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**Branding Nordicity:
Models, Identity and the Decline of Exceptionalism**

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This article introduces the idea of brands to debates about Nordic models and identity. Understanding brands to be more strategic and stable than identities the article shows how a Nordic brand was marketed during the Cold War, but which has since been challenged and undermined by a number of pressures. Central to the Nordic brand has been ideas of Nordic ‘exceptionalism’ – of the Nordics as being different from or better than the norm – and of the Nordic experience, norms and values as a model to be copied by others. In the post-Cold War period key aspects of the Nordic brand have been challenged. On the one hand, elements of the Nordic elite appear to have forsaken the brand. On the other, broader recognition of a distinct Nordic brand is being undermined with the melding of Nordic with European practices and processes. The article concludes by asking whether the decline of the Nordic brand matters and further explores the link between Nordicity as a brand and as an identity.

Introduction

Historically the concepts of the ‘Nordic model’ and Norden/Nordicity have gained unique status standing for an ‘exception’ to standard practices in international and economic affairs. The idea of the Nordic model has played at least two important roles. First, the idea of the ‘Nordic exception’ and of a particular Nordic way of doing things has been a central element in Nordic and national *identity* construction for the Nordic states (e.g. Lawler 1997). The implication has been that to be Nordic one has to be ‘exceptional’ (or at least *different* from the norm) as, for example, during the Cold War when the ‘peace-loving and rational’ Nordics differentiated themselves from the rest of ‘warlike’ or ‘conflict prone’ Europe. Second, the ‘idea’ of the Nordic *model* has also been presented as something that can be copied and implemented elsewhere. The Nordic model in this instance has stood for progress, modernisation and for being *better than* other models. Usually this refers to the socio-economic organisation of the Nordic countries. However, foreign policy elements have also been evident, especially in notions

of being bridge-builders and trying to teach people how to build a proper security community, and in terms of a firm Nordic belief in *internationalist solidarism* and *Third Worldism*. For instance, Finland's recurrent reference to the 'Åland Islands solution' as a model for other countries to copy in dealing with problems of potentially separatist regions, or regions where different states put forward competing claims to sovereignty, is just one example of how the Nordics have tried to teach outsiders how to settle conflicts and build a peaceful security community (see Mykkänen 2005; Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004).

So, the Nordic model has stood out both as an *identity* and as a *model* to copy. Indeed, I want to suggest that the idea of the Nordic model has become something of a *brand* by which to position the Nordics in the world and provide them with an international role. As such, being 'Nordic' and adhering to the Nordic model has implied engaging in some types of action, and not others. Increasingly, however, it is argued that this 'brand' is now passed its sell-by-date. This is not necessarily to say that the Nordics are changing their behaviour and no longer conforming to the 'model' (though in some instances they may be), but that whether certain practices and attitudes will continue to be understood as specifically 'Nordic' (rather than European, for example) is open to question. The result is that recognition of the 'Nordic brand' is being undermined, which in turn poses questions for the future of the idea of 'Nordic exceptionalism' as a central part of Nordic identity.

The article starts by discussing the idea of identity as a ‘brand’ that can be projected and marketed to an international audience. Next it lays out a number of factors that have been central to ideas of the Nordic model and the idea of Nordic exceptionalism. It then notes that there are reasons to suggest that each of these elements are now facing challenges such that the idea of a distinct Nordic position or model is increasingly less obvious. These elements are undermining ideas of the Nordic model as being both an identity and as something to be copied and aspired for by others. In short, it is argued that for various reasons the ‘Nordic brand’ is losing its marketability. The article concludes with a question: if the Nordic model and brand is passed its sell-by-date is this something to be mourned, or embraced?

Branding Identity

To start a few words about identity and the concept of ‘brand’ are required. This is important as the concepts of brand and identity, although closely related, are not interchangeable. Thus, the decline of Nordicity and the Nordic model as a brand does not necessarily entail the decline or loss of Nordic identity(ies) as such. So what is the difference between the concepts and what is the benefit of introducing the idea of ‘brands’ into discussions of the Nordic case?

This article understands identities in constructivist and narrative terms, meaning identities should not be understood as fixed or pre-given, but as fluid and open to change and transformation. Identities are intersubjectively negotiated in interactions with others. To

be able to act selves need to construct narratives that locate themselves in time and space and in relation to other actors. Such narratives, however, constantly need retelling and also need to be endorsed and accepted by the relevant audience if an identity or set of identities is to hang together.¹ This last point is important in that since selves (including collectivities like nations) are embedded in many different relationships selves characteristically have multiple, not singular, identities. Indeed, the very unit that is understood as the self may expand and contract as one shifts between relationships. Thus, whilst a person's identification may shift between being a 'woman', 'mother', 'industrialist', 'explorer' etc., depending on the social context in which that individual finds herself, in other contexts that individual may meld into a bigger collective self in which the unit of self might be a family, team, trade union, nation, civilisation etc...

This is all broadly accepted, but the point about multiplicity is important when differentiating between identities and brands. Whereas identities need to be seen as multiple and fluid and also as being projective into the future, the concept of 'brand' is arguably more specific. The concept is usually used in regard to the economic marketplace and the buying and selling of commodities. In this respect a brand is usually understood as a particular version of a particular thing, a brand of car for example.² However, as Klein (2000) notes, sometimes brands become ends in themselves: the brand itself becomes the product, the brand standing for a particular lifestyle choice or political philosophy (e.g. Body Shop). In such instances the actual material 'product' becomes less important than the idea (brand) being sold. As will become evident below, and as argued

¹ On narrative approaches to identity see Carr (1986); Ringmar (1996); Schrag (1997).

by Kuisma elsewhere in this volume, to some extent the brand of the ‘Nordic model’ has developed elements of this about it, where it is not so much what the Nordic model actually *is* that counts, but rather what it is seen to *stand for*. Thus, the article is more concerned with the ‘idea’ of the Nordic model as representing a deviation from the norm or as something to be copied, rather than with its particular content *per se* – though the two are obviously closely connected. In general terms, however, in the marketplace branding is used to try and convince people to buy one product instead of another and where a successful brand gets a reputation for being better (however defined) than other brands. As such the brand becomes something people recognise, admire and even aspire to have or associate with. Brands, however, can also lose popularity, appearing worse than other brands or seeming outdated.

