Do-Gooders at the End of Aid

Scandinavian Humanitarianism in the Twenty-First Century

Edited by Antoine de Bengy Puyvallée and Kristian Bjørkdahl

DO-GOODERS AT THE END OF AID

Scandinavian countries are routinely considered exceptional for their commitment to development cooperation, peace mediation, and humanitarian action. This book highlights how the political culture of Scandinavia is indeed characterized by the idea of doing good on the world stage, but then shows how this "Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand" is an asset that policymakers and others can capitalize on to legitimize policy interventions and ideas, or to advance commercial, diplomatic, and security interests. Providing case studies from all Scandinavian countries, this book shows how the brand is made, reinforced, and used in a variety of policy contexts, from foreign aid and humanitarian assistance; to military operations, peace-building, and mediation; to migration policy, global health and international cooperation. A key objective of the book is to explain why the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand retains such apparent resilience in a time when Scandinavia's characteristic approach to world affairs seems challenged from many sides at once. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BEE	black economic empowerment
BMFG	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EU	European Union
FDI	foreign direct investments
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
IDP	internally displaced person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIEO	new international economic order
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODA	official development assistance
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SAP	Swedish Social Democratic Party
SDDP	strategicdefense procurement package
SDG	sustainable development goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STTP	skills transfer and technology

UN	United Nations
UNGA	United National General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

On the Resilience of the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand

ANTOINE DE BENGY PUYVALLÉE AND
KRISTIAN BJØRKDAHL

Over time, the Scandinavian countries have earned a certain reputation for being "global good Samaritans" (Brysk 2009; Vik et al. 2018). According to a widespread narrative, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden have an exceptional approach to world affairs, which revolves around the pursuit of peace, human rights, sustainable development, and a humanitarian commitment to "saving lives." Scandinavian countries are indeed the world's most generous nations in terms of official development aid allocation – the only ones consistently at or above the target set by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Their largesse is cast as uniquely motivated and driven by altruistic and idealist motives, contrasting with the self-interested foreign policies of the great powers (Ingebritsen 2002; Lancaster 2007). This reputation is not exclusive, however, to outsiders who read Scandinavia as a utopian promise of a less cynical world order. It is also a key component of the Scandinavians' own national identity and collective self-image. Scandinavian citizens are inclined to identify their countries' foreign policies with values of solidarity and generosity (see Leira 2007). For instance, while the Swedes see themselves as the standard-bearers of neutrality and international solidarity (Dahl 2006), Norwegians see themselves as the "peace nation" and as a "humanitarian superpower" (Tvedt 2002; Nissen 2015).

If these self-images are perhaps widespread, this does not necessarily mean that they go unchallenged. In the case of Norway, the historian Terje Tvedt has analyzed what he dubs the "national regime of goodness," an ideological system of assumptions and intentions which is made and maintained by an elite Tvedt calls the "humanitarian-political complex," and which creates a political culture so tightly centered on a deontological ethic of good intentions that it fails to engage

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honestly and realistically with international affairs (Tvedt 2002, 2003; see also Witozsek 2011). Understood in this way, Scandinavia appears a prime example of what Didier Fassin calls "humanitarian government," which refers to the domination of political life by "moral sentiments" (2012: 1–10). According to Fassin, a "vocabulary of suffering, compassion, assistance and responsibility to protect" increasingly frames contemporary political issues, and this "humanitarian language" is used to justify a wide range of policies.

Scandinavians excel at framing their foreign policy in such terms. Especially when they operate on a public – i.e. nontechnical – scene, they typically cast their engagement in world affairs as a moral obligation to do good in the world and alleviate the world's suffering by giving back some of the wealth, expertise, and knowledge that led to Scandinavian societies' success and affluence in the first place. At the same time, another notable strand in the humanitarian tradition in Scandinavia is to collapse this moral motivation with a broader, political – often more self-interested – one. As a representative anecdote, the 1962 white paper which is said to have launched Swedens' aid ambitions, for instance, stated proudly that, "In rich countries, the political necessity of taking into consideration the demands of these new countries now unites with an awareness of our moral obligation to help" (Utrikesdepartementet 1962: 3).

Adopting Fassin's broad understanding of humanitarianism, we do not, in this book, limit this concept to describe the field dealing with emergency relief (Barnett and Weiss 2008). Rather, we understand "humanitarianism" as a political culture or a practical ethic, framing political issues such as development aid, peace negotiations, and emergency relief through moral sentiments such as solidarity, generosity, benevolence, altruism – quite simply, "doing good" in the world.

The Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand

Our point of departure is that this aspect of Scandinavian political culture is not just a coincidence of history, a hereditary biological given, or a collection of values set in stone. Rather, it is an evolving construct, both shaping and being shaped by political agency, social structures, and collective identity (Langford and Schaffer 2015). More crucially perhaps, Scandinavian humanitarianism is also an *asset*, or indeed, a *brand*, i.e. a resource that can be – and routinely is – put to strategic use to achieve specific purposes. Following recent scholarship that shows how countries

and regions can and do brand themselves (Aronczyk 2013), we understand nation branding as the result of a deliberate strategy to create *an image to capitalize on*, which includes a set of narratives drawing from selected elements of a country's political culture and collective identity deemed "exceptional" or distinctive. Various actors – not least policy entrepreneurs – can use this brand strategically through *branding practices* to legitimize policy interventions and governance arrangements. The brand may also serve other goals, such as status-seeking, reputation, and identity building, promoting ideas, concepts and norms, or advancing commercial, economic, diplomatic, or security interests.

We thus assume an inclusive notion of nation brands, where the uses of such brands run far beyond the marketing of commodities or "destinations." Alongside several other scholars of nation branding, we want to submit that these two aspects of Scandinavian political culture – ongoing negotiations about national identity and strategic efforts to brand the nation – are not entirely distinct. They are clearly not the same, and to some extent represent different idioms (see Ståhlberg and Bolin 2016; Mordhorst 2019). Still, in many cases there is no sure way of telling where one ends and the other begins. Norwegian romantic nationalism, for instance, was a key in the formation of the modern identity of that nation, but it was nevertheless *strategic* – and is still, today, a notable resource in nation branding efforts. Indeed, according to Mads Mordhorst, who in turn rests on Hobsbawm, the role of historians in consolidating a nation's story about itself was always infused by particular interests. Thus, "historians were the original nation-brand consultants," who "not only contributed to nation branding, but to ideology and politics" (2019: 203). As Mordhorst has also argued, there is reason to think of nations as *the original brands*, predating Coca-Cola, Nike, Apple, IKEA, and the rest, by several centuries.

In this volume, we entertain no ambitions of disentangling national identity from nation brands. To the contrary, we believe that nation building, narrating the nation, negotiating national identities, and so on are processes that have much in common with nation branding. And we start from the supposition that there is added value in incorporating both of these aspects in a single analytical movement. This ambition encourages a refocusing, as we see it, on the gaps and glitches, the discrepancies and disparities, the rhetorics and realities, of what we, with a phrase we intend to be all-encompassing, call the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand.

The Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand is an entity, then, composed of these two sets of processes: domestic self-presentation and identity-building,

on the one hand, and external presentation and reputation-building, on the other. The two sides of this branding process are not totally detached from each other, but nor is it the case that the one simply mirrors the other. Rather, our starting point will be that the relationship between external and domestic branding is a dynamic and contingent relationship, which is constantly being negotiated by politicians and bureaucrats at home and abroad, as well as between these expert communities and the general public of each country. The relation between these two sets of processes is often fraught (see, for instance, Jansen 2008; Jordan 2014), but by including both in the same panorama, we get a richer picture of what these nations do on the international stage, how they do it, and why. We follow in that way an established tradition in international relations of studying both the role of domestic and international factors in the formulation of foreign policies (Lumsdaine 1993; Reus-Smit 1999; Wendt 1999).

The first aim of this book is to describe and unpack how an idealized political culture of "Scandinavian humanitarianism" is branded across various areas of "humanitarian interventions," such as peace efforts, development assistance, humanitarian crises, democracy and human rights promotion. The aim is, in other words, to explain some of the ways in which the idea of an exceptional model of Scandinavian humanitarianism came to be, and to identify some of the mechanisms that keep this idea in place. It is our hope that the chapters assembled here will give some idea of the motivations behind the creation of this brand and also of its uses. We believe this book shows that, while the notion of a Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand does have explanatory value, we must look to the particular trajectories and context of each country to understand how this loose, overarching idea finds concrete expression. While each of the Scandinavian countries have a particular set of attachments to this unifying brand, there are notable differences between how each of them tap into this set of narratives. Norway, Sweden, and Denmark each stand in different relation to the overarching brand; in some cases, it is in the interest of each to stand together as one – i.e. as "Scandinavia" – whereas in other cases, they are driven to compete and to distinguish themselves from each other, as in Norway's drive to wear the moniker of "the peace nation." In still other cases, one of these countries can appeal to the overarching brand, but for its own, exclusive benefit, as happens when Sweden takes on a role as a leading representative, even spearhead, of Scandinavia. The first aim of the book, then, is to explain some of the dynamics of the making and

maintenance of the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand, within, between, among, and beyond these three countries.

The Resilience of the Brand

The second aim of this book is to shed light on how this brand creation and maintenance happens, or is changed, by a number of factors that would appear to challenge the very viability of the brand. Put differently, our aim is to ask how it can be that the idea of the Scandinavians as somehow exceptional in this area appears so resilient, or "sticky," despite all the factors that now seem to challenge it.

Among the factors that today seem to pose challenges to the viability of the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand, the first is undoubtedly what we might call *transnational policy convergence*. Not least in the area of foreign aid, ideals and practices assumed to be particularly Scandinavian or Nordic have increasingly been incorporated into, fused with, or taken over by transnational networks, notably the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.[1] There are other pressures in the same direction, including the OECD DAC's peer reviews, as well as the Europeanization of aid which results from the EU's foreign aid policy. All of these factors, and several more in adjacent areas, would seem to entail that the Scandinavians' "comparative reputation advantage" has been withering (Selbervik and Nygaard 2006; Hansen, Gjefsen, and Lie 2015; Elgström and Delputte 2016). This can be seen as a more specific version of a broader tendency, perhaps, wherein the notion of "Nordicity" as such has disappearing, much due to the same factors (Browning 2007).

More crucially perhaps, the viability of the brand may be seriously challenged by the pressures on the institution of aid itself, coming from both the international and domestic levels.

Firstly, on the international level, *the ascendancy of BRICS and other "emerging economies"* has been interpreted as a sign that the era of traditional foreign aid and humanitarian work is now coming to an end (Gill 2018). Admittedly, various actors have been calling for the "end of aid" ever since the 1970s, with the emergence of dependency theory and the agenda for a New International Economic Order. But not until recently did this actually seem a likely scenario. Because the

[1] www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm.

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emerging economies tend to frame their involvement in poor countries in contrast to the rationale associated with "traditional" North–South relations, their ascent has contributed to remaking what is meant by "aid," and they have in the process done much to undo the North–South divide altogether (Hansen and Wethal 2014). These factors too would seem to challenge the Scandinavian brand, which has rested heavily on the North–South axis – specifically on the notion of a peculiar set of rich, industrialized, modern countries (i.e. Scandinavia) who excel at helping poor, underdeveloped, and "backwards" ones.[2] Whatever the causes, there appears to be a shift in terms of how one justifies aid and humanitarianism, which has taken the whole field toward a more interest-driven frame. This tendency has in turn been exacerbated by *the widespread securitization of aid* over the recent couple of decades, which has considerably reshaped the fields of foreign aid and humanitarian assistance at the global level (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010; Brown and Grävingholt 2015) – and which has not left Scandinavian aid practices untouched (see, for instance, de Bengy Puyvallée 2018). In discourse as well as in deed, the provision of aid is increasingly made in the name of donor countries' security interests, whether the goal is to fight terrorism, to counter the threat of a pandemic, to reverse global warming, or to limit immigration. How to reconcile the Scandinavian premise of aid as a solidarity project with an increasingly securitized approach to aid, which is justified not so much by global justice and human rights as by the donor countries' national security interests?

Furthermore, the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand has, over the last couple of decades, had to confront numerous head-on *challenges emanating from each of the Scandinavian countries themselves*, as certain portions of the population have grown increasingly wary of the idea that the Scandinavians are – or even should be – global frontrunners of solidarity. The question of immigration has been a key issue in this context. In Sweden, the political mainstream has more or less isolated itself from the emerging far-right Sweden Democrats, who call for a more hard-nosed approach to immigration. Denmark, for its part, made a dent in its own international reputation with its notorious "jewelry law,"

[2] Of course, we cannot assume that actual practice has always lived up to this brand, and there are in fact many indications that it does not. In fiction, one of the most memorable studies of the discrepancy between Scandinavian brands and reality is arguably Jakob Ejersbo's so-called "Africa trilogy" – *Exit*, *Liberty*, *Revolution* – which leaves the reader with an impression of a notable gap between ideology and practice.

which allowed the state to seize the assets of refugees coming to the country. And in Norway, the controversial Sylvi Listhaug, from the far-right Progress Party, appropriated the term "goodness tyranny" to criticize the do-gooder tendency that she saw at the heart of Norwegian political culture. While immigration has been a contested issue in Scandinavia for a long time, in recent years it has been used as a lever to open up a debate about national self-images – a debate that in turn overflows into the question of Scandinavian foreign engagement. In 2017, historian Terje Tvedt's latest book (Tvedt 2017), *Det internasjonale gjennombruddet* [The International Breakthrough], made a ruckus when its author suggested that Norway's solidaristic foreign policy and its multiculturalist immigration policy were two sides of the same coin – a currency, to boot, which was designed not for actual success, but to make certain members of a humanitarian elite feel good about themselves. Connections like these would seem to spell trouble for the idea of Scandinavian exceptionalism abroad, since to the extent critics succeed in attaching foreign aid and humanitarianism to the highly contested and controversial issue of immigration, Scandinavian foreign engagement is dragged down in the mud of real politics, as it were; it is "tainted" by association with a policy area where the Scandinavians cannot boast of much more than modest success – if even that.

These are just some of the factors that would appear to create a more difficult market for the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand. To the extent international politics today is dominated by discourses of security and direct investment, instead of solidarity and aid, the Scandinavians seem to have been robbed of their most prized assets. And to the extent they encounter growing convergence transnationally, and greater criticism from home, the brand of Scandinavian goodness appears to be under threat – in several ways, and from several angles, at once.

But despite all of these factors, it would be both unwise and premature to write off the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand. In fact, in the face of all these challenges, this brand seems remarkably resilient and ready to adapt to any new circumstances, even though all nation branding logic makes it sound plainly impossible. How can this be? How do the Scandinavian countries today make use of the established Scandinavian brand in new circumstances that appear, at least on the surface, to make that brand less appealing? The second aim of the book, then, is to bring to the table concrete examples of how the Scandinavian countries update their own brand in what appears to be a more challenging situation. How

are these countries now *re*assembling items from their pool of nation branding resources, i.e. how have they managed to strike a balance between the past and the present, continuity and discontinuity, recognition of the brand and the brand's innovation?

Structure of the Book

This volume opens by exploring the paradoxical resilience of the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand, despite growing contradictions with the actual policies implemented. In Chapter 1, Christopher Browning provides a compelling argument for why the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand seems to "stick," despite various pressures challenging it. Drawing on recent scholarship on ontological security in international relations, he argues that "being and doing good" has become an integral part of Scandinavian national identity and provides a sense of self-esteem, status, and not least, a feeling of agency in the world. Paradoxically, perhaps, failing to live up to these altruistic expectations does not lead to a serious questioning of this identity. Rather, the unease and shame felt toward this tainted fantasy is cathartic and helps rejuvenate it by recommitting to the purity and ideals of humanitarianism. The Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand thereby "sticks" and remains a central element of collective identities, despite gaps with the reality of the foreign policies actually implemented.

This discrepancy between identity and reality is nowhere as striking as in Danish and Norwegian (and increasingly, Swedish) immigration policies, where a reputation for being the frontrunners of human rights has to be reconciled with very restrictive asylum and immigration policies. In Chapter 2, Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen explores the mechanisms and effects of "negative nation branding," whereby measures such as the infamous jewelry law in Denmark – by which asylum seekers' belongings are confiscated to contribute to the cost of hosting them – are actively branded in communication campaigns targeting potential immigrants – in an effort to discourage them from coming to Denmark. This deterrence strategy, which seems to have partially succeeded in making Scandinavia less attractive to migrants, has dangerous side-effects, however, warns Gammeltoft-Hansen – not least putting considerable pressures on Scandinavia's Humanitarian Brand with consequences both at home and abroad.

In Chapter 3, Kristian Bjørkdahl further analyzes the stickiness of the Humanitarian Brand, focusing particularly on Norway. To him, the

production of strategic ignorance is a key mechanism at play in maintaining the self-image and reputation of a nation, despite incoherence or gaps with the policies implemented. Bjørkdahl illustrates this argument by providing a rhetorical analysis of the Norwegian TV series *Nobel*, which exposes how strategic ignorance about Norway's contradictions in its engagement in Afghanistan is produced in the everyday life of the series' protagonists, but how this strategy eventually (spoiler alert!) backfires. Paradoxically, Bjørkdahl argues, the tragic form of the series provides its audience with *catharsis*: Instead of leading viewers to question Norway's hypocrisy abroad and its image of altruistic engagement, the show renews viewers' faith in the Norwegian humanitarian identity, now purified of the many contradictions exposed in the series.

Peace negotiation and conflict mediation is a critical element of Norwegian and Swedish foreign policy and both countries like to refer themselves as "peace nations." The following two chapters unpack this aspect of the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand and the contradictions it entails. In Chapter 4, Ada Nissen traces the origins of the Scandinavian "peace brand." Insights from recent history provide at least two important lessons, she argues: First, the "peace nation brand" may well be a powerful narrative – but is based mostly on unsuccessful mediation efforts. Trying to broker peace (*being good*) is seen as a virtue in itself, independently of the actual results achieved, and this peacemaking commitment feeds into a collective humanitarian identity that Scandinavians are so attached to and proud of. Secondly, Scandinavian countries only rarely cooperate together in peace processes, and rather, tend to compete against each other to reap the benefits in status and prestige of mediation efforts. The "peace nation brand" may therefore be mobilized for self-interested purposes, and not only for "doing good" and "being good." In Chapter 5, Wayne Stephen Coetzee explores the paradox of Sweden, the peace nation, being a large weapons exporter. He shows how Swedish political, military, and economic elites mingled ideal objectives of "doing good" and self-interests when selling the Swedish-produced jet fighter Gripen to South Africa in 1999. Sweden's humanitarian identity was echoed by a genuine intention to support South Africa's development, democracy-building, and the black community, Coetzee argues. But the reputation for "being good" was also usefully branded to sell the jet and advance national interests, such as gaining influence in South Africa and the African continent, profiling the aircraft or securing workplaces in Sweden.

Although unequivocally a part of Scandinavia, Denmark can often seem as somewhat of an outlier in relation to the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand. In Chapter 6, Lars Engberg-Pedersen and Adam Moe Fejerskov examine this Danish singularity by surveying the evolution of Danish development cooperation policy over the last 30 years. They highlight a shift from a focus on altruistic and humanitarian values, toward a stronger focus on short-term, domestic self-interests, such as advancing Danish commercial and security interests, limiting migration, or financing the costs of asylum seekers in Denmark. They argue that foreign aid is increasingly being subordinated and instrumentalized to domestic political interests, and partly decoupled from foreign policy and humanitarian objectives. Despite these pressures on foreign aid, the policy field shows a formidable elasticity and a resilience which enable development cooperation to manage, absorb, and survive policy shifts, these authors conclude.

The following two chapters take a closer look to the historical political processes behind the make-up of Sweden's often perceived exceptional approach to development and humanitarian affairs. In Chapter 7, Johan Karlsson Schaffer unpacks what is currently Sweden's main objective in development aid: democracy promotion. Arguing against culturalists' accounts of Sweden's democracy promotion (explaining the emergence of this policy as a mere translation of Sweden's political culture in its foreign policy), Schaffer traces the rise of democracy promotion to domestic political party struggles over the redefinition of development cooperation's priorities in the 1990s and 2000s. This political contestation, far from drawing solely on Swedish culture, was motivated by party politics and influenced by the international context (post-Cold War wave of democratization), as well as the circulation of global ideas (such as the rise of human rights). Sweden's approach to democracy promotion has become a brand, Schaffer concludes, which conveniently ties culturalist identity narratives to this policy, thereby boosting the country's moral standing and authority in world affairs. In Chapter 8, Carl Marklund also explores political contestation of aid in Sweden, focusing more particularly on the competing (and changing) meaning of conditionality and evaluation. The iconic picture of an exceptional Scandinavian aid model promoting a new international economic order (NIEO), driven by solidarity and based on the recipient countries' own premises, has been put under tremendous pressures by the growing demand to provide aid "efficiently," imposing conditions of accountability,

transparency, and often, increasingly channeling aid via the market or public–private partnerships. A consequence of this trend, Marklund argues, is a change in the nature of aid evaluation. Originally focused on highlighting unspoken competing motives and interests in aid projects, aid evaluation now focuses mainly on assessing "aid effectiveness." By so doing, it largely becomes a technical endeavor which obscures the motives and drivers of aid and brings Sweden and Scandinavia increasingly toward mainstream global aid practices.

Simon Reid-Henry usefully displaces the conversation from tension between ideology and *realpolitik* interests, and draws our attention instead toward what may be a distinctive Scandinavian political style in world affairs – what he calls the "pragmatarian style." In Chapter 9, Reid-Henry argues that former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, initiated a distinctive style of pragmatic humanitarianism under her leadership of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and of the World Health Organization (WHO), a style that still constitutes the basis of Norwegian (and Scandinavian) foreign policy. This style consists in a realist commitment to a progressive development agenda by building coalitions and achieving political compromise (in a similar fashion to social democracy) – a third way between the structural radicalism of the NIEO and the neoliberal individualism of right-based approaches. If this pragmatarian style offers a tempting way to refashion the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand, it also risks altering its exceptional character by compromising with dominant forces in global politics.

Finally, in Chapter 10, Desmond McNeill builds on Reid Henry's concept of Scandinavian "pragmatarian style" by arguing that global public good approaches to development, increasingly promoted by Scandinavian countries, may be one of the political translations of such a pragmatarian style, and a possible way forward for the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand. McNeill recalls that global public good approaches stem from an economic logic, both pragmatic, technocratic, and dispassionate – in other words, the opposite of an idealist or revolutionary approach to world affairs. The concept of global public goods might be seducing to social-democratic Scandinavian countries, who could frame and pursue development assistance as a way to support the vulnerable and at the same time pursue its self-interests, thereby absorbing the growing pressures on humanitarianism and sustaining the resilience of the brand. However, warns McNeill, this might also constitute a serious

threat to Scandinavians' collective identity as humanitarians, to the extent that global public good does not stem from any altruistic logic. Paying one's dues as good international citizens, McNeill concludes, may be less attractive than the recognition and status conferred by humanitarianism.

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1

Fantasy, Distinction, Shame

The Stickiness of the Nordic "Good State" Brand

CHRISTOPHER S. BROWNING

1.1 Introduction

The idea of the Scandinavian or Nordic countries as benevolent actors on the world stage is well entrenched. As a group they are frequently referred to as "norm entrepreneurs" (Ingebritsen 2006), "moral superpowers" (Vik et al. 2018), or just plain old "good states" (Lawler 2005). Central to this image – indeed brand – is the idea that these are fundamentally ethical and altruistic actors, good international citizens accepting (and promoting) a broader sense of responsibility for the world's problems. This has been particularly evident in their apparent embrace of environmentalism, solidarity with the developing world through active humanitarian and development aid policies, and not least their activism in respect of practices of conflict mediation/resolution and peacekeeping contributions.

Confirmation of their "goodness" can easily be found through a perusal of the numerous benchmarking indexes that have sprung up over the last few decades as a way of ranking states' competitiveness,[1] and where the Nordic countries typically frequent the upper echelons of all those benchmarks you would want to be topping. Indeed, the 2020 rankings for the *Good Country Index* (originally launched in 2014) have Sweden 1st, Denmark 2nd, Finland 6th, and Norway 10th.[2] The *Good Country Index* ranks countries in terms of their contribution "to the greater good of humanity,"[3] and does so through trying to establish relatively objective (though contestable) assessments of data in the areas of Science and Technology; Culture; International Peace and Security;

[1] For a critique see Broome, Homolar, and Kranke (2018).
[2] As with many debates about the Nordic countries Iceland is an outlier, ranked 34th.
[3] www.goodcountryindex.org/about-the-index.

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World Order; Planet and Climate; Prosperity and Equality; and Health and Wellbeing.[4] Irrespective of the robustness of the data, what is clear is that the Nordic countries continue to do exceedingly well in indexes analyzing national reputations (i.e. indexes that emphasize perceptions of performance – i.e. "brand" – rather than performance itself (Marklund 2017: 625)). For instance, the 2018 *Country RepTrak* study of the world's most reputable countries – which generates its data through surveying 58,000 individuals in G8 countries – had Sweden 1st, Finland 2nd, Norway 4th, and Denmark 9th.[5]

And yet as is well documented, the Nordic "good state" is open to challenge. For instance, in terms of practice it is often unclear that the Nordics any longer stand out as "exceptional" in respect of practices of environmentalism, humanitarianism, and peace support, since increasingly these are areas where other countries have caught up and where often Nordic positions seem little different to broader European positions (Browning 2007). Meanwhile, it is not only that claims of Nordic "exceptionalism" can be challenged, but that in view of recent Nordic practices it is reasonable to ask whether the Nordics are actually (or ever were – think Norwegian oil and Swedish arms exports) as good as they claim to be. For instance, Nordic "hospitality" and internationalism is under threat from a growing populist and isolationist tide in the region, while Denmark and Norway have increasingly embraced military activism, both being part of the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq in 2003 and responsible for firing approximately 20 percent of NATO's bombs in its intervention in Libya in 2011 (Wivel 2017: 489).

Despite such instances, however, the Nordic "good state" or "peace brand" appears relatively untarnished. This chapter therefore considers *how and why the Nordic "peace brand" and associated idea of the Nordics as quintessential "good states" appears to stick, both domestically and internationally, despite the fact that in many respects Nordic exceptionalism in this regard is no longer so obvious and increasingly tainted.* Building on existing explanations, this chapter argues that more attention needs to be paid to understanding the affective hold of ideas of "Nordic peace" and the "Nordic good state" on both insiders and outsiders. For insiders it is argued that these have become part of a fantasized ideal with which people enjoy identifying and that appeals because it offers a sense

[4] The Good Country Index, www.goodcountryindex.org/results.

[5] V. Valet (2018). "The World's Most Reputable Countries 2018," *Forbes*, June 21, 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/vickyvalet/2018/03/15/the-worlds-most-reputable-companies-2018/.

of self-esteem and status, but also of ontological security and agency through articulating a role in the world. However, this chapter argues that outsiders also sometimes seem to invest emotionally in this Nordic reputation and brand as part of the politics of (de)legitimation, projecting the Nordic as an ideal-type and aspiration of (dis)identification.

1.2 International Stickiness of the Good State Brand: From Status Seeking to Identity and Meaning Creation

It is worth starting with a brief discussion of the "stickiness" of this image of the Nordics amongst outsiders, which will be returned to toward the end of this chapter. An important intervention here has been made by Wohlforth et al. (2018), who are concerned with challenging the established status literature in IR, which they note has been overly focused on *realpolitik* competitions between great powers (also see de Carvalho and Neumann 2015). They argue that since small/middle powers cannot compete on this terrain they will instead emphasize alternative dimensions "on which status can be measured," and may in particular seek to gain status by carving out a niche and excelling in being "good states" (Neumann and de Carvalho 2015: 10–11, 16; Wohlforth et al. 2018: 527, 532–533).

Their argument – and utilizing Norway as an example – is that there are several ways in which this can be done, but where an image/brand of "goodness" can be strategically cultivated by proving to be "useful allies, impartial arbiters, or contributors to [the] system's maintenance" (de Carvalho and Lie 2015; Neumann and de Carvalho 2015: 2, 9–10; Wohlforth et al. 2018: 530). They proceed to make a number of important observations in respect of Norway in particular, but which can be extrapolated to the Nordics in general. The basic argument amounts to the claim that the Nordic "good state" brand – and the status this confers on them – appears to stick within the international community because over a long period of time they have gained an enhanced status as a result of an assiduously cultivated reputation for actually providing beneficent services, be that to particular great powers, or to upholding the system and a norms-based international order as such (see Schia and Sending 2015).

