, Irredentism, Plebiscite, the Redrawing of a Border, and Minority Rights 1864–1920 (& 1955)

The fifth chapter, and the second case, will examine the processes behind the non-violent redrawing of the border between Denmark and Germany in the twentieth century. The cause for the new border had its background in two nineteenth century wars over the Danish twin duchies of Schleswig and Holstein that bordered Germany. These wars were rooted in convoluted issues of ownership and the self-determination of the Germans living in the duchies. Ultimately, with Denmark losing the second war and thus the duchies, the Danes living in Schleswig and Holstein became irredentists in Germany. The redrawing of the border came in the aftermath of the First World War and was realized by holding plebiscites based on the self-determination of the Danes and Germans living in the duchies. Zones for the plebiscites were drawn and people voted accordingly in each zone on where they wanted to belong: Denmark or Germany. The result of the plebiscites would see the border redrawn in the duchy of Schleswig. Thus, as part of the settlement of the First World War, Denmark regained a part of Schleswig, whereas Holstein, in its entirety, went to Germany. The chapter will additionally cover the establishment the principles of minority rights for those minorities (Danish or German) remaining on the “wrong” side of the border. These principles would later be cemented in the Copenhagen-Bonn Declarations. Even though Denmark fought two wars over the duchies after 1814, the wars were defensive, and the belligerent Germany is not part of the Nordic region.¹⁰

Chapter 6: Case Three: Finland-Sweden—The Territorial and Irredentist Problems of the Åland Islands 1809–1921

The sixth chapter, and the third case, will entail the processes behind the autonomy, demilitarization, and neutralization of the archipelago that

¹⁰ The Nordic countries have not fought each other within the region since 1814. They have been in wars instigated from without the region as well as being occupied, e.g. World War II which saw fighting in Finland, Denmark, and Norway (with the latter two being occupied). Additionally, since 1814, no Nordic country has started a war.

make up the Åland Islands. The islands, which population is essentially homogenously Swedish, are an integral part of Finland and make up a military-strategic important territory for access to the Gulf of Bothnia and the Baltic Sea. As such they have seen several military engagements. Both the Åland Islands and Finland had been parts of Sweden until they were lost to Russia in 1809 during the Napoleonic Wars. Finland was made into an autonomous Grand Duchy under which the Åland Islands were incorporated in the Russian Empire. This state lasted until the Russian Revolution of 1917 when Finland declared independence and, in the process, claimed the islands as parts of its territorial integrity. Sweden, while recognizing the independence of Finland, wanted the Åland Islands restored as per the Ålanders wishes; a wish Finland refuted. Ultimately the case was resolved in the aftermath of the Paris Peace Conference of the First World War by the League of Nations. The following three issues presented to the League were: (1) the territorial integrity of Finland versus (2) the self-determination of the Ålanders, with the support of Sweden, over the ownership of the islands, and (3) the demilitarization and neutralization of the islands for perpetuity. After two commissions, one of jurists, and one of rapporteurs, had compiled two comprehensive reports ordered by the League, it was ruled that the islands were to be part of Finland with autonomy and protections for the Ålanders. In addition, the neutral status of the islands was cemented in a treaty guaranteed by both Finland and Sweden as well as other European powers. The case itself would become the first success of the League of Nations.

Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion of the Nordic Peace

The seventh chapter opens with a deeper discussion of the methods used for analyzing the three historical cases.¹¹ The chapter will thus fundamentally elucidate the principles from—and their subsequent relationship to—the Nordic solutions. The three historical cases show the various stages in which the Nordic Peace developed from its inception in 1814. From this point a steady movement towards peaceful co-existence commenced, which since the end of the Second World War, saw the region start to build a community between the countries. The solutions and the principles that started within the three historical cases will be examined in relation to how the region transformed in establishing new

¹¹ The methods are introduced in the following subchapter 1.3 Problem Statement and Methodology.

ways for peace; the conclusion of which is the security community the region established. This has led successive peaceful solutions, enabled by the Nordic Peace, in relation to current and future disputes. The three historical cases will in summation detail the events and processes that de facto caused the systemic change in the Nordic region and how seemingly irreconcilable principles can be reconciled. Additionally, the chapter will introduce four supplementary Nordic cases for cogency and highlight an increasingly predictable preference for pattern maintenance of peaceful resolutions to conflict.