This article argues that during the Cold War the Nordic States were rather successful in marketing a ‘Nordic brand’ on the international scene. This brand had various elements to it, as will be demonstrated below, but included a particular socio-economic model and approach to international affairs (content) as well as simply the ‘idea’ that the Nordic model represented something distinct. Whilst these ideas and elements were important aspects of identity construction, the notion of brand points to the rather strategic way in which the Nordic brand was depicted, first as better than other brands (of state/foreign policy) and, second, as something that others could, in theory at least, buy into and purchase in the marketplace of ideas. Moreover, whilst identities can be understood as malleable and relatively hard to pin down the idea of brand in this instance points to a set

² For a discussion of the concept of brand see Keller (2003: ch.1).

of ideas, norms and practices that might be conceived in terms of an overall (if loosely defined) package. The aim of marketing a brand in this instance might be driven by identity considerations to convince the audience that you have a particular identity, but it might also be to sell the package of ideas, norms and practices and to carve out a niche for one's product and oneself within the global marketplace/international system.

Another important difference between brands and identities (especially when thinking about international politics) is that brands are not necessary. Whereas it is imperative for people/nations to construct an identity for themselves if they are to be able to act in the world³ (and for collectivities if they are to even exist) brands are not like this. It is quite possible to have an international identity without having a brand. The opposite is not the case. All states, for example, make various identity claims, but not all states actively try to market a particular approach to global politics. The Nordic example is particularly interesting in this respect as at times deliberate efforts have been made by the Nordic political elite to market a common brand. This points to another reason for introducing the concept of brand, which is that discussions about a collective Nordic identity can become difficult because the Nordic countries generally narrate Nordicity in slightly different ways for different historical reasons (Østergård 1998; Hansen and Wæver 1998). Nordic identity means different things to different people in different locations. However, I argue that aside from these various and sometimes divergent narratives the Nordic countries have collectively and rather deliberately tried to construct and market a singular 'Nordic brand', a particular common 'Nordic experience' or way of doing things

that is also presented as applicable for others. It is this marketing of a particular brand that justifies treating the Nordic countries collectively in this article. It is also important, however, to reflect briefly on exactly ‘who’ has been engaged in these branding exercises. In this respect I posit the existence of a pan-Nordic epistemic community that had its origins in the Scandinavianist movement of the nineteenth century, but which was further enhanced in the early-mid twentieth century through the creation of various so-called Nordic societies and later the Nordic Council (Østergård 1998). As I will argue, one of the reasons for the current weakening of the Nordic brand would seem to be the decline of a privileging of this trans-national community amongst the Nordic elite.

Before turning to the substantive discussion some methodological points are also necessary. Like identities brands cannot simply be proclaimed. To sell they need to be accepted and recognised as distinctive by the international audience (Ringmar 2002). Similarly, for the Nordic brand to exist it has also been important that collective Nordic positions built around cohesive policy preferences could be framed, and that there has been acceptance that each country has authority to speak on behalf of the Nordic collective.⁴ These points are important because when people talk about the possible death of Norden and the Nordic model it is essentially because they see elements of this scheme as no longer holding true. For example, it is no longer clear that the Nordic countries hold to clearly defined or distinctive positions, interests or identities that mark out the Nordic

³ As Ringmar (1996: 13) puts it, “it is only once we know who we *are* that we can know what we *want*” (original emphasis).

⁴ These points are developed from Laatikainen (2003: 412-13).

states from others, or whether some Nordic citizens even identify with a particular 'Nordic' position anymore.

Likewise, it is also unclear whether other actors (the audience) so clearly identify the Nordics as a separate group with a distinct brand as they did previously, or identify the Nordic model/brand as being particularly Nordic. To the extent that confirmation from the international audience disappears it might be argued that so too does the Nordic model – at least in the sense of being a Nordic model to be copied because of its distinct Nordic attributes. In turn, the lack of confirmation may not simply undermine the model elements, but may also undermine the very notion of what it is to be Nordic in any case. This is to say that if the idea of the Nordic 'exception' is no longer confirmed by the audience, then this 'exceptionalist' element to Nordicity may need to be rethought. This indicates that if the Nordic brand is no longer recognised, or no longer sells, then the challenge to the brand may also be challenging particular constructions of Nordic identity as exceptional. The implications of this are returned to in the Conclusion where the connection between the marketing of the Nordic brand to the construction of Nordic identity is discussed.

Finally, the focus on the concept of 'brand' here makes it important to distinguish between 'rhetoric' (marketing) and 'reality' (actual practices). Obviously, from a discursive and constructivist perspective such a distinction is problematic since our discourses are constitutive of social reality (Searle 1995). The reason for introducing the distinction, however, is to assert that the article is interested primarily in how a 'Nordic

brand' has been marketed over time, rather than whether the Nordics have always lived up to the brand. Put otherwise, a few faulty models will not undermine a manufacturer with an established reputation for producing reliable cars. However, once unreliability (failure to live up to the rhetoric/reputation) becomes endemic then the brand will be compromised. In the following, therefore, whilst inconsistencies with the proclaimed Nordic brand will be noted, highlighting them does not invalidate focusing analysis on the concept of the brand. At the same time, some of the arguments for the death of the Nordic brand in the post-Cold War period are clearly related to the view that the failure of Nordic practices to live up to the rhetoric of the brand have become seriously compromising.

To summarise, therefore, whilst brands may be located in different identity narratives telling us who we are, they differ from identities in that they are intrinsically more strategic, are primarily targeted at external audiences, are relatively stable (unlike fluid multiple identities), and precisely because of their fixity are also more open than (fluid) identities to being destabilised in the face of changing conditions.

Establishing the Brand: Elements of Exceptionalism/the Model

In this section the existence and development of a 'Nordic brand' premised on ideas of a Nordic model and Nordic exceptionalism towards international affairs will be highlighted. This requires demonstrating not simply that the Nordic countries tried to carve out a distinct identity for themselves during the Cold War, but also that in doing

this they tried to market to the international audience a particular Nordic brand. The reasons for doing this were largely strategic and based on a desire to try and keep the region outside the main theatre of the Cold War conflict.

The Nordic model is usually seen to have a number of elements that taken together have contributed to the idea of Nordic exceptionalism and a particular Nordic way of relating to international affairs. There are various ways of categorising the different elements of the 'Nordic model' and Nordic exceptionalism (e.g, Wæver 1992; Mouritzen 1995). As such the scheme outlined here is simply being used to draw out key points in relation to the question under discussion, whilst there is in reality much overlap between the analytical categories adopted below.