In this respect, they argue that Norway's engagement in good deeds and development of a distinctive "peace nation" brand in international politics increasingly appears – at least at governmental level – to be driven by the desire for status and standing as opposed to an intrinsic

concern with the issues at play (Wohlforth et al. 2018: 544). In other words, the good state status is seen to confer both political and social capital, generating a sense of goodwill toward the Nordics, which in turn enhances the sense of self-esteem of Nordic leaders and populations (see Chapter 4). To quote foreign minister Jan Petersen in 2002: "Peace processes make us interesting ... We need a few products like that" (quoted in Wohlforth et al. 2018: 540). In turn this reputation has been fostered through using established branding and marketing techniques, in a form of what they term "conspicuous do-goodism" (Wohlforth et al. 2018: 543), including an embracing of benchmarking indexes for branding purposes (Browning 2018: 8). The argument therefore suggests that – at least to some not insignificant degree – the stickiness of the "good state" brand is a result of established and continuing Nordic practices of actually "doing good" (however defined), but also of "being seen to be doing good" through active branding strategies.[6]

What they also indicate, however, is that despite the fact that the Nordics no longer appear so distinctive in these terms they benefit from the fact that they have a long track record in this regard (Wohlforth et al. 2018: 536).[7] Their reputation is well established (they have "form" and therefore appear "genuine"), but with this presumably meaning that they are also able to ride out potential controversies (to some extent). For example, despite significant initial negative reaction, Denmark's "Mohammed cartoon crisis" of 2004–2005 did not appear to sully the country's reputation over the longer term.[8]

The argument of Wohlforth et al. is powerful and convincing; however, at the end of this chapter it is suggested that external actors might not simply recognize and confer status on the Nordics for this developed reputation in some neutral transactional sort of way – reflecting the idea that "they have earned it." Instead, it is suggested that at least some external actors some of the time also (and perhaps surprisingly) seem to themselves "invest" emotionally in this Nordic reputation and brand

[6] The most obvious example in the Norwegian case being through its custodianship and cultivation of the Nobel Peace Prize (see Johnsen 2015).

[7] While an established reputation may override the loss of distinction in preserving a state's status, Neumann and de Carvalho (2015: 6) also note that status can even survive the loss of power, as for example in the case of France during and after the Second World War. Examples like this therefore challenge the tendency within power political approaches to International Relations to treat status as little more than a reflection of power.

[8] Personal communication with a Danish diplomat who was based in the Middle East at the time (March 2019).

(potentially for a variety of reasons). At stake in the emergence of a Nordic "good state/peace" brand is therefore the extent to which the emphasis shifts from a focus solely on the utility benefits of Nordic contributions (its political and social capital), to the way in which the Nordics have emerged as a symbol through which meaning and identity are generated (symbolic capital), also amongst outsiders.

1.3 Domestic Stickiness: The "Good State" as Imagined Community

At this point, however, we can turn to the other side of the issue, the need to account for why the "good state" brand and image remains sticky for Nordic citizens/societies.[9] In this respect, it is important to emphasize how in each of the Nordic countries ideas of "goodness," "morality," and "peace" have not simply been understood in instrumental terms as avenues for gaining status and social and political capital, but have also been central to the imagined community in construction. While this was especially so throughout the Cold War period, such claims also often preceded this.

For instance, the idea of Norway as a "peace nation" was central to narratives of national identity and of Norway's role in the world from its very early years of independence after 1905. Indeed, emphasizing and pursuing peace was a way of drawing a distance from great power politics, but also part of a broader attempt at trying to change the rules of the international game (Leira 2013). To this extent, while pursuing peace and working for a better world has become a part of the country's efforts at status seeking (de Carvalho and Neumann 2015), it can also be argued that initially this first became an embedded trait in Norwegian national identity narratives and central to the national self-image

[9] The analysis focuses on Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, but omits specific consideration of Iceland. The concept of Scandinavia is generally considered to be more restrictive than that of Norden/Nordic, typically excluding Finland and Iceland. However, as social constructions there is nothing given about these markers, while outside the region they are often used interchangeably. Although within the region the distinction is often maintained, it is also important to recognize that the Finns in particular have sometimes made explicit claims to a Scandinavian identity (e.g. Wuorinen 1965: 304). Similarly, in recent years, claims to a Nordic identity have also been made by the Estonian government and some Scottish nationalists. The chapter limits its discussion to Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden because it is these countries that have become most closely associated with the idea of Nordic peace and the Nordic good state.

(Wohlforth et al. 2018: 537–539). For instance, within Norwegian society a prevalent and long running discourse exists that Norwegians are morally obliged to help those with less than themselves, with this making doing good an idealized aspect of national self-identity narratives. Tvedt (2007: 621) terms this the Norwegian "do-gooder regime," while in this volume Nissen highlights how such a discourse continues to be reinscribed through emphasizing legacies of Norway's lack of a colonial past, its nonviolent extraction from the union with Sweden, its enthusiastic membership of the UN, and not least its association with the Nobel Peace Prize.

Similarly, after the Napoleonic Wars and later following its war against Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, Denmark went through a considerable period of self-reflection as it began to come to terms with its declined status in European affairs, no longer a great power with *realpolitik* ambitions, but increasingly embracing the designation that it was actually a small state, a people's nation, and to some degree turning inward (Browning and Joenniemi 2013). Throughout the Cold War this manifested itself in a broadly anti-militarist stance to international affairs.

Most notably, of course, Sweden became the flag-bearer of Scandinavian exceptionalism during the Cold War, pursuing a foreign aid policy emphasizing "peace, freedom, and welfare" and seeking to cultivate the role of an arbiter, mediator, and bridgebuilder in global affairs (Bjereld 1995; Brommesson 2018: 4). In the Swedish case this often manifested in overtly moralistic terms, with Sweden positioning itself in solidarity with the Third World and where from the 1960s onward an idealistic element emerged of Sweden as having become the "world's conscience" (Trägårdh 2002: 152). In this respect, Swedish neutrality was not seen as constraining but as conferring a right and duty to speak out on international and moral issues. Central to this, and shared by the other Nordic states, was a belief in the need to help developing countries with generous foreign aid policies, and which Bergman argues in the Swedish case was understood largely in terms of the internationalization of the country's domestic welfare policy, the aim being to reduce inequalities between rich and poor on a global scale (Bergman 2007).

Lastly, there is Finland, an interesting case since its initial embracing of "peace" (and nonalignment/neutrality) after the Second World War was initially framed as a pragmatic response to geopolitical realities, but one where necessity was ultimately turned into a virtue (Browning 2008: 198–200). Thus, despite its rational and pragmatic underpinnings,

a "do-gooder" orientation in world politics quickly became integrated into Finnish identity narratives that people became emotionally invested in and which as such came to matter. In terms of foreign policy this was best captured in President Kekkonen's depiction of the country as a physician seeking to diagnose and cure, rather than a judge seeking to condemn and pass judgement (Kekkonen 1970: 94).

The Finnish case is also interesting, however, since its embrace of an international "bridgebuilder" role during the Cold War was also explicitly linked to efforts to (re)affirm to Finns and outsiders its Nordic credentials and identity. This was reflective of the fact that historically the country's Nordicness had often been questioned on geopolitical, racial, cultural, and linguistic grounds (Kemiläinen 1998). For the Finns a Nordic identification was essentially associated with escaping the precariousness of geopolitical imaginations that threatened to cast it as part of an emerging Soviet sphere of influence or within an East European/Baltic "buffer zone" (Browning 2008: 194–198). The desire to "prove" its Nordicness – be it through historical revisionism or embracing ideas of Nordic benevolence – again indicates the extent to which within the region (but also beyond) a Nordic identification carried a sense of status, but also security and safety to which Finland aspired.

Come the end of the Cold War, of course, this idea of the Nordics being different and ahead on the road to progress had become well established and was, of course, also associated with the development of a Nordic economic model depicted as a morally superior Third Way between American-style liberal capitalism and Soviet-style state socialism (Hanhimäki 1997: xii). Domestically, therefore, it can be argued that one reason why notions of Nordic do-gooding stick is because the conception of the Nordics as "good states" has become embedded in narratives of national self-identity.

1.4 Ontological Security and Good State "Fantasies"

What can be added to this identity-focused analysis are the insights of the developing literature on ontological security in International Relations. Briefly, this literature argues that subjects are generally driven by a desire to uphold and preserve established narratives of self-identity. They do so to avoid the onset of potentially debilitating existential anxieties that are liable to emerge whenever one feels their sense of self-(identity) is being questioned or in trouble (Giddens 1991; Mitzen 2006; Rumelili 2015). For example, this was the case in the early 2000s when discussions

around the future of Swedish neutrality often provoked confused, angry, and emotional responses amongst ordinary Swedes that shifting away from neutrality would infringe fundamental norms of what it means to be Swedish. The same is also evident today amongst liberal elements of Nordic opinion with respect to debates around migration, where the increased emphasis on restrictive bordering practices is similarly challenging idealized notions of Nordic hospitality, sanctuary, and of the Nordics as champions of human rights, with this a cause of considerable angst for some.

Once embedded as an identity, therefore, and then branded to the self and the world there are significant incentives to uphold the branded identity to avoid activating ontological anxieties. In this, we also see how citizens often generate a sense of ontological security through vicariously identifying with the nation – i.e. living through the nation and its achievements, not least through internalizing claims about national identity into self-identity narratives enacted at the everyday level (Browning et al. 2021).

However, the ontological security literature's account of the affective hold that particular narratives of self-identity have on subjects is insufficient in itself. It is, in a sense, a rather restrictive reading that captures only half of the story. Particular identities, it is argued, are to be upheld because failure to do so will generate anxiety. One reason this is problematic is because it can have the effect of reducing questions of ontological security down to questions of identity (Rossdale 2015). Theoretically speaking, this carries the danger of encouraging the "securitization of subjectivity," that is, the closing down of subjectivity around a particular identity, as evident for example in the discourses of populist politicians, though such practices are not limited to them and to some extent are also evident in the cases noted above (Kinnvall 2004; Mälksoo 2015; Browning and Joenniemi 2017). However, while securitizing subjectivity certainly happens, it also underplays the extent to which ontological security is always a work in progress, the result being that while the onset of anxieties may tempt subjects into securitizing established notions of subjectivity and fighting for them, this is not inevitable. Instead, subjects often adapt their identity narratives, shift between them, and are not just concerned with "going on" (Giddens 1991), but also with living a fulfilling, meaningful, and authentic life in an inherently dynamic social environment. This often entails taking risks and breaking established ontological security enhancing routines in favor of new practices, new routines, and new identifications (Browning and Joenniemi 2017).

In this respect, while the ontological security literature directs attention to the specter of anxiety that identity transformations can generate, it has so far not grappled sufficiently with the issue of why subjects become attached to particular identities in the first place. That is, why do some identities – like being "good states" in the case of the Nordics – become attractive, exert an affective hold, and become "sticky," while others may be more easily dispensed with?

This issue is relevant in the Nordic case because since the end of the Cold War, and in particular over the last couple of decades, Nordic foreign policy approaches have changed, in some cases quite dramatically. Most notably Denmark and Norway have embraced military activism in ways that during the Cold War would have been almost unthinkable (Knudsen 2004; Rasmussen 2005). From being bridge builders and mediators there is a growing willingness to take sides. Indeed, in the Danish case this has been accompanied by an internal process of self-critical historical revisionism that depicts its Cold War policy in almost immoral terms and where current military activism appears as a mechanism for redemption (Browning et al. 2021: Ch.5). Similarly, Wohlforth et al. (2018) highlight how for Norway this has been part of a process in which being a good state increasingly takes the form of being a "good ally," and engaging in system supporting actions upholding a rules-based international order.

Interestingly, therefore, despite the change in foreign policy orientation and practice both Denmark and Norway continue to see themselves as "good states" and continue to cultivate this self-image and identity domestically and internationally. Put differently, while conceptions of "how to be good" may be transforming in some respects, the idea of "being good" as a central element of self-identity narratives retains affective hold.

To address the limitations of ontological security accounts in explaining why some identity narratives appear to be stickier and more enduring than others, a turn to Lacanian accounts of subjectivity can be useful. These argue that a fundamental "lack" lies at the heart of subjectivity, a lack that emerges in the very moment in which the subject finds itself "thrown into the world" (Glynos and Howarth 2008: 164; Epstein 2011: 334). Subjects, Lacan argues, are then driven by a perpetual desire to fill that lack, often investing their hopes and dreams in fantasies of fulfilment that come to exert affective hold over the subject. The fantasy, for example, may be the acquisition of an object or the cultivation of a relationship or idea (like freedom, liberty, or greatness if thinking about

the United States) which is to be quested after and which offers the promise of wholeness if fully attained. A fantasy may therefore be a signifier – like goodness – with which particular communities have come to enjoy identifying, but which may also be somewhat elastic insofar as it can be pursued, sought, or enacted in a variety of ways.

At the same time, the nature of fantasies is that either they always fall short (the acquisition of the object/relationship ultimately only provides a temporary sense of relief or completion),[10] or they remain just out of reach (often because attainment is seen to be thwarted by obstacles yet to be overcome).[11] However, rather than delegitimizing them it is this falling short which precisely enhances their affective hold and calls for renewed efforts seeking fulfilment (Arfi 2010; Eberle 2019). The suggestion of this chapter is that notions of the Nordics as "good states" and "peaceful nations" could be understood and theorized in these terms, where being good has become an idealized (fantasized) – and therefore "sticky" – identity that appeals because it offers a sense of self-esteem, status, ontological security, and not least a sense of agency in the world. However, it is also an identity, the content of which can take different forms, meaning that the substance of what "being good" entails may at times be openly contested.

1.5 The Good State, Virtuous Difference, and the Nordic "Knowledge Brand"

In the case of the Nordics this argument might be pushed a bit further, since insofar as idealizations of the Nordic "good state" have become internalized it also responds to Bourdieuian notions of "distinction" (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu uses the concept of distinction to refer to the temptations people feel to establish a sense of virtuous difference toward others, and where doing so can help them generate positive self-concepts, pride, status, and self-esteem. Thus it is, Bourdieu argues, that the upper classes prefer exclusive sports to those typically enjoyed by the *hoi polloi*, and why people enjoy belonging to exclusive clubs, or place

[10] Consider, for instance, how contemporary marketing is often premised on convincing consumers how particular brands can provide a sense of meaning, identity, and fulfilment through their acquisition, but also how such feelings are only ever fleeting with this tempting consumers toward further purchases.

[11] In populist fantasies, for instance, it is typically "the elite," "migrants," "foreigners," and "the EU" (in the case of much contemporary European populism), which are positioned as the obstacles to fulfilment that need to be overcome (again and again).

high monetary value on rare gemstones with limited utility (Bourdieu 1984: 212). For Bourdieu difference is therefore something to be cultivated, while its erasure can be unsettling.

As Bourdieu argues, however, the enjoyment of distinction and the sense of status and self-esteem it can provide, is dependent upon others recognizing, admiring, and valuing one's difference. Virtuous difference therefore needs to be performed in front of others, and this can often stimulate those others to attempt to imitate one's distinction. Indeed, the enjoyment of distinction may even require encouraging others to engage in such actions, since doing so reaffirms those hierarchies upon which virtuous difference depends (Bourdieu 1984: 50).

To some extent, this offers a way of thinking about expressions of angst which gripped the Nordic region following the end of the Cold War, characterized as it was by proclamations of the decline of the Nordic model and the end of Nordic exceptionalism. In brief, instead of representing a progressive future a mood took hold that Norden now appeared decidedly statist and outdated, with the future moving toward the postmodern politics of European integration and Baltic Sea regionalization.[12] In Bourdieuian terms, the threat facing conceptions of Nordic identity and the Nordic brand at this time was the perceived loss of distinction – the fact that with the end of the Cold War aspects of Nordic do-gooding no longer appeared to be particularly exceptional or appeared increasingly irrelevant (e.g. East–West bridgebuilding). Instead of being exceptional, Norden was in danger of becoming merely normal.

Over the last decade, however, notions of Nordic distinction and a sense of Nordic self-confidence have returned. Discussions of Nordic models, a Nordic perspective and rejuvenated Nordic brand, have become widespread. In 2015 this resulted in the Nordic Council of Ministers publishing a *Strategy for International Branding of the Nordic Region 2015–2018*, subsequently extended for 2019–2021 (Nordic Council of Ministers 2019).[13]

In this respect, fantasies of the Nordic good state seem to fit well with developing nation branding discourses, which arguably play on subjects' desires for distinction and virtuous difference and which the Nordic states are well placed to capitalize on. As noted at the start of the chapter,

[12] For such debates see Wæver (1992), Mouritzen (1995), and Browning (2007).

[13] See also Nordic Council of Ministers, "International branding of the Nordic Region," www.norden.org/en/international-branding-nordic-region.

new global benchmarking indexes are increasingly being designed that rank countries in terms of their contribution to global welfare – the *Good Country Index* being the most notable example. Nation branding consultants therefore increasingly advise their clients to think less about what the world can do for them, and more about cultivating a brand by focusing on what their country can do for the world (Browning 2018). As such, this is also fostering a shift in nation branding practices away from typical "place branding" narratives, more toward "policy branding" and cultivating the idea that in particular areas of activity (e.g. education, environment, health, criminal justice, etc.) the country in question possesses cutting edge knowledge – what Sum and Jessop (2013: 268, 299–305) call "knowledge brands." The idea of knowledge brands, they argue, resonates with new hegemonic discourses and economic imaginaries connected to ideas of "globalization," "competitiveness," and the rise of the "knowledge-based economy."

This is precisely what the Nordic Council of Minister's new *Strategy for International Branding of the Nordic Region* plays upon, explicitly identifying the Nordic region as a "knowledge society" that possesses solutions for pressing global problems, in particular of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. For instance, under the rubric "What the Nordic region can offer the outside world," an emphasis is placed on the Nordic governance and welfare model which is seen to have distinguished itself following the 2008 economic crisis (Nordic Council of Ministers 2015: 16–17). This shift toward policy branding therefore functions to reinscribe notions of Nordic distinction, virtuous difference, and exceptionalism as a core part of the Nordic brand and regional identity narratives. Such claims, of course, are then "evidenced" through reference to benchmarking indexes, which themselves serve to cultivate the idea that the Nordics possess expertise in specific policy areas. This, in turn, feeds into a fantasized identity of environmentalism, humanitarianism, and egalitarianism onto which the Nordic brand is built.

One example of this is the Nordic Council of Ministers' increasingly active role in support of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5, which focuses on improving the status and rights of women and girls worldwide and advancing gender equality. In March 2019, for instance, the Nordic Council of Ministers issued a "Declaration of Support towards the role of the UN Women in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which explicitly traded on the idea that when it comes to achieving gender equality the Nordic countries possess a "knowledge product." The declaration brands this as

The Nordic Gender Effect and which is to be offered to the world as part of the Nordic Prime Ministers' initiative, *Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges* (original emphasis) (Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality 2019). Academics have also advocated embracing gender as a policy brand for rebranding the Nordic model – like the Nordic Council of Ministers emphasizing a presumed link between gender equality, peace, and prosperity (Wivel 2017: 494).

Sweden has gone further than the other Nordic countries in this regard, not simply by promoting gender quality, but rebranding its foreign policy as "Feminist Foreign Policy."[14] This has raised some interesting questions, in particular with regard to the distinction between "doing good" and the imperative to "be seen to be doing good." Notably, on this issue the other Nordic countries appear to be more cautious about overtly adopting the feminist label, believing doing so can sometimes be counterproductive. Of course, it might also be argued that one of the other benefits of a focus on gender is that in many respects – not least due to cultural, structural, and developmental reasons – Nordic distinction in this regard is largely ensured. This therefore conforms to Bourdieu's idea that while performing distinction is central to establishing a sense of virtuous difference, and while such performances may encourage imitations, it is always important to remain *avant-garde*.

At the same time, while establishing a sense of distinction and virtuous difference through emphasizing knowledge brands – with all the benefits that can bring in terms of status and self-esteem enhancement – may help account for the affective hold of ideas of the Nordic good state on Nordic populations, such an emphasis can also have its drawbacks. This is not least the case when such knowledge brands come to appear smug or arrogant. For example, Moss (2018) argues that the Nordic countries' proselytizing about all things gender has sometimes left the impression that they are actually rather sanctimonious "know it alls."[15] For example, an investigation into Finland's failed campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council in 2012 precisely placed some of the blame on associations of Nordics with a sense of moral superiority and a condescending "*besserwisser*" attitude (cited in Ojanen and Raunio 2018).

[14] Government Offices of Sweden, "Feminist Foreign Policy," www.government.se/government-policy/feminist-foreign-policy/.

[15] Or to quote Mordhorst, it is not unusual for Denmark to be portrayed "as an arrogant country living in its own fairy tale" (2015: 245).

1.6 The Re-Generative Politics of Shame

The Nordic "good state" brand and self-image therefore has vulnerabilities. Indeed, it is not only that Nordic claims to goodness can appear self-satisfied and superior, but that they can also be challenged on empirical grounds. Thus, as noted at the start of the chapter, in some aspects the Nordics appear less distinctive and exceptional than they were previously, while in other respects Nordic practices appear increasingly sullied. While Danish/Norwegian militarism has already been noted, notions of the countries' humane internationalism have also been challenged by increasingly restrictive policies toward refugees and migrants, with this generating a certain amount of negative international publicity. Stand out cases have been the controversial Danish "jewelry law" that came into force in 2016 and mandated seizing cash and valuables from asylum seekers to help pay for their stay,[16] and the Danish People's Party proposal to house unwanted migrants on a small island two miles offshore, which presently contains a center for researching contagious animal diseases, and where one of its two serving ferries is called the Virus.[17] Concerted efforts like these to foster a hostile environment for migrants clearly challenge established images of Nordic humanitarian hospitality.

Policies like these clearly reflect the rise of populist sentiment within the region, and populist elements are unapologetically embraced. For other parts of Nordic opinion, however, such developments – the fact that the Nordics are not living up to claims of self-identity – have been a source of angst, ontological destabilization, and even shame. For example, the rise of populist sentiment in Finland has resulted in concerns that Finland is drifting away from its Nordic reference group to the level of "old Eastern European countries," a "very shameful league" (quoted in Ojanen and Raunio 2018: 10). Indeed, this idea that Finland is on its way to forsaking its Nordic identity again highlights the extent to which for many people the "Nordic" remains an idealized/fantasized identity impregnated with notions of moral do-gooding, not necessarily a birth right.

[16] "Danish Law Requires Asylum Seekers to Hand Over Valuables," *New York Times*, January 26, 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/01/27/world/europe/denmark-asks-refugees-for-valuables.html.

[17] M. S. Sorensen (2018). "Denmark Plans to Isolate Unwanted Migrants on a Small Island," *New York Times*, December 3, 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/12/03/world/europe/denmark-migrants-island.html.

In this respect, it is also worth noting that Nordic academics may themselves play a role in (perhaps unwittingly) activating ontological anxieties precisely by highlighting instances of Nordic hypocrisy and of the Nordics falling short of their self-proclaimed moral self-image. Examples of this are numerous, but to note two recent instances, Vik et al.'s (2018) introduction to a recent special issue of the *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* explicitly asks the question of whether the Nordics actually warrant the label of "global good Samaritans" and points to considerable inconsistencies, both domestically and internationally (also see Langford and Schaffer 2015). Similarly, Aggestam, Bergman Rosamond, and Kronsell (2018) point to inconsistencies and trade-offs in Sweden's feminist foreign policy (e.g. continuing to promote militarization through arms sales) and its (patriarchal) assumption that those women in need of (our) assistance lie solely beyond the country's borders, while remaining blind to the situation of indigenous or marginalized refugee populations at home.

The anxieties and sense of shame that such criticisms may potentially activate might, of course, give pause for thought and could potentially provoke a fundamental renegotiation of narratives of self-identity. There is, however, little sign of this. In this respect, Sara Ahmed's discussion of "shame dynamics" is interesting. Ahmed (2004: 108–112) argues that despite failures – of our self as individuals or as a community to live up to fantasized and idealized narratives of self-identity – so long as we recognize these failures and own the shame they bring we can actually also end up reproducing "the ideal" to which we aspire.

Her point is that recognizing failures and embracing shame – and even engaging in self-shaming – can be a resource for renewal and regeneration. This is a constitutive political act in the sense that willingness to witness past (and ongoing) injustice through feeling "national shame" entails aligning with other "well-meaning individuals" willing to do likewise, while excluding others unwilling to do so (e.g. populists). "[I]f you feel shame, you are 'in' the nation, a nation that means well" (Ahmed 2004: 109). Understood this way even academic critiques can be understood as part of this (self)-shaming process. In other words, criticisms that we are not living up to the ideal may actually have the effect of preserving an idealized and aspired for notion of Nordic subjectivity, which can become the basis for a narrative of national recovery: "*By witnessing what is shameful about the past, the nation can 'live up to' the ideals that secure its identity or being in the present.* In other words, our shame *means that we mean well*, and can work to reproduce the nation as an ideal" (Ahmed 2004: 109, original emphasis).

Indeed, Ahmed argues that in the face of failures it would actually be the lack of shame that would be truly shaming, whereas embracing shame can actually be affirming since it manifests "the desire to be able to identify with a national ideal" (2004: 110–111). Put differently, coming up short is not necessarily as problematic as might first be imagined, and where a willingness to acknowledge shortcomings and experience shame can actually be one further mechanism explaining the stickiness of the Nordic good state brand (at least internally).

One example of this can be seen in the response to the rise of populism in Finland noted above. Another perhaps concerns Nordic responses to the #MeToo movement, which became a particularly prominent phenomenon in Sweden.[18] Sweden, of course, is a nation with a long track record of claiming to be at the forefront of progressive gender politics and equality, such that it has now made gender a fundamental strand of its branded approach to foreign policy. What the #MeToo movement highlighted is that – at least in some respects – Sweden might not be quite so different as many other places. It is probably going too far to suggest that what resulted throughout the course of 2017–2018 was a "moral panic," but over this period there was a proliferation of stories and harassment claims across all sectors of Swedish society. Likewise, there were numerous petitions that further marked out the intensity of the Swedish experience from how #MeToo became manifest in most other places, including its Nordic neighbors.[19] Many in Sweden were themselves aware of this, with the country's Gender Equality Minister Åsa Regnér emphasizing how the country has a long history of movements for gender equality, with #MeToo another manifestation of this, and where "Swedish society expects gender equality."[20]

The explanation is interesting precisely because it identifies gender equality as an ontological issue – this is what Sweden is – and as such recasts all the unsavory experiences of Swedish women exposed by #MeToo, not as a debilitating source of shame and embarrassment – one effect of which could have been to delegitimize Sweden's proselytizing feminist foreign policy from the outset – but rather as an opportunity of

[18] E.g. for a selection of stories see The Local.se, "Metoo," www.thelocal.se/tag/metoo.

[19] A. Booth & K. Munro (2017) "Why Is the #MeToo Movement Sending Shockwaves through Sweden?," *SBS News*, November 27, 2017, www.sbs.com.au/news/why-is-the-metoo-movement-sending-shockwaves-through-sweden.

[20] Cited in A. Booth & K. Munro (2017). "Why Is the #MeToo Movement Sending Shockwaves through Sweden?," *SBS News*, November 27, 2017, www.sbs.com.au/news/why-is-the-metoo-movement-sending-shockwaves-through-sweden.

restating, reclaiming, and reaffirming the desire for Sweden to represent this gender ideal, to be what it "really is." In other words, the prominence of the #MeToo phenomenon in Sweden ended up being used to add weight to its foreign policy brand – because Sweden is a country where society knows right from wrong, and where women feel empowered to speak up. Indeed, while with respect to #MeToo Sweden to some extent stood out from its Nordic sisters, it is also worth noting that the declaration of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality of March 2019 noted earlier – that extolls the virtues of the *Nordic Gender Effect* – also felt compelled to recognize how #MeToo had exposed some need for improvement in the Nordic countries, as well as beyond (Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality 2019). Again though, rather than this disqualifying notions of the Nordics possessing a "knowledge product" on gender issues, it rather appears as reinforcement of it.

Finally, it is important to note that "owning shame" in the way Ahmed describes is not the only way of responding to situations when the ideal is exposed as coming up short. Indeed, impressionistically it also seems that while Sweden may be more prone to shame dynamics – with this perhaps reflective of its longer history and more overt embracing of moral(izing) conceptions of self-identity – Danish society has so far been less susceptible to shame dynamics, with Finland and Norway arguably lying somewhere in between. This is most evident with respect to debates over migration, where Denmark has generally rejected any notion that it should feel ashamed, the essential position being that the country is already so good and generous that it can afford to be a bit less exceptional.[21] Similarly, *#MeToo* never really broke in Denmark.[22] In both cases, of course, such intra-Nordic differences – in particular between

[21] Indeed, the use of self-deprecating humour to deflect away from accusations of falling short (e.g. with respect to racism, sexism etc.) in the Danish case is also notable. For example, see "Denmark Propaganda – Don't Hate Us," *DR3*, January 29, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhuJyCw06lw.