Chapter 8: Nordic Principles as Peace Mechanisms

The eighth chapter will summarize the principles as an overarching umbrella in their relation to the Nordic Peace. This summarizing chapter is also a continuation of the analysis chapter as it cements the Nordic Peace in the principles; without which, the Nordic region could not remain as a security community.

Chapter 9: Nordic Solutions: Relevance for Japan and Northeast Asia

The ninth chapter will introduce Northeast Asia as a possible region for which the Nordic solutions could prove beneficial. The chapter will discuss four conflicts that persist at present between Japan and the countries China, the Republic of Korea, and Russia. These conflicts comprise three territorial disputes in addition to the discord between Japan and its neighbors over the disputed historical legacy of the Second World War as obstacles that Northeast Asia face in establishing a high quality, viable and resilient peace. The chapter will further highlight where Northeast Asian conflicts are *structurally similar* with some of the Nordic ones, albeit not identical.

Chapter 10: Closing Remarks

The tenth chapter concludes the book. The chapter will highlight where the Nordic region is now and in relation to the Northeast Asian Region. The chapter highlights that Nordic Peace is a dynamic ongoing process that is facing new challenge. Still the foundational principles of the Nordic Peace is what consequently gives the region its resilience when facing these challenges.

The positivists have a simple solution: the world must be divided into that which we can say clearly and the rest, which we had better pass over in silence. But can anyone conceive of a more pointless philosophy, seeing that what we can say clearly amounts to next to nothing? If we omitted all that is unclear, we would probably be left with completely uninteresting and trivial tautologies.

— Werner Heisenberg¹²

¹² Werner Heisenberg, “Positivism, Metaphysics and Religion,” *The World Treasury of Physics, Astronomy & Mathematics* (Ed. T. Ferris) (Little, Brown & Co., NY, 1991).826.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND METHODOLOGY

This book employs qualitative methodology in examining the Nordic Peace and to answer the following two key questions: (1) *How have the solutions that underlie the Nordic Peace transcended causes for conflict?* And (2) *are there universal potentials in the Nordic solutions?*

The methods in this book are grounded in a historical approach linked to hermeneutic interpretation of historical processes. The hermeneutic interpretation analyzes the historical record and interprets the subjective meanings found therein within a socio-historic context.¹³ This will, in turn, highlight Nordic causality—for which this book focuses on the formation of peace-preference patterns of successive events—and is hence presented hermeneutically as the scope of the research relates to the human dimension; the subjective meanings of events in their socio-historic context are only meaningful as they are of human qualities. This method iterates the socio-historic context within a holistic understanding of the historical processes that enabled the Nordic Peace. As such, it becomes the application of history to analyze the solutions of the Nordic Peace, in order to highlight the emerging pattern of a regional preference for peaceful resolution, that is rooted in principles, to conflict.¹⁴

This hermeneutic historical approach is inspired by a constructivist methodology, *subjectivism*, developed by Vincent Pouliot.¹⁵ This methodology builds on the constructivist core tenet that human reality is a social construct and as such “emphasizes the mutually constitutive dialectics between the social construction of knowledge and the construction of social reality.”¹⁶ Pouliot further couples this with that “the main argument is that constructivist inquiries need to develop not only objectified

¹³ Anol Bhattacharjee, “Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices,” (2012).

¹⁴ As historical events are often analogous across the spectrum of time, drawing upon historical transformative events, can give insights into current challenges. Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson, “Why the President Needs a Council of Historians,” *The Atlantic*, 2016, accessed 09/08/2016.

¹⁵ Vincent Pouliot, ““Subjectivism”: Toward a Constructivist Methodology,” *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2007).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*