

Speaking notes: Can the Nordic model be applied to British-Irish relations?

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The issue tackled here is whether there is anything in Nordicity, the "Nordic model" and Nordic experiences as "zone of peace" applicable in British-Irish relations as well?

Norden certainly is now a zone of peace. A previous "war system" with lot of intra-Scandinavian conflicts and wars has over time turned into a configuration in which wars - or even serious tensions for that matter - among the Nordic countries have become unthinkable.

As war according to the power political view or the school of Realism is ever-present in relations between state entities (due to lack of a central authority and a sovereign power able to rule out the danger of war, large scale violence and anarchy), the Nordic configuration is indeed something of an exception. It has on good grounds attracted attention and provided inspiration as a case perhaps showing the way out and providing insight into how to mitigate the danger inherent in international politics.

The Realists have taken the easy way out: *Norden* is just a mild exception and a sub/region within a larger setting conditioned by power politics. It is somewhat privileged due to an unusual degree of co-operation among the Nordic entities (i.e. "Nordic balance"), but void as a way of shaping more generally the relations between states as a site of conflict, power politics and war.

Another explanation to why *Norden* has managed to escape the ordinary power political dilemmas rests on the idea that an unusual degree of tolerance, flexibility and reformism has been allowed to emerge. Reason has taken the place of faith and fear to an unusual degree. The Nordic - or rather Scandinavian - nations have felt such an affinity for each other, this allowing for far-reaching integration to emerge, so that there has been little place for war. The argument is, among the more idealist/liberal/interactionist school, that *Norden* exemplifies a "security community" (this is the argument advanced by Karl W. Deutsch in his famous *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area*).

My view is somewhat different. I do not think that *Norden* is a "security community" in the sense that the underlying theme would be that of security. There has perhaps been too much objectification and sociological type of analysis in the picture making *Norden* exemplary in modernity. I would rather call *Norden* a "community of a-security" or a community that reaches beyond security, i.e. concerns for security did not play any role in the construction of Scandinavian communality.

It seems to me that themes such as language, religion and joint history played a crucial role. The community that emerged was prepolitical (in contrast to the more political projects of nationality not to speak of the conventional endeavours to construct nation-states). Linking security to the Scandinavian community would have been disastrous as the project would, in becoming a political one, have competed with that of the Nordic political nation.

Nordicity has existed alongside nationhood over a long period of time. It does not compete, due to its nature of an emotional container and prepolitical character, with the political endeavour of nationhood. This nationhood is there indicating that the Nordics have not failed to live up to the challenges of British or French type of "normal" development along the nation-state trajectory. However, in addition to this "normal" modernist project, they have also created something different, and specific for their part of Europe. In a sense *Norden* and Nordicity resemble the concept of *patriae*, or one could speak of a *Kulturnation*, although in the Nordic case the entity that emerged did not run parallel to the more political nation. Instead it transcended the bounds of the nation-state, and came into being as togetherness at a safe distance from the atomised and autonomous individuals that formed the community.

In other words, the formula employed allowed both for solitude and anonymity as well as an aspiration towards a common cultural community. The distance required for the ends to meet has been so considerable that instead of creating a second category of nationhood (such as the German *Volk*) alongside the more political nation, the community created reaches beyond the borders of the Nordic nation-states, this undermining the credibility of any efforts to securitise the intra-Nordic relations. What is not perceived as a threat and therefore invoking defence and other extraordinary measures, allows various issues to be resolved within the context of the ordinary conduct of affairs.

If my endeavour at explaining the Nordic case is correct, then the peacefulness of Nordicity is not one aspect of the modernist features of the Nordic project. Rather it is something that succeeded in surviving despite the all-encompassing efforts of securitisation that usually form an integral part of the construction of nation-states. One stopped asking scary and fearful questions, and instead focused on the construction of political containers conducive to the finding of answers to such questions.

The remedy has not been one of engaging oneself in deep-going functional cooperation aiming at so tight integration that war no longer is possible. The aim has not been overcoming war in the first place and *Norden* is not tightly integrated in a functional sense as for most of the time *Norden* has just been a feeling, an idea, a concept and a discourse rather than a process, a structure or an explicit political project.

The core question to ask in the context of the British-Irish relationship would be whether there are bonds and links that transcend the very question of security. Are there concepts of togetherness, pre-modern or post-modern, which continue to exist alongside the more political projects of nationhood, yet reach beyond these national projects? Are there other containers (e.g. political, professional or voluntary) of loyalty and solidarity that would be immune to tendencies towards "securitisation"?

In any event, I hope the method of deconstruction employed here can help to reframe the British-Irish relationship in a more peaceable direction.