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# From Fratricide to Security Community: Re-Theorising Difference in the Constitution of Nordic Peace

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This article utilises a revisionist account of the emergence of Nordic peace in the 19th century to open up space for rethinking and re-theorising the constitutive dynamics underlying security communities. While the Nordic case is often considered a prime example of a security community the article argues it did not emerge in the way usually claimed. First, security did not figure as a key constitutive argument as assumed by traditional security community theorising; second, togetherness did not emerge because of difference being traded for enhanced similarity. In fact, security was side-lined and difference re-interpreted rather than erased in forging ontologically safe identities.

**Keywords:** securitisation; (de)securitisation; difference; Nordic peace; ontological security; security community.

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## Introduction

The Nordic region is often viewed as an exemplar in International Relations (IR) for its ability to do peace and escape the confines of the apparently ubiquitous security dilemma. Indeed, peace has become a veritable brand within the region, marketed not least through the Nobel peace prize and the region's various nation-branding strategies (see Country Brand Report 2010). However, viewed over the *longue durée* peace is as much the exception as the rule. In the five centuries up to 1814 the Nordic states were involved in about 60 wars between themselves and with neighbours (Wiberg 2000: 291). This begs the question of how this history of often brutal and fratricidal warfare was superseded, such that since 1814 no armed conflict has occurred between the region's states. Attempts have obviously sought to explain the Nordic case, the most persuasive of which have viewed the region as a quintessential example of a security community. This article contends such explanations fall short because security community theorising assumes that at stake is the need to find solutions to relations between entities already in a heightened state of securitisation. Rather than treating the securitised nature of inter-state relations as a question to be explored, it is treated as a pre-given foundation to be overcome. Our contention is that such presumptions are not obvious in respect of Norden, and therefore the Nordic case can also be used to reflect on the utility of security community theorising in general.

Stated broadly, the article argues that like much IR theorising the security communities literature, as exemplified in the work of Deutsch *et al.* (1957) and Adler and Barnett (1998a; 1998b), operates with a problematic, limiting and under-theorised understanding of the relationship between identity and difference in the formation and maintenance of security communities. The underlying presumption is that the more values, culture and identity

converge around common understandings the more stable the security community will be and the less likely it is that war will occur (Bøås 2000: 311). Implicit is that tensions and disagreements over these aspects easily become conceptualised as destabilising, as representing rupture, and as undermining the security-enhancing properties of the community, such that the security community's existence itself might be questioned. Put differently, otherness, difference and divergence are implicitly theorised and represented as threats to be minimised.

Empirically, such concerns have been evident in debates about the state of the transatlantic security community. Here, depictions of social, cultural, political, religious and economic differences between Europe and America have frequently been presented as existentially salient divergences threatening the West's demise. Indeed, even its defenders have replied in kind, claiming cultural, social, religious, political and economic ties are stronger than pessimists fear, thereby asserting that the stock of homogeneity remains considerable (see Browning and Lehti 2010; Anderson *et al.* 2008). In other words, it is convergence around sameness which keeps the West together, with the invocation being that cementing transatlantic bonds requires fostering this sameness.

Importantly, the security communities literature is aware that drawing a causal link between common identity and security is potentially problematic. As Barnett and Adler (1998: 427) note, elite moves to enhance transnational links may be resisted by societal groups reluctant to transfer their loyalties to a broader entity. Fears in the United Kingdom (UK) that more Europe means less Britain is just one example where difference has a positive reading and where likeness with others (Europeans) is instead perceived as threatening. Likewise, Barnett and Adler actually imply that security communities may succeed precisely where more universalising Kantian projects fail precisely because successful security communities have so far not sought to transcend the nation-state or to eliminate 'existing cultural and ethnic loyalties and identities' (Adler and Barnett 1998a: 59). However, such allusions to the potentially positive effects of retaining space for difference remain undeveloped in the literature, with the existence of difference retaining a status of a non-ideal vulnerability. In contrast, we argue that, while elements of convergence over identity and values are important, the Nordic case demonstrates that security communities are also critically brought together by their differences. Thus, instead of expunging otherness and constituting it as a threat to be eradicated over time, difference can also be theorised as central in holding security communities together. Moreover, *contra* concerns about difference, the article builds on the implications noted by Adler and Barnett above: that convergence also has its dangers.

We develop the argument in four parts. First, we outline the key claims underlying the security communities literature, noting that a presumption in favour of convergence around commonly held identities and values, with difference implicitly existing as the problem to be overcome, has been central. This presumption is then shown to exist in established explanations of Nordic peace. While this literature is important in demonstrating why the Nordic region should be viewed as a security community, this section shows that such explanations are limited as they rest on problematic presumptions about the role of security and similarity in the story. Indeed, we argue that the Nordic case appears atypical insofar as key elements usually seen as central to the emergence of security communities were largely lacking. The case therefore requires an alternative explanation.

The second section therefore begins by re-theorising the relationship between identity, difference and security by turning to insights from social theory and psychology to argue that there is no settled way in which difference plays out in the constitution of identity, security and community. So, while much IR theorising translates difference into threatening otherness, there is nothing inevitable about this. This now well-established observation,

however, begs the question of why difference sometimes results in both conflict and peace. To answer this the article develops an analytical framework drawing on the literature on ontological security to show that the constitutive effects of difference are dependent upon the types of ‘ontological security seeking strategies’ that specific actors adopt combined with the type of politics in play in specific contexts.

In the third part this framework is used to provide a revisionist account of the emergence of the Nordic security community in the 19th century. Given the space constraints of this article, we do not claim this as a definitive account, but seek to show how the Nordic case invites us to rethink and re-theorise our understandings of the constitutive dynamics underlying security communities. Finally, the conclusion draws together the central claims of the article and further points towards their broader significance.

## **Security Communities and the Absence of Difference**

### *Development of the Concept*

The concept of ‘security communities’ was first systematised by Deutsch, who used it to refer to the emergence of a community ‘in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle disputes in some other way’ (Deutsch *et al.* 1957: 5).<sup>1</sup> Security communities are therefore premised on the development of trust between members that practices of self-restraint will prevail in their internal relations, with this guaranteeing that dependable expectations of peaceful change are upheld. In particular he argued security communities rest on the existence of compatible core values, common institutions and a sense of ‘we-ness’ sustained by common practices. By emphasising compatibility Deutsch promotes the idea that the more alike different actors are the more likely a security community is to form (Wæver 1998: 77). However, mutual identity and compatible values were not enough. Instead, Deutsch adopted a *transactionalist* approach, arguing that what ultimately bound security communities together was high levels of communication and social, political, economic and cultural transactions, all of which would enhance trust, predictability of behaviour and further foster common positions and expectations of peaceful change (Booth and Wheeler 2008: 183–4; Adler and Barnett 1998b: 7). Understood this way security communities are therefore premised on notions of a longer term convergence around common interests and identities.

Ultimately, however, Deutsch’s analysis rested on behaviouralist commitments which later scholars found problematic. For example, his emphasis on transactions and communications mistakes quantity for quality (Adler and Barnett 1998b: 8–9, 1998a: 47) and is empirically easily falsifiable by noting cases of enduring conflict between closely connected societies — not least the Nordics. In the late 1990s Adler and Barnett therefore presented a constructivist-inspired rendering of security communities that sought to avoid the determinism of Deutsch’s behaviouralism and transactionalism and instead argued that security communities fundamentally rested on the existence and development of shared identities, values and meanings (Adler and Barnett 1998a: 31).