Peaceful societies and bridge builders

The Nordic model/brand rested, first and foremost, on a claim that the Nordic countries were exceptional in regard to the Cold War reading of international politics. Instead of the inevitable conflict between states the Nordics presented themselves as having successfully overcome the security dilemma between themselves to establish a region of peace and prosperity. This image became popularised in Karl Deutsch's (1957) understanding of the region as a unique security community in which stable expectations had developed such that an intra-Nordic war had become unthinkable. Deutsch's account was eagerly endorsed in the Nordic countries and helped foster what might be termed a 'Nordic peace industry'. On the one hand, this involved attempts to explain and propagate the reasons for internal Nordic peacefulness. However, it also fed into a

‘peace-driven’ approach to international relations in general. This could be seen in the state sponsored development of peace movements and peace research institutions in each country. For example, the creation of Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) in the early-mid 1960s was followed with the establishment of Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI - 1970) in Finland and Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI – 1980s) in Denmark.⁵

Another element in this peace driven approach to international relations was the adoption of a broadly anti-militarist stance to international affairs, meaning that *resort* to military force should be rejected in all but the direst of circumstances and that if possible international problems should be resolved through diplomacy and recourse to the UN/international law. Anti-militarism was understood differently in the different countries. In Denmark, beyond peacekeeping missions, the relevance and utility of armed force, even as a deterrent, was questioned (Rasmussen 2005b: 69). In contrast, Finland and Sweden maintained considerable defensive capabilities and defence industries (Sweden even considered developing nuclear weapons in the 1950s), with these being justified as necessary to preserve their neutrality.⁶ Thus, an effective military was required precisely so that it would not have to be used. At least in the Swedish case military readiness became seen as a key support to the ambition to be a ‘moral great power’ (Åselius 2005: 26-7).

⁵ On the development of the discipline of peace research and of the peace research institutes in the Nordic countries see, Gleditsch (2004); Vesa (1987). Another important symbol in contributing to the Nordic peace brand has been the Nobel Peace Prize, which was first awarded in 1901.

⁶ Since the end of the Cold War it has become apparent that Sweden maintained secret military links with the USA and did not necessarily live up to its proclaimed neutrality in the strictest sense. For the purpose of

Taken together, this peaceful Nordic security community was seen as different from the norm during the Cold War, with the north existing as a region where power politics approaches were largely eschewed. Moreover, in Nordic identity-building discourses this ‘peaceful’ heritage was usually extended back to before the Cold War. In the Danish case the shift to peace driven approaches to international affairs was often dated to the 1864 Schleswig-Holstein War after which it was (and still is) argued Denmark dramatically re-oriented its approach, rejecting *realpolitik* in favour of Scandinavian solidarity and neutrality (Joenniemi 2006: 19). Whilst such accounts may be true they also contributed to the historicisation and naturalisation of this particular understanding of Nordicity.

During the Cold War such stories had practical implications. To an important degree to be Nordic meant retaining a distance from the Cold War conflict. Moreover, the Nordics engaged in considerable efforts to act as mediators between East and West and established a brand for themselves as bridge-builders in the East-West conflict. Such an approach was typified in the comment of Finnish President Urho Kekkonen (1970: 94) to the UN General Assembly in 1961 that “We see ourselves as physicians rather than judges; it is not for us to pass judgement nor to condemn, it is rather to diagnose and to try to cure”. Key elements of such an approach, for example, became Finland’s sponsorship of the CSCE process that put an emphasis on dialogue through the development of institutional links and that also put questions of human rights onto the Cold War debating table. Similarly, the limitations that Denmark and Norway placed on

the idea of the ‘Nordic brand’, however, it is important that these links remained secret and only a handful

their links with NATO was also understood as calming East-West tensions, whilst the fact that the Nordic countries became champions of nuclear disarmament should also be noted.⁷ More particularly, the Nordic countries' geopolitical position between the Eastern and Western Blocs, but on the fringes and in the 'quiet corner' of Europe, also provided them with geographical resources by which they could develop this bridge-building role and brand. As Ingebritsen (2002) has pointed out, the Nordic countries did not sit back and withdraw into isolation from the Cold War, but became active 'norm entrepreneurs' who attempted to introduce and strengthen new global norms of cooperation, especially between the great powers.

Internationalist solidarism

The second element to the idea of Nordic exceptionalism during the Cold War can be termed 'internationalist solidarism'. During the Cold War the Nordic brand (and the Nordic model) attained a highly moral dimension. Not only did the Nordics seek to stand between the East-West conflict, but they also sought to play a role in overcoming the North-South divide by trying to speak on behalf of the world's poorest and most excluded. Central to the idea of Nordic solidarity with the Third World was an emphasis on the right of all nations to be free to develop without external (i.e. great power or colonial) interference. Thus, in an article written in the early 1980s on 'Sweden's Role in the World', and reflecting on Swedish policy towards the Third World, Prime Minister Olof Palme proclaimed:

of military personnel and government officials were aware of them (af Malmberg 2001: 148-51).

We have taken a stand for national freedom and independence... As a small state we have as our goal a world in which the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention are fully respected. This has also made it possible for Sweden, albeit to a modest extent, to build bridges between South and North in a period marked by crisis and the risk of polarization (quoted in Trägårdh 2002: 153).

Solidarity with the Third World was perhaps most important to Sweden, where it became a highly idealistic element of the country's foreign policy. From the 1960s onwards the idea of the country having become the 'world's conscience' was widely debated and seen as a central part of Sweden's international mission (Trägårdh 2002: 152; Bergman in this issue). This was clearly demonstrated in Sweden's vociferous criticisms of American involvement in Vietnam. As the Minister for International Development Cooperation proclaimed in a speech in 1975:

Throughout we have sided with the Vietnamese in their struggle. We have done this in the firm conviction that small nations must be entitled to decide their own destinies without interference from the great powers (quoted in Bangura 2004: 26).

⁷ Central were proposals made by Finnish President Urho Kekkonen in 1963 and 1978 for a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the north, and which were also supported by Olof Palme in 1982 (af Malmberg 2001: 163).

Swedish criticisms even included the granting of a kind of asylum to American military deserters and were also evident in condemnations of the position of African Americans in the United States (Bangura 2004: 27). Neutrality was not seen as constraining, but rather as conferring a right and duty to speak out on international and moral issues. Importantly criticism was not confined to the United States, but extended to the Soviet Union's actions in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland as well as the apartheid regime in South Africa.