[22] Indeed, an opinion poll conducted by the YouGov-Cambridge Globalism Project, which surveyed more than 25,000 people in 23 major countries, found that only 4 percent of the men and 8 percent of the women they questioned in Denmark had a "very favorable" view of the #MeToo movement. This compared to 16 percent of men and 34 percent of women in Sweden, with the average across all the countries surveyed being 19 percent and 24 percent respectively. The poll also highlighted Danish society (including Danish women) to be largely skeptical about feminism in general. See R. Orange & P. Duncan (2019). "And the Least Feminist Nation in the World Is . . . Denmark?" *The Guardian*, May 10, 2019, www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/may/10/and-the-least-feminist-nation-in-the-world-is-denmark.

Denmark and Sweden – have become the basis for the reinscription of national stereotypes reaffirming particular claims about national identity (e.g. pragmatic Danes vs moralizing Swedes).

1.7 Nordic Fantasies and the Politics of (De)legitimation

By way of conclusion it is worth returning to the chapter's opening consideration of why it is that the Nordic peace brand and associated idea of the Nordics as quintessential "good states" also appears to stick internationally. Here it was noted how revisionist literature on status seeking in international relations can point to the importance of the Nordics having developed an established reputation for "do-gooding," be that in terms of actually *doing good* as well as making sure they are *seen to be doing good*. Insofar as such a reputation has developed it insulates them from criticisms; they are, in a sense, given the benefit of the doubt.

This account certainly goes a considerable way to explaining the continuing stickiness of the Nordic good state brand amongst outsiders. Such an account, however, can also appear a little mechanistic. What can be suggested now, and building on the foregoing analysis of factors contributing to the domestic stickiness of the Nordic peace brand, is that at least some external actors some of the time also seem to themselves invest emotionally in this Nordic reputation and brand and are affectively attached to it in certain ways. In other words, it might not be only the Nordics who are invested in fantasies of the Nordics as do-gooders.

The key dynamic here is that for some outsiders the Nordics exist as a fantasy projection of an ideal-type. This ideal-type comes in two opposed forms, either a utopian vision to be identified with and aspired for, or a dystopian vision to be roundly rejected. In both cases, however, the Nordics function as a marker of (de)legitimation in internal policy debates that often seem to have little to do with the Nordics themselves (or even with actual Nordic practices/realities).

On the utopian side, for instance, Crouch notes that there is an "enduring image of the Nordics as a soft-focus paradise of welfare and well-being" (2018: 30). In this vision the Nordics encapsulate the yearning for a better world and where they are seen to have found the key to individual and collective flourishing. In the contemporary period, this is no more evident than in airport and high street bookshops outside the Nordic region, where shelves are filled with titles dedicated to unpicking the Danish concepts of *hygge* and *lykke* and the Swedish

concepts of *lagom* and *fika*. Particularly interesting about this phenomenon, however, is that it was actually cooked up and driven by London publishing houses looking to capitalize on the flourishing market for books about lifestyle choices, this itself highlighting the extent to which preconceptions about the Nordic good life pervade such that they can even be branded and capitalized on by non-Nordics.[23] One aspect of such publishing is the cherry-picking of information and facts about Nordic lifestyles and Nordic economics to create checklists for success (Crouch 2018: 33).

However, it is also important to emphasize that such fantasies of the Nordic good state/life are also often appropriated and utilized in (geo) political debates outside the region. For instance, Norden is frequently appropriated in British politics to bolster a range of positions, with those appropriating Nordic images, myths, models, and solidarity spanning the political spectrum. This has included the selective embracing of (different) Nordic public, social, and educational policies by both Conservative and Labour politicians – therefore suggesting the apparent success of aspects of Nordic policy branding. It has also included the active courting of Nordic politicians and venues to bolster a sense of solidarity and support, both domestically and internationally. And not least, it is also evident in attempts of vicariously identifying with Nordic histories and achievements – this latter most notably evident in the Scottish National Party's invocation of Nordic themes and a Nordic cultural and geopolitical imaginary in their campaign for Scottish independence.

In such instances fantasized ideas of Norden exist as a resource of political legitimation, as also evident in former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' embrace of "Nordic socialism," where the Nordic part of the couplet is clearly utilized as a means of detoxifying the socialist part for American audiences. Invoking Norden is therefore understood by progressivist politicians as a way of advancing a more progressive politics (be that with regard to taxation, state interference, gender representation etc.). Again, the fact that such invocations themselves often generate rebuttals from political opponents – such as in claims that the Nordics are not socialist but

[23] C. Higgins (2016). "The Long Read: The Hygge Conspiracy," *The Guardian*, November 22, 2016, www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/nov/22/hygge-conspiracy-denmark-cosiness-trend.

compassionate capitalists[24] – only further highlights the extent to which Nordic associations are deemed powerful and politically legitimizing. In such debates over "Nordic realities" the relevant point for the argument of this chapter is not who is right or wrong, but the fact that it does not really matter whether the Nordics actually match-up; the Norden of such debates is rather a fantasized Norden of possibility and becoming.

It is important to emphasize, however, that fantasies of progressive Norden are also sometimes co-opted to legitimize nonprogressive political agendas, the argument being that "if the Nordics do it how bad can it be?" In recent years, this has been most notable with respect to justifying restrictions on immigration, particularly in reference to Danish policies. Indeed, such an argument has also been played within the Nordic countries themselves, where the populist Finns Party has argued for readmission agreements on the basis that the other Nordics already have them. Meanwhile, the Finnish government has also justified cuts in development aid, and more particularly bringing enterprises into development policy, in similar terms (Ojanen and Raunio 2018: 10–11).

Finally, of course, Norden also appears in dystopian fantasies of outsiders, where Norden's "goodness" is represented more as an illusion, a warning or trap threatening immorality, decadence, and social collapse. It was to such visions that Donald Trump appealed when he suggested in February 2017 – in reference to a terrorist attack that never happened – that Sweden's lax immigration policy toward people fleeing war and persecution was itself a cause of terrorism.[25] Similarly, in response to those utopian fantasies currently populating bookshelves, counter-narratives are also increasingly being propagated aiming to debunk Norden for what it "really is" by exposing the "darkness lurking at the edges" (Crouch 2018: 31–32). Again, such efforts are not merely a "corrective" seeking balance but play on a much longer heritage where Norden figures as a warning against political and social experiments best avoided.

[24] J. Dorfman (2018). "Sorry Bernie Bros but Nordic Countries Are Not Socialist," *Forbes Magazine*, July 8, 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/jeffreydorfman/2018/07/08/sorry-bernie-bros-but-nordic-countries-are-not-socialist/#1cb5d8f074ad.

[25] A. Topping (2017). "'Sweden, Who Would Believe This?': Trump Cites Non-existent Terror Attack," *The Guardian*, February 19, 2017, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/19/sweden-trump-cites-non-existent-terror-attack.

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, the argument of this chapter is that one significant reason for the continued stickiness and attraction amongst both insiders and outsiders of what can be generically referred to as the Nordic "good state" brand, is the extent to which such ideas have become embedded within fantasized notions of Nordic identity. For many insiders such fantasies have arguably become central to conceptions of self-understanding which if challenged may be ontologically unsettling and a source of anxiety. At the same time, however, the affective pull of these fantasies is such that even dissonant experiences and practices tend to be managed in ways that reinforce fantasized conceptions of a Nordic ideal. Thus it is that even shame can become regenerative of the affective hold of idealizations of the Nordic good state. However, the chapter has also argued that such fantasized notions of Nordic goodness also operate and exert affective influence on outsiders. Amongst outsiders, however, the fantasy is less an issue of self-identity but instead manifests in Nordic goodness appearing as an instrumentalized ideal to be utilized as a tool of both legitimation and delegitimation in political debates often only tangentially connected to the Nordics themselves.

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2

The Do-Gooders' Dilemma

Scandinavian Asylum and Migration Policies in the Aftermath of 2015

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2.1 Introduction

Scandinavian countries are often held up as liberal frontrunners when it comes to human rights. Historically, this also held true for the otherwise politically thorny issues of asylum and immigration. Norway, for example, has significantly helped advance protection for internally displaced persons (IDPs) around the world. Denmark was the first country to sign and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1983 Aliens Act used to be described as the "world's most liberal asylum legislation."[1] And while many other European countries have continuously applied a minimalist interpretation of EU asylum law, for long Sweden championed both a more liberal policy and discourse (Stern 2014; Fratzke 2017). Both domestically and as part of foreign policy, concern for refugee and IDP rights has thus been a significant component of the "Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand" that the editors to this volume outline.

Today, however, this picture has arguably changed significantly. All three countries remain top donors to international refugee protection.[2]

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[1] Interview with former executive staff of the Danish Refugee Council, November 2018. See further Christensen and Vilby (2019).

[2] As measured by donations to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) relative to GDP. UNHCR, "Contributions to UNCHR – 2019," September 30, 2019. Available from www.unhcr.org/5baa00b24.

Yet, at the level of domestic asylum and immigration policy each of these Scandinavian countries have introduced a host of more restrictive measures in response to the "European asylum crisis" beginning in 2015. While many of these restrictive measures build upon and expand earlier restrictions (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2017), 2015 can nonetheless be seen as a significant turning point in terms of both intensifying restrictions and changing the internal policy dynamics in this area across the Scandinavian countries. Several of the Danish measures have made international headlines and prompted international responses. When Norway introduced a broad range of asylum and immigration restrictions in November 2015, one of the government parties, Fremskrittspartiet, made a particular point of stressing that this would make Norway "the most restrictive country in Europe" in national and international media.[3] That same month, a clearly emotional deputy prime minister, Åsa Romson, announced that Sweden would now apply a minimum interpretation of EU standards with the explicit ambition to push asylum seekers toward other countries instead.[4]

The present chapter examines the various domestic policy measures adopted by Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in the field of asylum and immigration since 2015 and the dilemmas these raise for the traditional "Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand." It argues, firstly, that the vast majority of these measures are designed around a common logic focused on making conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in the Scandinavian countries as unattractive as possible and thereby push asylum seekers toward other countries and regions. It is secondly argued that this kind of policymaking can be conceptualized as a unique form of *negative nation branding* and that, to achieve the deterrent effect of these policies, Scandinavian states are prompted to actively advertise new restrictions both in public discourse and through targeted campaigns toward migrants and refugees. The chapter finally discusses

[3] Peder Ottosen and Ralf Lofstad, "Norge får Europas strengeste asylpolitikk." *Dagbladet*, November 19, 2015. Available from www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/norge-far-europas-strengeste-asylpolitikk/60461396; Lizzie Dearden, "Refugee Crisis: Number of Asylum Seekers Arriving in Norway Drops by 95%." *Independent*, July 1, 2016. Available from www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-number-of-asylum-seekers-arriving-in-norway-drops-by-95-a7114191.html.

[4] David Crouch, "Sweden Slams Shut Its Open-Door Policy towards Refugees." *The Guardian*, November 24, 2015. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/sweden-asylum-seekers-refugees-policy-reversal.

whether and to what extent negative nation branding in regard to asylum and migration have international spillover effects. How do the new and more restrictive domestic policies impact the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand internationally? And to what extent can restrictive policies at the domestic levels coexist with Scandinavian aspirations to continue playing a leading role in regard to international refugee and IDP protection?

The following section first provides an overview of the three Scandinavian countries' policy response to the 2015 European asylum crisis, arguing that in comparison to other countries the Scandinavian countries have relied on a particular set of indirect deterrence policies. Section two conceptualizes this form of indirect deterrence as a form of "negative nation branding." Using Denmark as a case, section three proceeds to examine the relationship between domestic and international policymaking in this area. On this basis, the final section asks whether negative nation branding in regard to asylum and migration is a sustainable policy strategy for Scandinavian countries.

2.2 Scandinavian Responses to the 2015 European Asylum Crisis

There was a time where the Scandinavian region was generally seen as welcoming toward refugees and asylum seekers. Liberal asylum policies did not only fit well with these countries' humanitarian self-image and broader support for human rights, but also reflected wider geopolitical and economic factors. As Chimni has pointed out, the Cold War produced a particular kind of humanitarian politics (Chimni 1998). Accordingly, for both sides receiving refugees became part of the ideological scoreboard and border jumpers, fleeing minorities and smuggled dissidents celebrated as allowing people to "vote with their feet." Like many other Western states, the Scandinavian countries further operated guest worker schemes. Refugee integration was thus seen as a doable challenge, partly coextensive with existing social-economic programs.

From the 1970s, however, this welcoming attitude began to change. The 1973 oil crisis abruptly ended previously welcoming labor immigration schemes and created fears that asylum procedures might be abused by "welfare refugees" (Gibney and Hansen 2003). The proxy wars of the 1980s further created large-scale displacement across several regions in the Global South. At the same time, globalization has made both

knowledge of faraway destinations and transcontinental transportation more readily available. Taken together, this meant that Scandinavian and European countries were faced with new and different groups of refugees. Following the end of the Cold War, receiving refugees finally no longer served an ideological agenda. The way was thus paved for a new policy paradigm.

In response, Western states introduced a distinctly bifurcated form of humanitarianism when it came to refugees. With the post-Cold War emphasis on human rights, both international refugee assistance and the institution of asylum managed to survive and as a result of progressive human rights jurisprudence in some cases even expand eligibility to new classes of protection-seekers – e.g. persons fleeing gender-related persecution or widespread violence (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2019). Meanwhile, however, access to apply for asylum was being systematically curtailed. Legal measures were introduced to exclude refugees from the "procedural door" through the use of notions such as "safe countries" and "manifestly unfounded applications" (Vedsted-Hansen 1999). Other measures aimed at physically preventing refugees from accessing the territory of the asylum state. In the 1990s the United States began interdicting refugees in international waters, returning them with no assessment of claims for political asylum – a form of extraterritorial migration control soon adopted by Australia and Europe (Ghezelbash 2018). Through the introduction of carrier sanctions, private airline companies around the world were similarly forced to reject boarding to thousands of asylum seekers, who are unlikely to obtain a visa (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2011). The last two decades have finally seen international cooperation on border control becomes embedded in a host of different foreign policy arrangements, including transnational crime, development assistance, trade privileges, labor immigration quotas, and visa facilitation (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Hathaway 2015; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Vedsted-Hansen 2016).

The policy response by the Scandinavian countries to the events in 2015 may be seen as part of this wider "deterrence paradigm" (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Feith Tan 2017). More specifically, the policy measures introduced in each of the three Scandinavian countries followed a two-prong approach. On the one hand, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden all reintroduced temporary border controls inside the Schengen area. Similar internal controls have been introduced by several other European countries, such as Austria, France, and Germany. While politically controversial, not least at the EU level, the temporary controls

have been extended several times and at the time of writing remain in place for all three countries.[5]

On the other hand, a range of measures were introduced limiting rights and benefits for arriving asylum seekers and refugees. In Denmark, a new tertiary protection status, "temporary protection status," was introduced in 2015 for those fleeing general violence and armed conflict.[6] Under this provision, residence permits are initially granted for a period of one year only, ensuring that cases are regularly reviewed to assess continued protection needs. For other categories of refugees, the duration of initial residence permits has similarly been reduced from five years to two years (Convention refugees) and one year (protection status).[7] Access to family reunification for those granted "temporary protection status" has also been removed during the first three years of residence unless special considerations apply.[8] The grounds on which asylum seekers can be detained have been increased, and an option has been introduced to waive the ordinary, automatic right to habeas corpus for detained asylum seekers in cases of mass influx.[9] Social benefits for refugees have been cut by 50 percent, and child care support and pensions for refugees are now graduated based on the length of the applicant's stay in Denmark.[10] Legislation has been adopted granting the police the authority to search and seize funds and assets from asylum seekers to cover costs related to accommodation and other benefits.[11] Fees have similarly been introduced in connection with applications for family reunification and permanent residence for refugees. The latter is further subject to new requirements with regard to language and employment, and the waiting period for permanent residence has been extended to six years.

[5] European Commission, "Temporary Reintroduction of Border Control." Available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control_en.

[6] Amendment to the Danish Aliens Act, Law No. 153, February 18, 2015.

[7] Amendment to the Danish Aliens Act, Law No. 102, February 3, 2016.

[8] The moratorium on family reunification was originally for one year but was subsequently extended. Amendment to the Danish Aliens Act, Law No. 102, February 3, 2016.

[9] Amendment to the Danish Aliens Act, Law No. 1273, November 20, 2015.

[10] Amendment to the Danish Aliens Act, Law No. 1000, August 30, 2015.

[11] The authorities may confiscate funds or assets estimated to have a value above DKK 10,000 (approximately EUR 1,350). Personal assets with a particular sentimental value, such as wedding rings or religious artifacts, are exempt. Amendment to the Danish Aliens Act, Law No. 102, February 3, 2016.

A similar picture emerges in Sweden and Norway. In Sweden, refugees afforded subsidiary protection are now granted shorter residence permits of thirteen months, and family reunification is limited to exceptional cases. Also, a new maintenance requirement means that, to obtain family reunification, refugees must be able to provide adequate housing and economic support for family members. Almost simultaneously, Norway adopted its own restrictive measures, many directly mimicking similar provisions in Danish and the revised Swedish law in regard to family reunification, including requirements regarding age, association with Norway, economic support and the ability to refuse family reunification to persons afforded subsidiary protection. In the area of asylum, Norway goes even further than its two neighbors, having introduced an emergency measure to deny access to asylum seekers at the borders of other Scandinavian countries and a "safe third country" measure enabling the Norwegian authorities to deny asylum seekers entering Norway from neighboring Russia.[12]

On closer inspection, however, the Scandinavian policy measures remain somewhat different from the general approach to deterrence involving the physical or legal exclusion from accessing asylum set out above. Contrary to common wisdom, reintroducing physical border controls do not prevent asylum claims. In some cases, it may even increase the number of claims as asylum seekers stopped hoping to transit onward to reach Sweden or other Nordic countries are instead forced to submit their claim in Denmark. As a policy measure, border controls may have a deterrence effect in other states, further down (or in this case geographically up) the migratory trajectory: The Danish border control may limit the number of asylum seekers in Sweden, the Swedish border controls in Finland and Norway and so forth. But from a strict asylum perspective, it is not necessarily in the immediate self-interest of states to reintroduce border controls within an area otherwise governed by free movement. In the Nordic context, one exception in this regards concerns the controls introduced by Sweden for passengers crossing the Øresund bridge from Denmark by train. Here, Sweden imposed carrier sanctions, meaning that private security companies would perform controls at the Danish side and reject onward passage to anyone without

[12] Norwegian Ministry of Immigration and Public Security, "Tightening of Norway's Asylum Rules," January 11, 2017. Available from www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/immigration/asylum-regulations-in-norway/insight/tightening-of-norways-asylum-rules/id2465829/.

proper documentation. Asylum seekers traveling by car across the bridge would however still only be checked on the other side of the bridge and hence able to apply for asylum with the Swedish authorities.

Reviewing the host of other restrictions adopted in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, few if any measures similarly impact who when arriving have access to claim asylum. Except for the Norwegian introduction of a "safe third country" rule in regard to Russia and different emergency measures, which have so far not been implemented in practice, none of the new restrictions impact groups of persons eligible for asylum. Rather, the focus is on measures designed to discourage asylum claims or divert them to other countries by making the conditions for asylum seekers and recognized refugees less attractive.

This form of "indirect deterrence" has emerged in other European countries as well post-2015. Germany has replaced financial benefits for asylum seekers with coupons which they exchange for food and clothing,[13] and limited access to family reunification for persons afforded subsidiary protection.[14] In France, a combination of year-long processing times, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of access to work and social welfare during the asylum process has been proposed to serve as a deterrent for asylum seekers.[15] Austria introduced a cap of eighty asylum applications per day in 2016, Belgium a cap of 250 applications per day.[16] Greece and Italy have similarly been reported to block physical access to submitting asylum applications temporarily.[17]

Yet, the geographic and legal position of the Nordics means that indirect deterrence is likely to be a particularly important strategy in these countries. First of all, the Scandinavian countries remain geographically

[13] Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz [Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures], October 20, 2015, BGBl. I at 1722. Available from www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl115s1722.pdf.

[14] ECRE/ELENA, "Information Note on Family Reunification for Beneficiaries of International Protection in Europe," June 2016. Available from www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ECRE-ELENA-Information-Note-on-Family-Reunification-for-Beneficiaries-of-International-Protection-in-Europe_June-2016.pdf.

[15] Anais Renevier, "Non Merci! Why Refugees Avoid France," *IRIN News*, October 20, 2015. Available from http://newirin.irinnews.org/non-merci-why-refugees-avoid-france/.

[16] Bethany Bell, "Migrant Crisis: Austria's Plan B to Cap Influx of Refugees," *BBC News*, January 21, 2016. Available from www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35365603.

[17] UNHCR, "Dozens Queue Every Week in Athens to Apply for Asylum." *UNHCR News Story*, March 23, 2012. Available from www.unhcr.org/4f6c8b6a6.html; AIDA, "Country Report Italy: Fourth Update," December 2015. Available from www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_it_update.iv_.pdf.

removed from the direct pressure that several south and east European countries face from irregular immigration. These and other frontline countries, such as Australia and the United States, are more likely to focus on physical deterrence mechanisms. In addition, the legal architecture within the EU means that Scandinavian countries are at least partially insulated from the effects of secondary movement of asylum seekers due to the Dublin System.

On the other hand, as highly developed welfare states subject to the EU's law of free movement within the Schengen area, the Scandinavian countries remain particularly vulnerable to secondary movements of asylum seekers within Europe. Here again, however, differences in legal regulation remain significant. Norway and Denmark retain more regulatory freedom in comparison with Sweden and Finland. While Norway may be part of Schengen it is not directly bound by EU asylum and immigration law – even if historically different Norwegian governments have attempted to align domestic legislation with the developing EU Acquis in this area. Although an EU member state, Denmark similarly retains legal opt-outs in the areas of justice and home affairs, which means that neither the EU asylum directives, nor the directive on family reunification applies to Denmark. Denmark has not been hesitant to apply this comparative advantage when it comes to adopting deterrence measures. Several of Denmark's policies on asylum and family reunification would thus not have been possible if it had had to comply with EU law in this area (Adler-Nissen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2010).

2.3 Scandinavian Asylum and Immigration Policy as "Negative Nation Branding"

What unites the different kinds of indirect deterrence policies set out above is their underlying logic. They work by making the country's asylum system and protection conditions appear as unattractive as possible. If successful, a "beggar-thy-neighbor" effect is thereby achieved, pushing asylum seekers toward other countries. However, for policies of this nature to achieve their objective, it is essential that prospective asylum seekers know of an intended destination country's restrictive approach before arriving or launching an asylum application there.

The Scandinavian policies to indirectly deter asylum seekers may in that respect be characterized as a peculiar form of national reputation management or "nation branding." Nation branding has been defined as "the application of corporate marketing concepts and techniques to

countries, in the interests of enhancing their reputation in international relations" (Kerr and Wiseman 2013: 354). It can involve the simple establishment of a visual identity, as in the 2013 "Brand Sweden," which includes a set of graphics, colors, and fonts, which is used across different government websites.[18] Nation branding may further involve the export of cultural tropes, concepts, and policies somehow linked to their national identity (Anholt 1998; Browning 2007; Dinnie 2008). As the editors to this volume emphasize, at the international level nation branding may also manifest itself as a political culture shaping countries' outlook and actions in regard to foreign policy. Humanitarian issues such as international development, human rights, peace-brokering, and climate adaption technologies are thus often associated with Scandinavian foreign policy. This includes international assistance to refugees and IDPs, in regard to which several Scandinavian countries remain frontrunners, as mentioned in the introduction.

As pointed out in more recent scholarship, nation branding may however also be linked to a "competitive identity" (Anholt 2011) and the concept of the "competition state" (Angell and Mordhorst 2015). In a global and open economy, market-based states compete to attract things like financial investments and consumption, and this by implication also extends to certain kinds of "wanted migration" benefiting the economy – in particular tourists, business-travelers, highly skilled labor migrants, and fee-paying international students (Castles and Miller 2003).

In a policy paradigm where receiving refugees is no longer positively linked to ideological, political, or economic incentives, the asylum seeker emerges vice versa appears as something to avoid and actively deflect through similar market-based means. Underscoring this point, substantial efforts have been made to commercially disseminate specific deterrence policies or to brand countries as generally "unwelcoming" toward asylum seekers and refugees. Scandinavian countries have translated and tried to communicate pedagogically the impact of new restrictive measures in the languages of major groups of asylum seekers. Norway, for instance, has run Facebook campaigns to dissuade particular groups of asylum seekers.[19] Denmark made the decision to take out advertisements in newspapers in key countries of transit in the Middle East, warning

[18] Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Strategy for the Promotion of Sweden 2.0." Available from https://sharingsweden.se/topic/brand-sweden-strategy.

[19] "Norway Launches 'Anti-refugee' Facebook Page," *The Local* (Norway). Available from www.thelocal.no/20151108/norway-launches-anti-refugee-facebook-page.

prospective asylum seekers about its new and more restrictive policies.[20] The former minister of immigration in Denmark, Inger Støjberg, similarly installed a counter prominently on the front page of the ministry's website, enumerating the ultimately more than 150 restrictive measures adopted since she came into office. Similar campaign initiatives have also been adopted by non-European countries. Notably, Australia, as part of its "No Way" campaign, has had 30 feet long banners installed in key transit airports throughout South East Asia and published e.g. YouTube videos and a graphic novel warning prospective asylum seekers that they will not be able to make Australia their home.[21]

While such measures, as well as transnational networks, may be reasonably effective in disseminating the deterrence message, information and communication gaps are likely to persist. Interview studies show that, while asylum seekers may have an overall idea of different asylum states as more or less welcoming, few have more specific and in-depth knowledge of the conditions they are likely to face in them (Brekke 2004). In other cases, deliberate misinformation and "overselling" regarding certain asylum countries can be a strategy used by human smugglers with access to particular routes or who stand to make a larger profit by organizing longer routes.

Beyond concrete initiatives, states may thus also seek to brand themselves more generally as "hard-line" countries when it comes to asylum and immigration. Assuming imperfect information among asylum seekers, these more general branding efforts may potentially be much more important than any specific measure of deterrence. Denmark has long openly justified its more restrictive asylum policies with reference to its desire to avoid asylum seekers. When Norway introduced a broad package of deterrence measures, the immigration minister and government coalition partners made a particular point to argue that the new restrictions would make Norway "the most restrictive country in Europe" when it comes to asylum.[22]

[20] The text of the ad was subsequently criticized by the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman for being misleading in that it suggested that the new restrictions regarding family reunification apply to all types of refugees.

[21] Oliver Laughland, "Australian Government Targets Asylum Seekers with Graphic Campaign," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2014. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/11/government-launches-new-graphic-campaign-to-deter-asylum-seekers.

[22] Peder Ottosen and Ralf Lofstad, "Norge får Europas strengeste asylpolitikk." *Dagbladet*, November 19, 2015. Available from: www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/norge-far-europas-strengeste-asylpolitikk/60461396; Lizzie Dearden, "Refugee Crisis: Number of Asylum Seekers

Last, but not the least, negative nation branding is often disseminated – either intentionally or unintentionally – through the shock effect or identity clashes that restrictive migration policies may create vis-à-vis pre-existing conceptions or branding among international audiences. The restrictive migration measures in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have each made international headlines. Pictures of an openly emotional Swedish deputy prime minister went worldwide, exactly because its symbolic illustration of the clash with common perceptions of Swedish policies in this area.[23] In the case of the Scandinavian countries, the branding effect is thus also tied to the radical policy shifts that the new and more restrictive regimes represent vis-à-vis the Scandinavian countries' historically liberal stances in regard to asylum and immigration, as well as the seeming clash between this policy area and wider attempts to brand Scandinavia as humanitarian, pro-human rights and inclusive societies. In a highly controversial essay, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek thus refers to Scandinavian welfare states, specifically Norway, as an utopian trope and hence pull factor for refugees.[24]

2.4 Negative Asylum Branding and the Two-Level Game

The potential clashes between migration policy and the Scandinavian countries' nation brands more generally, further raise the question what impact, if any, negative asylum branding has in regard to Scandinavian countries' foreign policy engagement on refugee and migration issues.

Compared to the shifts in domestic policy, most Nordic countries have maintained the traditionally strong commitment to refugee protection and assistance as part of their foreign policy and development engagement. While nine European states, as well as the United States, either voted against or abstained from voting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in December 2018, all Nordic countries

Arriving in Norway Drops by 95%." *Independent*, July 1, 2016. Available from www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-number-of-asylum-seekers-arriving-in-norway-drops-by-95-a7114191.html.

[23] David Crouch, "Sweden Slams Shut Its Open-Door Policy towards Refugees." *The Guardian*, November 24, 2015. Available from www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/sweden-asylum-seekers-refugees-policy-reversal.