In developing their argument Adler and Barnett present a framework for understanding how security communities emerge and may develop over time. The first part of this framework posits three analytical tiers. The first consists of precipitating conditions that encourage states to begin orienting towards each other and coordinating their policies. These may include technological developments, the identification of a common threat, cataclysmic events, economic transformations, environmental changes and new interpretations of social reality (*ibid.*: 37–8; Acharya 2009: 37). The second tier consists of structural and processual factors conducive to the sedimentation of a security community. As in Deutsch these include

the role of transactions and communications, but also social learning and international organisations. For instance, Adler and Barnett (1998a: 43) argue that international organisations can help promote trust and collective identity through their capacity to ‘engineer’ things like ‘cultural homogeneity, a belief in a common fate, and norms of unilateral self-restraint’. The third tier represents the fruition of second tier developments and is characterised by the emergence of trust and collective identity. Elsewhere Adler actually defines this tier (and therefore the existence of trust and collective identity) in terms of the ‘necessary conditions’ required for a security community to emerge (Adler and Greve 2009: 70).

The tiered framework is accompanied by an evolutionary framework that suggests security communities move through stages of birth (nascent stage), adolescence (ascendant stage) and adulthood (mature stage). Broadly speaking these stages map onto the tiers. Most pertinent is the mature stage, where Adler and Barnett argue security communities come in two ideal types — loosely-coupled and tightly-coupled — depending on the depth of trust and collective identity established. Loosely-coupled security communities are presented as the ‘minimalist’ version, where states identify positively with each other, proclaim a similar way of life, exercise self-restraint and operate an informal governance system premised on shared meanings and a collective identity. Tightly-coupled security communities exhibit all this and more, including commitments to mutual aid. Most importantly, though, their collective identity assumes an increasingly corporate character, such that the identity and interests of the constituent states and their citizens increasingly blur with those of the broader community (Adler and Barnett 1998a: 47–8, 55–6).

The key point here is that central to their analysis is an implicit view that shared identities enhance security and that the more this develops the better. The first point is evident in their claim that ‘Trust and identity are reciprocal and reinforcing’ (*ibid.*: 45), while the second is evident in the distinction between loosely-coupled and tightly-coupled security communities, with the former viewed as the ‘minimalist’ position. Thus, their framework is underpinned by a directional move in which the emergence, development and stability of security communities is dependent upon a steady convergence around common identities, values and meanings.

Interestingly, this tendency has been reproduced in the subsequent literature inspired by Adler and Barnett and where the focus has shifted from explaining their emergence to discussing how security communities are maintained and why they might decay. In terms of their maintenance, invoking the ‘practice turn’ in IR Pouliot (2008: 278–83) suggests that within mature security communities statesmen come to practice diplomatic solutions to disputes almost instinctively. So, once established the constitutive practices of security communities become routinised and habituated. In contrast, Bially Mattern (2000: 305–6) suggests habit and routine might not always be enough. Instead, sometimes ‘representational force’ is required to discipline potentially recalcitrant members. Here key members attempt to shame others into abiding by the security community’s norms by playing on fears that their identity and sense of self is being questioned (on shaming see Steele 2005). Slightly differently, Kitchen (2009: 104) argues security communities will make extensive efforts to downplay dissent by casting it as superficial and resting on an underlying and shared sameness — for example, by demonstrating the democratic nature of a community. In both cases, though, the presumption is that difference and divergence from the norm needs to be guarded against. Difference therefore has a habit of creeping in, but remains cast as a problem to be managed.

This becomes particularly evident in the limited discussion of decline in the literature. Departing from a similar position as Pouliot, Adler and Greve (2009: 82) argue practices are important because they reflect notions of identity. Consequently, disagreements over

practices — as between the US and Europe over Iraq — can reflect disagreements about collective identity and put the security community in danger.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Mueller (2006) suggests that decay is liable to result from emerging disjunctures over common values and threat perceptions. This position is supported by Adler and Barnett (1998a: 58) who note that given the constructed nature of social reality values and identities are always liable to change. Therefore, those forces that build up security communities might later undermine them. As with its initial presentation, therefore, the subsequent literature on security communities reproduces a dichotomy where the identification of difference and processes of differentiation are seen as destabilising factors for security communities to overcome, while moves towards homogenisation designed to overcome the sense of difference are viewed positively as reinforcing the security community.

### *Extant Explanations of Nordic Peace and their Limitations*

These tendencies can be seen in extant explanations of Nordic peace and where the Nordic case has frequently been depicted as a *prima facie* example of a Deutschian security community. This empirical claim can be contested. Thus, while no intra-Nordic war has occurred since 1814, at least until the end of the Second World War mutual suspicions amongst military planners were often high. For example, after Norwegian secession from Sweden in 1905 the two countries developed defensive war plans against each other that remained in place for several decades (Kupchan 2010: 115), while during the inter-war period the Norwegians were similarly concerned about Finland (Kaukianen 1997: 255–6, 258). Indeed, detractors of the security community claim can also point to a series of high-level intra-Nordic disputes, indicating that the absence of war hardly meant the existence of an unproblematic and positive peace. Such incidents included Norwegian independence in 1905, Finland's and Sweden's dispute over the sovereignty of the Åland islands (1918–21) and a territorial dispute between Denmark and Norway over Greenland. There were others besides.

However, as Wiberg (2000: 291-2) argues, from a security communities perspective, notable in each case was precisely that war never broke out despite the political dynamite of the issues at stake. Each was instead either resolved through negotiations or arbitration at the League of Nations, such that over time expectations of peaceful change became the norm. Moreover, the existence of continued tensions supports Adler and Barnett's evolutionary model of security communities developing from nascent to ascendant to mature. The claim, therefore, is that security communities take time to stabilise, with Norden being one demonstration of this.

Empirically, then, the claim that Norden meets the security community criteria can be upheld. How, though, to explain its development? Here, explanations have followed the prescriptions of Deutsch and Adler and Barnett, with scholars highlighting factors suggesting that enhanced levels of commonality were central. Typically, this includes identifying things like the convergence around compatible values, the close compatibilities of the Scandinavian languages (excluding Finnish), or the region's shared religion and ethnic and cultural homogeneity. Likewise, trade links are noted, as is the institutionalisation of Nordic linkages from the end of the 19th century through things like the Nordic Inter-Parliamentary Union, the creation of the culture-focused Norden Association in 1919, and the creation of the Nordic Council and the Nordic passport union in the 1950s and subsequent efforts to harmonise laws and work and social security arrangements (see Archer 2003). Similarly, it is argued that political reforms of democratisation and the emergence of a common and consensus-based political culture had an impact on how the Nordic states viewed and interacted with each other (Elder *et al.* 1982; Kupchan 2010: 118–21). Such cultural, institutional and communicative developments, it is claimed, all fostered the development of

a Nordic 'we-feeling' transcending previous divides in favour of emphasising membership in a common Nordic family of nations.