However, a focus on international justice was important for all the Nordic countries and as such a central element of Nordic identity and the Nordic model became the moral duty to help those less fortunate than oneself. The principal vehicle for this approach became the UN which was supported, not least because its multilateralism was seen as a way to curb the excesses of the great powers. Moreover, it was largely through the UN (and especially the UN Development Programme and other agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO) that the Nordic countries directed high levels of development aid and successfully carved out an image of themselves as being moral actors and 'good states', unlike other 'neo-liberal' northern states (including the EEC) that they depicted as intent on exploiting the Third World (Trägårdh 2002: 157). Particularly notable was that the Nordic countries were the first to achieve the UN target of devoting 0.7 percent of GDP to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Moreover, the Nordics also stood out in that the distribution of ODA was only rarely tied to national commercial and strategic interests, but was more driven by the goal of helping those in greatest need (Lawler 2003: 158; Ingebritsen 2002: 18-19; Bergman in this issue).

The Nordic focus on international justice and equality was also evidenced by the fact that throughout the Cold War they provided 25 percent of the military personnel deployed on UN operations. They also promoted alternative approaches to security that took more account of issues pertinent in the Third World, such as concepts of common (e.g. the Palme Commission's 1982 report on *Common Security*), individual and human security, and not least the idea of sustainable development. The result, as Laatikainen (2003: 417) notes, was that during the Cold War the Nordics carved out a niche for themselves, not only between East and West, but also between North and South. In the South they were not only identified as a single group, but were also understood as 'different' from the rest of the North (West). As she also notes, this was assisted by the fact that within the UN the Nordic countries acted as a single group. During the Cold War it was common for one of the Nordics to speak on behalf of them all. This was only possible because there was considerable cohesion between them in terms of policy preferences, but also because other states also recognised them as a cohesive group with distinct interests and policies that could be identified as distinctively 'Nordic' (Laatikainen 2003). Similarly, Haggrén (2006) has noted that the Nordics' outspoken political aim within UNESCO was twofold. First and foremost it was a branding exercise designed to stress "Nordic unity and create an image of Norden". Thus, the "central idea of the [sic] cooperation has been the [sic] cooperation itself, unity has mattered more than content". Second, it was to export Nordic values. Such collective and concerted action went a considerable way in gaining recognition for the development of a distinct 'Nordic brand'.

Egalitarian social democracy

The third element to the Nordic model during the Cold War related to ideas of egalitarianism and the acceptance of a social democratic model of distributive justice by all major political parties for how the Nordic countries should be organised internally (Kuisma in this issue). As Patomäki (2000: 116-7) notes, during the Cold War the idea of the Nordic economic model as a Third Way between US capitalist neo-liberalism and Soviet-style state socialism became another notable element of a distinctive Nordic identity. This economic model, with its emphasis on distributive justice, was conceived as morally superior to its contenders. At the same time the Nordic social democratic welfare state also became a symbol of Nordic bridge-building; rather than seeing socialism and capitalism as polarised extremes the Nordics presented themselves as having successfully amalgamated the poles and, to some extent, transcended the ideological conflict (Hanhimäki 1997: xii).

Putting all three elements together, during the Cold War a ‘Nordic brand’ was advanced which was essentially built around the idea that the Nordic countries, in terms of foreign policy, international morality and social justice, both at home and abroad, were ‘better’ than the rest. As Max Jakobson (1987: 139-40), a senior Finnish diplomat and former Ambassador to the UN, asserted in 1987 in regard to the UN General Assembly:

[this] little [Nordic] group of politically stable, socially advanced, prosperous countries which have no major international claims to press or to counter, no present or recent colonial record, and no racial

problems, represents moderation and rationality in an assembly often swayed by fanatic or neurotic forces.

The accuracy, or otherwise of this statement (e.g., discrimination against the Sami population, Denmark's continuing colonial presence in the Faroes and Greenland, forced sterilisations...) is not the point. What matters is that Nordic identity and the Nordic brand were presented as the promise of a better, more advanced, more peaceful, less militarised future to that offered by the Cold War combatants. Thus, the Nordic countries did not simply try to isolate themselves from the Cold War: they marketed a brand of rational/modern society and international order that they believed should be projected onto the international scene and copied (Wahlbäck 1982: 13).

The Nordic Brand: Passed its Sell-by-Date?

Today, however, it seems that the three elements to the brand of Nordic exceptionalism noted above are becoming less exceptional and less particularly Nordic. Moreover, in some instances the Nordics appear to have given up on aspects of the Nordic model and have become less interested in marketing the brand. Consequently, the elements of 'cohesion', 'recognition' and 'autonomy' that became central in the development and acceptance of a Nordic brand built around a specific Nordic model and position in international affairs are being undermined.

Peaceful societies and bridge builders

For example, ideas of the Nordic countries as particularly peaceful societies and bridge-builders make less sense in a post-Cold War context. Given the transformations in Europe since the end of the Cold War, the idea that the Nordic region stands out as more peaceful and less conflict ridden than Central Europe has become problematic (Wæver, 1992: 87). With the end of the Cold War the Nordic model appeared outdated and increasingly hard to market. Writing in the early 1990s Wæver (1992) argued that Norden was increasingly reminiscent of the past 'statist' Europe preoccupied with matters of territorial sovereignty, in contrast to a rejuvenated new and future-oriented Europe to the south more focused on integration. As it happens processes of cooperation and border breaking within the Baltic Sea Region have in many respects surpassed that of the rest of Europe, with the proliferation of multiple networks, regimes and organisations linking together all the Baltic littoral states. In this respect northern Europe (but not specifically Nordic Europe) remains a front runner and potential model.⁸ However, as noted the 'Nordic' elements here are less clear, whilst the idea of being somehow 'more peaceful' than the rest of Europe seems anachronistic.

Similarly, in terms of bridge-building the Nordic states have also continued to try and play important roles and continue to try and market themselves as being 'good states' with something unique to offer. This was evident, for example, in the conference on 'Nordic Peace Diplomacy' sponsored by the Norwegian Embassy in Denmark and hosted at the Danish Institute for International Studies in February 2005. The conference's goal

⁸ For example, the Baltic Sea Region has been seen as an area for experimentation in developing structures of European governance and in particular for building a new relationship with Russia (Browning and Joenniemi 2004: 248; Browning 2003).

was “to discuss how the [sic] Nordic peace diplomacy can continue to make a difference in the post-9/11 world characterised by the threat of terror and an increased resort to military force” (Jakobsen et al., 2005: 1). As the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Petersen (2005), put it: “We [the Nordics] feel that we have a moral obligation to pursue peace and stability when – and where – we can”. Other speakers included Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt and former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, indicating the event had some prestige and that the idea of a particular Nordic approach to peace diplomacy still resonates. Moreover, there have also been notable practical applications of this desire to maintain an important role as bridge-builders on the world stage. This has been evident, for example, in Norway’s diplomacy in the Middle East, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, and in the role Ahtisaari played in facilitating links between the US and Russia over the Kosovo crisis and more recently in directing the Aceh peace process.