[24] Slavoj Zizek, "The Non-existence of Norway." *London Review of Books*, September 9, 2019. Available from www.lrb.co.uk/2015/09/09/slavoj-zizek/the-non-existence-of-norway.

ultimately ended up endorsing the new migration agreement.[25] Similarly, while then Danish prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, aired the possibility of renegotiating the 1951 Refugee Convention in December 2015, the idea seems to have been quickly abandoned. On par with all other Nordic countries, Denmark thus signed the September 2016 New York Declaration, which reaffirms the 1951 Refugee Convention as "the foundation of the international refugee protection regime" and actively encourages more states to ratify the convention.[26]

On the one hand, this may be explained as (partial) brand "resilience."[27] At the level of foreign policy, the Humanitarian Brand is sticky, creating a situation where strong multilateral engagements vis-à-vis refugee protection have managed to coexist despite the domestic reorientation toward more restrictive policies. Internally, the apparent mismatch between domestic and international branding is sustained by bureaucratically different cultures. Despite repeated attempts to link development with domestic migration and readmission priorities (Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2019), national development agencies still maintain a degree of independence and their budgets subject to legal protections. Externally, the Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand has been earned over decades. With financial commitments and civil society structures still intact, the domestic shift does not necessarily change the position of Scandinavian countries vis-à-vis their peers when it comes to international cooperation in regard to refugees, IDPs, and migration.

So far, the Scandinavian countries, in particular when compared to GDP, have thus remained top donors to UNHCR and other aid programs targeting refugees and internally displaced. Denmark even served as chair of UNHCR's governing body, the Executive Committee, from 2015 to 2016. Denmark has further spearheaded important intergovernmental initiatives to promote refugee protection, such as the Solutions Alliance launched in 2014. Scandinavian countries further benefit from the fact that they are home to some of the largest refugee-assisting NGOs in Europe. Both the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Danish Refugee Council are internationally renowned, have grown to see multi-billion

[25] Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. UN Doc. A/RES/73/195, December 18, 2018.
[26] New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. UN Doc. A/RES/71/1, September 19, 2016, par. 65.
[27] See Introduction.

kroner annual turnovers, and are consistently high ranked when it comes to international reputation.[28]

On the other hand, despite different cultural-political logics, the coexistence of domestic deterrence policies and international humanitarianism need not necessarily to be at odds. The current Danish Social Democratic government has thus repeatedly justified its restrictive policies with arguments that the expenses linked to domestic asylum processing and refugee protection may help many more in places closer to refugees' countries of origin.[29] This kind of utilitarian, cost-benefit analysis has also been forwarded by other countries, e.g. Australia, as justification for its "No Way" campaign (Hall 2008). Likewise, policymakers have repeatedly sought to reframe deterrence measures as a particular form of humanitarianism, intended to "save lives" by blocking dangerous migration routes and reducing the "pull factor" of generous asylum systems in the Global North (Little and Vaughan-Williams 2017). As scholars within refugee studies have long demonstrated, the conceptual ambiguity of humanitarianism has always made the concept prone to co-optation and exclusion (Harrell-Bond 1986; Every 2008).

Nonetheless, both the domestic backlashes against migrant and refugee rights as well as the specific negative asylum branding strategies pursued are likely to create certain spillover effects on the international standing and maneuverability of Scandinavian countries. As perhaps the most long-standing proponent of negative nation branding in regard to migration, the case of Denmark is illustrative of the difficulties in limiting negative branding to the intended audiences. Denmark has thus repeatedly made international headlines, both as a result of concrete policy measures and as the result of the political communication of its migration policy on e.g. social media. Perhaps most famously, a picture on Facebook of then immigration minister, Inger Støjberg, celebrating restriction number 50 with cake went viral and prompted strong responses from international organizations and media.[30] Since 2017, the picture has repeatedly resurfaced, serving as a visual nodal point

[28] NGO Advisor, "Top 500 NGOs in 2019," February 27, 2019. Available from www.ngoadvisor.net/ngoadvisornews/announcing-the-top-500-ngos-2019.

[29] "Retfærdig men Realistisk: Helhedsplan for Dansk Udlændingepolitik." *Socialdemokratiet*, February 2018. Available from www.socialdemokratiet.dk/media/7011/en-udlaendingepolitik-der-samler-danmark.pdf.

[30] Dan Bilefsky, "In Denmark, Passage of Rules on Immigration Called for Cake." *New York Times*, March 15, 2017. Available from www.nytimes.com/2017/03/15/world/europe/denmark-immigration-cake-inger-stojberg.html.

through which international media contextualize Denmark's restrictive stance on immigration.[31]

In 2016, newspapers around the world likewise responded to Denmark's so-called "jewelry law," allowing police to search and confiscate valuables from asylum seekers to help pay for their accommodation.[32] The provision was one among several deterrence measures, many of which were much more serious in terms of the human rights issues involved. Yet, an emotive link was made by several commentators, comparing the Danish proposal to the confiscation of valuables from Jews during the Second World War. When the British daily, *The Guardian*, printed a cartoon featuring then prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen in a nazi uniform alongside other known Danish brands, including Lego and Carlsberg, the Danish People's Party demanded an apology and asked for it to be withdrawn.[33] The press attention ultimately led the Danish government to nuance the initial proposal, setting a threshold of EUR 1,350 and underscoring that personal assets such as wedding rings would not be seized.

Branding conflicts are further likely to emerge in areas where domestic and foreign policy aspects of migration/refugee policy are intrinsically linked. As part of its restrictive suite of measures following 2015, Denmark introduced a complete halt to its long-standing refugee resettlement program, arguing that its capacity to receive more refugees had been completely filled by spontaneous arrivals.[34] Notably, the announcement came less than two weeks before the first-ever UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, at which

[31] See for example, "'They Are Undesirable & They Must Feel It': Denmark to Ship Unwanted Refugees to Remote Island." *RT News*, December 4, 2018. Available from www.rt.com/news/445552-denmark-refugees-island-unwanted; and "Inger Støjberg posing with a cake celebrating the 50th amendment to Denmark's immigration controls." *ABC News*, October 8, 2019. Available from www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-08/former-immigration-and-integration-minister,-inger-stojberg,-po/11576064.

[32] Charles Duxbury, "Denmark Considers Seizing Valuables from Migrants." *Wall Street Journal*, January 13, 2016. Available from www.wsj.com/articles/denmark-debating-seizing-valuables-from-migrants-1452689275.

[33] Steve Bell, "Steve Bell on His Best Cartoons of 2016 – 'The Danes Demanded an Apology'." *The Guardian*, December 27, 2016. Available from www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/gallery/2016/dec/27/steve-bell-best-cartoons-2016-danes-demanded-an-apology.

[34] Niels P. York, "Regeringen stopper for modtagelsen af kvoteflygtninge." *Berlingske Tidende*, September 11, 2016. Available from www.berlingske.dk/samfund/regeringen-stopper-for-modtagelsen-af-kvoteflygtninge.

a key objective was to mobilize states to implement or expand existing refugee resettlement schemes.

More recently, the new Social Democratic government in Denmark has begun consultations with other European heads of state to explore the possibilities for more radically reforming EU asylum policy.[35] A particular challenge for Denmark in taking on a leading role in this regard, however, remains Denmark's carefully guarded EU opt-out in regard to justice and home affairs. Consequently, Denmark would not itself be able to vote for reforms to the existing Dublin rules and would in principle stand outside any substantially new EU-wide initiatives adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure.

Vice versa, increasing international awareness of the Scandinavian countries' more restrictive approaches may also have domestic implications. Asylum and immigration are issues closely circumscribed by international human rights law. During the past five years, Denmark has seen a marked increase in the number of complaints against decisions in asylum cases made by the Danish Refugee Appeals Board taken up by the UN human rights committees. The increase is particularly noticeable, since none of the restrictive measures Denmark has implemented in regard to asylum seekers the last decade in principle impact how the board works and the determination of who should be granted asylum.[36] This led members of Danish Refugee Appeals Board to speculate that the increasing finding of violations may be indirectly impacted by Denmark's general reputation in this area, and a special consultation in Geneva was thus organized between the board and the committees in 2016 (Figure 2.1).[37]

Other parts of Denmark's asylum and immigration policy have faced similar challenges, in particular when it comes to rules regarding family reunification. In 2016, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights found Denmark's so-called "28 years rule" to constitute

[35] Martin Borre, "Mette Frederiksens asyldrøm har uden held været forsøgt i 30 år." *Berlingske Tidende*, November 18, 2019. Available from www.berlingske.dk/politik/mette-frederiksens-asyldroem-har-uden-held-vaeret-forsoegt-i-30-aar.

[36] The one possible exception is the changing composition of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board, which from 2013 was expanded to five members (adding one member from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and one nominated by the Danish Refugee Council) and from 2017 again downsized to three members (one judge, one member of the Danish Lawyers Association and one employee from the Danish Ministry of Immigration).

[37] Interviews with members and staff of the Danish Refugee Appeals Board, of which the author was himself a member from 2013 to 2016.

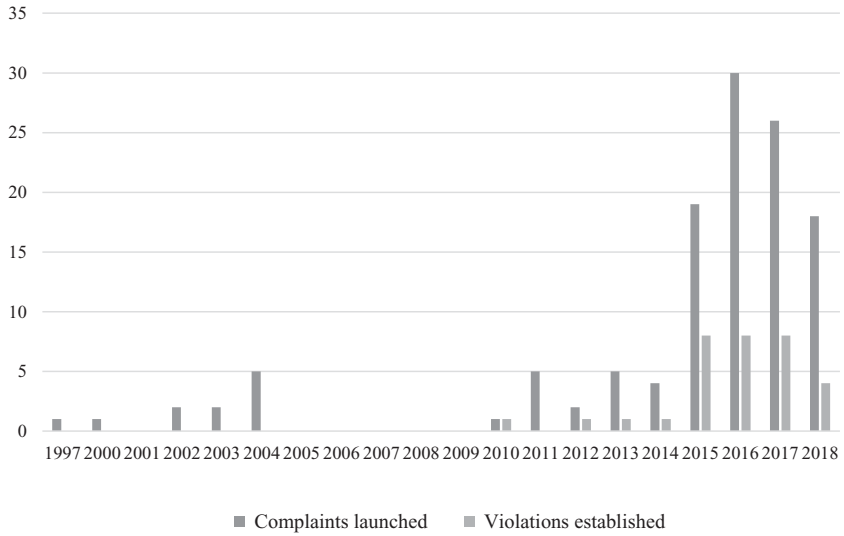

Figure 2.1 Individual complaints against the Danish Refugee Appeals Board at the UN human rights bodies.
Source: Danish Institute for Human Rights case law database.

"indirect discrimination" in violation of Article 14 together with Article 8 of the Convention.[38] In doing so, the Grand Chamber of the court overturned a previous decision in the same from 2014 by the Court's Second Section finding no violations of the convention. At the time of writing, another pending case concerning Denmark's policy to defer access to family reunification for three years for certain categories of refugees has been deferred to the Grand Chamber.[39]

Last, but not the least, the Danish experience suggests that over time negative branding may well come to impact the standing and maneuverability in the foreign policy realm. For a number of years, Danish diplomats working on issues related to migration and refugees were able

[38] *Biao* v. *Denmark*, European Court of Human Rights, Appl. No. 38590/10, May 24, 2016. The rule means that persons seeking family reunification with a spouse, and who have had a Danish citizenship or permanent residence for 28 years or longer (since changed to 26 years), are exempt from the requirement of having a stronger common association to Denmark than any other country.

[39] *M.A.* v. *Denmark* (Appl. No. 6697/18). European Court of Human Rights, Press Release, ECHR 397 (2019). November 20, 2019.

to maintain a proactive foreign policy role in regard to refugee protection by arguing that the domestic policy restrictions were the result of a particular government coalition backed by the anti-immigration Danish People's Party. Yet, this narrative became more difficult to sustain after further restrictions were introduced by the center-left government between 2011 and 2015 – including the above-mentioned three-year suspension to apply for family reunification. Likewise, the curtailment of the Danish resettlement program – albeit never very significant in terms of numbers – was seen as particularly symbolic by some other countries.[40] According to one Danish diplomat, Denmark had to work "unusually hard" and pledge additional funds to get invited to the special donors conference following the 2015 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants.[41] In 2015, former Danish prime minister, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, was further rejected for the position as UN High Commissioner for Refugees. According to UN officials speaking on condition of anonymity, then UN General Secretary Ban-Ki Moon had decided against Thorning-Schmidt due to, among other things, her role in crafting some of Europe's most restrictive immigration policies.[42]

In conclusion, negative and positive nation brands in regard to migrants and refugees are not mutually exclusive. Despite the emphasis on deterrence and exclusion in terms of their domestic policies, Scandinavian countries have so far sought to maintain their humanitarian brand when it comes to international refugee and migration policy. Maintaining this split is not unproblematic, however, and spillovers are likely to happen between domestic and foreign policy brands. This can happen where international peer communities respond negatively to domestic policy orientations or when international media attention creates branding clashes. It is also likely to happen where domestic and international policy measures are directly linked, such as in the case of resettlement quotas, and where e.g. the Danish decision to suspend its refugee resettlement program in 2016 may be seen as free-riding, or even actively undermining the global agenda, by other states. In both cases, this has led diplomats having to work harder to maintain their countries'

[40] Interview with German diplomat, September, 2016.
[41] Interview with Danish diplomat, December, 2017.
[42] Louis Charbonneau, "Italian Diplomat Appointed to Head U.N. Refugee Agency." *Reuters*, November 12, 2015. www.reuters.com/article/us-un-refugees-italy/italian-diplomat-appointed-to-head-u-n-refugee-agency.

international standing and it may lead to missed opportunities for international leadership that may or may not otherwise have been achievable.

2.5 Conclusion and Postscript: Is Negative Nation Branding a Sustainable Policy Strategy?

The present chapter has argued that the current wave of unilateral restrictive measures across the Scandinavian countries constitutes a distinct form of asylum and immigration policymaking. As opposed to other forms of migration control aimed at physically or legally blocking access to asylum, these policies restrict access to rights and benefits for asylum seekers and refugees already within the host state with a view to discouraging further arrivals. These policies are designed to make the prospective asylum country appear as unattractive as possible – and at the very least less attractive than neighboring states. Scandinavian states actively advertising restrictive measures toward prospective asylum seekers and their information networks may as such be considered a form negative nation branding.

This turn, from humanitarian frontrunners to self-proclaimed hardliners on asylum and immigration, stands in contrast to the continued engagement of Scandinavian states when it comes to promoting refugee protection and migrant rights as a matter of foreign and development policy. Yet, the nature of negative nation branding and the way these measures are disseminated (intentionally and unintentionally) through international media means that this bifurcation between domestic and international politics may be difficult to uphold over time.

As many other European states have begun to adopt similar measures in the post-2015 context, a final but important question is whether this kind of negative asylum branding is an effective and sustainable policy strategy. Previous research suggests that in at least some cases, consistent use and dissemination of negative nation branding strategies may indeed impact arrival numbers by prompting asylum seekers to move to other, often neighboring, countries (Brekke, Røed, and Schøne 2016; Gammeltoft-Hansen 2017). In other cases, however, the deterrent effect remains limited or nonexistent (Havinga and Böcker 1999; Holzer, Schneider, and Widmer 2000; Gilbert and Koser 2006; Brekke and Five Aarset 2009). Just as for other kinds of nation branding, the long-term effects of negative asylum branding thus remain questionable and difficult to measure (Anholt 2011).

Yet, the fact that policies of indirect deterrence may be effective in terms of lowering arrival numbers does not mean that states shouldn't think twice before embarking on this path. In addition to the points set out in the previous section, most obviously the kinds of measures currently adopted place additional burdens on asylum seekers and refugees who have already arrived, raising questions in regard to both international law and political proportionality. Indirect deterrence policies are also more likely than other forms of migration management to negatively impact efforts to ensure the integration of refugees who are already in the country. This is particularly the case for policies involving deliberate delays in processing asylum claims, a lack of access to labor markets during the asylum phase, automatic national dispersal policies, and short-term residence permits, which have each been shown to impact negatively the later employment opportunities and economic performance of those who are subsequently afforded protection. Similarly, economic destitution and a lack of access to education and work experience may negatively impact decisions by rejected asylum seekers to return voluntarily and by refugees to agree to repatriation (World Bank 2016).

Indirect deterrence may further create negative externalities in respect of other issues. Both domestic and international law place certain limitations on the design of indirect deterrence with regard to nondiscrimination, making it difficult for governments to design policies specifically targeting certain groups or nationalities. The desire to maintain strict rules in respect of, for example, family reunification may thus inadvertently impact a country's ability to attract wanted labor migration or necessitate restrictions on a wider group of national citizens – something that similarly risks impacting the wider nation brand of the country in question.

Last but not least, policies of indirect deterrence are by design premised on a "beggar-thy-neighbor" effect that fundamentally challenges their continued effectiveness in the long or even medium term. Once pursued, surrounding states are likely to respond with similar policies – either preemptively or once they experience the displacement effect – in ways that are likely to reduce, nullify, or even reverse the intended effect in the first country introducing them. More than anything, the return to this kind of competitive, instrumentalist, and zero-sum game policy-making across Europe is likely to fundamentally challenge Scandinavia's Humanitarian Brand.

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3

The *Nobel* Savage

Norwegian Do-Goodery as Tragedy

KRISTIAN BJØRKDAHL

A widespread and not altogether ridiculous presumption is that small countries, because they can never compete with bigger countries when it comes to economic, political, or military force, tend to orient themselves toward various forms of soft power. Since "aiming for status may well be the only game in town" for these small countries, they become players in a game of "small state status seeking" (de Carvalho and Neumann 2015: 16) – constantly working to maintain a reputation for diplomacy and advocacy, mediation and cooperation, human rights and humanitarianism. Norway is arguably a paradigmatic case of this mode of international relations: While it has never aimed to become a *great* power, it has pursued intensely an ambition of becoming a *good* one (de Carvalho and Neumann 2015). Whatever influence Norway has on the world stage has been gained not by force, or by the threat of force, but by moral example.

This, at any rate, is how things often seem – to Norwegians and foreigners alike. The American scholar Christine Ingebritsen, for instance, classes Norway with the other Scandinavian countries as "norm entrepreneurs" which, by virtue of their characteristic welfare state, have been inclined to project their domestic "model of generous and consistent aid to the poor" (Ingebritsen 2002: 11) onto the world at large. Regardless of how accurate this analysis is, there is no denying that ideas of Norway as a "humanitarian superpower" (Tvedt 2002; Leira 2007), as a "peace nation" (Nissen 2015; Pisarska 2016), and as a frontrunner for sustainability (Ross 2019; Anker 2020) have circulated widely. Whenever a broadly mediatized index puts Norway at or near the top of the world's nations – which has, by now, become a routine occurrence – it appears only to cement former Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland's idea that "Being good is typically Norwegian."[1]

[1] G. H. Brundtland (1992). "Det er typisk norsk å være god," www.virksommeord.no/tale/5485/.

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While there may be some truth to this, we would do well to acknowledge that these images are, first and foremost, aspects of Norway's "nation brand" (see Browning 2007; Aronczyk 2013), and that nation brands are not simple reflections of reality, but products of efforts by certain individuals and institutions to *make* the nation appear in a particular way. To the extent that such efforts have been successful in Norway's case, one will be forced to admit that there is a certain gap between brand and reality: Norway, the peace nation, is a notable producer of weapons and ammunition (Lie and Mikalsen 2012), and regularly deploys its troops abroad (Egeberg 2017). Norway, the environmental pioneer, is one of the world's largest exporters of fossil fuels, and still a long way from delivering on its climate commitments (Sæther 2017). And Norway, the human rights advocate, has been accused of criminalizing immigration (Johansen et al. 2013), as well as of dubious incarceration practices.[2] This goes to show that a small country seeking international status by way of reputation lives dangerously, as it is constantly at risk of being exposed as a hypocrite.

My interest in this chapter is the work that, in the face of such risk, goes into maintaining Norway's self-image and reputation as a good power. I will argue that a key mechanism of such maintenance work is the strategic production and management of ignorance, a phrase that refers to various forms of secrecy, selection, or suppression of information (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008; see also McGoey 2019). While this mechanism may be at work in maintaining the image of any nation, there is reason to believe it is particularly key to small states who endeavor to lead by moral example.

In what follows, I present what the literature has to say about the role of strategic ignorance in creating and maintaining a nation's self-image and reputation. I will then devote the bulk of the chapter to a rhetorical criticism of the TV series *Nobel*, focusing on the narrative means used by the series to give Norway's long-standing contribution to the military operation in Afghanistan fictional form.

Nobel not only exposes Norwegian practices at odds with a strand in this nation's self-image and reputation, it also dramatizes the complex work that goes into maintaining an image of "Norway," at home and abroad. Most importantly, it exposes how strategic ignorance about Norway is produced in the everyday lives of soldiers, politicians,

[2] Nina Johnsrud (2015). "Har kritisert glattcelle-bruk i 22 år," *Dagsavisen*, June 15.

diplomats, media, and citizens. My argument will be that, while *Nobel* artfully fictionalizes how an image of Norway is maintained through production and management of ignorance, the story comes with some troublesome implications. Notably, the tragic form of the narrative suggests that such strategic ignorance management will ultimately, and necessarily, *fail* – that the presumed good power will be revealed as a do-gooder, as secrets are exposed and knowledge replaces ignorance. In the real world, however, this idea offers false hope, and might possibly even be counterproductive: If, by presenting Norway's do-goodery as tragedy, *Nobel* offers its audience a *catharsis* from which viewers emerge with renewed faith – as is the supposition of the tragic form – this series lands us in a wicked paradox indeed.

3.1 Producing National Ignorance

In the last decade or so, research on nations as "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) has been extended, but at the same time complicated, by critical research on nation branding. Scholars like Sue Curry Jansen (2008) and Melissa Aronczyk (2013) have argued, for instance, that, in our age of globalized neoliberalism, the line between the nation as *community* and the nation as *commodity* has been blurred, as the commercialized idiom of the latter has begun to encroach on the former. And while there is no agreement among scholars about just how malignant this commercialization is (see Ståhlberg and Bolin 2016), studies have shown that campaigns to present nations abroad often come into conflict with domestic ideas about what the nation in question is (Jansen 2008; Jordan 2014). The research has thus found many potential tensions between "imagined communities" and "imaged communities" (Clerc and Glover 2015).

Paul Jordan notes, for instance, that "Branding and marketing a nation is . . . inevitably a more fraught project than the branding of commercial goods," not least because it intensifies the question of "who decides/purports to speak on behalf of the nation" (2014: 283–284). In a study of a campaign to brand Estonia, Jordan notes that, in such campaigns, the "perspective of the public living in [the] states that are engaged in the process of nation branding [is] all too often . . . neglected" (2014: 284), and proceeds to show how nation branding campaigns have often collided with the nation's own self-image. In Estonia, citizens felt that the branding campaign "was not organic, and in a sense was a label imposed on Estonia from outside by people with little or no connection to Estonia

the country" (2014: 298). The conundrum, Jordan argues, is that "Nations are complex entities and nation branding as a practice strips them down to a simplified representation in a bid to enhance the marketability of a state. But nation states are not products, so can they really be branded and marketed in the same way?" (2014: 300). Likewise, Göran Bolin and his coauthors have argued persuasively that the basic purposes of nation building and nation branding are clearly distinct, so while there is "tension between the inward- and outward-directed dimensions of the phenomenon" (Ståhlberg and Bolin 2016: 275), there are probably limits to the traffic from one to the other. As they phrase it, while nations are about the heart and soul, nation brands are about the face (Ståhlberg and Bolin 2016; see also Bolin and Miazhevich 2018).

While these studies make sense of how nation branding, in a narrow sense, promotes the reputation of nations in the twenty-first century, the ensuing debates have not left us with many substantial insights into the broader mechanisms by which this happens. Because they tend to focus on branding campaigns designed and effectuated by consultants and agencies, these studies do not sufficiently capture how other institutions – or even citizens themselves – contribute to making and maintaining an image of the nation, domestically and abroad. Hence, these studies cannot explain how nations, while "complex entities," are also "simplified representations," in the sense that they tend to remove from view anything that is unpalatable to the national self-image. We can gain valuable insights about these things, however, if we attach these questions to the literature on agnotology, that is, the study of how and why and with what consequences ignorance is produced.

The study of how strategic ignorance is produced and maintained was first opened up by Robert Proctor and Londa Schiebinger in their edited volume, *Agnotology* (2008), which demonstrated not just how central ignorance is to social life, but how it can be – and often is – used intentionally to protect and promote certain *people* (say, a celebrity), *products* (not least tobacco and oil), or *prejudices* ("whites are better than blacks"; "men are superior to women").

More recently, Linsey McGoey (2019) has developed this paradigm further, in a study that focuses mainly on how strategic ignorance has been produced to maintain certain cherished economic ideas and principles. Defining strategic ignorance as "any actions which mobilize, manufacture, or exploit unknowns in a wider environment to avoid liability for earlier actions" (2019: 3) or, also, as the ways in which

"non-disclosure is tactically deployed to avoid the repercussions of inconvenient evidence" (2019: 2), McGoey suggests that, while the practice is perhaps most typical of corporate elites out to secure their own privilege, it also extends to ordinary citizens in their imagining of the nation. "[C]itizens typically resent the effort to draw attention to global atrocities carried out by their own governments in both the past and the present" (2019: 40), she notes, and adds that "societies often derive a sense of national identity through what [Gayatri Spivak] terms 'sanctioned ignorance' of state crimes that could undermine a sense of national respectability or honor" (2019: 41). McGoey suggests that such "national mythmaking" can also result in "elite ignorance at the academic level," as the myth "comes to be slowly misperceived as factual reality" (2019: 43).

In what follows, I will offer a reading of the series *Nobel*, as an illustration of how strategic ignorance plays a role in making and maintaining a nation's self-image and reputation. While the series' critique of the "Norwegian brand" is valuable in itself, I believe it might also add a useful perspective to our general knowledge about the broad mechanisms through which such brands are made. Notably, *Nobel* shows that efforts to make and maintain the self-image and reputation of a nation cut across established divides between domestic and foreign, community and commodity. As I will argue, however, the series might also lead us to think, less fruitfully, that such ignorance management schemes are bound, in the end, to fail.

3.2 *Nobel*: Disillusion in Seven Parts

Centered on Norway's deployment of troops to Afghanistan, *Nobel* is arguably the most successful attempt to date to fictionalize Norway's involvement in military operations abroad.[3] It was certainly not the first attempt to raise this issue in the Norwegian public sphere; in fact, almost from the very start, Norway's operation in Afghanistan had been the object of a steady stream of news reports, books, documentaries, and

[3] The seven-part series, which was conceived and written by Mette M. Bølstad and Stephen Uhlander, first aired on Norway's public broadcaster, NRK, in the fall of 2016. It was one of that season's big hits on Norwegian television, and as per 2020, NRK still advertises it on its streaming platform as one of its "most viewed" shows. Since its launch, it has also been made available to an international audience via Netflix, and in 2016, it won the broadcasting award Prix Europa for best drama.

more, some of which was fairly critical.[4] Although the slant of this information flow varied somewhat, it would be fair to say that criticism of the operation had largely failed to make much of an impact on policy (see Eide and Ottosen 2013). The war dragged on, and just as *Nobel* was preparing for its launch, a white paper on Norway's operation in Afghanistan came out, which went quite far toward concluding that the operation – often referred to as "the longest war" – had been a failure: "Despite more than fifteen years of international effort," the report stated somberly, "the situation in Afghanistan remains discouraging." As for Norway's role, it concluded simply that "Overall, Norway's contribution did not make a significant difference to the international mission in Afghanistan" (NOU 2016: 11).

While this increasingly pessimistic context might have provided *Nobel* with a more receptive audience than it might otherwise have had, this series is nothing so straightforward as an intervention into an ongoing debate about Norway's engagements abroad. Rather, *Nobel* is a multifaceted exercise in reflective self-criticism on behalf of the Norwegian nation. As I read it, *Nobel* makes a drama of the many dilemmas of Norwegian foreign policy – not least, how willingly this "peace nation" goes to war – and exposes some of the intricate work that goes into maintaining the image of Norway as a good power.

The series revolves around Erling Riiser, a soldier in Norway's Special Forces, and his wife, Johanne Riiser, a chief-of-staff for Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Building a cast of characters outward from this conveniently placed pair allows *Nobel* to interweave stories on the ground in Afghanistan with behind-the-scenes politics in both Norway and abroad, while it also creates a familiar dramatic frame that touches on marital turbulence, generational bitterness, love triangles, troublesome coworkers, and more. As a collective, the Norwegian characters of the series quite obviously stand for the Norwegian nation, or more precisely, for what historian Terje Tvedt has dubbed *det sørpolitiske system* ("the South-political system"), i.e. the Norwegian elite involved in "humanitarian" efforts in developing countries (Tvedt 2003; see also Toje 2012).