Empirically, however, the priority given in such accounts to cultural commonality, enhanced communications and institutionalisation processes is problematic. Indeed, various commentators have suggested the emphasis on enhanced commonalities is overlaid in such explanations. For example, Wiberg (1993: 211) argues that claims about a language community, strong economic ties and dense networks of economic, social and cultural interaction are exaggerated, the result being that Scandinavia's apparent uniqueness as a model is not as self-evident as sometimes imagined. For example, repeated Cold War negotiations to create a Nordic economic zone failed (Wiberg 2000: 294), while economic trading links did not increase substantially from when Nordic war predominated, prior to 1814. Indeed, intra-Nordic trade was often less important than trade links maintained with non-Nordic partners like Russia, Germany and Britain (Kupchan 2010: 118). Similarly, institutionalisation has been notably light, with the main developments occurring only after Norway (1905) and Finland (1917) gained independence, while the Nordic Council of Ministers has lacked legislative powers. As such, that institutionalisation which did occur appears to have been a consequence of the security community's emergence, not its driving force.

Particularly notable, however, is that the question of security appears to have played little role in the Nordic security community's emergence. Thus, whereas both Deutsch and Adler and Barnett see security communities as the outcome of specific security-related projects designed to transcend the security dilemma and 'abolish war' (Deutsch *et al.* 1957: 3; Adler and Barnett 1998b: 3), the Nordic case is notable because it was neither intentional, nor formulated as a project to secure peace amongst the Nordic countries. Instead, as Wæver (1998: 73, 76, 104) notes, it rather formed inadvertently and is a case of 'unintended peace'. Indeed, rather than states leading developments, as assumed amongst others by Deutsch, Wæver argues that civil society actors have been more important. Also contrary to expectations within the security communities literature, neither has the community subsequently been held together by the identification of common external threats and broader cooperation in the military realm. Indeed, threat perceptions have rarely been shared, and when defence unions have been proposed they have come to nothing (Wiberg 2000: 293). Instead, neutralism became the order of the day, with this reflecting the extent to which agreement over the sources and nature of threats has historically been lacking. Security as a driving force of the argument has therefore been notable only for its absence. Indeed, as Wæver (1998: 77) suggests, Nordic peace rather seems a case where security has been enhanced precisely by ignoring it and focusing on other concerns.

The problem with mainstream understandings of the causes of Nordic peace, therefore, is that they present a story of peace emerging as a result of enhanced commonness and convergence gradually overcoming the problems of difference. Hence, Kupchan (2010: 121) argues that the problem before this point was that commonalities were not strong enough. However, as noted, moves towards enhanced commonality (politically, socially, economically, ideationally, militarily) have actually not been that significant. This begs the question, therefore, of whether the implicit understanding whereby moves towards similarity are *de facto* good and community-enhancing, while moves of differentiation are *de facto* bad and community-threatening, is too one-sided. We suggest that it is. Further, we suggest that a more satisfying explanation of Nordic peace requires understanding not how difference was transcended but how its meaning was reinterpreted, thereby opening space for plurality and tolerance in intra-Nordic relations. In turn, we argue that a blind commitment to replacing difference with similarity can itself be a source of considerable anxiety and therefore cannot

be all that holds security communities together. This argument requires that we start by re-theorising the role of difference in constituting identity and community.

## **Bringing Difference Back In**

### *The Necessity of Difference*

Security community theorising assumes that enhancing similarity and common identity is central to constructing expectations of peaceful change, a view succinctly expressed in Adler and Barnett's (1998a: 45) formulation that 'Trust and identity are reciprocal and reinforcing'. Under this view difference must be downgraded and even excluded or externalised for a security community to emerge. As psychologists and social theorists note, though, such a view is problematic. Although conflicts may occur between individuals and groups marked by notable differences or appearing to grow apart, some of the fiercest conflicts involve groups and communities that differ little or even where previous differences have significantly diminished (Blok 1998: 33). Indeed, it is not uncommon for individuals and groups lacking a strong sense of self to lash out, precisely when they feel their boundaries are being transgressed by others perceived as getting too close and undermining the subject's sense of distinct selfhood (Mitchell and Black 1995: 52). This is particularly liable in periods of stress, fear and anxiety, when the chances of paranoia increase (Post 1996: 27–8). Violence in this sense serves to re-establish boundaries, shoring up the 'ego skin' from perceived threats of contamination (Glass 1997). As Girard therefore notes, in such situations it is the loss of difference between groups that is problematic, not difference itself (cited in Blok 1998: 38–9). From this perspective preserving distinctions becomes re-valued and is a view captured by Freud's invocation of the 'narcissism of minor differences', which suggests that 'identity – who you are, what you represent or stand for, whence you derive self-esteem – is based on subtle distinctions that are emphasised, defended, and reinforced against what is closest because that is what poses the greatest threat' (*ibid.*: 48). Thus, while enhancing similarity may in some contexts promote security, in others it might generate unease and ontological anxiety.

From this view difference is therefore central to ensuring safe identities, which begs the question of the types of relations that are possible between identity and difference. In this respect, a central presumption in much IR theorising is that self-other relations are always liable to slip into the mode of adversarial exclusion. Mouffe (2000: 213, 1994: 107–8), for example, is explicit that collective identities are always prone to radicalisation and the creation of antagonistic 'us versus them' dynamics. Campbell (1992) has similarly argued that identity is primarily constituted in the face of a radicalised and external Other. The emphasis on such Schmittian-type enemy/friend constellations has therefore stressed the need to keep similarity apart from difference as the central constitutive move in constructing identity. Indeed, for Schmitt the identification of the Other as an enemy even served an ethical end insofar as it enhanced the sense of community among citizens (Lebow 2008: 475).

However, relationships of difference need not be premised on the radicalised construction of enemies *à la* Schmitt, popular in much IR theorising. Indeed, several alternative views are worth noting. First, some suggest that while processes of radicalised othering may be necessary they need not be directed at others, but can be targeted at prior manifestations of the self in projects of self-transcendence. Indeed, in his contribution to Adler and Barnett's volume Wæver (1998) argues the constitutive narrative of European integration is largely premised on preventing a return to its inter-war past. The radicalised other is therefore European history with the European Union (EU) moving from a spatial emphasis, when constituting its identity *vis-à-vis* states beyond its borders, to a more temporal focus. In turn it



is claimed that the EU is able to develop more peaceful relations with its neighbours. However, whether temporal othering can replace spatial othering is contestable. For example, temporal othering has enabled the EU to construct an identity based on claims of historical progress and moral superiority which critics note is then frequently deployed spatially to position itself in an exclusionary hierarchy with its neighbours (Rumelili 2004; Prozorov 2011: 1275–79; Joenniemi 2008). So, if the interwar period is perceived as mired in the concerns of nationalism, geopolitics and sovereignty, then self-transcendence through European integration requires the EU also delimit itself from others who still think in these terms and are therefore perceived as stuck in history.