However, despite the apparent aim to maintain a distinct Nordic peace brand this has been undermined by several developments. Not least, despite some successes Nordic attempts to play a mediating role, particularly between the West and Russia have been sidelined. This is not only due to the Cold War’s end, but because cooperation and confidence building between the US/NATO and Russia has increasingly taken place face to face in forums like the NATO-Russia Council, and has not required mediators or neutral venues. Moreover, in the context of 9/11 and the War on Terror, and with international politics increasingly being framed along different lines, the geopolitical position of the Nordic states is less of a resource (at least in terms of bridge building).

A further point concerns these societies' traditional anti-militarism. As noted above, anti-militarism has generally been understood in terms of an unwillingness to use military force, and one of the three sessions of the conference on Nordic Peace Diplomacy was specifically about "Nordic peace diplomacy *versus* the increased resort to force" (emphasis added) (Jakobsen et al., 2005: 2). In the context of the War on Terror, however, anti-militarism understood this way is becoming problematic for some of the Nordic countries. Expectations for engagement are growing with the development of the EU's ESDP and NATO's rapid reaction forces, and all the Nordic countries have passed legislation making the deployment of peacekeeping forces easier. However, for those Nordic countries with military links to the United States through NATO the pressures and expectations have been higher.

Developments in Denmark and Norway are especially interesting (on Denmark see Lawler in this issue). In Norway, the previous Cold War view that the armed forces existed precisely so that their deterrence effect would mean they would not have to be used, has radically changed. Today they have been re-conceptualised precisely as a tool that 'should' be used. Or as the Norwegian Defence Minister declared in 2002, "the reason for having a defence is using it" (quoted in Græger 2005: 412). Similarly, whereas Denmark opted out of some of the foreign and security policy elements of the Treaty on European Union in 1992, out of concerns that it might draw the country into 'militaristic adventurism' (Lawler 2003: 163), Rasmussen (2005b: 67, 82) has demonstrated how, at least in government circles, the military is now seen as a tool of considerable utility,

especially since the declaration of the War on Terror. As he puts it, the debate has shifted from focusing on whether force ‘should ever’ be used, to debating for which purposes it ‘should be’ used. Notably, therefore, the 2004 Defence Agreement argues that the Danish military forces should be redirected towards ‘high-intensity operations’ – war fighting rather than peacekeeping (Rasmussen 2005a: 46). The shift entailed here is radical as it represents a Clausewitzian acceptance that war is simply politics by other means. In Rasmussen’s terms, in the Danish debate the question of whether or not to use force has become framed in terms of utility, not morality as previously.

Indeed, in its deployment of combat units to Afghanistan and Iraq Rynning (2003: 24) argues that Denmark has shifted from being a ‘civilian actor’, preferring to regulate the conflicts of other people and minimising the use of force, to becoming a ‘strategic actor’, “willing to use armed forces because they believe these to be appropriate means in the (allegedly) inevitable confrontation with hostile forces in the international arena”. As such Denmark has forsaken traditional Nordic anti-militarism for a position alongside the US, UK, France and Russia, “all countries with a sense of vital interests and a willingness to fight militarily for them”. Moreover, in this process Knudsen (2004) argues that Denmark (admittedly somewhat unwillingly) also gave up on its (and the Nordic model’s) previous emphasis on the primary role of the UN in solving international conflicts, and instead placed support for the pre-emptive actions of a key ally above support for the primacy of international law.⁹

⁹ This shift in policy, however, has not necessarily been definitive. Notably, the Danish Foreign Minister continues to feel the need to stress Denmark’s inclusion in that Nordic group of countries who “consider themselves to be among the staunchest supporters of the United Nations”. However, in the same speech he

In contrast to this Clausewitzian shift in Danish policy, the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish governments have retained more vocal support for the UN and the primacy of international law in world politics. Indeed, criticisms of the war against Iraq and the ultimate rejection of the UN process by the US-led coalition of the willing were notable. Swedish Prime Minister, Göran Persson, was adamant that international law should be respected (cited in Vogt 2004: 67), whilst already in 2000 Finnish President Tarja Halonen was asserting that “There is no clear legal foundation for armed intervention” and that when the international community talks about intervention it should always be kept in mind that intervention can also include diplomatic, humanitarian and peace operations” (quoted in Vesa 2001: 63). In other words, the significant Clausewitzian shift to thinking of war as a political tool has been less apparent in the other Nordic countries. As Rasmussen (2005a: 52) indicates, Denmark’s different position can be understood in the context of a growing view in the country that the “Danes are kidding themselves if they think they are any different from the rest of the Western world” and that as such “they ought to accept responsibility for what happens in the rest of the world”. Such a view indicates an undermining of notions of Nordic exceptionalism in Denmark, where Nordic exceptionalism is understood in terms of a Nordic identity and brand that is fundamentally different from other dominant streams in international relations.

However, if the Danes have answered the question of how to take ‘responsibility’ by re-appraising the utility and morality of using military force, the other Nordic countries have

also remarked that no “all-encompassing ‘Nordic way’ to peace diplomacy” exists, thereby leaving space

retained a focus on traditional Nordic peacekeeping and peace support operations. Finland and Sweden, for example, have been at the forefront in bringing civilian crisis management and policing operations on to the agenda of the EU's developing European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), precisely as a balance to the developing military dimension (Bergman in this issue).¹⁰ Key aspects have been their promotion of the Petersburg Tasks within the ESDP, with their focus on humanitarian and crisis management issues, and their promotion of the headline goal to create a 5000 strong rapidly deployable police force, agreed at the EU's Feira summit in 2000. Beyond this Finland, Sweden and Norway will also constitute one of the EU's Battle Groups that are being created as part of the European Rapid Reaction Force.¹¹ All this indicates a desire to retain a particular traditional 'Nordic' focus on issues of peace building and conflict resolution. However, as Carlsnaes (2005: 405) notes in regard to Sweden, activism in the peacekeeping field is increasingly being linked to the EU, rather than the other Nordic countries. The Nordic dimension is thus increasingly blurring with a European profile.