[4] In 2011, for instance, NRK ran a six-part documentary, called *Norway at War – on Mission in Afghanistan*, which was followed up, in 2012, by a stand-alone documentary, *Afghan Nightmare*, and then, in 2013, by a four-part series called *Exit Afghanistan*. The war has also attracted the attention of Norwegian scholarship, of which Eide and Ottosen (2013) is the most relevant contribution for my purposes.

Nobel presents a tapestry of plotlines which all connect, in one way or another, to a conflict over land and power in Afghanistan. A local landlord, Sharif Zamani, owns a piece of oil-rich land, and the Norwegians are tirelessly trying to persuade him to enter into an agreement with Norway's aid agency, NORAD, to enact a petroleum law, inspired by Norway's success with managing its own fossil fuels. The main proponent of this scheme is Rolf Innherad, who works at NORAD's "Oil for Development" program, but whose efforts until now have been frustrated by Zamani.[5] The purpose of the Norwegian law, as Innherad sees it, is to make sure "the spoils can remain with the Afghan people," but Zamani "wants to make money," and is consequently inclined to consider a competing bid from the more commercially inclined Chinese. In frustration, Innherad recruits the partnership of Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Umin." The Minister is apprehensive at first, since Innherad's agenda involves sidelining the Chinese, with whom Umin is trying to close a sizeable trade deal. As the story progresses, however, Umin not only warms to the plan, but begins to see the petroleum law as an occasion for his own scheme to bring peace to Afghanistan.

The plot thickens when Riiser, who has recently returned to Norway from Afghanistan, receives a puzzling text message, apparently from a superior officer, ordering him to immediately pursue a target in Oslo. Obviously, this order goes against protocol, and the message is odd in a number of other ways. Still, it is both well informed and acute, so Riiser rushes to execute the order. Execute is precisely what Riiser does to the target, who turns out to be none other than Sharif Zamani. It later transpires that the message was *not* sent from any official quarters after all, and this circumstance supplies *Nobel* with an element of the *whodunnit*: Who had this information? Who would impersonate Riiser's superiors? And why?

The situation that ensues is indicative of how *Nobel* thematizes strategic production of ignorance: Riiser and his superiors must work to maintain secrecy vis-à-vis the press and the public, but at the same time, they must try to uncover what has been kept secret from *them* – namely, who sent the fake message. This central motive is intertwined with various other narrative threads, where secrecy, strategic ignorance, and the exploitation of unknowns are central drivers. These various storylines motivate the final act of the tragedy, where Umin deceives Afghani

[5] Oil for Development is also in real life a prestigious program at NORAD, https://norad.no/en/front/thematic-areas/oil-for-development/.

government officials about his plans to broker a peace between the central government and the intransigent Taliban. Given the tragic thrust of the narrative, this effort is bound to fail: The Taliban uses the occasion to stage an explosion that kills numerous Afghani government officials, along with several Norwegian diplomats, soldiers, and guards.

In effect, *Nobel* suggests that Norway's ambitions as a peace nation are both hubristic and hypocritical: While it may be true that Norway punches above its weight, it nevertheless tends to overestimate its capabilities. Norwegians fatally think that they can save the world all on their own. Any viewer who comes to *Nobel* with ideas like these is up for a long series of disillusions. The series gives us the story of Norway's good power image in the form of tragedy – it paints a picture of a nation so ignorant of its own hubristic hypocrisy that it is bound, in the end, to crash and burn.

3.3 Good Power, Dirty Hands

At the most immediate level, what *Nobel* does is to expose Norway's reputation as a good power to be a sham. Far from doing good, Norway is here a hypocritical nation which gets its hands dirty on a routine basis. This motif infuses the whole series literally from the very start – beginning with the opening credits, which enact the story of *Nobel* as a kind of micro-drama. In a series of shots featuring the key characters, the credits assemble a sequence of extreme slow-motion explosions. These images announce the war-like context of what we are about to see, but more importantly, they act as a forewarning that "things will blow up" in a figurative sense. The sequence hints clearly toward the tragic form, in that the explosions make a chain reaction, where one explosion leads to another, which leads to another, and so on: Objects, buildings, even some of the characters fracture, splinter, and are ripped apart, while debris floats off into the air as pieces of a rough puzzle. The symbolism is straightforward but effective: The Norwegian flag is torn apart, as if it exploded; a white dove flutters above the bloody corpse of Sharif Zamani; a war-torn Afghani landscape is placed above Oslo's city hall – the site of the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony – as a troubled firmament over the unknowing inhabitants of the peace nation. Toward the end of the credits, we see Riiser, our protagonist, standing despondent in the midst of the rubble of an explosion, a *prolepsis* that hints toward the narrative's tragic end. Finally, before the credits give way to the action, the title – *Nobel* – appears on screen. Then, that too explodes.

The series' title is, of course, a play on words, pointing both to Alfred Nobel and to the "noble" (in Norwegian: *nobel*) image of Norway. The title thus captures one of the main themes of the series, namely Norway's hypocrisy, and it does so by activating connotations that already circulate quite widely. Viewers know that Alfred Nobel was not just the originator of the Nobel Peace Prize, but also the inventor of dynamite, so before the action even begins, its title suggests that the paradoxical origin of the Peace Prize has been handed down, as it were, to Norway, the "peace nation." As inheritors of Nobel's legacy, Norwegians ended up with the good as well as the bad, with *both* peace *and* war. In the same way that one might suspect Alfred Nobel of having instituted the Peace Prize as a gloss on his own reputation, *Nobel* leads us to wonder whether Norway's good power image is not just a smokescreen for all sorts of self-righteous or self-interested wrongdoing. *Nobel* feeds such ideas with a number of scenes and plotlines: We see Norwegian forces disobeying their own protocol not to engage in hostilities; rogue Norwegian soldiers on revenge missions against local Afghani mobsters; senior Norwegian military officials unduly pressuring the media not to publish stories that will place the armed forces in a bad light; Norwegian aid programs used as mere covers for personal and national ambitions; and so forth.

As if actual crimes and misdemeanors were not enough, *Nobel* also confronts us with a score of situations in which the Norwegian characters display a rich catalogue of vices, ranging from ambition to arrogance to possessiveness to naiveté. In fact, if we discount certain marginal figures, each of the central characters of *Nobel* either commits a crime or contributes to covering one up, and many of the misdeeds are perpetrated by people in positions of great power and responsibility – like ministers, senior military officers, aid executives, and journalists. And given that we are to understand this cast of characters as a microcosm of a certain (elite) portion of "Norway," the clear implication is that this good power is not quite what it pretends.

The most striking elaboration of this theme is Riiser's decision to kill Zamani, an unconvicted foreign national on Norwegian soil. Our hero, in short, commits murder – leading us to doubt his moral instincts: *Just how far can the good guys go before we must count them as bad?* Instead of offering an easy answer to this question, *Nobel* complicates it, extending our moral deliberations almost to the very end of the story.

The first complicating factor is that Riiser is a soldier. We have already learned that he is capable of things that most ordinary citizens are not, and that this, in a sense, is his job. In one of the very first scenes, we see

Riiser giving the order to "take out" a young boy wearing a suicide west at an Afghan market, a boy of about the same age as his own son. Further, thanks to his previous interactions with Zamani, Riiser is well aware of this man's lack of scruples. Zamani is no good guy, far from it. The most significant extenuating factor, though, is that Riiser catches Zamani in the act of badly mistreating his wife. By intervening, Riiser thus appears to save the life of an innocent person. If these factors stir our sympathy for Riiser, that sentiment quickly deserts us when we realize that Riiser was not on duty and that the killing took place on Norwegian ground, where he has no mandate to do what he did. We wonder why Riiser did not simply call the police. And we are also forced to reflect on why he had to *kill* Zamani. Surely, as a trained special forces soldier, he would have had ways of merely incapacitating him?

Another extenuating circumstance is that Riiser did not act entirely on his own accord – for was he not, after all, *ordered* to do exactly what he did? *Nobel* instills a certain doubt in us, however, about Riiser's motives. We are made to think that he finds the message odd, and quite naturally, since official orders to kill foreign nationals on Norwegian soil tend not to be delivered anonymously by text message. Still, he *does* act on it. Was Riiser out to do the right thing – and nothing else? Or did he also see the fake order as an opportunity to get rid of a bad-to-the-core trouble-maker? Were Riiser's intentions pure or was the killing on some level an act of vengeance?

By prompting us to consider such questions, *Nobel* forces us to take on a much more complicated view of Norway's self-image and reputation. In scene after scene, Norwegians who on the surface seem out to do good, get caught up in complications that they, in their naiveté, had not foreseen, in complex, cross-cutting landscapes of interest that they are not able to navigate, or – as in the Zamani killing – in getting their hands very dirty indeed. Our doubts about whether Riiser, and by extension, Norway, really is as good as we thought are amplified by his superior officer's reaction when he learns about the episode: "You have to remember he was an asshole. The world is better off without him."

As such, this episode epitomizes a motive that recurs throughout the whole series, namely that when the good guys get their hands dirty, they will soon have their hands full maintaining their image as good guys. It is fitting that the special forces should be placed in the middle of this action, as they are known to be a highly secretive outfit, and part of the suspense of the series derives from these elite forces' attempt to withhold information from the Norwegian public.

As the story unfolds, however, the production of ignorance becomes much more complex than the simple imperative to keep the public suitably uninformed; in *Nobel*, strategic ignorance is an endemic feature of the effort to maintain Norway's image and reputation. In the scene above, for instance, the special forces who are normally "in the know" find themselves having been misled and kept in the dark. While they are trying to keep key facts of the episode hidden from the public, they are themselves in fact ignorant of certain other facts. When we later learn that Rolf Innherad, the NORAD executive, sent the message to get Zamani out of the way, we gradually understand that the deceiver is himself being deceived – by Umin, who uses the petroleum law summit to stage the signing of a peace accord. The intriguing aspect of these various levels of secrecy is that this entire web of cross-cutting strategic ignorance is spun by various actors who all seek to produce and maintain an image of Norway as a good power.

3.4 Hypocrisy and Hubris

The many ploys that the characters in this drama use to keep other people in the dark arguably amount to a particular take on the Norwegian nation. In short, the series suggests that, despite what it and others may think, Norway is a hypocrite and a do-gooder. It purports to help others, but the "good" it supposedly does is not always recognized as such by the "recipients," and what is more, the work of keeping up the appearance of being good comes with significant collateral damage. Whether it intends to do so or not, *Nobel* thus presents a view on the production of Norway's self-image and reputation that recalls historian Terje Tvedt's analysis of the Norwegian "regime of goodness," which he argues is driven by a dehistoricizing deontology that casts Norway in the role as a "humanitarian superpower" (Tvedt 2002, 2003), conveniently giving the nation a mission on the world stage as a sort of spearhead of international solidarity. Tvedt's critique, which I believe we find echoed in *Nobel*, is that Norway is prone to do-goodery, and that a certain elite of Norwegians involved in foreign affairs are inspired by a national self-image in which it is practically inconceivable that Norway, in some situation or other, is *not* doing good.

And *Nobel* details a whole catalogue of "Norwegian vices" characteristic of this elite, vices that will, inevitably, cause its downfall. These vices all feed the mothership of hubris, however, which several of the key characters demonstrate in ample measure. It is not simply that the

Norwegians are naïve and believe they can make rather fantastic schemes come true. It is that faith in their own goodness makes them prone to justify dubious means with lofty ends. The moral logic that *Nobel* attaches to the Norwegians is that, as long as your heart is pure, it makes no difference that your hands are dirty. Or, as Umin at one point says, "If we are to accomplish peace in Afghanistan, we can't worry about stepping on some toes."

In *Nobel*, the Norwegian goodness regime is given dramatic form by several of the key characters, not least Umin, who fills a particularly central, metonymic, role – as symbol and spearhead of that which he is also a part, namely Norway. Umin is quite literally a *representative* of Norway, and thus, a living, breathing incarnation of the "regime of goodness." He is also, however, a representative of certain characteristic Norwegian vices. His foolhardy scheme to bring peace to Afghanistan exemplifies how the goodness regime relies on secrecy. It is not just that Umin possesses information which is unavailable to the common Norwegian, but that his use of this information is paradoxically (one might say, *paternalistically*) motivated by a duty to serve the Norwegian nation. Umin's designs are not plainly corrupt; unlike certain other characters, he is not out to serve his *own* interests in any straightforward, individualistic, way. The vice at play in Umin is not individual glory, but the collective glory that attaches to Norway as a peace nation. So although Umin in virtue of his position is an experienced international player, his way of going about his job is emphatically not that of the more *realpolitische* Americans who occasionally enter the narrative. Umin's monomaniacal attachment to peace prevents him from seeing the facts of the matter; it leads him to assume that others must also see the world as he sees it.

This comes across most clearly in a scene where Umin has staged a negotiation with the Taliban's Mullah Ahmed and his bitter opponent Sharif Zamani. The scene is a rather painful portrayal of how the Norwegian top diplomat is forced to confront his own assumptions about the world. "Even if this country has several parallel ongoing conflicts," begins Umin, "it's obvious to me that behind it all, there exists a solid base for agreement." Unable to conceive of a standpoint outside the ideals of Scandinavian welfare state universalism, Umin adds that: "Everyone wants a society without crime, enough food for everyone, schooling . . ." But at this point, the Mullah forcefully interjects: "For boys!" Umin suggests that some of the Mullah's views about women will be hard to sell internationally, but the Mullah simply responds that the

Taliban has no need for international cooperation. "Look at the map, you're surrounded by superpowers," Umin pleads, and says that, if the different factions could only lay aside their differences, the natural gas underneath them could become a source of great prosperity for Afghanistan. The Norwegian's appeals, which spring from motives of consensus and agreement and the common good, collide, however, with the Afghani's priorities, which are deeply rooted in conflict and partisanship.

Umin's gamble to organize a meeting between these two arch-enemies is risky in itself. Zamani announces that he will need a guarantee that the oil can be extracted without any interference from the Taliban, or they will prefer to make a deal with the Chinese instead – who assumedly are not so concerned about the common good. "You get what you give," Umin says, trying to get the Mullah to commit to an agreement. But the Mullah is not playing by the foreigner's rules:

MULLAH AHMED:	What are you doing here? What do you want?
UMIN:	I have, as you all do, a burning wish for peace in Afghanistan.
MULLAH AHMED:	And what are you prepared to give?
UMIN:	We have an oil deal.
MULLAH AHMED:	[Laughs] And what will we get out of it?
UMIN:	What do you want?
MULLAH AHMED:	Money. A poor warrior in an asymmetric war can always use money. So how much will we get?
UMIN:	For what?
MULLAH AHMED:	You said we all agreed.
UMIN:	Is there any way we can solve this that does not involve our financing Taliban's warfare?
MULLAH AHMED:	Nah . . . [gets up and leaves]. Then there will be no peace after all.

The minister's "burning wish for peace in Afghanistan" is made void. Confronted with something else than his own worldview – in fact, with real, difficult people of flesh and blood – Umin must sit for a lesson in *Realpolitik*. The idea of goodness on which the Norwegian minister relies, turns out to be ineffective; when his deontology bumps up against unapologetically partisan priorities, Umin's schemes fall apart. The Mullah does not desire what Umin unreflectively takes as a premise for the negotiation, namely peace. The Mullah, in fact, *wants war*.

The scene places the Norwegian regime of goodness into deeply troubled circumstances, and in that way, it echoes the sound clip that

overlays *Nobel*'s opening credits, which is taken from Barack Obama's acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, a prize that caused substantial confusion and irritation, considering that Obama at that point had done very little, in many people's estimation, to further peace. Obama did not appear particularly affected, however, but used the acceptance speech – interestingly – to offer a rather hard-nosed defense of violence, which is what we hear over *Nobel*'s opening credits:

> But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their [prophets of nonviolence] examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: *Evil does exist in the world*. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms.

Obama's insight, that *evil does exist in the world*, is precisely what the Norwegians – even their most seasoned and centrally placed diplomat, Umin – can neither see nor accept. The scene where Umin confronts Mullah Ahmed suggests that, despite the Norwegians' assumptions to the contrary, good intentions are not always enough to sort out other people's business. The Mullah implies that the Norwegian's very presence is illegitimate. Meanwhile, Umin has trouble grasping that anyone would *not* want to utilize oil resources for the common good, that they could *not* want peace and prosperity. Despite the paternalistic intention of Umin's proposal – a "deal" meant to serve the "common good" of all Afghanis – the neo-imperialist circumstance of his presence does not even occur to him.

The same sort of incapacity is on display in a related scene, involving Rolf Innherad, the NORAD executive. As he too leaves failed talks with a highly recalcitrant Zamani, Innherad erupts in anger: "Fuck, this is not happening! What a goddamn psychopath. He doesn't care about anything." Arguably, though, it becomes quite apparent from their talks that Zamani indeed cares deeply about a number of things, including his wife, his land, and his future. What he does *not* care for is foreigners who intervene to complicate his relation to these things.

The motivations of both Umin and Innherad are pure; they believe deeply in the goodness of their own agenda. That, however, is part of the problem. Faith in their own goodness blinds them to the possibility that other ways of seeing exist and might be legitimate. In Innherad's case, this blindness will also interfere with his moral compass; when he finds that his appeals to Zamani are to no avail, he sets up a secretive scheme to

have him killed. And while Umin takes no active decision to kill anyone, his own secretive schemes cause a great many lives in the end. As a parable on Norway, the story of Innherad and Umin tells us that this peace nation will have not only to confront violence, but to wield it.

3.5 Nothing Can Stand in the Way of Norwegian Goodness

As in a classic tragedy, the story of *Nobel* brings Riiser and the rest of the cast cascading toward the final catastrophe. Toward the end of the series, Riiser has been taken out of active duty, and via a chain of confusing events, relations with his wife have deteriorated. When she leaves to accompany Umin on a trip to Afghanistan, Riiser decides to take Innherad up on an offer to come along as his private security. But now things spiral ever more wildly out of control. Despite a long line of warning signs, Umin does not relent; he insists on bringing everyone to the table to make peace. Justifying his plan to a somewhat skeptical Johanne Riiser before they leave for Afghanistan, Umin says: "But just think if we can make it happen. A meeting like this, between the government and Taliban, that would be a huge step towards peace in Afghanistan." Laughing, he adds (in English), "*No guts, no glory*."

Apart from the obvious naiveté of his plan, the trouble is that it can only work if Umin keeps central parties ignorant about it; he intentionally neglects to inform the government representatives that the Taliban will also be present. When the Taliban arrive, Innherad objects, as does the Afghani energy minister, but Umin presses on: "Are we ready to sign and begin initial peace talks?" But Umin's pipe dream is about to blow up. Just as he announces that this agreement is "a first step towards public ownership," and that "herein lies a vague glimmer of hope in this troubled nation," a bomb goes off. The Taliban have exploited Umin's dreams of a peace accord for their own, partisan purposes, leaving the building in ruins. Dead bodies litter the reception hall. As Riiser and a handful of others scurry to help those who can be saved, Rolf Innherad, wounded and perplexed, looks over at what appears to be some pages of the petroleum law agreement. A NORAD logo printed proudly on top of the page, a river of fresh, red blood runs across the paper.

If *Nobel* exposes the dirty hands of the presumed good power Norway, showing it to be a hypocritical and self-righteous do-gooder, it does so in a dramatic form much like tragedy. The ultimate catastrophe, where the peace nation's dreams are literally shattered, killing many innocent people in the process, is ushered on by *hubris*, not least that of Rolf

Innherad and Umin, who are so captivated by the ambitions they carry on behalf of the nation as to become quite blind to any obstacles or objections. For them, nothing can stand in the way of Norwegian goodness – until, of course, something does.

3.6 All You Ever Wanted to Know about Ignorance

What *Nobel* gives us, I argue, is a complex and crisscrossing patchwork of secrecies, where groups of people are categorized by their need to know – or *not* know, as the case may be. The various plotlines of the drama present key characters who withhold their identities, who do not disclose their relation to other key characters, or who keep other players in the dark about their real intentions; a military that manipulates the media and the public about crimes committed at home and abroad; members of the elite who liaise with each other to gain classified information; and a media that refrains from publishing stories with obvious news value.

Of course, the withholding of information is a key ingredient in many a crime story, and in *Nobel* – as in many iterations of this genre – we, the viewers, are among those kept in the dark. But as I have suggested, in *Nobel*, the production of ignorance is not just a nifty storytelling technique, it is not there simply to create suspense. Rather, it is the whole point of the series. *Nobel* explores – and critiques – the ignorance-making mechanisms that characterize Norway and Norwegians; it exposes how key players engage in maintenance work to keep this nation's self-image and reputation intact.

The central contribution *Nobel* can make to our thinking on the international work of small states like Norway is to suggest that such complex and crisscrossing patchworks of secrecy will, in the end, come undone. The series' tragic form suggests that all this secrecy, all this deception, all this two-facedness, all these ambitions camouflaged as solidarity, will keep amassing, to a point where the shaky edifice they have built will no longer stand. The ruins that surround Riiser in the opening credits as well as in the final scene is an image of where this strategy will unavoidably end: In the last act, it will all come tumbling down.

In its strongest form, the argument of *Nobel* is that Norway's way of knowing and presenting itself – which are largely coextensive – is a terrible strategy. It is terrible in all senses of the word: It is a form of hypocrisy, and hence *immoral*, but it is also a form of hubris, and hence impractical, or *unrealistic*. Norway's strategy carries great risk, *Nobel*

suggests, because at any point, the hypocrisy can be exposed. If that has not happened yet, it certainly will in the end.

One might object to this argument that to maintain the image or reputation of a nation with the strategic production of ignorance is a necessity for any country. That may be true, since, to the extent even strong states can benefit from soft power strategies, they too are at risk of being exposed as hypocrites. The risk is greater for small countries, however, precisely because this, as de Carvalho and Neumann (2015) pointed out, may be the only strategy available to them. Small states like Norway, who are forced to place all their bets on soft power strategies, cannot very easily take up the strategies that McGoey (2019) calls "strongs" and "smarts" – that is, they cannot appeal to the superiority of their own strength or their own intelligence, since all they will have to back up that claim with is morality, goodness.

3.7 Conclusion: Ignorance Is Bliss

If what *Nobel* does is to present Norway's hypocritical do-goodery as a tragedy, we should note that, while this dramatic form is very effective, it might in the end be counterproductive. According to tradition, the tragic form is supposed to stir the spectators' sense of empathy, so that their feeling of dread and terror builds as the story unfolds, until everything culminates in inevitable catastrophe. The effect of *catharsis*, rendered alternatively as "purification" or "clarification" and presumably (according to Aristotle) to be delivered by tragic spectacles, is supposed to give spectators a renewed perspective on, perhaps even confidence in, themselves. By seeing, and even imagining ourselves into, a story of how terribly bad things can go, we are reassured that *we* will not be going down the same path. In what might seem paradoxical, tragedy aims through intense empathy with the drama to create, in the end, a sense of distance from the horrors it contains.

This effect is complicated in the present case, however, since the primary viewing *we* in question is precisely the *we* that has been exposed in the series. This raises the question of whether the tragic effect is really what we should desire in this case. If "we, Norwegians" were to take from *Nobel* a renewed sense of confidence in ourselves, that would indeed be a paradox of quite gigantic proportions.

As rhetorical scholar Carolyn Miller (1984) famously suggested, genre can productively be understood as a form of social action. If we consider *Nobel* in this light, it would appear that it amounts to a sort of

momentary venting ritual; for a set period of time, *Nobel* invites Norwegians to engage in national self-criticism, but then, at the end, it offers release from the ritual, and allows everyone to go back to normal. It offers national self-flagellation, but done with a silk whip.

To read this national self-criticism as a – ultimately harmless – ritual allows us to understand better why Norwegians do not seem lastingly moved by such scathing critiques of Norway's self-image and reputation as the one offered in *Nobel*. The notion of Norway as a good power is not just a brand that helps differentiate Norway in a globalized and increasingly competitive world, nor is it just a neat way of summing up Norwegians' collective national identity. Rather, this notion is a particularly effective agnostic device, it is a tool that allows Norwegians to distance themselves, politically and morally, from the fact that the world is a nasty place, and which, at the same time, allows other countries to use Norway as a sort of peaceful utopia (see Chapter 1). To put it in no uncertain terms, ignorance is bliss. As McGoey points out, summing up recent research from psychology and behavioral economics, people have a "surprisingly low desire for knowledge." In fact, "people often prefer to act on the basis of ignorance rather than knowledge" (2019: 39). So even if Norway's "small state status seeking" strategy might, as I have pointed out, involve a risk of being exposed as a hypocrite, that does not mean we can assume such exposés will have consequences. As a matter of fact, Norway is quite routinely exposed as a hypocrite, but only rarely do the exposés make a dent. Overall, it is still more comfortable for us to believe in the highly selective self-image, to take the largely doctored reputation at face value. The illusion has great utility.

The very last scene of *Nobel* appears in many ways to incorporate a pessimistic sense that no critique will ever bite, that nothing will ever change – almost as if the series were providing a commentary on itself. We see a group of soldiers, presumably special forces, leave for another mission, while the audio plays a statement from Norway's former Prime Minister (thereafter General Secretary of NATO), Jens Stoltenberg, who underlines that they have agreed to "maintain a presence in Afghanistan, even after the end of our current mission." Even after all this, then, even after the type of catastrophe that ensued from Umin's hubristic and secretive plan to bring peace to Afghanistan, the Norwegians do not change. They never stop believing in what they take to be – obviously – *good*. The very final shot is of a military personnel carrier taking off from the military airport, the implication being that Norway, the peace nation, is – when you look at it – actually quite bellicose.

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4

A Historical View on the Nordic "Peace Brand"

Norway and Sweden: Partners and Competitors in Peace

ADA NISSEN

4.1 Introduction

Sweden should make a comeback as international peacemaker! This urgent request to Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallström came from Peter Wallensteen and Isak Svensson in October 2016. The two scholars were working on the first overall review of Nordic peacemaking since World War II, and their message was clear: Since the rising number of armed conflicts required more peaceful conflict resolution, the Swedish government should increase its engagement and become more like its neighbors in Norway.

In 2016, the Norwegian government spent more than half a billion Norwegian kroner on peace processes with Norway in a third-party role. Sweden on the other hand, once known as the world's moral superpower, spent less money and was less visible since it prioritized peacemaking under the auspices of the UN and other international institutions. If this did not change, Wallensteen and Svensson argued, Sweden would continue to lag behind in international peacemaking. This was not satisfactory for a country that for decades had prided itself on international solidarity and peace promotion (Dahl 2006; Wallensteen and Svensson 2016b, 2016c).[1]

But why was it necessary to bring up Norway in the appeal to the Swedish Foreign Minister? Should it not have been sufficient to appeal to her sense of ethics and/or logic – Sweden should engage more because this would create more peace, and/or Sweden should engage more because Sweden's security depends on a peaceful and stable world?

[1] See also: Bolling, "Sverige i Norges skugga bland fredens stormakter," *Dagens Nyheter*, February 25, 2017, www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/sverige-i-norges-skugga-bland-fredens-stormakter/.

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In terms of Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, ethos and logos were apparently considered insufficiently persuasive. Pathos on the other hand, the emotional appeal, would hit a political nerve in Sweden. Therefore, Wallensteen and Svensson alluded to the fact that Scandinavians and other Nordics, be it politicians or the common person, tend to be quite receptive to arguments appealing to their sense of regional competition. This is visible for example in winter sports or in friendly quarrels about which is the most progressive, modern, happy, and healthy country, and which is doing most good for the world.[2]

Obviously, countries compete all the time, in the global economy, in military power, in sports, and in cultural competitions. What is special about the Scandinavian competition, however, is that it also includes competing in doing good deeds other places of the world. Take for example aid donations. Since the late 1970s, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark have been among the most generous donors to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), reflecting an ever-increasing willingness to supply capital and projects to maintain the goal of aid spending as 1 percent of GNP. Since no Scandinavian country wants to be perceived as less generous or less benevolent than its neighbors, matching the others has long been an impetus for foreign policy-makers in all three countries (Pharo 2008: 55, 79).

The point here is to illustrate the distinctive competitive streak that exists in an otherwise cooperative region, often presented as a coordinated political block with shared values, and a common Nordic identity or "brand" based on ideas of exceptionalism (Browning 2007). As pointed out in the introduction to this book, the "Scandinavian Humanitarian Brand" can be defined as a set of narratives that circulate within and outside the Scandinavian countries. An important component of this brand is the exceptional efforts to further peace. Drawing on literature about Nordic exceptionalism and small states in international relations (Mouritzen 1996; Trägårdh 1997, 2002; Riste 2003; Nye 2004; Ingebritsen et al. 2006), as well as Christopher Browning's suggestion that "[b]randing is not just about questions of image but also of identity, status, and recognition in a context where a lack of visibility is seen as inherently problematic" (Browning 2015: 196), this chapter unpacks the peace nation narrative by discussing its historical roots and practical expressions.