A second possibility is that instead of trying to eliminate the need for others in claiming identity, possibilities of constructing difference non-antagonistically are explored. The claim, therefore, is that difference need not always appear as negative (Laclau 1990: 39–44). Thus, drawing on Deleuze, Parker (2009) notes that while a minimum requirement for any entity's existence is that it can distinguish itself from other entities, such discrimination need not be based on particular substantive differences nor oppositional. Although for different identities to exist they cannot be identical to each other, they may still relate to each other and share or even replicate key characteristics. Deleuze refers to this as 'differences which resemble each other' (quoted in *ibid.*: 29). Identities may thus share, emulate, replicate and compete over common qualities (*ibid.*: 32). Discrimination is therefore needed, but need not be hostile. Indeed, Wiberg (2000: 297) distinguishes between 'shared' and 'common' identities. Fostering common identities entails promoting a totalising sameness and uniformity which from our perspective may infringe upon the psychological requirements underlying Freud's 'narcissism of minor differences', thereby potentially provoking ontological anxiety and backlash. In contrast, thinking of security communities in terms of shared identities implies that while some elements of the members' identities are held in common, others are not, thereby preserving space for differentiation (Bellamy 2004: 38). As Norton (1988: 37) puts it, friends are united not only by what they have in common, but also by what they do not. In friendship difference is not something to be regretted, but provides space for interaction and an alternative perspective.

The constitution of self and other is therefore not destined to translate into mutually exclusive and incompatible categories of subjectivity. While communities clearly do require some sense of commonality and sameness, critically they are also bound by their differences and the existence of complementarities between different identities *on the inside* whereby the other appears simultaneously as both other and like. The suspicion is obviously that underlying such complementarities will be a broader foundational identity shared by the community's members, so difference will only be embraced if it complements or accepts this broader identity. The EU's slogan of 'unity in diversity' elicits such a view, such that despite various national and regional differences, something deeper and more abstract still binds all together as 'Europeans'. Importantly, therefore, embracing difference does not require embracing all difference, thereby slipping into the advocacy of cosmopolitan universalism. Instead, the point is that difference can both exist within a community and be that which distinguishes one community from another.

However, accepting that a deeper synthetic identity must underlie differences within a community raises a question. Are communities constituting themselves through openness to difference still impelled to rely on moves of (radical) othering, reproducing the Hobbesian security dilemma *between* security communities rather than within them? Do such communities still need to draw boundaries between the community's deeper shared identity and those outside (Bellamy 2004: 10–11, 57)? Arguably such a view erroneously conflates the needs of individual and collective actors. As Abizadeh (2005: 47–8) notes, while individual identity is inherently particular, collective identity need not be. Thus, while

individual identity is fundamentally tied up with securing the recognition of external others for claims made about the self, for collectives the recognition required for constituting identity can also be provided by the collective's members themselves. This may be evidenced in the members' tacit or active acceptance and reproduction of the claims made about the collective's identity in various contexts and in terms of how members represent their collective identity to themselves, to the broader collective, as well as in interactions with non-members.

This view, moreover, is also supported by recent findings from psychology, which indicate that, *contra* previous views, in-group solidarity is not necessarily dependent upon the stereotyping of out-groups, even if historically that has often been the case (Lebow 2008: 478-9). As indicated in the case study, core narratives of Nordic communality have often been rather indifferent to the outside, with Nordic communality the product of internal dialogical processes whereby individuals and groups throughout the Nordic countries recognised each other as kin, doing so without necessarily relying on arguments radicalising those deemed as lying outside the community, or without even focusing overly on defining the community's borders in the first place. Following Abizadeh (2005: 49–50) we also argue that one reason for this is that Scandinavianism has generally been constituted outside the language of sovereignty. Abizadeh's point is that in the modern era sovereignty has been constituted as an institution presupposing the existence of external others. While in principle sovereignty can be understood to describe 'the nature of legitimate political authority *within* a political community' — and need not as such presuppose the existence of other sovereign bodies beyond — in practice sovereignty has also come to describe 'the regulation of relations *between* separate political communities' (*ibid.*: 49). To this extent, states and nations claiming sovereignty not only require recognition from their constitutive members, but have also come to require recognition from other sovereign entities. In terms of contemporary practice, therefore, sovereignty by definition has come to require the demarcation of clear-cut borders between inside and outside, which in turn has tended to encourage an emphasis on questions of security. In contrast, communities like the Nordic one that constitute themselves outside the language of sovereignty do not face this requirement. This in principle facilitates a potentially more relaxed attitude toward the need to assert borders or to seek recognition for claims made about the community from those beyond. At the same time, this is not to suggest that sovereignty's requirement for external others need result in the constitution of self-other relations in negative us-them terms. Indeed, as indicated in the Introduction, mutual recognition of sovereignty can at times provide a useful way of navigating the dual need for sameness and difference. By the same token, it is also not inevitable that collective identities constituted outside of sovereignty will also be benign.

### *Difference and Ontological Security*

Having established that difference is central to identity and noted that (minor) difference can feature in various ways, being both implicated in conflict and peace, we need a way of explaining different outcomes. Here we therefore outline an analytical framework built on the needs of ontological security and the nature of specific political environments, which can help us understand why in some contexts difference may translate into relations of enmity and conflict, while in others peace and community might prevail.

In International Relations ontological security has been invoked to problematise the otherwise dominant emphasis on issues of physical and material security in the discipline. As Mitzen (2006: 342) notes, traditional security studies has been preoccupied with threats of physical violence and the use of force, thereby failing to understand that securing a sense of identity and being often take precedence in decision-making processes. Focusing on ontological security therefore hones in on the relationship between the logic of security and

the production and reproduction of identities, with ontological security referring to the need of actors (individuals or collectives) to maintain a sense of continuity and certainty over self-identity in respect of unfolding events (Giddens 1991: 243).<sup>3</sup> Central, here, is the need of actors to maintain a convincing self-biography, without which they might otherwise feel overwhelmed. Indeed, lacking such a story can be a significant source of anxiety and ontological insecurity and may result in actors feeling paralysed to respond to events (Giddens 1991: 35–6, 53; also Ringmar 1996: 73–6). 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.

As Zarakol (2010: 6–7) notes, the ontological security literature is divided between psychological and sociological variants. Whereas psychological views generally focus on agents as authors of their own futures, sociologically derived perspectives locate agents in their broader social environments. Most notable is Giddens, who while drawing on its psychological foundations notes that at root ontological security also ‘includes a basic trust of other people’ (quoted in Kinnvall 2004: 746), implying that ontological security is also in part the property of relationships. Arguably Giddens’ formulation can be read two ways. First, it can imply that ontological security becomes dependent upon whether one trusts in the integrity of significant others. Alternatively, we suggest that what is often at stake in questions of ontological security is whether one trusts in the nature of the relationships established. Thus, one can seek ontological security by trusting in the integrity of a friendship, or in the fact that the other is an inherently untrustworthy mendacious enemy. Others can therefore be positioned in radically different ways in the processes constituting ontological security. So, while ontological security is inherently relational, at root it comes down to whether or not actors expect to be treated by others in predictable ways — as friends or enemies. In contrast, existential anxiety is liable to be a product of situations when this does not happen (Roe 2008: 778, 782).