As such, although interest remains apparent in preserving a distinct Nordic brand and profile in this sphere, this brand is also being challenged. A number of contradictions are apparent: first in that the region no longer appears more peaceful than the rest of Europe; and, second because some of the Nordic countries have de-emphasised and rejected the utility of the brand when it comes to military issues. Moreover, in a context when

for alternative approaches and arguably blurring the notion of a Nordic brand (Møller 2005).

¹⁰ On the growing emphasis on civilian crisis management in Sweden see, Rieker (2004: 380).

¹¹ Denmark cannot participate as a result of its defence opt out.

peacekeeping, crisis management and stability creation is being dominated by EU structures it is becoming harder to maintain a distinct Nordic profile.

Internationalist solidarism

Similar concerns exist in the second area, where the previous emphasis on internationalist solidarism and Third Worldism as central to the Nordic model and a 'Nordic' identity, role and outlook on world affairs, has also been challenged, though in two distinct ways. First, Denmark has again signalled that its adherence to internationalist solidarist ideals may not be as committed as previously. This has been evident in increasingly negative attitudes towards immigrants in Danish society (similar trends exist in Norway), but also in significant cutbacks in development aid since the liberal-conservative government of Anders Fogh Rasmussen came to power in November 2001 (see Lawler in this issue). Despite the cuts Denmark (with Norway) still tops the list of official development aid (ODA) as a percentage of GDP and continues to sell itself as a 'good state' in these terms. However, Olsen (2003: 80-3) notes these cuts occurred at a time after 9/11 when virtually all other OECD countries were increasing their ODA budgets. Moreover, irrespective of Denmark's continuing significant development aid provision, it is clear that such actions (as well as an attempt to close the country's human rights institute, provoking criticism from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) to some extent undermine Denmark's (and possibly Norden's) image as being 'exceptional' in their solidarism with the world's poor.

Second, however, although internationalist solidarism clearly does remain important to the broader Nordic approach to international affairs,¹² and Norway, for example, continues to present itself as a ‘humanitarian great power’ (Græger 2005: 415),¹³ the Nordics no longer appear exceptional in this regard. Indeed, this element has become a broader European concern, with the EU becoming to some extent ‘Nordicised’ in this respect. Thus, it is the British government that has led moves towards cancelling Third World debt, and as Laatikainen (2003: 427-36) notes, the result is that Nordic internationalism is increasingly melding into a more general European profile to the extent that specific ‘Nordic positions’ are no longer so clearly identifiable or marketable. In turn, this undermines recognition by other actors (states) of the existence of a particular Nordic model, position or identity distinct from that of the rest of Europe. One notable element here is how the EU (and more particularly the countries of ‘Old Europe’) is itself developing an identity in opposition to the United States. In the new European identity narratives Europe is depicted as kinder and more sympathetic towards the world’s poor and has a stronger belief in the value of international law than the United States. As the French Defence Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, has put it, whilst Americans prioritise personal success, Europeans focus more on solidarity. Similarly, “Europeans understand other people more and understand cultural differences more

¹² Examples include Finnish Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja’s, support for the Tobin Tax, and Finnish President, Tarja Halonen’s, joint chairmanship of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation. Another example is the Nordic countries’ new ‘Nordic Africa Initiative’ that aims to enhance the accommodation of African interests, particularly in regard to the WTO and the Doha Development Agenda. This initiative began with a conference in January 2005 (see Lehtomäki 2005).

¹³ Likewise, Østergård (2005: 73) notes that with his sponsorship of the annual Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust that began in 2000, Swedish Prime Minister “Göran Persson entered the world of the high politics of morality, almost as an incarnation of his charismatic predecessor Olof Palme”.

easily” (quoted in *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition* 2004). This sounds remarkably similar to key discourses concerning Nordic identity and the Nordic model.

Another reason for the demise of a distinctly Nordic brand of internationalist solidarism relates to Finland’s and Sweden’s EU membership in 1995 and the EU’s increasing desire to speak with a single voice on the international stage through the development of the CFSP. In this context, whilst the Nordic EU members might band together to try and get their preferences to the top of the EU agenda, they are increasingly restricted in their ability to present distinctly ‘Nordic’ positions to the international audience. As Laatikainen (2003: 435) puts it in regard to Nordic policy within the UN:

The focus of continued Nordic cooperation is not to present a cohesive, autonomous Nordic position to the rest of the world, but to work together informally to find ways of influencing European policy within the UN.

Similarly Vesa (2001: 61, 68) notes that since membership Finland’s key reference group in the UN has shifted from the Nordic group to the EU, even if close cooperation with the other Nordic countries remains important at less visible levels. The same is true in the Council of Europe where pan-Nordic cooperation is restricted to issues where the EU has not taken a direct stand (Torbiörn 2006). The restrictions and goals of the CFSP have therefore undermined the ‘autonomy’ and ‘authority’ of the Nordic group to speak with a single voice, and as such has arguably led to a declining cohesion in the Nordic epistemic

community that was central to the promotion of the brand previously. In turn this has undermined 'recognition' of the Nordics as a distinct group by others.

However, despite these challenges to a distinct Nordic role and profile on the international stage, in the post-Cold War period the desire to retain a particular Nordic mission has remained important. The primary way in which a distinct Nordic profile was preserved was by prioritising the Baltic Sea Region as the main focus for Nordic internationalist solidarity, with the primary goal being to help the Baltic States and Russia in the transition process and by trying to build an extended security community within the region. One notable element of this was the restructuring of the Nordic Council and the refocusing of its third pillar on cooperation with the Baltic countries and northwest Russia.¹⁴ However, the Nordic states have been active in many other respects. For example, Denmark (with Germany) sponsored the creation of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Norway sponsored the creation of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), whilst Finland, through its Northern Dimension Initiative, played an important role in getting northern issues onto the EU agenda.

Within these processes previous elements of Nordic superiority, or of the idea of the 'Nordic model' as something to be exported and copied, have remained apparent, not least in the clear desire to spread 'Nordic' norms to their southern neighbours. As Archer (1999: 62) notes, drawing on Cold War benevolent self-identifications the Nordics have engaged with almost missionary zeal, seeing the reproduction of Nordic values,

particularly of security and international responsibility, as the ultimate goal. To some extent a discourse of ‘Nordic teachers’ and ‘Baltic students’ emerged such that in 1998 Finnish Foreign Minister, Tarja Halonen, even depicted Finland as Estonia’s “godmother” in the development of Estonian-Russian relations (*Kansan Uutiset* 16 December 1998). However, central to Nordic actions in the Baltic Sea Region have been precisely attempts to export Nordic principles of internationalist solidarism, and arguably they have been rather successful (see Bergman 2004a). For example, the desire to spread their internationalist values to their Baltic neighbours can be seen in their support for the development of a Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT), whilst the Baltic States have in turn become active in the peacekeeping realm (Bergman 2004b).