[2] The Local. 2016. "The Nordic Nations Have Gone to War… on Twitter," *The Local*, November 23, 2016, www.thelocal.no/20161123/the-nordic-nations-have-gone-to-war-on-twitter.

The chapter concentrates on Norway and Sweden and goes back in history to explore the roots of their postulated peace traditions and some key features of their mediation efforts during the Cold War. It then moves on to explain Norway's attempt to take ownership of the peace nation narrative in the 1990s and 2000s, and discusses why peacemaking became such an attractive tool for national image building, and why it from time to time caused some friction between two states that both wanted to be *the* peace nation. The chapter uses examples from Norwegian and Swedish peace efforts in Guatemala, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka to illustrate the possibilities and limitations of Nordic mediation. It argues that although the mediation successes have been relatively few, the peace nation narrative is hard to challenge. The main reason for this is that its overarching *telos* is to *be* the good, *spread* the good, and *fulfill* the good.

4.2 Roots of the Scandinavian Peace Nation Narrative

It is sometimes suggested that the political and cultural history, the democratic structure, and social peace in the Scandinavian countries make them natural and particularly well qualified mediators and exporters of peace (Pharo 2005; Leira 2007; Nissen 2015). A reaction to Wallensteen and Svensson's book on Nordic mediation in *Dagens Nyheter*, one of Sweden's biggest dailies, illustrates this notion. "Sweden in the shadow of Norway among the great powers of peace," the paper announced, indicating an undesirable loss of standing, alluding to Sweden's historical identity as "the world's moral superpower."[3]

But where did this idea that Scandinavian countries naturally belonged to the category "great powers of peace" come from? The answer is manifold. Let us begin with establishing that peacemaking is a variation on a familiar theme, namely the small Scandinavian countries' general post–World War II ambitions to be a moral force in world politics and play significant roles on the global stage (Eriksen and Pharo 1997; Dahl 2006: 151–202; Andersson and Hilson 2009). In some sense, these ambitions sprang from the perception of having a special Nordic identity, which, according to the historian Uffe Østergaard, included qualities like non-European, non-Catholic, anti-Rome, anti-imperialist, non-colonial, and non-exploitative. The Nordic countries shared a sense of being free

[3] Bolling, "Sverige i Norges skugga bland fredens stormakter," *Dagens Nyheter*, February 25, 2017, www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/sverige-i-norges-skugga-bland-fredens-stormakter/.

from Europe's historical burden as conquistador, colonialist, and exploiter of the rest of the world (Østergaard 1997: 25–26, 2002: 151–202).

As suggested by Lars Trägårdh this sense of exceptionalism appears to have given Nordic people the idea that they were on some kind of holy mission to spread the Good Message of social democracy to the world. According to Trägårdh and other scholars, such as the political scientist Hans Mouritzen and the historian Olav Riste, this missionary impulse was rooted in an older Nordic Lutheran Protestant tradition of non-hierarchy and egalitarianism (Mouritzen 1996; Trägårdh 1997, 2002; Riste 2003).

Political scientist Mikko Kuisma has argued that this missionary impulse in turn rested on a peculiar social democratic sense of justice (Kuisma 2007: 16). At the domestic level, this revealed itself as the state's guarantees against unemployment, and provision for sickness insurance and pensions. At the international level, the deep-rooted belief in justice found its expression in the export of human rights, peace, and democracy, values that people considered fundamental in the Nordic social democracies. Especially the Scandinavian states, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, presented their own well-functioning welfare states as models for others to emulate in the transition from conflict and authoritarian rule to peace and democracy (Wæver 1992; Mouritzen 1995; Andersson 2009; Andersson and Hilson 2009). Since most disagreements in Scandinavia were resolved with negotiations and few battles were fought outside the institutional system, the Scandinavian countries developed "a propensity for a less aggressive and confrontational approach to foreign affairs than most other European states" (Archer 1996: 462). This gave them leeway to act as humanitarian frontrunners and peacemakers.

4.3 Swedish Dominance during the Cold War

Among the Nordics it is first and foremost Norway and Sweden that have cultivated the peace nation narrative. Denmark has focused more on NATO, the EU and traditional aid and so has Iceland, which in addition has a considerably smaller population and economy than the others. Finland did not emerge on the mediator scene before the 1990s, and does not lay claim to a peace nation narrative in the same way as Norway and Sweden. The Finns have mostly mediated under the auspices of the UN, the EU, or OSCE and kept a lower profile than the Norwegians and the Swedes (Wallensteen and Svensson 2016a: 19–20). It was in fact not

until 2008–2010 that the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs really integrated peacemaking in Finland's national agenda. This makes Finland more of a newcomer than a pioneer in international mediation (Joenniemi 2013: 54–55, 59).

Sweden and Norway, on the other hand, have endeavored to play roles as international bridge builders or peacemakers since the 1950s. During the Cold War, Sweden was the most visible and prominent bridge builder of the two, seeing itself as a representative of a third way between East and West. Swedish representatives mediated among other places in the Suez crisis (1956), the Vietnam War (1965–1968), the conflict in Western Sahara (1976–1977), and in the war between Iran and Iraq (1980–1986). But also Norway facilitated talks in several Cold War conflicts, such as in the Korean War in 1950, in discussions with Poland about détente in the late 1950s, and in the so-called Ohio channel in the Vietnam War between 1967 and 1968. Yet, there was one important difference between the two Scandinavian go-betweens. Sweden was a nonaligned state (at least on paper) whereas Norway was a loyal NATO member that always weighed its viewpoints in light of US politics. Each position had its advantages and disadvantages in regard of peacemaking.

Whereas Sweden could allow itself to raise a clear and loud critical voice, pointing out faults and shortcomings in other states' handling of human rights violations or political repression, Norwegian criticism of the same reprehensible actions was more tempered (Nilsson 1991: 175–180; Tamnes 1997: 361–364). However, this was not always a disadvantage. On several occasions, such as in the talks with Poland, Norway was preferred as third party because of its secure position within NATO, its closer relations with the US, and access to decision makers in Washington (Eriksen and Pharo 1997: 221–227, 245–249).

Still, according to its advocates, many of them Swedish, Sweden was without doubt the real *Sonderweg* and the true peace nation. Supporting this claim was an argument about Sweden's two hundred year old peace tradition, which rested on its long-standing policy of neutrality since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Sweden's neutrality continued during the First and Second World War, and endured with nonalignment and distance to NATO from 1949 onward (Ottosson 2003: 22–23). During the Cold War the Swedish Social Democrats claimed that only nonaligned countries that were not associated with one of the two hegemonic superpowers could pursue an active and truly moral foreign policy. Although never spelled out, this inevitably implied that the Swedes considered themselves a more moral country than the NATO members

and America friends Denmark and Norway. Often, the Swedish government would oppose US politics that Norway and Denmark accepted or only commented mildly. When a study at the end of the Cold War revealed that Sweden's neutrality actually rested on close and top-secret military cooperation with NATO, there was no strong reaction from Swedish opinion to this disclosure of doublespeak (Dahl 2006: 901–902). Most likely, the identity as nonaligned and independent was so deeply rooted in Swedish culture that it would take a lot more than a study to shake the Swedes' faith in it.

4.4 New Positions in the Early 1990s

What did shake Sweden, at least temporarily, was the global banking crisis and subsequent recession that hit a number of countries in the early 1990s. Whilst the Swedish government focused on rescuing its suffering domestic economy, contemporary observers described the downfall of the Swedish model. In this period, Sweden assumed a less self-assertive international position, turned toward Europe and eventually joined the European Union. Norway, on the other hand, went in a different direction and introduced a formerly unparalleled foreign policy activism, known as the policy of engagement, including energetic promotion of peace, democracy, and human rights in faraway places.

There were several reasons for these political choices. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Sweden and Norway had lost their major threat in the Northeast. This provided both states with greater room for political maneuver, but for Norway it also had some serious strategic challenges. During the Cold War, the long Norwegian coastline and the border with the Soviet Union made Norway strategically important and an indispensable ally in the eyes of the United States. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, however, Norwegian territory was no longer as important and the Americans turned their attention to other areas. This made Norwegian foreign policymakers reflect upon Norway's role in international politics and which measures to take to avoid geopolitical marginalization. As suggested by Browning, this was definitely a "context where a lack of visibility [was] seen as inherently problematic" (Browning 2015: 196). To maintain its identity, status, and recognition, Norway needed to find some ways to make itself visible. For a small, democratic state with limited hard power resources, peacemaking was a possible political niche. Since the number of intrastate conflicts increased in the aftermath of the Cold War, and military intervention was an undesirable

option in most cases, small state or NGO mediation became a sought-after response. This opened a window of opportunity for Norway and Norwegian mediators-initiated dialogue processes in Guatemala and the Middle East (Tamnes 1997: 151, 341–349).

Parallel to this, the Norwegians ended up rejecting EU membership in a 1994 referendum. This contributed to a dual feeling of anxiety and optimism about the future, which boosted the engagement policy. Within short, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry took on new assignments in Sudan, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, the Philippines, and Colombia just to mention some places, often engaging high-profile politicians or diplomats in key roles.

4.5 The Norwegian Peace Model

These engagements were grist to Norway's national mill, and soon the formulation of a national narrative about Norway as a peace nation and the introduction of a so-called Norwegian peace model became important elements in Norwegian foreign policy. In the early 1990s, policymakers, diplomats, aid workers, and others involved in foreign policy began to bring up historical circumstances, events, and national icons to justify the country's new role. Among these were the polar hero Fridtjof Nansen who introduced the Nansen passport issued by the League of Nations to stateless refugees, the absence of a colonial past, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, the nonviolent dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905, and enthusiasm for the UN, just to mention some. In brief, the narrative established that Norway was a nation with a unique tradition for promoting peace and solidarity with other peoples and therefore particularly well qualified to create peace elsewhere. A considerable number of policymakers, diplomats, and others involved in international relations looked upon this somewhat vague but cherished perception of a peace tradition as part of Norway's "family silver" (Nissen 2015: 1–2).

Although it was mostly a post-hoc construction conceptualized in the 1990s, the peace nation narrative was self-reinforcing. The more Norwegians talked about their special tradition, the more important it became and the more plausible it seemed. In the 2000s, the peace nation narrative was so well established that it convincingly provided Norwegians with a character that distinguished them not only from the rest of the world, but also from their Nordic neighbors. A speech given by Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre in 2006, "Norway as Peace Nation – Myth or Reality?" illustrates this. In the speech, Støre underlined that

there were "clear features, in mindset, in Norwegian society, in political life, that [had] led us to play the role as advocate for peace and development."[4]

Another expression of Norway assuming ownership of the peace nation identity was the introduction of the so-called Norwegian peace model in the 1990s–2000s. This model was a synthetization of Norway's supposedly unique qualities as a third party, promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its essence was the close cooperation between the Norwegian government, NGOs, and research institutes – implying a seemingly exceptional semi-private, semi-public construction for peace-making. No one really knows who first coined the term Norwegian peace model, but according to aid worker Petter Skauen, who helped facilitate peace talks in Guatemala, the Swedes used the expression very early. What we do know, however, is that the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the first to use the concept systematically, and that the reason for this was to conceptualize and internationally promote Norway's role as peacemaker (Nissen 2015: 8).

Although presented as a unique approach, the model was essentially a reflection of the flexible public–private partnership that characterized society in all the Nordic welfare states. Moreover, the model resembled international mediation trends. After the Cold War, non-state actors like NGOs and research institutes became important players in peace negotiations for most countries engaged as intermediaries (Bartoli 2009). Finally, Norway's way of setting up assistance to countries in conflict was in fact a marriage of convenience based on practical considerations, not a carefully designed plan or model.

Yet, this postulated model had an important function. It was a very useful tool for promotion of Norway as international peacemaker and helped construct a Norwegian "peace brand" that became significant for Norway's position in the increasingly crowded field of mediation. This position was in turn vital for the country's general position, visibility, and status in international politics. Norway was now the small state that demonstrated humanitarian commitment in a unique way and had "developed a voice and presence out of proportions to its modest size and resources" (Nye 2004: 10, 112). The peacemaker role was great for establishing and maintaining relations with central and powerful

[4] J. G. Støre, "Norge som fredsnasjon – myte eller virkelighet?," speech, April 24, 2006, www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/dep/Utenriksminister_Jonas_Gahr_Store/taler_artikler/2006/Norge-som-fredsnasjon–myte-eller-virkelighet.html?id=273461.

international actors, especially in Washington, and made it easier for Norway to promote its national interests and values. Peacemaking increased Norway's ability to deliver political messages on a great number of issues from poverty reduction to salmon and gas market directives. When this position was established, it became important to nurture it. Peacemaking was not only a good deed, but also a smart foreign policy.

4.6 Why So Little Cooperation?

As Norway was embracing its new international role, Swedish peace efforts continued at the civil servant level without political profiles involved, usually under the auspices of the EU or the UN. Whereas Norway increasingly emphasized the importance of access to Washington, the Swedes stuck to their historical narrative about neutrality and independence to explain why their contribution to world peace also had a special and important character. Imaginably, Norway and Sweden's slightly different positions in international politics could create a fertile ground for cooperation in peacemaking. The two countries had qualities and contacts that could complement each other. Sweden was more independent whilst Norway had better access to NATO and the powerful US. Yet, cooperation did not dominate Scandinavian peacemaking. In the long list of efforts led by Nordic mediators between 1946 and 2015, there are in fact remarkably few joint projects. On some occasions, Norwegian and Swedish mediators have cooperated, but for the most they have been protective and pursued their mediation missions separately (Wallensteen and Svensson 2016a: 19–20).

Part of the reason for this lies in the general dynamics of peace processes. Few disputing parties want more than one mediator to intervene since too many cooks may spoil the broth. Still, this does not explain everything. It might in fact seem as if Norway's and Sweden's adoption of very similar peacemaker identities has made cooperation somewhat complicated for them. Although they are able to pull together, each country's recurring need to promote its "unique" peacemaker identity has made it imperative to distinguish oneself from the seemingly identical neighbor. Since neither Sweden nor Norway wants to be left "in the shadow among the great powers of peace," to use the words of *Dagens Nyheter*, they both seek to stand out in an international comparison.

Many of the Swedish and Norwegian actors involved in mediation would probably not agree that distinction or prestige-seeking is a central component to Scandinavian peacemaking. "We seek effect, not glory," Norway's former Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide maintained when he explained the fundamental approach of many Nordic peacemakers (Wallensteen and Svensson 2016a: 197). While it is hard to dispute that seeking effect in the form of a more peaceful situation has lied at the heart of Norwegian and Swedish motivation to engage in peacemaking, competition and "glory" in the form of status-seeking cannot that easily be excluded as additional motivating factors, at least not at the state level (de Carvalho and Neumann 2015). A historical glimpse of Norway and Sweden's peacemaking efforts in Guatemala, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka illustrates this clearly.

4.7 Obscure Competition in Guatemala

Let us first turn to Guatemala. In 1989, two Norwegians more or less spontaneously started Norway's first mediation initiative after the Cold War. Secretary General of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Gunnar Stålsett, and the aid worker Petter Skauen, from the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), convinced the Guatemalan government and the Marxist inspired guerrilla URNG to start a direct dialogue. At this point, several countries in Central America had been plagued by internal conflicts where left-wing insurgency movements fought against US-backed right-wing regimes. Stålsett and Skauen's initiative quickly received support from the Norwegian government, with the ambitious aim of ending a more than thirty-year-long civil war. As the initiative gained momentum and the dialogue progressed, Norwegian media and politicians began to present it as exceptionally brave and typical Norwegian. It was never mentioned that the initiative to a large degree built upon forgoing Swedish peace efforts in Central America (Nissen 2015: 60–63).

In the early 1980s, Sweden had engaged extensively in Latin American liberation struggles and search for peaceful solutions. Social democratic Prime Minister Olof Palme and Secretary General of Sweden's Foreign Ministry Pierre Schori dreamt of establishing a "Pax Centroamericana" and pushed for peace through a high-level regional dialogue forum known as the Contadora group (Nilsson 1991). This dream was never fulfilled, largely because the powerful US did not share the Swedish enthusiasm for dialogue with left-wing

movements. Yet, the initiative had planted some seeds that became fruitful a few years later when the Costa Rican President Oscar Arias decided to revive the group to promote peace in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador (Azpuru 1999: 104).

This pre-history of Swedish engagement actually made Sweden the preferred candidate for a mediator role in Guatemala. As it happened, the Lutheran World Federation, which had established a conflict resolution fund, asked the Swedish government to host the initial meeting before it asked the Norwegian. The Swedes were positive, but backed down because a security guard at the Swedish embassy in Guatemala was suddenly killed for unknown reasons. Instead of taking the role as official host, Sweden decided to continue as a less directly involved supporter. This led the LWF to Norway where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted the role as host immediately.

Norway was much more inexperienced in Central America than Sweden and had very few financial, political, or cultural ties to the region. One important exception was the Labor politician Thorvald Stoltenberg's assignment as the Socialist International's special representative to Nicaragua between 1983 and 1987. Yet, this was a personal–professional rather than an official Norwegian connection and Norwegian policy toward Central America remained less activist and outspoken than that of Sweden. Interestingly, Sweden's important groundwork for the Guatemala peace process, and the fact that Sweden was the preferred candidate for a first meeting were passed over in silence in Norway. Instead, the Norwegian mediators explained that Sweden probably did not get the third-party role because the Swedes had been "inattentive in class and failed to realize the potential of the peace process" (Egeland cited in Nissen 2015: 72).

The process in Guatemala provided an opportunity for Norway to demonstrate the capability of small states on the global scene and to receive positive international attention. Because of this, it became important for Norway to demonstrate its skills as third party. Combined with the fact that Norway was an inexperienced mediator, this urge to demonstrate skills led the Norwegian mediators to prepare for a final ceremony in Oslo way too early into the process. Tempted by the prospect of rapid success and seduced by the Guatemalan president Jorge Serrano Elias' launch of a "quick plan for peace" the Norwegians ignored objections from the URNG guerrilla that the president was moving too fast, and decided to push for the signing of an agreement in Oslo. Thorvald Stoltenberg, who had now become Foreign Minister

(1990–1993), remarked enthusiastically: "We should definitely support this [the quick plan] because of our interest in bringing the negotiations to a happy solution – in Oslo!"[5]

However, not everyone favored the idea of a happy solution in Oslo. Other players were also interested in the diplomatic limelight that the hosting of a final ceremony would inevitably shine. Facilitator Petter Skauen noted that the Swedes had in fact offered money to the Guatemalan Reconciliation Commission "virtually to buy the ceremony." This worried the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who urgently set out to convince the Guatemalans that Norway was the best place for a final ceremony, not Sweden. Although the quick peace plan eventually was called off because the talks stalled as human rights violations increased, the Norwegian eagerness to rush the negotiations despite warnings demonstrates that rapid success and positive international attention were important to Norway (Nissen 2015: 70–71).

Another example of the status and recognition-seeking aspect of peacemaking occurred only a few months after the incident with "the happy solution in Oslo." While waiting for the official Norwegian-led talks to resume, the Swedish government organized a meeting with key actors in Stockholm to discuss the human rights situation in Guatemala. The problem was that the meeting was a side initiative and not communicated clearly to the Norwegians. This caused great irritation. Not only did the Swedes neglect to inform about their plans, the Norwegians also perceived the initiative as intruding and potentially threatening to their own position. The reason for this was that the Guatemalan government accused Norway of favoring the guerrilla since both Norway and the guerrilla were more concerned with human rights issues than the government. Sweden's human rights meeting was troublesome because it could give the impression that the international community, and thereby Norway, sympathized with the guerrilla. Since this would make Norway unacceptable as third party, the Norwegians risked losing their role as go-between. Again, Norway needed to demonstrate ownership to the process (Nissen 2015: 70–71). When the official talks resumed in 1992, Foreign Minister Stoltenberg instructed his staff: "[W]e must not wait so long that the [first] meeting is organised somewhere else!"[6]

[5] Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 25. 4/54, 12, memo, April 30, 1991.
[6] Handwritten remark on memo. MFA 25. 4/94, 14, memo, September 9, 1992; MFA 25. 4/54, 14, memo, August 13, 1992.

A third example of how important it was for Norway to remain a central actor in the Guatemala process took place in 1993. Several countries were forming an official support group for the process, and Norway feared being excluded because the Guatemalan government found the Norwegians biased toward the guerrilla. To secure Norway a place in the group, the Norwegian ambassador to Mexico therefore suggested a discrete trade-off. Norway would donate 100,000 dollars to the Guatemalan Reconciliation Commission in exchange for inclusion in the group. This was a remarkable suggestion, considering the negative Norwegian reactions to Sweden's attempt to "buy the ceremony" in 1991 (Nissen 2015: 74–75).

In sum, these examples illustrate how attractive a third-party role in a peace process could be for Norway and Sweden and how far they would sometimes go to maintain or create such a role for themselves. Although the general, outward impression of the Scandinavian peace efforts in Guatemala was one of harmony, Norway's need to demonstrate ownership to the third-party role and Sweden's attempt to engage more actively through an uncommunicated side initiative depict a relationship with elements of both cooperation and competition. A successful third-party role in an international peace process provided such great opportunities for increased status and recognition, and a strengthened national image or brand, that Sweden and Norway both found them very attractive. Still, Norway's drive and desire to stand out seems to have been stronger than Sweden's.

4.8 A Rare Incident of Cooperation and Norwegian Sensation in the Middle East

Norway and Sweden's appetite for third-party roles became apparent also in the Middle East. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, a number of other international actors had tried to contribute to dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. Several Swedish actors were among the ones who mediated between the two parties, including personalities such as Count Folke Bernadotte, UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, and UN Special Envoy, Gunnar Jarring. Whereas the Swedish government by the early 1970s had established connections with both Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Norway continued to support and talk only with Israel until the late 1970s when also Norwegians opened up for dialogue with the PLO (Waage 2000b: 189–211).

Like in Central America, the Scandinavian states' mediation experience in the Middle East started as a Swedish-initiated dialogue, which Norway later built upon. The Swedish breakthrough came in 1988, when Foreign Minister Sten Andersson (1985–1991) managed to persuade the chairman of the PLO Yasser Arafat to publicly reject terrorism and proclaim Israel's right to exist. This led the United States – an essential player in the Middle East – to recognize the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinians and start a dialogue with the organization. For this work, Andersson and his Swedish team received great international recognition (Waage 2000a: 62–63).

However, this time Sweden had not put the initiative across alone. Norway had helped secure vital American support through its close relationship with the United States, by convincing US Secretary of State, George Shultz, to back the Swedes. This incident is in fact a rare example of how Norway and Sweden could use their different positions to pull together as a peacemaker team. Since Sweden had a more ambivalent relationship to Israel due to the assassination of the Swedish UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, in 1948, an action probably ordered by the Israeli politician, Yitzhak Shamir, and because Israel did not like Sweden's pro-PLO policy under Prime Minister Olof Palme, Norway provided what seemed to be a more balanced position than Sweden. This led Sweden and Norway to cooperate, but also here, the desire to position oneself through playing an active role came to the fore.

The Norwegians believed they could do more than just assist Sweden, and were looking for a way to reach what they believed was their full diplomatic potential. Parallel to Sten Andersson's initiative, Norway's Foreign Minister, Thorvald Stoltenberg, explored the possibility of Norwegian facilitation of direct talks between Israel and the PLO. Although the Israeli government was lukewarm, since the Israelis saw the Swedish initiative as the preferred alternative, the Norwegians did not leave the idea. Motivated by the fact that Yasser Arafat two times had raised the idea of Norway as go-between because of its good relations with Israel and the United States, Stoltenberg continued to look for opportunities. When the Swedish initiative after a while broke down due to lack of trust between the two parties, Sweden left its active mediator role in the Middle East and the scene was open for new attempts. Although Norway's parallel activity never competed directly with the Swedish initiative because of their different relations to PLO and Israel, it still exposes how eager both states were to take initiatives, often at the same time. It was almost as if Sweden and Norway overbid

each other in an international peace auction (Waage 2000a: 62–63, 2004: 1–46; Aggestam 2012: 74).

Eventually, Norway took the big mediation prize in the Middle East. After the Swedes left, the peace process scraped through some rounds of American-led negotiations in Washington without much success. While this went on, a new clandestine Norwegian initiative took form. Terje Rød-Larsen, a Norwegian sociologist and researcher who accompanied his diplomat wife to Cairo, established a secret back channel for dialogue between the Israeli government and the PLO. After a year of complicated, secret negotiations in Norway, the (in)famous Oslo agreement was surprisingly presented to the world. Few could believe that little Norway had managed to succeed with mediation in the Middle East, especially the Americans who had been running a parallel and official peace process in Washington all along. Also to the Norwegians involved, the situation was dreamlike. "It felt completely surreal," State Secretary in the MFA, Jan Egeland, explained. At the same time, Egeland was convinced that the Norwegian peace efforts in the Middle East and Guatemala verified that Norway had a special role to play and had demonstrated this "more clearly than any other small nation, ever, [I think,] in the history of the world, during the last four to five years" (Egeland cited in Waage 2012: 106).

What seemed to be a giant Norwegian mediation success seduced diplomats, politicians, aid workers, and journalists. Newspapers were overflowing with compliments and recognition of the Norwegian-brokered agreement. According to the Norwegian newspaper *VG*, requests about assistance from the Norwegian peace team were "pouring in from all over the world."[7] Also international actors were impressed and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres even claimed that the role of Norway "simply represent[ed] the character of its people."[8]

The Oslo agreement and its aftermath marked a shift in Norway's understanding and promotion of itself as a peace nation with special skills to resolve conflicts in other countries. From this point on, the narrative of the peace nation accelerated and Norway became known to the public as "humanitarian superpower." Yet, when the Norwegian daily *Dagens Næringsliv* asked Foreign Minister Bjørn Tore Godal (1994–1997) whether Norway planned to adopt a form of activism

[7] T. Johansen, S. Talsnes, & H. Henden (1993). "Verden venter på Holst," *VG*, September 29, 1993. *Author's translation from Norwegian.*

[8] NRK. "Den gode viljen 2:5." Broadcasted, January 15, 2013.

similar to Sweden's during the last decades of the Cold War, Godal disproved.[9] In reality, however, Norway was actively looking for third-party roles to play, and ended up as mediator in countries like Sudan, the Philippines, East Timor, Cyprus, Haiti, and Sri Lanka.

4.9 The Limits of Norwegian Mediation: A Tragic Outcome in Sri Lanka

On the face of it, Norway's post-Cold War activity indeed resembled Sweden's activity during the Cold War. Moreover, since Norway had decided to remain outside the European Union, the Norwegians were for the first time since 1945 on some occasions perceived as more independent than the Swedes. This became particularly apparent after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, when the EU decided to designate a number of groups as terrorist organizations. Since EU members were prevented from talking to terrorists by legal constraints, Norway became one of few players who could act as intermediary in conflicts where one party was considered terrorist. This dynamic played out in Sri Lanka where Norway mediated between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from 2000 to 2009.

To support the Norwegian mediation efforts, the EU members Sweden, Denmark, and Finland participated in an international monitoring mechanism, which they funded and staffed together with Norway and Iceland. But when the EU designated the LTTE as a terrorist organization in 2006 after pressure from the Americans, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland were forced to withdraw. Since Norway had not succeeded in securing comprehensive support from vital, powerful players such as the United States and India, this left Norway as a lonely and vulnerable facilitator in a country on the brink of war. Together with a series of local and regional developments, this made Norway's mediation mission impossible and allowed the process to slide into a full-scale war. Norway's efforts in Sri Lanka demonstrated that the peace nation was no great peacemaker without support. Still, when Norwegian mediators were asked if it would have been better to admit one's shortcomings and pull out instead of contributing to an illusion of an ongoing peace process under the cover of which a war could gradually unfold, their

[9] "Superdepartementet," *Dagens Næringsliv*, July 8, 1995.

unison response was no. Pulling out would be the opposite of doing what was ethically right, the opposite of doing good. And doing good was after all the whole point of being in Sri Lanka (Nissen 2018: 239–245).

For Norway more than for Sweden, the experiences from Guatemala and the Middle East became significant for development of the national identity as peace nation after the Cold War. Norway's decision to mediate alone in Sri Lanka is a good example of how the role as international peacemaker sometimes involved an element of hubris that led to miscalculation of own capacity. The fact that the peace process ended in a full-scale civil war in 2009 was by no means Norway's fault, but Norway definitely overestimated its ability to change conflict patterns and convince important states like India and the United States to support the process wholeheartedly. Observably, seeking status, prestige and doing good deeds could sometimes have severe negative implications.