However, given the dynamic nature of social reality a condition of ontological security, once achieved, is liable to be transient and in constant need of reassertion by repositioning the self in view of changing events. In this respect, a healthy sense of ontological security is not simply a product of the incessant following of habit and routine, but rather entails an ability to tolerate and cope with uncertainty by reconstituting self-biographies and routines in view of unfolding developments (Craib 1998: 72). This, of course, begs the question of the connection between the ability to tolerate uncertainty and the unfolding nature of self-other relations. Perceived changes in established patterns of self-other relations resulting, for example, from perceptions that the other is getting either too close or changing to become something very different, can become considerable sources of anxiety as they may challenge established conceptions of self-identity, with the obvious response being to re-establish a sense of stability and certainty in respect of self-other relations. Importantly, though, this does not mean an ontological security perspective supports a particular view on the appropriate relationship to difference in the constitution of self-identity; rather, it indicates that this can take different forms. Indeed, we suggest that at least three strategies (*ontological security-seeking strategies*) are available for actors to adopt in mediating their relationship to difference in the constitution of self-identity in situations when they perceive their sense of ontological security is threatened.

The first strategy is that of *securitisation*. Securitisation emphasises internal homogeneity and the externalising of difference to achieve harmony and feelings of self-certainty. Such strategies are frequently adopted in times of crisis and entail ratcheting up political debates so they take on existential dimensions prone to the adoption of exceptionalist security strategies (Wæver 1995). Established literature on ontological security — but also in social psychology — suggests that the closing down of identities is a frequent response to the existential

anxieties that often accompany societal upheavals. Indeed, in situations of societal stress the reassertion of fundamentalist and populist accounts of nationalism and religion clearly distinguishing between group members and threatening non-members is common (Kinnvall 2004: 754–5, 757; Dijker *et al.* 1996; Karakayli 2009: 543, 556; Roe 2008: 787–8). Securitising subjectivity through articulating exclusionary (even fundamentalist) conceptions of identity is as such perceived as providing the desired stability central to ontological security.

The second strategy is that of *desecuritisation*. This concerns attempts to enhance self-certainty by directly engaging the securitisation process and returning to a more ‘normalised’ political debate. Desecuritisation, therefore, is about overcoming the conflicts and identity discourses of the past that result in the constant reproduction of adversarial relations. As such it entails processes that open up securitised identities to new possibilities. There are, however, various avenues for desecuritisation, with Hansen (2010) distinguishing between four approaches: rearticulation, replacement, silencing and fading. ‘Rearticulation’ entails challenging established understandings of the security situation by presenting the issue in other terms. In an analysis of migration Huysmans (1995: 65) labels this an objectivist strategy, the goal being to convince people that in reality the other is not as dangerous or irrational as perceived (likewise see Wæver 2008). ‘Replacement’, by contrast, involves downplaying the threat in one context via the securitisation of something else. In identity terms this might be a process of swapping enemies and, understood as such, entails obvious contradictions. However, cases of securitising soft security issues (disease, organised crime, development etc.) in order to foster common approaches and ameliorate previously highly securitised relations can also be identified (Browning and Joenniemi 2004: 239). ‘Silencing’, meanwhile, achieves desecuritisation through actively repressing it, by not allowing certain agents to articulate their security concerns. Such a process, though, can arguably result in unsettling consequences damaging both to people’s physical and ontological security (see Hansen 2000). In general, however, desecuritisation strategies usually entail providing more space for a positive reading of difference by undermining assertions of otherness as necessarily constituting radical and uncompromising difference. Desecuritisation therefore entails a shared process of managing threats designed to reverse the direction of othering in that it reduces rather than increases the temporal and spatial distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In this sense the impact is the opposite of securitisation strategies.

Hansen’s fourth desecuritisation approach is ‘fading’. This, though, can be incorporated under our third ontological security-seeking strategy of *asecuritisation*. Asecuritisation differs from desecuritisation in that while desecuritisation strategies focus on how to escape and move away from the exceptionalist politics of securitisation in asserting ontological security, asecuritisation lacks directionality and assumes a normalised politics from the start.<sup>4</sup> Asecuritisation, therefore, refers to discourses upholding ontological security where questions of security are themselves simply not part of the picture. In this respect, Hansen (2010) understands ‘fading’ as a situation where former threats ‘no longer exercise our minds and imaginations’ and are ultimately forgotten. Importantly, though, this is not about burying one’s head in the sand and suppressing talk about extant securitisations in the hope they might just disappear (Huysmans 1995: 65). Instead, asecuritisation implies embracing a different ontological perspective that abandons a differential logic of identity and therefore has no reason to engage in negating action in constituting the self in the first place (Prozorov 2011: 1288–89). Such an ontological position implies accepting as givens ambiguity, difference and the inherently fragmentary nature of identity.<sup>5</sup>

In summary, what these different ontological security-seeking strategies indicate is that while (minor) differences may become disruptive and radicalised in periods when politics is framed in exceptionalist terms, they are potentially more integrative in periods of more

‘normalised’ political discourse. Thus, what distinguishes these different strategies from each other are their different political trajectories deriving from how politics is framed in each case. However, strategies of securitisation, desecuritisation and asecuritisation can in turn help explain movements from one political environment to another, but also single out why and how various security communities differ from each other.

Missing so far, though, is the question of why actors might adopt the strategies they do, or shift from one to another over time. Various arguments can help explain this. First, Adler and Barnett’s discussion of facilitating conditions is important. As highlighted below, structural changes can be important in shifting opportunities and perceptions, thereby providing grounds for the emergence of new narratives. This is particularly pertinent regarding crisis situations, a defining element of which is that often established narratives no longer seem to make sense. Second, it is worth returning to questions of ontology since how difference is constituted is arguably often a function of key actors’ ontological assumptions. For instance, if these rest on a world of sovereign nation states in a Hobbesian anarchic international environment, then securitisation and strict bordering might be a more likely outcome. In contrast, if ontological assumptions presuppose a world of transversal communities transgressing political and territorial boundaries, then the possibilities for circumventing the usual state/sovereignty-gearred ontology and requirements are enhanced, not least because they are liable to foster alternative ‘logics of appropriateness’ (Bellamy 2004: 39–41, 60).

### **Nordic Peace: A Revisionist Account**

The above re-theorisation of difference in constituting identity and community therefore enables us to suggest a revisionist interpretation of the emergence of Nordic peace in the 19th century. In this respect, what marks out Nordic peace during this period is not simply the emergence of a negative peace in the form of the creation of a no-war community after 1815, but the development of more positive dimensions in which the idea of Scandinavia and Norden gained positive valence in the constitution of regional identities.<sup>6</sup> Central to this revisionist interpretation are the following points. First, while an emphasis on promoting commonality was not unimportant in this development, particularly notable is how the embracing of a regional identity also entailed respect for the preservation of internal difference. Second, contrary to established interpretations noted earlier, we argue that the shift from a Nordic community of war and high-level securitisation to one of peace and communality did not result primarily from processes of desecuritisation designed to overcome an extant security dilemma, but from strategies of asecuritisation.