The success of the export of principles of internationalist solidarism, however, is also evident in that today the Baltic States are beginning to establish a distinct international role for themselves by also exporting such principles and the lessons they have learnt from the transition process to states further East – especially Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, but also to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (see Miniotaite 2004; Carlsen 2002: 28). The Nordic states’ problem in this regard is twofold. First, with the Balts’ memberships of the EU and NATO in 2004 the transition process in the Baltic Sea Region has largely ended and as such so has the Nordics’ post-Cold War mission in the region. Second, having successfully exported principles of internationalist solidarism to them, the Baltic States appear better equipped than the Nordics in exporting these principles further east. As such it appears they might be co-opting a Nordic

¹⁴ The first pillar focuses on cultural, educational and linguistic ties amongst the Nordic states. The second

internationalist mission, identity and brand for themselves that will not only compete with the Nordic brand, but will arguably appear more plausible and attractive to others by virtue of their having gone through the transition process themselves (Ilves 2003: 197). In the future, then, it may be the ‘Baltic model’, not the ‘Nordic model’ that becomes the model to be copied, especially by states in the post-Soviet space, with the Nordic model, precisely because of its success in the Baltic Sea Region, in consequence becoming largely redundant.

Egalitarian social democracy

Finally, even on the economic side the idea of Nordic exceptionalism and the Nordic Third Way as a distinct brand seem problematic. On the one hand, unified support for the economic model has dissipated with many in the Nordic elite no longer buying into the brand anymore, let alone wanting to market it. On the other, in the post-Cold War context the brand no longer appears to resonate as positively as previously. For example, whilst the Nordics have successfully exported broad ideas of internationalist solidarity to the Baltic States it is notable that they have failed to convince them of the benefits of the Nordic economic model. Indeed, once again the Balts appear to be surpassing the Nordics, instead championing a more neo-liberal conception of capitalism imbibed from the US and UK and depicting (indeed *branding*) themselves as progressivist, dynamic, reform-minded ‘Tiny Tigers’ who may soon be able to teach some of the older Europeans a thing or two on the economic front (Lehti 2004). Thus, whilst the Nordics may maintain

their ‘exceptionalism’ with respect to the economic model, whether it will be for export anymore as a particularly ‘Nordic brand’ is less clear.

Second, as Patomäki (2000: 133-5) has noted and as indicated above, the Nordic economic model has also been challenged in that many within the Nordic economic and political elite have begun to reject it in favour of a more neoliberal agenda, even if general public opinion is not necessarily in accordance. This process began following the end of the Cold War when the Nordic countries, but especially Finland and Sweden, slipped into deep economic recession. In 1991 Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt commented that whilst the Middle Way between capitalism and communism made sense during the Cold War, in the post-Cold War world this was no longer the case. As he put it: “no one wants to be a compromise between a system which has turned out to be a success and another that has turned out to be a historic catastrophe” (quoted in Trägårdh 2002: 161). Similarly, Finnish Prime Minister Esko Aho proclaimed “The Nordic Model is dead” (quoted in Hanhimäki 1997: 187). Furthermore, at the same time as the economic model was being questioned the Nordics’ claims to have created the ultimate modern, enlightenment, rational society, where people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds might be happily integrated, also became challenged with the growing prevalence of racism and the continued rise of anti-immigrant political parties, especially in Denmark and Norway (see Pred 2000; Mouritsen 2005) – issues most recently illustrated in the furore over the cartoons of Mohammed published in a Danish newspaper. To the extent that the Nordic countries stop adhering to and championing the

economic model and broader Nordic notions of solidarism then the idea of the continued relevance of the model must surely be in question.

At the same time, not everyone has given up on the Nordic economic model. Arguably the notion of ‘economic identity’ remains important, which is to say that the Nordic economic model has a future to the extent that it continues to be a fundamental element of national and Nordic identity discourses – of what it is to be us. These discourses are sedimented to different degrees in the Nordic states, being perhaps strongest in Sweden. Once identity is in the equation the key question for the future of the economic model is not so much whether Nordic models of capitalism are any longer ‘feasible’ (a kind of rationalist judgement), but rather the extent to which it is about identity and being. To the extent that the idea of being exceptional and different is a central element of Nordic identity, then this in itself may be enough reason not to conform to a neo-liberal agenda. At the same time, it is important to also note that some politicians continue to champion the Nordic model precisely in terms of its economic viability. To quote Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja (2004; also see 2003).

We should ask whether we seek to enhance European competitiveness through a neoliberal agenda and its one-sided emphasis on labour market flexibility, deregulation and profit maximization, or whether we base our reforms on the indisputable strengths of the European

social model, such as the ones that are particularly evident in the Nordic welfare states.¹⁵

Perhaps a bigger question though, is again the extent to which what was once clearly identifiable as a ‘Nordic’ marker and symbol is eliding into a ‘European’ one. Notably, Tuomioja here now talks of the ‘European social model’. The Nordics may be presented as bastions of this model, and indeed the goal is clearly to Nordicise Europe to some degree, but here the Nordic label has dropped out to be replaced with a European brand. Similarly, to reflect again on the growing split in transatlantic relations it is evident that in constructing their identity in opposition to America, some Europeans are also increasingly referring to a developing ‘European model of capitalism’ with a much greater social dimension than American neo-liberalism. (Clark 2004). In these debates reference to the ‘Nordic model’ appears largely absent, with Europe instead being presented as representative of progressivist social democracy – in contrast to individualist, neo-liberal America. Thus, whilst key attributes of the Nordic model may still have a considerable future, whether they will any longer be thought of as being exceptional to the Nordic states (or being in some sense ‘Nordic’) is less clear.¹⁶

Conclusion

¹⁵ It is also not lost on such people that the Nordic countries today consistently top the various indexes produced to analyse economic competitiveness. It is also worth noting that more positive (if tempered) comment on the Nordic economic model(s) has also be evident in the international media in recent years, e.g. *Newsweek* January 9, 2006.