4.10 Conclusion

Both Norway and Sweden cling to variations of the peace nation narrative or "peace brand," which at its core holds the fundamental assumption that Norway and Sweden are more peaceful and thereby better at understanding and creating peace than most other states. The reasons for this are several. First, if we turn to Browning's suggestion that branding is about identity, status, and recognition in a context where a lack of visibility is seen as inherently problematic, it is obvious that Norway and Sweden's smallness and geographical position in the outskirts of Europe constitutes a potential lack of visibility. Since lack of visibility is inherently problematic for any state with ambitions to influence global affairs, the selection of peacemaking as a special contribution to the world is rational. It helps Norway and Sweden to become visible and recognizable, and to achieve a certain status in international politics.

Second, the role as international go-between seems to fulfill some values that most Scandinavians appear to reckon as universal. No Scandinavian country wants to be inferior to its neighbors in terms of communal solidarity or promotion of peace, democracy, and human rights. In some sense, the peacemaker ambitions are also related to the perception of having a special identity, which includes a sense of being free from Europe's historical burden as colonialists and exploiter of the

rest of the world. Third, because the dominant notion of peacemaking in Norway and Sweden is to see it as a virtue in itself, the actual success rate does not matter that much. Besides, success in peacemaking depends on the yardstick you measure by.

The cases in this chapter are three examples. In Guatemala, the government and the guerrilla did reach a comprehensive agreement in 1996. However, it was reached with assistance from the UN, not Norway, and large parts have not been implemented. The signing of Oslo accord in the Middle East was ground-breaking since it was the first time Israelis and Palestinians signed an agreement after direct talks, but in wider perspective Swedish and Norwegian efforts in the Middle East have not made peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Oslo accord is controversial because it is an intentional agreement that does not deal with substantial issues. In Sri Lanka, Norway helped the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE come together, discuss substantial matters, and sign a ceasefire agreement in 2002, but the parties never signed any final agreement because the peace process ended in full-scale war. The fact that there are few clear Scandinavian mediation successes is not because Norway and Sweden are bad mediators, but rather because peacemaking is a difficult and risky business. In principle, Norway and Sweden are just as good or bad at mediation as other similar mediators with limited international status and power. Sweden and Norway have definitely gained some mediation experience, but this does not necessarily make them better mediators or more genuine peace nations than others.

This implies that Norway and Sweden cling to the narrative of the peace nation because it is a powerful narrative in itself. It fulfils certain auto- and xeno-stereotypes of Scandinavia as a historically anti-imperialist, non-colonial, and nonexploitative region. Since the peace nation narrative's overarching *telos* is to *be* the good, *spread* the good, and *fulfill* the good, it distinguishes the Swedes and the Norwegians from the various "bad guys" in international politics. However, because the peace nation identities that Norway and Sweden have created for themselves are so similar, the need for distinction is pressing. Therefore, the peacemaking activity also has a certain competitive streak, which at first glance seems illogical given the two states' long tradition for cooperation on a broad range of foreign and security policy matters. However, this competitive streak seems to be one of the components that keeps the peace nation narrative or "peace brand" alive. This was visible in Isak Svensson and Peter Wallensteen's call to the Swedish foreign minister.

Because neither Sweden nor Norway wants to be perceived as less visible or less generous than the neighbor, this contributes to push them to be proactive, donate money, and engage extensively in international peacemaking. When this engagement is grounded in postulated peace traditions, which in turn are justified by continued practical peace promotion, the peace nation narrative or "peace brand" acquires a circular robustness that makes it sticky in times of change.

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5

Sweden's Weapons Exports Paradox

WAYNE STEPHEN COETZEE

5.1 Introduction

The increased willingness by successive Swedish governments to export advanced conventional weapons has been a contentious and heatedly debated topic for several years. Many in academic and lay circles alike are perplexed and dismayed by what they perceive as an inconsistent Swedish foreign policy: On the one hand, championing peaceful, ethical, and altruistic practices on an international stage, and on the other, promoting increased militarization and upholding the interest-driven preferences of the arms political economy. Critics maintain that conventional weapons trade – especially to countries in the Global South – contradicts Sweden's oft-cited internationalist values, that is, normative commitments to duties beyond borders. After all, the Global South has historically been Sweden's ideals-driven area of concern regarding a wide range of social, political, economic, and environmental issues (as several chapters in this volume detail). In short, opponents argue that arms trade is antithetical to Sweden's professed foreign policy ideals and crucially undermines emancipatory and transformative processes in developing countries in various ways.

Evidently, Sweden's weapons exports raise a host of important and suggestive questions about so-called Swedish "exceptionalism." Yet despite provoking considerable debate, very little attention has been paid to the actual practice of selling advanced weapons products to the Global South in the post-Cold War era. More specifically, the Swedish policy-making elite's personal motivations and (often unofficial) actions driving these arms trade processes have yet to attract significant analysis in contemporary academic literature. The latter, however, is not entirely surprising. Arms deals are usually shrouded in secrecy and negotiations habitually take place behind closed doors between a relatively small and tightly knit group of elites.

Using the Sweden-South Africa JAS-39 Gripen fighter jet deal as a case study, this chapter sheds light on the paradoxical logics embedded in the policymaking elites' rationale for exporting advanced conventional weapons to the so-called developing world. In its broadest sense, this chapter argues that Sweden's arms trade with the Global South should not be understood in the widely used (and often implicit) explanation that it represents a shift from foreign policy ideals to interests. Instead, drawing on Aggestam and Hyde-Price's (2016) insightful analysis of Sweden's post-Cold War military activism, it is argued that these processes reflect something more profound: A dual strategy that is consciously pursued by elites, one that is driven both by the Swedish internationalist tradition of "doing good" and "being good" in the world and for instrumental purposes.

The empirical findings are based mainly on sixty-four semi-structured elite interviews and archival work that were conducted between October 2012 and May 2016 in Sweden and South Africa. Due to the particular focus of this study, the interview process targeted individuals with in-depth knowledge of weapons manufacturing/trade and foreign policy-related matters. Most of the interviews were conducted with current and former elites in government, Parliament, the wider arms industry, trade unions, the military, and some special advisors for government.[1]

The chapter proceeds as follows: The next section provides a contextual overview of the case study to familiarize the reader with some of the most pertinent empirical aspects related to the Gripen deal, as well as the major criticisms of that weapons sale. The purpose of such a synopsis is to "set the scene" for the remainder of this chapter. In the two following sections, the analysis considers how the Gripen deal transpired in the context of "doing good" and "being good," respectively. These discussions aim to highlight some of the professed "softer" values, beliefs, and symbolic factors that were connected to the decision and how both insiders and outsiders perceived them. Thereafter, the chapter maps out the awkward strategy of "enlightened interests" which was pursued by the policymaking elite. Such a discussion illustrates how Sweden's

[1] It was decided to conceal the identity of my respondents to avoid any possible harm that may arise after publication. According to the "Chatham House Rule," one can make such arrangements since the researcher is not required to identify the individual or the affiliation of the informant. While I do mention the type of actors interviewed during the research process, I do not make reference to any particular individual or their affiliation in the empirical discussion. Instead, interviews are numbered.

weapons exports to South Africa transpired in the context of continuity and change because it stood at the intersection of traditional normative commitments and a strategy that was born out of necessity. The chapter then proceeds to reflect the consequential material calculations regarding Sweden's weapons exports and why these were considered equally important for Sweden's overall foreign policy interests. In the concluding section, the wider implications that follow from the case study findings are identified and consideration is given to how we can think about these aspects conceptually and analytically.

5.2 Contextualizing the Sweden–South Africa Gripen Deal

On December 3, 1999 the government of South Africa signed a Strategic Defense Procurement Package (SDDP) with the Swedish aerospace and defense company (SAAB AB), and the Swedish government for 26 Advanced Light Fighter Aircraft (ALFA) JAS-39 Gripen. An SDDP differs from routine arms purchases in the sense that it is a rare and extremely expensive acquisition (Sylvester and Seegers 2008). The 26 Gripens cost the South African government approximately 1.5 billion US dollars,[2] which, at the time, was the most expensive foreign arms deal in both South Africa and Sweden's history (Eliasson 2010; Resare 2010). Conventional weapons acquisitions are habitually long-drawn-out affairs and the Sweden–South Africa Gripen deal is no exception. Even though the official contract was signed in 1999, the final payments for the Gripen deal only concluded at the end of 2019.[3] Moreover, because of the lifespan of fighter aircraft – typically 30–40 years – continuous agreements are negotiated between the buying and selling party.

Due to the social, economic, and political implications of an arms transfer of this nature, the Gripen deal (like most arms deals with developing countries) was subject to intense scrutiny and criticism from the outset. A weapons deal with South Africa was considered particularly controversial given Sweden's special relationship with that country. The special relationship was primarily shaped by events that occurred

[2] DefenceWeb. 2013. "A dozen SAAF Gripens in long-time storage." Available at www.defenceweb.co.za.

[3] The final cost of the deal is estimated to be significantly higher because the price of the aircraft was pegged to the prevailing exchange rate. Essentially, what this means is that the more the South African rand depreciates to the US dollar, the higher the cost to the South African government.

between the 1960s and 1994 when Sweden supported the liberation struggle movement against apartheid in Southern Africa. As the leading faction of the liberation struggle movement, the African National Congress (ANC) received by far the most Swedish aid during this period (in fact, the financial support the ANC-led liberation movement received from Sweden was the most offered by any country in the world).

In the lead up to the first democratic elections in 1994, the Swedish government and other organizations sharply intensified humanitarian aid and financial assistance "in recognition of the needs facing the ANC in order to establish itself inside [the country] and to be able to participate fully and effectively in the transformation of South Africa" (Sellström 2002: 828). Overall, through a series of social, economic, and political initiatives – including full-scale sanctions against the apartheid regime between 1987 and 1993 – Sweden's support had a measurable impact on South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994.

In the aftermath of the democratic transition, both the ANC-led government and the Swedish government acknowledged that one of the critical challenges for post-apartheid South Africa was to provide basic services and infrastructure to those who were disadvantaged by the apartheid system and to tackle the extreme income gaps between black and white. Hence, significant emphasis was placed on restitution, reconstruction, and development as part of a broader project of state-building in South Africa (SIDA 1998; SMFA 1999). It was because of these pressing issues that many critics questioned the logic behind the Gripen deal.

In both countries, civil society and religious groups, politicians from various parties, as well as numerous academics, analysts, and journalists, questioned the logic behind the Gripen deal by highlighting the contradictions of Sweden's support for the struggle against apartheid and the promotion of weapons exports to South Africa – a country facing a so-called desperate crisis of poverty. NGOs were particularly concerned about the large or, as they termed it, "one-sided" emphasis that the Swedish government and industry placed on trade and industrial offset agreements (interviews #1, #2, #3).

In addition, the security rationale behind the Gripen deal was also heavily criticized for various reasons. The mainstay of these arguments revolved around the prioritization of narrowly defined state-centric security over human security. For example, with the inauguration of the democratically elected government in 1994, there was little reason for the post-apartheid state to fear regional military threats (cf. Harris

2002; Holden 2008; Feinstein 2009, 2012; Holden and van Vuuren 2011). Furthermore, despite South Africa's ageing Air Force and Navy equipment, it was still the military heavyweight in the region – possessing overwhelming defensive and offensive capabilities. Questions were thus raised whether conventional security threats outweighed other more credible security challenges for South Africa. Critics maintained that the real threats to South Africa's national security lay in nonmilitary fields such as HIV/AIDS[4] and widespread poverty (ASC 1999).

5.3 The Intention of "Doing Good"

Owing to the widespread criticisms of the Gripen deal, former Swedish Prime Minister, Göran Persson, assured aggrieved parties who were concerned about the financial strain the acquisition would place on the new democracy that the Gripen deal would not detract from the "much greater" values-driven relationship between the two countries (Swedish Parliament, Protocol 1999/2000:38). Such rhetoric, based on the Swedish government's historic commitment to socio-economic and socio-political equality in South Africa, was common in Persson's Gripen deal rebuttals during Parliamentary sessions.

One of the key assumptions put forward by those elites who championed the Gripen deal in Sweden was that the Gripen program would transfer knowledge from the Swedish industrial base to South Africa through research, education, and training (interviews #17, #18, #19). Hence, the idea put forward by several respondents was that the Gripen program would "add value" to South Africa's broader development goals, especially the projected technology spillovers which would be beneficial for the wider South African industrial base (interviews #8, #19, #23, #54).

A senior defense official explained that Sweden's "generous technology transfers [connected to the Gripen deal] was mostly based on a paying it forward principle" (interview #56). Namely, it refrained from a hard protectionist and zero-sum approach by opting for a more internationalist long-term cooperative approach. As one defense advisor observed, "The way we were thinking about was that if you buy our plane then you get a lot of training, a lot of jobs, a lot of technology transfers, and a lot of broad-based development cooperation" (interview #45).

[4] At the time, South Africa had some of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world (cf. van der Westhuizen 2005).

Another important motivation was offsets, which are often referred to as industrial participation programs. Such an arrangement requires the seller country (Sweden) to reinvest weapons sales proceeds in the purchasing country (Brauer and Dunne 2004a, 2004b). These so-called "offsets" purportedly offer significant benefits to developing countries in various ways, the most common being: (i) promoting and investing in industrial activity; (ii) counter-trade – an agreement to buy components from local manufacturers in exchange for the required defense hardware; and (iii) reducing the overall procurement cost of the buying country. SAAB proposed an initial offset under-taking until 2011 with a total cost of 8.7 billion US dollars, of which 7.2 billion were National Industrial Participation (NIP) and 1.5 billion were Defense Industrial Participation (DIP); that is, direct military offsets (Axelson and Lundmark 2010: 14).

Aligning with South Africa's broader national development plan, the Swedish offset package specified that it would create approximately 27,000 jobs in South Africa (interview #2) and that skills would be transferred via a Skills Transfer and Technology (STTP) initiative, which would have a significant impact on the way future manufacturing would take place in South Africa's defense industrial base (cf. van Dyk, Haines, and Wood 2016). These competence development schemes highlighted above were habitually cited by government, defense industry, and trade union officials as key factors connected to the broader Gripen program. For example, elite respondents asserted that "Sweden was pushing for incremental socio-economic change in South Africa with the Gripen deal" (interview #13) and "developing the concept value of the Gripen program as a public good for the South Africans" (interview #16). As one politician explained: "We wanted to create capacity in South Africa. We wanted to make a change. We wanted to make South Africa a better and more modern country" (interview #51).

At the same time, the policymaking elite in Sweden also tapped into a very sensitive socio-economic and political phenomenon in post-apartheid South Africa: Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). BEE is a racially selective program that was launched by the Nelson Mandela government to redress the inequalities of apartheid in the business sector. An important part of the justification for the Gripen deal with South Africa was that it would specifically benefit black Africans (interview #6). Similar arguments were made in Sweden's Parliamentary debates. The motivation for the government's decision to export the aircraft was, it was suggested, ultimately in line with South Africa's broader development goals, which involved developing black talent (Swedish Parliament

Protocol, 2000/01:106). The assessment that the Gripen program would benefit black Africans also directly aligned with South Africa's national reconstruction program that started in 1996 – the aim of which was to rectify the socio-economic imbalances created by apartheid.

To further satisfy Parliament and other dissenting voices in Sweden, guarantees were made by the Persson government that BEE-owned companies would benefit significantly from the Gripen deal (interviews #9, #15, #20, #22). SAAB officials also used the BEE component to justify the export of the Gripen aircraft and the proposed offset projects that would benefit South Africans (interviews #17, #18, #19, #23). In doing so, they too appeased those parties who were critical of the Gripen deal by promising job opportunities for poor black South Africans and financial gain for BEE-owned companies.

Interestingly, many elite respondents in favor of the arms procurement package also put forward the notion that the Gripen deal would help uphold and even advance democracy in South Africa in various ways. In fact, most respondents indicated an ideological inclination to see South Africa's democracy prosper and succeed or, as a senior politician put it, "survive and strive" (interview #25). Asked how the Gripen deal would uphold or advance democracy, one respondent explained the following:

> If you look at our foreign policy over the years towards South Africa, most of it was based on democratic principles. We supported the liberation movement because it was fighting for democracy. We helped build their institutions and we trained their people so that they could run South Africa in a democratic manner. But there are many ways to support democracy, I have just explained a few. Another way of doing that was by giving South Africa the JAS [Gripen] so that it can help to uphold a democratic state. We wanted to try all possible ways to ensure that South Africa's democracy succeeded. You could say that selling the Gripen was a symbol of democracy building in South Africa. (interview #4)

The quotation above seems extraordinary, considering Sweden's oft-cited semi-pacifist international image. However, such aspects were routinely rationalized by the policymaking elite as being part of Sweden's own ideational assessments of democracy, in particular, notions surrounding the sanctity of sovereignty. Overall, these examples reveal that there was a strong belief reverberating through government and business corridors alike that the Gripen deal had various "good" implications – aspects that aligned with Sweden's broader internationalists foreign policy ideals toward South Africa.

5.4 The Utility of "Being Good"

The belief that Sweden was a "good" partner for defense cooperation or considered "better" and "more moral" than other arms-exporting countries was frequently echoed by various respondents. Moreover, being perceived as nonaggressive and generous was considered vital for exporting the Gripen abroad. As one interviewee noted, "there was deep fear in the Swedish business community and in government circles not to be seen as an aggressive partner who uses coercive tactics" (interview #48). In other words, being different from the "Americans, British, and French" was vital for Sweden's arms exports to South Africa (interviews #23, #25, #45, #49).

Following on from the quotation above, trust was considered one of the most important ingredients when engaging in sensitive defense cooperation. That is to say, the Gripen aircraft, the Gripen program, and the "Swedes" symbolized trust. Trust is important in foreign policy "because without trust you have nothing," as one former Swedish politician remarked (interview #49). Moreover, trust is an important ingredient in business because "business is always based on trust. If you already have that, then it is much easier to do business, especially an arms deal" (interview #56). In fact, many respondents considered the South African Gripen deal, with its associated industrial offset contracts, as "a symbol of trust." It was, as one Swedish politician remarked, "probably the most visible point of trust that you can have. Because the South Africans trusted us, all we needed was a handshake and that was the deal. And that is how it was" (interview #20).

The absence of a colonial history in Africa seems to have been one of the key principles of Sweden's "trust image." As a South African government official stated, "Doing an arms deal with Sweden is not like doing an arms deal with France or Britain with their colonial histories in Africa. These big powers cannot really be trusted after what they have done to our African brothers and sisters" (interview #34). Another interviewee noted, "The fact that Sweden does not have a colonial history in Africa was very important for us" (interview #36).

The perception of Sweden's "good international conduct" over the years, as one senior Swedish politician observed, "has created a situation where most countries around the world see us as a country that is driven by a moral identity. Generally speaking, this is our great strength, it is also very good for business of course" (interview #22). The eleven trade officials interviewed for this study all echoed similar views than their

political counterparts. For example, arguing that, "Sweden's moral identity provides it with leverage in trade deals" (interview #46); "Sweden is a moral power because it represents a specific course of history and this affords it a special license to trade" (interview #5); or the assertion that "Sweden's moral identity has helped it to create very close political and business relationships with countries in the Third World" (interview #31).

In practical terms, Sweden's "good" identity was useful for gaining access to and aligning with the policymaking elite in South Africa. The high regard the South Africans held for the Swedes explains, at least in part, the extraordinary access Swedish government and trade union officials, as well as business personnel, had to the political top structures in the lead-up to the Gripen deal. A South African government official captured this experience rather well when he asserted, "The Swedish Ambassador enjoys better access to top government people than most other Ambassadors to South Africa. This is because he is the Swedish Ambassador, not because he is necessarily a nice person" (interview #37).

Reflecting on their extraordinary access to the policymaking elite in South Africa, Swedish elites connected to the Gripen deal claimed, in one way or another, that they were received warmly by top ANC government officials; they were treated much better than other groups marketing defense products; and they were listened to and taken seriously (interviews #23, #44, #46, #51, #57, #59). Because of Sweden's favorable international image, and in South Africa, several Swedish elite respondents mentioned how ANC government officials did not distinguish between different Swedish actors but rather viewed Swedes or Sweden as a monolithic unit which stood for something "different" and "special" (interviews #15, #44, #47, #51, #57, #63).

The quotations above clearly illustrate that the mechanism that connected transnational actors in the Gripen deal was not only individual identities or personalities but also the collective image of a nation. However, a significant finding that emerges from this study is how this national image was also perceived in terms of status and prestige symbols regarding the Gripen aircraft itself.

Notwithstanding that several defense analysts often referred to the Gripen as the "IKEA plane" – given that it can be easily maintained with minimum personnel and no sophisticated tools needed (interview #19) – many respondents indicated that Sweden's ability to manufacture the Gripen provided it with a "good" image in the international domain. For

example, the notion that the Gripen has become a mark of national prestige because "only a handful of countries in the world have the capacity and impetus to develop such an aircraft" (interview #7). Hence, being able to develop a highly advanced fighter such as the Gripen "is a great accomplishment and says quite a lot about a country" (interview #8). As a former foreign policy advisor to the Swedish government observed, "our defense industry has become very good at making high-tech and niche products. It is part of who we are. Like it or not, a product like the Gripen has become part of Sweden's national identity" (interview #61). Yet, the Gripen seems to occupy a special place in Sweden's national identity inventory. It is one of the few weapon systems with which Swedish elites comfortably identify. The following expression by one of the leading security experts in Sweden provides a rare insight into this mindset: "Politicians are more comfortable with sales in the aeronautics sector because it is not problematic. It is much better for our Prime Minister to sell the Gripen than selling canons. He does not want to stand in front of a canon and look happy. I mean canons or small arms are a more clear sign of selling death" (interview #54).

Curiously, when asked about the nature of such a weapons product and the human cost connected to its use, many respondents resolutely asserted that the "Gripen is a plane made for peace and not for war," or as one interviewee put it, "The Gripen is there to help, not to harm" (interview #14). What these and other examples in this section show is that the policymaking elite in Sweden was consciously vacillating between ethical convictions and weapons status symbols regarding Sweden's international image. More importantly, these dual national images of "being good" were important for both outsiders and insiders to validate a Swedish weapons deal. There thus appears to have been an explicit recognition that purchasing fighter jets from Sweden did not only foster a long-term technical or economic relationship but also embodied a socio-political constructed meaning. After all, "every machine has a socially constructed meaning and a socially orientated objective [and] can never be fully understood or predicated independently of their social context" (Eyre and Suchman 1996: 86).

5.5 Awkwardly Pursuing "Enlightened Interests"

Despite the ongoing ostensibly altruistic posturing by most state and societal actors in Sweden when South Africa was being discussed, there

simultaneously existed an unambiguous sense of return for Sweden's generous apartheid solidarity during most discussions on the Gripen deal. Curiously, many Swedish elites actually considered the Gripen deal as South Africa's solidarity toward Sweden. One respondent provided a fascinating account of how elements within the Persson government viewed the deal as inverted solidarity: "We were by their side during apartheid and now they had to find ways to work with us in various ways. I scratch your back and you scratch mine. For us it was a positive thing to do an arms deal with South Africa because that was a way for them to show solidarity with us" (interview #44).

To rationalize the aforementioned strategy, a former special advisor to the Swedish government argued that "there was nothing strange with the approach of wanting to get something in return for our support, there was nothing upsetting about it; it was actually quite normal for us to hold such a view" (interview #29). A similar opinion was echoed by a prominent figure at one of Sweden's most powerful trade unions: "When you put so much money down as we did, you want to get your money back somehow. That does not necessarily mean that our relationship was now dictated by realism. But we invested a lot of time and money in the ANC and we felt that they were now in a position to give something back in a practical way" (interview #59).

Being aware of the paradoxical logics at play regarding inverted solidarity through weapons acquisitions, respondents routinely reverted to the above-indicated tactic of justifying their actions in abstract ways. For example, referring to such a strategy as one that is "based on a different type of idealism – an idealism that has different scales and one that has evolved towards a practical application of idealism" (interview #47). Or, a strategy where "idealism and realism work together in a non-threating way" (interview #44). However, the "working together" of Swedish idealism and realism extended much further than the inverted solidarity idea. In what follows, I demonstrate how it was consciously and actively pursued in broader economic and politically instrumental ways as well.

The most salient example of the "idealism-realism" strategy was on open display a month before the Gripen deal was signed in South Africa. In November 1999 a large delegation of Swedish government personnel (including former Prime Minister Göran Persson) and business delegates traveled to South Africa to "celebrate the special relationship between the two countries" (interview #64). The visit culminated in "a huge exhibition at Gallagher Golf Estate [in Johannesburg], which was

like a Swedish showroom, a promotion of Sweden and everything Swedish. We had everything from stuffed moose to fake snow and even human sized models of the JAS [Gripen]," as one trade official recalled (interview #21). On the one hand, the Swedish delegation "was in South Africa to celebrate the whole apartheid struggle thing with the ANC and to support the ANC's policies. They were also promoting Swedish-funded development partnerships at that time" (interview #21). On the other hand, however, they were also "showing off Swedish industry and industrial cooperation projects connected to the Gripen program" (interview #52). A senior trade officer captures the dual strategy on display in November 1999:

> Some people thought it was all a bit bizarre. I mean, here we are celebrating the struggle against apartheid and our special relationship with the black people of South Africa and then the next minute we are talking about selling one of the world's most advanced fighter jets to the South Africans. But it makes sense when you look at it. The relationship was changing and the Gripen deal was actually a good way to bring the two countries closer together. But yes, let's be honest, we went there to brag. We wanted to show them that we were very competitive on fighters, that we had the best business products and that they were buying the whole Swedish package when they buy these planes. That was part of the edge that we could offer. We had bragging rights on our moral image and we had bragging rights on our good products. It's a fine line to walk of course, but it worked. (interview #31)

Two respondents who were directly involved in the negotiations for the Gripen deal eloquently summarized the dual purpose of the 1999 trip as well as some of the overall logics driving the wider arms deal: "Yes, we held hands for justice with them, but we had this great plane that we could sell to the South Africans" (interview #11). Swedish elites are, as the other noted, "a little bit schizophrenic when it comes to these matters" (interview #49).

Coinciding with the previously discussed marketing efforts was also an explicit understanding among the policymaking elite that a Gripen deal with South Africa would provide Sweden with an opportunity to influence a wider audience in various ways. For example, a defense ministry official noted that "a successful deal with South Africa would elevate the profile of the Gripen and make the plane more marketable to other nations" (interview #56). One of the reasons why a deal with South Africa would elevate the Gripen's profile was because of South Africa's

image in the international domain at that time. As a Swedish government official candidly remarked:

> South Africa was a victorious nation where black people had made their way under the leadership of a very famous statesman, Nelson Mandela. So, in that sense it was an example of a victorious state wanting to buy weapons from Sweden. We thought about it like this: the sale of the Gripen to South Africa was a sale to a winner. The ANC was a winner. Selling such a product to a winner that fought against apartheid was a very good signal to other post-colonial countries because they would say: Look, Mandela's government wants to buy the Gripen from Sweden, maybe we should too. (interview #57)

A similar sentiment was expressed by a former foreign policy advisor to the government:

> To sell to South Africa was symbolic because you would be selling to this new nation which had been oppressed for so long. It was actually important for us to trade this weapon with a black government. To be honest, this was a very important factor for some people in the Social Democrats. You know, selling to a black government would be a huge achievement. (interview #60)

The marketing strategy cited above, extraordinary as it may seem, was echoed by several Swedish trade officials, other government personnel, and trade union officials. It was, as one respondent noted, "a strategy that was well thought through, quite thoroughly actually" (interview #30). The following striking example further illustrates how deeply entrenched these "enlightened interests" were in the policymaking elite's thinking regarding the Gripen deal:

> We had the opportunity to train black people not only to work on the Gripen or manufacture parts for the Gripen, but also to become pilots and fly the Gripen. Imagine that, imagine having a black person fly the Gripen! Or even better, imagine having a black female fly the Gripen! That would be a great achievement for us. And of course, a great marketing strategy for the future. (interview #14)

In addition to aspects discussed already, there were, of course, also "enlightened interests" regarding security matters connected to the Gripen deal – issues that directly aligned with Sweden's post-Cold War military activism as well the legitimacy of the aircraft itself. For example, the Gripen deal, as one official asserted, "would confirm Sweden's commitment to the African continent. It was also a way for Sweden and

South Africa to cooperate on security matters in the international and multilateral arena" (interview #20). Such an assessment was echoed in 2003 by South Africa's Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, who reiterated that Sweden and South Africa aimed to combat conflict in Africa and increase security cooperation to restore peace and stability.[5]

Hence, the Gripen deal was viewed by many elites in terms of the opportunities it provided to realize broader security goals of "peace in Africa" (Government Communication 2007/2008: 51). In that context, it was argued that the export of the Gripen to South Africa essentially acted as an extension of the Swedish government's new and more active post-Cold War international security strategy.