Importantly, this is not to say that desecuritisation practices cannot be identified during the period but that over the course of the 19th century asecuritisation (fading) was the dominant trend. Evidence for this claim is derived from the discourses and practices of different groups at the time, with an analysis of these highlighting the following things. First, that concerns about security in the form of overcoming previous conflicts were deemed largely irrelevant and are therefore absent in the discourses advocating intra-Nordic cooperation, with this speaking for fading as opposed to the emphasis on rearticulation or silencing that we might find in desecuritisation strategies. Second, that while attempts to promote intra-Nordic cooperation and community-building through articulating security concerns in terms of the need to bind together in the face of common external threats (i.e. desecuritisation through ‘replacement’ strategies of securitising something else) were tried, these failed to win wide public and political support. And, third, that discourses and practices promoting Nordic communality lacked attempts to enforce homogeneity on the identity in construction, and in this respect remained relatively open to the preservation of internal

difference within the community. Finally, it should also be noted that the 19th century experience should not be seen as determinative for how Nordic communality was constructed subsequently. As we note in the conclusion, given that security communities need to be continually rearticulated in the face of changing events, the possibility always exist for their constitutive practices and discourses to change.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Facilitating Conditions: From Gothic Dynasticism to Scandinavian Nationalism*

Before 1815 the prospects for the emergence of an enduring Nordic security community characterised by expectations of peaceful change seemed bleak. Instead, 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). Moreover, imperial ambitions and dynastic rule were supported by narratives recalling an ancient Gothic Scandinavian warrior society (Henningsen 1997: 98). Gothic narratives, like those evident in Olof Rudbeck's *Atlantica* (17th century), proclaimed northern civilisation's political and moral superiority and were designed to support Nordic dynastic ambitions concerning European power politics (Henningsen 1997: 101–4, 116; Kent 2008: 83). Gothicism, alongside other formative narratives, provided a historicised biography of society's origins and different actors' position within it. Internally it justified a stratified social order and distribution of power, while externally it supported imperialist adventures. Intra-Nordic relations were therefore dominated by issues of threat and the balance of power, with ontological security largely a product of practices, discourses and routines securitising subjectivity in the face of threatening and external otherness.

After 1815, however, and in line with Adler and Barnett's emphasis on facilitating conditions, space for a dramatic transformation opened up. Following this, previous adversarial discursive structures emphasising securitisation and enmity unravelled, to be replaced by narratives and routines promoting more benign and inclusive understandings between the Nordic neighbours. Structural changes were particularly important, most notably Sweden's and Denmark's diminished power following the Napoleonic wars. Among other concessions Sweden ceded Finland to Russia and lost regions in northern Germany, while Denmark lost Norway, which after several months of independence entered into a union with Sweden. Such structural changes had an impact on geostrategic perspectives, with Sweden and Denmark compelled to accept that their dreams of becoming major European actors had collapsed. Thus, instead of an emphasis on military revenge, the focus shifted to accepting a different role as only minor actors on Europe's fringe. Amongst the elite this entailed a shift in ontological perspective as an emphasis on expansion and the attainment of honour through battle gave way to a growing emphasis on neutrality towards European power politics (Kent 2008: 156) and the need for 'domestic consolidation within their new territories' (Sørensen and Stråth 1997: 15).

These changes were accompanied by the transformation of internal power relations within the Nordic kingdoms as dynastic absolutist rule was challenged by ideologies of national awakening, locating sovereignty in the people and not the monarch. The idea emerged of the peasants constituting the national soul, the 'carriers of freedom, equality, and education', with this myth crucial in constructing national communities after 1815 (*ibid.*: 14; Hilson 2006: 195–9). This valorisation of the peasants helped in leaving the divisive and securitised past behind by creating space for viewing past conflicts and the states' grandiose ambitions as resulting from a now moribund dynastic politics, with intra-Nordic wars understood as the wars of kings/nobility rather than peoples. Indeed, throughout the period a connection between the 'people' and 'peace' became established and was juxtaposed against a connection between monarchs and war. Indeed, in Norway by the turn of the 20th century, influential commentators such as the poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson were arguing in favour of

rejecting the European power political system entirely and rejecting the traditional conflation of 'foreign policy' with *realpolitik* (Leira 2010). Notably, in 1905 the Swedish prime minister limited Swedish foreign policy to 'protecting its neutrality' (quoted in Kent 2008: 177–8).

Theoretically speaking, understood as not being 'our wars', previous intra-Nordic (and indeed extra-Nordic) conflicts could therefore be rejected as irrelevant to the future and replaced with new stories of legitimation and identity. Thus, structural change was not primarily met by strategies of securitisation or even desecuritisation. Unlike the European integration project after the Second World War (WWII), there was little talk of forging new identities by explicitly overcoming past conflicts and escaping history. Hence, there were no peace treaties, no emphasis on confidence building measures and no thought that future relations would only be secured through establishing an intra-Nordic balance of power (Joenniemi 2011). Instead the past was rejected as bankrupt and could be ignored as not being 'our' past or 'our' conflicts, and therefore unimportant when moving forward. Security became increasingly superfluous and largely dropped out as grounds for organising regional relations. To continue the comparison, for European integration this move was not possible because WWII was clearly understood as a war of peoples as much as of leaders. It therefore could not be 'forgotten' or discounted, but needed to be tackled through a broader strategy of desecuritisation aimed at undermining entrenched enemy images and pervading hostilities.

#### *Difference within Unity*

More particularly, with the end of pre-modern dynasticism for many people Gothic narratives legitimising state power and foreign adventures no longer worked, or appeared inappropriate for the emergent order. Instead, rearticulated celebrations of Nordic antiquity and a shared Scandinavian heritage were invoked that served to legitimise the new political structure of 'peoples' states' (folkhem). Noted works on Nordic mythology like those of N. F. S. Grundtvig and Adam Oehlenschläger helped convince the defeated nations that while past imperial visions were now moribund the respective nations could instead find a sense of national (self-)esteem through their cultural heritage (Jespersen 2004: 199). Invoking Scandinavianism therefore helped enhance claims of national distinction. Nationalists across the region therefore appealed to a common Scandinavian/Nordic heritage to enhance their nation's ontological security, even while simultaneously demarcating territorial and identity related national borders in direct reference to each other.

However, despite this element of mutual differentiation, appeals to Scandinavian myths also implicitly drew the different nations together, bolstering a sense of Scandinavian commonality, precisely by 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 predicated on highlighting commonalities of language, religion, climate and geography, while simultaneously avoiding imposing homogeneity on the community. Notably, a common icon of Scandinavianism was a tree with shared roots but different branches (Stråth 2005: 209). Difference, therefore, did not translate into the otherness of an anti-self. Indeed, the Dane Oehlenschläger was awarded a medal by the Swedish King for his work and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Lund (Kent 2000: 239). The construction therefore upheld a sense of 'difference within unity' through accepting that the Scandinavian/Nordic could be appropriated in different ways. Accepting that the other nations might constitute their identities in Nordic terms was not problematised, even if sometimes nationalists competed to declare themselves the purest manifestation of the original Norse people (Hilson 2006: 206). Hence, the Nordic idea remained relatively open, conceptualised differently in different national settings, with this having important effects in constituting the broader political and security environment. In short, 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*

This process was most evident in the ambitions of the ‘Scandinavian Movement’. Emerging around 1830, the Scandinavian Movement was initially comprised mainly of academics and teachers, though by the century’s end it had spread to encompass both middle and working class groups (Nilsson 1997: 216; Wiberg 2000: 296). The Movement encouraged viewing intra-Scandinavian and Nordic borders in connective rather than divisive terms and as such existed as an epistemic and transversal community standing for a different ontology regarding the status of difference. Central to this was the rejection of borders as inevitable sites of othering, security and conflict, a rejection particularly evident in the routinised practice of crossing the Øresund Strait between Denmark and Sweden to meet the other as a brother in usually informal encounters — parties or speeches, for example. Between 1839-1905 at least 100 such meetings were held, sometimes attracting as many as 7000 participants (Hemstad 2010: 182–3). Such border-transcending movements were not to be guarded against but welcomed, as an exceptionalist top-down statist politics was replaced with a more normalised view based on bottom-up interactions across civil society. Indeed, those embarking on such meetings were often met by enthusiastic crowds (Kent 2000: 239; Østergård 1997: 35–6). In such encounters the other was embraced as a civilised and respectable person with considerable academic and artistic credentials. These meetings emphasised a willingness to learn more about the non-threatening differences inherent in the Scandinavian ‘cousins’, while over time this kind of difference became constitutive of Nordic communality.