This article started by arguing that ideas of the Nordic model and Norden/Nordicity have had two elements to them. First, the Nordic model and particularly ‘Nordic’ approaches to economic and international affairs have been important in Nordic and national *identity* construction for the Nordic states. Second, however, there has been the idea that Nordic practices represent a *model* that might be exported and copied by other societies. In both instances, Nordic identity and the Nordic model have been associated with being *different* from others. These elements of exceptionalism have then been presented as a *brand* to market to international audiences, the notion being the Nordic countries collectively have an experience of norms and practices to offer in the international marketplace of ideas, with the Nordic brand ultimately being about what it is to be a ‘good state’. The article has argued, however, that the exceptional aspects of Nordicity and the Nordic model are becoming increasingly less clear. In terms of ideas of Nordic peacefulness, bridge-building, internationalist solidarism and the economic model two processes are apparent. First, some of the Nordic states are finding it difficult (or simply do not want) to continue to adhere to previous ‘Nordic norms’, and appear to have lost interest in even selling a Nordic brand anymore. In other words, there has been a significant weakening of the pan-Nordic epistemic community promoting a Nordic brand that emerged during the Cold War. Second, to a significant degree elements of Nordic practices and the Nordic model have become Europeanised. The result is that recognition of a distinct Nordic profile in international affairs is being undermined. In conclusion, this leaves us with one key question: *If key elements of the Nordic brand of exceptionalism that have been central to*

¹⁶ As Stråth (2004: 19) notes, “A somewhat disintegrative factor *for the image of a specific* Nordic welfare model and way to modernity is the European attempt to respond to globalizing forces and re-establish political legitimacy and economic growth” (emphasis added).

both Nordic identity and the Nordic model are no longer so exceptional, and if it is becoming ever harder to identify particular Nordic positions or a Nordic profile and international brand, does this matter?

The question might be answered in two ways. First, it is interesting to look at the implications of declining recognition for the brand of Nordic internationalism. To provide a positive spin, there is no need to mourn this undermining of the 'Nordic brand' since its very demise might be seen as representing a staggering success for Nordic ideals and the Nordic model – especially to the extent that internationalist and solidarist elements have become Europeanised and accepted as a part of the EU's international profile. The Nordicisation of the EU and the Europeanisation of key elements of the Nordic model should be welcomed and we should not cling to the Nordic label or mourn the loss of Nordic difference and exceptionalism out of egoistic reasons of the need for recognition. As such, Tuomioja's (2004) repackaging of the Nordic brand in European terms (rather than seeing the Nordic as different and better than negatively framed 'European models' as during the Cold War) is an interesting development. So long as people are promoting 'Nordic' values we should not be concerned if they are labelled 'European' rather than 'Nordic'. Likewise, we should not be sad if the Nordic reference group and ability to influence is replaced by other groupings of which the Nordics are a part (e.g., EU).

However, a more cautious perspective is also warranted as it is unclear that all that has happened is the repackaging of the Nordic brand in European terms. This is to say that arguably the Nordics have not been completely successful in marketing their brand of

internationalism to their European partners. Instead, it rather seems that at least some of the Nordic countries have been influenced by, and begun to buy into, either US or other brands of internationalism currently on offer. In short, Nordic internationalism, as traditionally defined, is not the same as Bushian/Blairite neo-liberal neoconservative/theologically-inspired internationalism, or arguably even the same as the universalising internationalism of some of the 'old Europeans'. As Lawler (2005) has argued, what is being lost with the melding of the Nordic brand of internationalism with Western/European internationalist approaches more generally is a social democratic inspired alternative to the current liberalist agendas, with their focus on opening markets and individualist understandings of social order. In contrast, the social democratic inspired Nordic brand has traditionally been one that emphasises the right of countries to choose their own path (rather than have a model imposed on them) and that arguably has a better track record when it comes to emphasising issues of distributive justice and egalitarianism in world politics (see Bergman's article).

The second way of answering the question is to look at the relationship between the Nordic brand of exceptionalism and particular constructions of Nordic identity. Arguably, if the Nordic model and a distinctive Nordic international profile are disappearing then this raises questions for the construction of national identities in the Nordic area. For example, will the Nordic marker lose any relevance whatsoever and instead be replaced by the marker of 'Europe'? Will ideas of Nordicity be reduced to simply cultural, geographic and historic elements? Would this necessarily be a bad thing? Perhaps the key question here is how essential the idea/brand of 'exceptionalism' is to Nordic identity and

whether Nordicity can be told in different ways? Here, it is interesting to note the tension within the Nordic brand between its identity element of exceptionalism (implying constant difference) and its emphasis on being a model (implying others can become like us). The result is that to the extent that the brand has been successfully sold it threatens its very existence as a model of exceptionalism. Thus, to the extent that being Nordic is equated with being 'different', 'exceptional' and 'better than' others then accepting the demise of the Nordic may be difficult. Importantly, though, such a development may be easier for some than others. In particular, for the Finns the melding of the Nordic with the European is less problematic since historically a Nordic identification has been seen as bringing them closer to Europe and the West. In contrast, for Denmark, Norway and Sweden 'Nordic' has been told more in contradistinction from 'Europe'. Thus, whilst all might have bought into the Nordic brand, some of the countries may be better able to cope with its demise than others, and for whom the desire to reconstitute a Nordic brand of exceptionalism may be stronger and result in renewed efforts to be norm entrepreneurs in the future.

This returns us to the initial distinction made between the concepts of brand and identity. On the one hand, one of the article's implicit arguments has been that whereas during the Cold War a pan-Nordic elite found a clear interest in marketing a collective Nordic brand (not least to distance the region from the Cold War, but also to promote norms, values and an experience understood as distinctly 'Nordic'), today such a collective interest has weakened. The consequent decline of the pan-Nordic community might explain why the Nordic brand has ossified around largely Cold War understandings, rather than

developing and being updated with a new model and a *re-branding* of the Nordic in terms, for example, of the networked society, or a kind of Nokia Norden. Whilst this is happening at national levels (e.g. Castells and Himanen 2002) the idea that the Nordic countries might share a strategic interest in such a project seems absent. Finally, however, even if the future of the Nordic brand is in the balance, the loss of this brand would not entail the end of Nordic identity(ies) as such, even though the brand of exceptionalism and the model has been constitutive of these identities to some extent. What it might mean though is that Nordic identity may need to be reconstituted around other elements where being 'exceptional' would be less important and where the foundationalist myth of Nordic exceptionalism might, for example, be replaced by a more positive reading of Europe.

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