At the same time, the most ambitious in the Movement conceptualised Scandinavianism as a pan-Scandinavian nationalist political project (Østergård 1994: 13–4; 1997: 39). For them temptations of sovereignty and a modern reading of international relations remained influential with their version of Scandinavianism incorporating self-deterministic elements akin to the nationalist movements seeking Italian and German unification. The idea, therefore, was to foster a united and increasingly homogenous Scandinavian nation-state again able to compete on the stage of European power politics. In this rendering standard aspects of statist discourse remained, with Scandinavian identity/community constituted partly through the securitisation of other European powers like Germany or Russia (see Holmberg 1946: 282–3), or which in a softer form demarcated Norden as democratic, Protestant and progressive, in contrast to a Catholic, conservative and capitalist Europe (Stråth 1994).

Ultimately, though, this form of Scandinavianism, premised on customary discourses of political space and challenging the existing states’ sovereignty and the aspirations of nationalists in Finland and Norway for self-determination, failed. As Stråth (2005: 210) notes, whereas in Denmark and Sweden some people aspired to create a Scandinavian nation-state, in Norway Scandinavia was always 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. In other words, pan-Scandinavianism failed partly because it proposed imposing a stultifying similarity that would erase national distinctions, and this generated anxieties regarding the ability of national identities to retain space for difference.

Aside from the supranationalist dreams of some pan-Scandinavianists, in general the Nordic was therefore rather 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 been achieved in Norway (1905) and Finland (1917), and why, unlike with the EU,



continuing institutionalisation has not been understood as central to preserving a Scandinavian identity or community. The key year for the defeat of pan-Scandinavian dreamers, however, was 1864, when despite promises of help Sweden failed to assist Denmark in its war against Schleswig-Holstein (supported by Prussia and Austria) (Hilson 2008: 17–8; Østergård 1997: 40). The Swedes therefore refused to bring military issues into the discourse on Nordic commonality, following which the Danes lost faith in any overarching Scandinavian national project.

Although 1864 can be interpreted as the failure of Scandinavianism (certainly as a nascent project of national self-determination usurping the existing states) another reading is possible. After 1864 Scandinavianist political discourses were replaced with an emphasis on locating solidarity culturally (Hemstad 2008: 22–5). Scandinavianism therefore developed to complement ongoing nationalist projects. Internal difference thus became easier to accept as something enriching Scandinavian/Nordic unity. Pan-Scandinavianism's failure 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 translate Nordicity into traditional alliance politics. After 1864, he argues, the idea of a Scandinavian unified political subject became impossible. Instead, a construction based on cultural and emotive identity became dominant, with this identity being one that 'did not need to withstand any political test' (Henningsen 1997: 117; also Stråth 2005: 221). Thus, although ideas of Scandinavia were utilised to uphold and assert the nations' sovereign aspirations, Scandinavianism therefore escaped the inside/outside logic of sovereignty highlighted by Abizadeh earlier. This also helps explain why security has since the 19th century failed to dominate discourses regarding the essence of intra-Nordic relations.

## **Conclusion**

Nineteenth century Norden challenges the link drawn between security and identity in much IR theorising and raises questions about security community theorising in particular. Incorporating debates about ontological security indicates both that security is not always about physical security concerns and questions of survival, and that a sense of self-certainty and stability around identity can be achieved through various ways of relating the self to difference. Put otherwise, community does not always require emphasising (moves towards) homogeneity, just as upholding identity need not require securitising otherness.

However, the case also demonstrates that desecuritisation processes explicitly challenging established securitisations are not the only way of moving towards a more 'normalised' — or less exceptionalist — politics. Instead, in line with asecuritisation, it appears that sometimes past securitisations and conflicts can be ignored, especially if they are seen as disconnected from a new situation and fundamentally not 'our' responsibility. Which approach is most relevant will depend upon the specific historical situation. In the Nordic context the shift from dynasticism to people's-states enabled the past to be rejected and left behind rather easily, with previous conflicts depicted as those of kings, not peoples. By contrast, as regards European integration, insofar as the Second World War was viewed as a war of peoples, of 'our' nation fighting 'their' nation, and within which negative stereotypes and mistrust were firmly entrenched, then desecuritisating strategies have been more relevant, with this fully in line with security community theorising.

As such, security communities may emerge and thrive in different ways. In line with standard theoretical understandings they may, for example, be the product of both processes

of securitisation (with community constituted around the identification of a common threat) and of desecuritisation (with community constituted around escaping a history of violence and insecurity). In such cases the driving force rests in concerns with physical and material forms of security. However, options of asecuritisation, where physical and material forms of security attract little concern, are also possible. In contrast to established explanations the Nordic case arguably appears closer to an asecuritisation model. Similarly, it remains 'nascent' in essence in that so far it has not conformed to the directionality of development towards the 'mature' status anticipated in Adler and Barnett's approach. Moreover, the Nordic community did not emerge primarily because of various epistemic changes promoting the erasure of difference and fostered by improved communications, the establishment of joint institutions and intensified interactions, as assumed in much of the literature. Instead, ontological issues related to reinterpreting difference as benign were central, with this creating space for constructing commonality across previous divides. The security communities concept therefore needs expanding to account for forms of commonality related to ontological security and safeguarding identities, rather than limiting itself to focusing on security as survival.

This emphasis on ontological shifts also raises questions about the often assumed centrality of security in the formation of political space. In contrast to most approaches, which assume traditional security concerns inevitably lie somewhere in the background and therefore see security communities as anomalies to be explained, the re-theorisation of the relationship between identity, difference and security here makes them appear rather more normal features of international relations. Indeed, as indicated by the failure of various forms of pan-Scandinavianism, resulting from the perceived threat of pushing similarity too far and obliterating difference, shared identities may well be preferable to common ones. Moreover, this shift in perspective and ontology also makes it possible to understand why the Nordic case has arguably emerged 'inadvertently' and 'incidentally' without much effort and without security lying in the background as a driving argument, why it actually lacks many properties usually ascribed to security communities and why in various respects it fails to correspond to the model it has frequently been taken to represent.

This point about ontology reflects Der Derian's (1993) earlier distinction between Hobbesian and Nietzschean approaches to security. Whereas Hobbes assumes security is ever-present and inescapable in international relations, Nietzsche left space for ambiguity and asecuritised readings of difference. The Nietzschean approach maintains difference and divergence need not be rejected or eradicated to produce certainty and predictability but is instead central to the possibility and value of life (*ibid.*: 104). As Huysmans (1998: 245) notes, in positively revaluing ambiguity the Nietzschean approach clashes 'with the ethico-political project of (inter)national security practices', yet in turn it facilitates alternative options, including that of anchoring ontological security through the toleration and even appreciation of difference. In resting on such foundations the Nordic case therefore also entails emancipatory potential. By indicating that safe identities may emerge through an acceptance of difference, it invites theoretical innovation in understanding the constitutive processes underlying security communities.

More broadly it also invites undertaking comparative analyses by indicating that Norden is not just one security community among others but has distinctive characteristics, not least because it rests on discourses concerning ontological safety rather than physical and material forms of security. Whereas the latter type of arguments have been abundant in the context of the European Union and NATO for example, it is the absence of such standard security talk that accounts for Norden's emergence as a security community.

This denaturalisation of the 'need' for security arguments in constituting borders and commonality also speaks for analyses exploring the nature of this constitutive role over time.

Importantly, since identity is inherently contingent the empirical story will never be fixed or predetermined. Thus, although the 19th century emergence of Nordic peace rested on asecuritisation processes promoting openness towards both internal and external difference, with this partly premised on particular renderings of Scandinavian narratives, this does not mean that asecuritisation has determined how ontological security has been sought subsequently. Certainly during the Cold War Norden still resonated positively through its narration in terms of modernity, rationality, peacefulness and progress (Musial 2009: 288–90). Little need was therefore felt to bring in security arguments to further legitimate and ground Nordicity. However, with the Cold War's end and the Soviet Union's collapse the situation changed as the Nordic configuration lost status. Instead of being viewed as a forerunner and model for others to emulate, it became tainted with notions of compromise, aloofness and statism. Indeed, in the 1990s for some Scandinavia/Norden became viewed as anxiety-inducing and a source of ontological *insecurity*, with some senior politicians declaring the Nordic model of exceptionalism dead (Hanhimäki 1997: 187). Norden instead became a burden to be escaped with salvation now seen to lie in European integration and Anglo-American economic liberalism (Wæver 1992; Patomäki 2000).

More recently, however, Norden has made a comeback but with strategies of asecuritisation being challenged by those of securitisation and desecuritisation. For example, Gunnar Wetterberg (2009) recently proposed creating a Nordic federation with joint foreign, economic and security policies, a proposal reminiscent of 19th-century pan-Scandinavianist goals. Indeed, the proposal promotes common over shared identity and invokes security as the driving force behind a new togetherness. Similarly, a recent report on the future of Nordic foreign and security policies called for enhanced coordination over search and rescue missions and maritime accidents, but also suggested common security guarantees to counter external threats (Stoltenberg 2009: 34). While the first two proposals indicate a form of desecuritisation — with risk and 'soft' security as the core underlying argument — the latter (which was initially approved by the Nordic foreign ministers in watered down form in 2011, though later reopened for future discussions on more stringent guarantees) implied a securitising rationale for future region-specific cooperation.

Likewise, recent debates over migration indicate it is also not inevitable that difference in the Nordic story will always be told in open and benign ways. In these debates, instead of offering a counter-discourse concerning how to mediate increasing encounters with difference emanating from processes of Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation, difference is often depicted as dangerous and threatening. This is amply illustrated by the rise of more exclusionary forms of nationalism in the region, particularly evident in the rise of populist anti-immigrant (especially anti-Muslim) sentiment. Openness towards internalised difference therefore appears to be closing down with a growing focus on emphasising homogeneity in drawing identity boundaries.

There is therefore nothing inevitable about how ontological security can be achieved. In the Nordic case ideas about Scandinavia have generally brought the Scandinavians together into a rather peaceable and open transnational community, with this community drawn together through particular ways of relating to both difference and similarity. Whether or how Norden continues to stand out will, though, depend on contemporary choices regarding the construction of identity and self-certainty in respect of difference. It might be that Norden is beginning to turn into a more standardised form of security community easy to explain by the stress on common (not shared) identities in established theories, and where security is depicted as a core concern underlying togetherness. However, it is precisely for this reason that it is important to highlight examples, like that of 19th-century Norden, that indicate that other forms and paths to security community exist. The bigger point, however, is that Norden demonstrates how deferring or postponing Schmittian-type decisions regarding the bounds of

community need not be a source of ontological insecurity as implied in much IR theorisation. Understanding this, though, requires opening up the relationship between security and identity and rethinking the relationship between identity and difference.

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<sup>1</sup> Deutsch distinguished between two types of security community. 'Amalgamated Security Communities', like federalised states, form through the 'formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit with some type of common government after amalgamation'. 'Pluralistic Security Communities' retain 'the legal independence of separate governments' (Deutsch *et al.* 1957: 6). The subsequent literature in IR has been overwhelmingly concerned with pluralistic security communities.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of the transatlantic security community Adler and Greve strike a note of optimism suggesting that 'a future convergence of practices [and therefore identity] cannot be discounted' (Adler and Greve 2009: 83–4).

<sup>3</sup> Recent works on ontological security in International Relations include Delehanty and Steele (2009), Huysmans (1998), Kinnvall (2004), Mitzen (2006), Steele (2008), Zarakol (2010), and Zaretsky (2002). The extrapolation of a concept with its origins in psychology from the individual to the collective level is not uncontroversial, but has been tackled elsewhere. See Roe (2008: 779, 785); Steele (2005: 529–30); Krolikowski (2008); Marlow (2002: 247).

<sup>4</sup> While the distinction between 'exceptionalist politics' and 'normal politics' is not uncontroversial, here we use the distinction in the same way as securitisation theory, in which normal politics is equated with open democratic political debate.

<sup>5</sup> There are similarities here with Huysmans' (1995: 67–8) account of deconstructivist desecuritisation.

<sup>6</sup> Strictly speaking, until Norwegian independence in 1905 the Nordic security community only included Denmark and Sweden as the region's two sovereign states. However, Norway operated as a separate administrative unit and developed a distinct national consciousness during the period, with Norwegians also engaged to some extent in debates about Scandinavianism. For this reason we include Denmark, Norway and Sweden in our discussion of the emergence of the Nordic security community during this period. We pay less attention to Finland for two reasons. First, Finland remained a Grand Duchy of the Russian empire until 1917 and was therefore excluded from many Nordic developments. Second, the constitution of Finnish national identity during the nineteenth century through to the inter-war period was to a significant degree constituted in opposition to Swedishness, with this reflecting an internal political battle between Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers. In this battle Swedish speakers sought to protect their traditionally privileged status by drawing explicit links with a broader Scandinavian tradition. In contrast Finnish speaking nationalists often rejected Scandinavian links outright (Browning 2008: 80–92). It is notable that Finland's (and Iceland's) later inclusion in the security community was accompanied with the discursive replacement of Scandinavia with Nordic when referring to the community (Hemstad 2010: 186). It is also notable that Finland's more positive stance towards Nordic cooperation in part was driven by more classical geopolitical calculations in its attempt to balance against the Soviet Union. This further supports the point made below that the constitutive dynamics underlying security communities are always open to change.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of changes in the constitutive nature of Nordic and Scandinavian discourses see Hemstad (2010).