5.6 Unflinching Realpolitik

As was noted elsewhere in this chapter, a major conventional arms deal with South Africa (and other countries for that matter) inevitably had important security and economic implications. This final empirical section highlights some of the explicitly cited interest-driven aspects related to Sweden's arms political economy and foreign policy concerning the Gripen deal with South Africa.

Respondents routinely noted that the Gripen deal with South Africa aligned with a broader foreign policy reorientation regarding exports in the 1990s, especially arms exports. A senior politician in Sweden, who referred to himself as "the father of the Gripen project," explained that during the "Cold War, the government calculated that we needed approximately 288 fighters to defend Sweden. We planned for 300 just to be safe" (interview #50). However, the end of the Cold War significantly changed the threat scenario for Sweden. As the previous respondent asserted, "The end of the Cold War changed everything. We no longer needed so many fighter jets. We only needed like 200 planes and not 300" (interview #50). The diminished need for fighter acquisitions after the Cold War posed unique challenges for the government, which, until then, was the sole customer of the Gripen program.

With the government's defense procurement preferences drastically changing after the Cold War, there were genuine concerns that projects such as the Gripen would be discontinued if trading partners were not found. As one respondent recounted, "There was a real possibility that if

[5] "Zuma Opens SA Fighter Plane Production." *Mail & Guardian*, October 13, 2003.

we didn't sell the Gripen to foreign customers, then the Gripen program could have collapsed. That would mean the loss of thousands of jobs, which nobody in our coalition wanted" (interview #46). A Member of Parliament explained how important the jobs issue was in the South African Gripen deal, especially in the context of regional dynamics in Sweden:

> The jobs issue was a huge aspect in the Gripen deal with South Africa. We as politicians care deeply about jobs, especially the Social Democrats. Many of the supporters of the Social Democrats live in places like Linköping where there are factories or other businesses connected to the defense industry. These places are often the largest employer in these regions. Look, you must understand that this JAS [Gripen] issue was important because it helped to create and pay for Linköping University, people's jobs, careers, people's lives. (interview #64)

In addition to the latter, there were also interrelated transnational commercial incentives for weapons exports in products such as the Gripen. Like all major weapons exporting countries in the post-Cold War era, "the defense industry and other heavy industries in Sweden are primarily focused on market access for their products," as one politician noted (interview #25). He continued by arguing: "The logic at play here is that you make niche products for your own consumption primarily. But because you have such a large industrial system creating these products, you must export the rest to make profit to survive. For that to happen, you must go where the money is. In 1999 South Africa was where the money was" (interview #25).

Most respondents considered South Africa as a favorable destination for trade in products such as the Gripen because it would also open possibilities for trade with other African countries. As one trade official explained, "Many of us considered South Africa as a trade steppingstone to the rest of the continent. In other words, getting our foot into the South African market could act as a springboard into the rest of Africa" (interview #44). More specifically, "setting-up shop in the region's dominant power provided Sweden with the opportunity to build trade relations with other countries that were dependent on South Africa" (interview #21). SAAB's recent marketing efforts to sell the Gripen to Botswana illustrate this point. As one respondent explained:

> Look at how we are approaching the Botswana case. SAAB already has facilities in South Africa, which could be used to support Botswana's Gripen aircraft. It would make servicing easy and we could export

> products for their Gripen directly from South Africa to Botswana. It fits into a trade model, which we thought about long ago. South Africa was, and continues to be, important for our future operations in the region. (interview #58)

Ultimately, an arms deal with South Africa "created a mass mentality in Sweden's relatively small but highly engaged business community. People realized that they could trade more with South Africa and other African countries because of this deal as well as move their businesses there" (interview #44). The "Gripen deal opened up a lot of possibilities and everybody wanted to join the party," as one respondent candidly remarked (interview #47). Hence, "the Gripen deal was one of the most salient examples of how a massive investment was used to ignite a hugely expensive and expansive trade deal" (interview #52). Because of business interests connected to South African Gripen deal, "you had a massive influx of Swedish companies into the country. Three hundred plus Swedish companies entered South Africa in a very short period" (interview #31).

The transnational economic activities highlighted above had direct implications for political influence because the Gripen deal with South Africa allowed the government to have a larger say in the affairs of South Africa. The latter was not necessarily viewed as coercive diplomacy or the subjugation of the so-called underdeveloped "South." Instead, the policymaking elite viewed it as a vehicle through which to achieve pragmatic goals. As one government official noted:

> The Gripen deal helped Sweden to have a larger say in the affairs of South Africa because we took over a large part of their domestic defense industry. We may not be like the British or the Americans when it comes to these things, but we want to be important and we want to be influential. A way of doing that is by exporting weapons and cooperating in security and defense with other countries. (interview #24)

The quotation above speaks to and confirms a long-held assumption in arms trade literature, which is that a major incentive for arms trade from the supplying state is to gain influence in the domestic affairs of the receiving state (Neuman and Harkavy 1980; Pierre 1982; Krause 1992). These findings also align with Sweden's post-Cold War military activism, which clearly highlights the policymaking elite's ambition to strengthen Sweden's voice abroad, be influential, and have a say in the affairs of other states (Aggestam and Hyde-Price 2016).

The dual assessment of the policymaking elite, however, was that Sweden would also be politically weakened internationally if it did not

develop, manufacture, and export high-tech conventional weapons systems such as fighter jets. One government official argued, "If we did not produce our own weapons and exported it to countries like South Africa, we would not be trustworthy." He clarified the latter by arguing that Sweden's "security policies would be illegitimate because what is Sweden when we say we are non-aligned, but we are dependent on foreign deliveries for our armed forces?" (interview #51). His colleague went further and asserted that despite Sweden's post-neutrality reorientation in the post-Cold War era, and the increased globalization of the weapons industry, Swedish arms production and exports were vital ingredients of the country's legitimacy profile (interview #50).

In terms of legitimacy, there was also a vested interest that the South African Air Force (SAAF) uses the Gripen on military operations in Africa because it would enhance the profile of the aircraft. For example, asked whether Swedish interests regarding South Africa and Africa's security needs were a guiding principle as opposed to mere rhetoric, one respondent remarked, "No, it was really in our interest that South Africa uses this plane and that it was not only a product for show. So much of the security interests were connected to the fact that South Africa actually uses the Gripen on their security operations in the region" (interview #56). Asked why it was so important for South Africa to use the Gripen for operations in Africa, several interviewees explained that South Africa's military operations in Africa would provide the Gripen with a sense of legitimacy in the international domain because fighter aircraft are usually judged by their record of accomplishment in conflict situations. Before the Gripen deal with South Africa, the Gripen had not been tested in combat, which created some difficulties in justifying its credibility.

As Åke Svensson, former president of SAAB, publicly acknowledged, "the success of future negotiations with other countries depends on the performance of the aircraft in South Africa."[6] A defense ministry official similarly noted that "the Gripen deal with South Africa had huge long-term implications. As the old saying goes, first impressions last. A successful deal with South Africa would elevate the profile of the Gripen and make the plane more marketable to other nations" (interview #56).

[6] J. Erasmus (2010). Gripen first for SA woman fighter pilot. South Africa Info. Available at www.southafrica.info.

Based on Sweden's security doctrine over the years, there was also a view that the Gripen could act as a strategic deterrent to potential aggressors in the region (interviews #22, #24, #54). This view, it was often argued, should be understood in the context of Sweden's own assessment of the role of its armed forces and military equipment internationally. The following quotation demonstrates this point rather well: "It was important for us that South Africa had these fighter aircraft. We wanted them to be a strong regional power. Having a fighter like the Gripen is a symbol of their power and stability. For them to have sophisticated fighters sends a strong security message to other nations" (interview #55). Another senior politician provided a more candid interpretation: "Our way of protecting our sovereignty is through having very advanced weapons. Say what you want, that is how we protect it. Yes, there are international laws blah blah blah [sic]. But us selling the Gripen to South Africa actually mirrors who we are and what we believe in" (interview #15).

Several high-ranking officials in government reiterated the deterrence rationale above. To put the Gripen deal into context, one respondent, who was involved in Swedish politics for 40 years, argued that, "We view weapons manufacturing and exports as a way to show our deterrence and to show our capability. The Gripen deal with South Africa was part of that thinking" (interview #57).

5.7 Conclusions

By analyzing the South African Gripen deal as a case study, this chapter provided some crucial insights into the paradoxical logics embedded in the Swedish policymaking elites' rationale for exporting advanced conventional weapons to a country in the Global South. Overall, the Gripen deal with South Africa demonstrates how the policymaking elite in Sweden consciously pursued a dual policy, that is, a strategy that was driven both by the Swedish internationalist tradition of "doing good" and "being good" in the world, but also for instrumental purposes. Each of these processes was evident in (i) circumstances that can be immediately connected to the Gripen deal and were consciously considered by the decision-makers and (ii) more contextual circumstances related to the larger economic and geopolitical structure which affected the broader orientation of policymaking.

The paradoxical nature of Sweden's post-Cold War arms exports to South Africa is a clear example where traditional national interests such

as national sovereignty (Gustavsson 1998), national survival (Makko 2012), and broader commercial and security interests (Huldt 2005) are conflated with cosmopolitan ideas of a shared humanity based on ethical commitment to international cooperation and justice, solidarity, human rights, peace, and democracy (Lawler 2013; Bergman-Rosamond 2016). Such a dual foreign policy stance consisting of cosmopolitan and statists objectives as it relates to the production and circulation of advanced weapons products distinguishes Sweden from most cognate nonaligned and neutral states such as Ireland, Austria, Finland, and Switzerland.

While aspects related to "doing good" and "being good" were perhaps expected findings in a study involving Sweden, it was how they were connected to weapons exports that made for interesting reading. The wider implications of these findings are that the manufacturing and export of advanced weapons products have become embedded societal symbols of Swedish identity – a phenomenon that also serves to conflate the operations of a militarized state with the perceived ideals of Swedish mediation, honest brokership, and overall as a significant contributor to frameworks of promoting ethical and peaceful methods on a global stage.

One of the major messages of this book is that the Scandinavian brand is an entity composed of external presentation and reputation building, and domestic self-presentation and identity building. As Browning notes, analyzing branding strategies "enables us to see that foreign policy is not simply about interreacting with others but also entails communicating values and identity narratives to citizens" (2015: 196). As this chapter detailed, conventional arms trade is far more than just procurement for military hardware because the supplier is not just selling a product, it is selling a broad-based "national package." More specifically, when Swedish elites sell the Gripen fighter jet, it is selling more than an aircraft; it is selling an idea – in this case a quintessential idea of "Swedishness," which is perceived and projected by both insiders and outsiders as something better and different from others. In other words, where, how, and by whom a conventional weapons product is manufactured seems to be just as important as its functionality and price tag.

An important finding of the present study was how the notion of trust played a significant role in the decision to export and buy the Gripen. For example, many respondents considered trust as one of the most important ingredients for engaging in sensitive weapons industry cooperation. The wider implications of such a finding are that it speaks directly to one of the significant ingredients of nation branding practices. For example, Anholt (2010) points out how trust raises expectations of integrity and

competence of a nation brand; van der Westhuizen (2003) demonstrates how trust allows nation brands to reverberate globally; Browning (2015) notes the importance of trust for creating "safe" nation brand identities; and Giddens (1991) argues that trustworthiness is important for managing a general sense of ontological security.

In relation to the latter point, the deeper relevance of the current findings also demonstrates that inasmuch as weapons such as the Gripen provide a sense of order and physical security in an ever-changing world, such products are also conceived as an ideological lynchpin for securing and even bolstering self-identity as well as build a sense of self-esteem, dignity, and legitimacy. These aspects, I argue, reinforce the taken-for-granted notion that conventional weapons are somehow the bedrock of state-building, and procurement of such weapons systems is justified because they represent symbolic power. Yet Sweden's impartial image on the international stage still seems to support its ability to pass as an inherently well-meaning and generally peaceful exporter in the global arms industry. While Sweden's weapons exports are considered a public good both at home and abroad, these initiatives are also the product of more calculating processes relating to Swedish elites' engagement with the international community by leveraging that country's so-called principled national identity.

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6

Danish Development Cooperation

Withering Heights

LARS ENGBERG-PEDERSEN AND ADAM MOE FEJERSKOV

6.1 Introduction

Danish development cooperation has changed significantly since the 1990s. Both in terms of quantity, character, and organization, Danish foreign aid has been altered so thoroughly that it is difficult to recognize today. Alongside sudden dramatic cuts to aid in other countries,[1] this demonstrates the peculiar nature of the policy field of development cooperation, whose stakeholders are either absent, as in beneficiaries in countries far away, few as in those earning their living from the "aid industry," or disinterested, as in voters with only marginal interests in the field. This chapter analyzes the changes that have taken place in Danish aid over the past decades and seeks to provide some explanations of these changes and their drivers.

In the literature, there is a long-standing discussion of how to understand and explain development cooperation. Multi-country economic regressions have been used to determine the motivations behind aid allocations (Maizels and Nissanke 1984; Alesina and Dollar 2000; Hoeffler and Outram 2011), and multi-country qualitative studies have sought to establish causal factors and mechanisms explaining the organization of foreign aid (Stokke 1989; Lancaster 2007; van der Veen 2011; Lundsgaarde 2013). While the first tend to link development cooperation to foreign policies, the latter have been preoccupied by domestic factors. Moreover, the studies with one notable exception (Lancaster 2007) tend to focus on a single explanatory variable rather than the interaction of several different factors (Engberg-Pedersen 2016). Our contribution is to emphasize that both domestic and international elements are important

[1] For instance, 66 percent cut in Spain from 2009 to 2012, 22 percent in the Netherlands from 2010 to 2014, and 28 percent in Finland from 2014 to 2017.

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for the understanding of changes of development cooperation. We do so by emphasizing the historical development of Danish foreign aid which, although today substantially different from the 1990s, builds on earlier experience and practices (Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov 2018).

Furthermore, this chapter discusses two particular questions raised in this book and relates them to Danish aid, namely Scandinavian exceptionalism and the end of aid. With respect to the first, it is tempting to ask: Is Denmark an exception to Scandinavian exceptionalism? Whereas Sweden has had several powerful idealists and internationalists as leading political figures (Olaf Palme, Dag Hammarskjöld), and Norway has long pursued a role as a peacemaker in conflicts all over the world, the Danish approach has been much more characterized by pragmatism, mercantilism, and subservience to international trends. It appears neither altruistic, idealist, nor driven by exceptional motives of humanitarianism, though it is sometimes presented as such. While aid professionals have sought to put together a professional and responsive development cooperation, politicians have never assigned aid a significant role in Danish foreign policy in ways similar to Sweden and Norway.

On the second question, numerous observers and authors have declared the end of aid (Gill 2019), and there are definitely signs of disarray and decay. Danish development cooperation could be seen as an example of that trend, and the global tendencies toward increased nationalism are another indication that the days of international development cooperation may be over. Nevertheless, total Official Development Assistance (ODA) is not decreasing, and most middle-income countries seem to be construing their own development cooperation (see Fejerskov, Lundsgaarde, and Cold-Ravnkilde 2017), from Brazil to South Africa to Turkey. Foreign aid thus still widely appears to be perceived as an instrument of influence and cooperation, though it is used for all sorts of purposes, many of whom do not necessarily have development itself or support to poor people as primary objectives. Development cooperation accordingly seems to be in a process of reconceptualization and transformation, away from a focus on poverty reduction and aid effectiveness, rather than experiencing a withering away altogether.

Apart from documenting the changes of Danish development cooperation, this chapter's main argument is that these changes are the results of interactions between Denmark's particular history, international changes, and contingent political events. Thus, Danish aid is less a reflection of a political ambition to brand Denmark internationally as a

humanitarian frontrunner, and more a by-product of unfolding domestic political priorities influenced by international events and changes. While Danish politicians regularly boast about how the country's development cooperation comes out at the top of international assessments of foreign aid, this is a concern which is easily trumped by other interests, as we will show. Only during a brief period in the 1990s did developments coalesce so that long-term poverty reduction seemed to be the real, and not only the official, objective.

This chapter is organized as follows. The next part highlights a set of features that have characterized Danish development cooperation since its beginning. In the second and major part, we turn towards the significant changes that have taken place over the last decade, including cutbacks, reorientation, and a general transformation of aid. Here, we focus specifically on five issues and show how changes in each have been driven by contingent events and domestic politics more so than ambitions of Scandinavian exceptionalism or the position as a humanitarian great power. We end by concluding on the nature of the changes taking place over the past decades, and the drivers of those changes.

6.2 Pragmatism vs Political Priorities: Poverty Focus vs Commercial Interests

In its early days, Danish foreign aid focused on project assistance and technology transfer with a large involvement in integrated rural development in Bangladesh in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. In 1978, some years later than Sweden and Norway, Danish aid reached the quantitative target of constituting 0.7 percent of GNI, established by the UN, and in 1985 a majority in parliament decided that Denmark's development assistance should increase to 1.0 percent of GNI by 1992 where it stayed throughout the 1990s.

Noninterference in political processes in decolonized societies was a significant priority in the first many years of Danish development cooperation (Bach et al. 2008), and a partnership approach has been a major discursive reality in discussions of foreign aid. Pragmatic partnerships were, albeit with different interpretations, important notions all the way up to the adoption of the Paris Declaration in 2005 with its focus on ownership and alignment, and all major strategies have had a separate chapter on how the cooperation should be based on partners' priorities.

Despite this emphasis on cooperation, political priorities began to be established in the second half of the 1980s. The first general policy

drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was published in 1988 (Danida 1988) identifying six qualitative goals. In 1994, a comprehensive policy, *A World in Development,* came out making poverty reduction the overall objective, with gender equality, environment, and democratization three cross-cutting concerns (Danida 1994). A number of changes took place during these years. In 1989 it was decided that Danish bilateral aid should be concentrated on twenty so-called co-operation countries. The idea was that Danish aid had little impact because it was too thinly spread. This has had some effects, as foreign aid of most other Western and "like-minded" countries exhibits significantly more proliferation across recipient countries compared to Denmark (Acharya, Fuzzo de Lima, and Moore 2006). Moreover, the 1994 policy announced a change from project aid to sector-wide approaches. Underlying this new orientation were two rationales: firstly, that projects tended to become "development islands" with few sustainable long-term effects and, secondly, that effective sector institutions are crucial conditions for development. Moreover, the change corresponded nicely with the view that sustainable development cannot be created by outsiders. These ideas were repeated six years later in a new general development policy, *Partnership 2000* (Danida 2000). Moreover, a significantly strengthened focus on environmental issues emerged in the late 1980s, particularly as a consequence of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It was agreed in parliament to create a separate fund for aid to the environment and to catastrophes. The plan was that this fund should grow to 0.5 percent of GNI by 2002 in addition to the ODA now constituting 1.0 percent of GNI.

Thus, the relationship between pragmatic partnerships and political priorities gradually changed around 1990 in favor of the latter without eliminating the former. This change mirrors largely international trends before and after the end of the Cold War. Institutional development, democratization, and macro-economic responsibility were central notions in the wake of the economically catastrophic decade of the 1980s particularly in Africa. Moreover, the increasing amounts of money set aside for ODA were difficult to justify without referring to Danish political priorities.

Another long-standing concern in Danish development cooperation is a focus on poverty reduction which sometimes has played an important role and sometimes not. It is the overall goal of all laws and strategies for Danish development cooperation, and even though other priorities have often dominated the agenda, poverty reduction is always a potentially

important argument. Against this worthy ambition stand short-term interests of which a significant one is commercial. The "percentage of return," signifying the proportion of aid going to Danish companies and jobs, was a dominant issue in Danish foreign aid until the first years of the new millennium. As much as 70 percent of bilateral assistance was tied to Danish products, firms, and experts until around 1989 (Bach et al. 2008: 488). Despite criticism from OECD's Development Assistance Committee it was only in 2004 that Denmark began using EU procurement rules in this field (Bach et al. 2008: 488). Moreover, various programs to stimulate cooperation between Danish firms and enterprises in developing countries have been in existence since the early 1990s. The focus on poverty reduction and the concern with commercial interests have generally existed quietly alongside each other as a kind of political compromise between left-wing and right-wing parties. Although the support of commercial activities was supposed to contribute to poverty reduction, this was never organized in a thorough manner.

Around the turn of the millennium, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (presented as "Danida" when it comes to development cooperation, yet there is no organizational distinction between the ministry and Danida) was characterized by two developments: one was an attempt to significantly strengthen and streamline aid management, primarily by developing a set of aid management guidelines, setting up a unit for quality assurance in the ministry, and undertaking regular performance reviews of embassies. The other was the decentralization of substantial aid management powers to the embassies which were henceforth responsible for developing new support programs (Engberg-Pedersen 2014). This constituted a relative emphasis on pragmatic cooperation and poverty reduction, and, in retrospect, the 1990s could be characterized as the heydays of Danish foreign aid. It was backed by the government, the budget was large and constant, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed an "active multilateralism," and a professional and long-term commitment to program support increasingly characterized bilateral cooperation. During the 1990s and the early 2000s, Danida formed Danish development cooperation largely in agreement with international norms as they emerged in OECD's Development Assistance Committee.

6.3 Falling from the Heights

The change of government in 2001 not only brought about a cut in the overall aid budget (see Figure 6.1), but also clearly downgraded aid and

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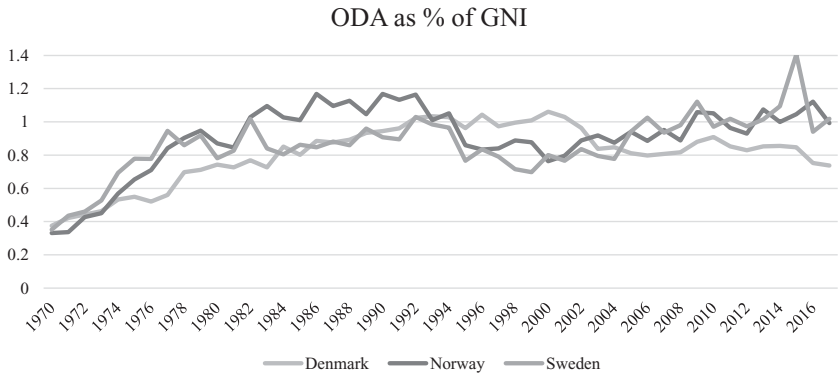

Figure 6.1 ODA as percent of GNI for Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.
Source: OECD/DAC.

development cooperation from its earlier significant position in Denmark's international engagement, in favor of security concerns and military intervention. Danish troops had been deployed to the Balkans during the late 1990s and the new government began to prioritize "hard" instead of "soft" solutions to security challenges and went on to engage in the Iraq war in 2003, with very narrow parliamentary support. The main concern in this process was to comply with the wishes of the US government (Mariager and Wivel 2019). Moreover, the government adopted a tougher stance toward Danish development NGOs and initiated a quick phasing out of bilateral support to Eritrea, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. The linking of security and development came to dominate foreign aid, and funds were increasingly channeled toward fragile states, notably Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia (the Danish support for these three countries rose almost twenty-four times from 2001 to 2009).

The purpose of the fund for aid to the environment and to catastrophes was in 1999 enlarged to support peace and stabilization, in response to the conflicts in the Balkans. Some politicians argued that ODA should not be channeled to the Balkans, used to receive Kosovo-Albanian refugees, or allocated as relief to sudden catastrophes, as this would jeopardize the scope for planning development activities in Africa (Bach et al. 2008: 411–412). All major political parties supported this agreement, but with the change of government two years later the fund was shut down and resources for relief, stabilization, and environment had to be found within the reduced aid budget.

The decentralization of aid management was strongly influenced by cuts in administrative resources in the early years of the new millennium. The new liberal-conservative government wanted to make the public sector more effective, and "more bang for the buck" became an important slogan. Between 2001 and 2004, the administrative resources of Danida were reduced by 25 percent, which prompted a DAC peer review to note: "This decreasing trend in administrative resources raises the question of how far Danida can reduce its resources without negatively affecting quality and its ability to adapt to new aid modalities" (OECD/DAC 2007: 16).

Focusing on the last ten years, five issues stand out in Danish foreign aid as areas of change: (i) the proliferation of general policy papers and high-level political changes with respect to aid; (ii) the reduction of foreign aid; (iii) the use of development assistance for asylum seekers in Denmark; (iv) the attempts to mobilize the private sector for development purposes; and (v) the focus on fragile situations, refugees, relief, and development. The subsequent analysis explores the degree of change in these different areas and discusses the interaction between humanitarian ambitions and contingent, pragmatic, or instrumentalizing drivers.

6.4 General Policy Papers and the Law

After a reshuffling of government, a well-known, rather ideological politician, Søren Pind, was appointed development minister on February 23, 2010. This ended a period of relative quietness regarding Danish foreign aid. Søren Pind baptized his department the Ministry of Freedom, invited the private property proponent Hernando de Sotos to Copenhagen, and presented the first new general policy paper in ten years, called *Freedom from Poverty, Freedom to Change* (Danida 2010). Apart from introducing a strong focus on freedom, the paper did not contain many surprises compared to *Partnership 2000*. Poverty reduction continued to be a stated objective, the partnership approach was reiterated, and the five priorities included the three earlier cross-cutting concerns (gender equality, democratization, and climate/environment) while supplementing them with economic growth and stability in fragile situations. To some extent, the paper was not much more than a policy update couched in a liberal ideology. On one point the paper did, however, reflect a new approach to development cooperation. Hitherto, the primary issue influencing the choice of new cooperation countries had been their level of poverty, but this was changed into three principles

(development need, relevance, impact and results) where "Danish interests" were specifically mentioned (Danida 2010: 11). As the three principles were equally ranked, the policy introduced the possibility of selecting countries other than low-income countries as partners and this was new. The paper was met with a lot of opposition in parliament, but not for its content and clear-cut liberal messaging.[2] The government announced a nominal freezing of foreign aid together with the draft policy paper, provoking the opposition to vote against the policy. Such a narrow adoption of a general policy paper on development cooperation was unusual and it reduced the legitimacy of the policy.

After the elections in September 2011, a government led by the social democrats came to power. The new development minister, Christian Friis Bach, had a background in civil society and research. Given that the new government had voted against Søren Pind's development policy, a different policy paper had to be prepared. As the law framing Danish development cooperation dated back to 1971, Christian Friis Bach decided to change both in one go. The law establishes a broad set of objectives for Danish foreign aid, including poverty reduction, human rights, democracy, sustainable development, peace, and stability. In addition, it refers to the importance of policy coherence for development which was a relatively new phenomenon in a Danish context.

The policy paper, *The Right to a Better Life* (Danida 2012), stands out in four different ways. First and foremost, it introduced a human rights-based approach, which created some unease in Danida. Although the ministry was used to handling policy dialogues with public authorities in developing countries, advocating the roles of duty bearers and rights holders seemed rather intrusive and in opposition to the historical emphasis on partnerships in development cooperation. Secondly, green growth was promoted vigorously. In Danish foreign aid, economic growth has always constituted a condition for poverty reduction, but the policy paper elevated it to one of four priorities and the minister states in the introduction that "[p]overty must be fought with human rights and economic growth" (Danida 2012). The government had established the position of Minister of Trade and Investments in an attempt to strengthen commercial relations abroad, and the policy paper refers to the use of "public-private partnerships and innovative financing modalities as catalysts for green growth through enhanced cooperation on technological development and energy and

[2] Folketingstidende (2010) Fredag d. 28. maj. 99. møde. Copenhagen, pp. 15–39.

emission-reduction interventions in developing countries" (Danida 2012: 22). This was the first visible step toward later efforts to mobilize private capital, particularly for energy investments. Thirdly, gender equality and the environment were downplayed as independent priorities and integrated into other issues. Fourthly, policy coherence for development was underlined, partly in response to the increasing complexity of global development.

A new change of government preceded the most recent paper on development policy, *The World 2030*, published in January 2017 (Danida 2017). This paper differs from all earlier development policies by being the product of a political agreement in parliament with the support of all political parties, bar one. It is, accordingly, more binding politically than earlier papers. Still, it is phrased in broad terms and does not exclude specific activities. Just as the liberal-conservative government of the 2000s lived happily with *Partnership 2000* although it had been developed by the earlier social democratic government, it seems that the policy papers constitute a platform more for signaling policy priorities than for negotiating agreements that can constrain Danish development cooperation.

The paper was drafted in the wake of the refugee crisis when Syrian refugees marched along Danish roads to reach Sweden. This is clearly reflected in the policy, as two of four main priorities deal with reducing the number of foreigners coming to Denmark. One addresses security and development and focusses on supporting refugees and host communities in areas neighboring crisis and conflict. The other deals with migration and development and specifically seeks to counter "irregular economic migration and … address … the root causes of migration" (Danida 2017: 5). As such, migration is perceived as something to prevent. The two other priorities are well-known concerns: (i) inclusive, sustainable growth, and freedom, and (ii) democracy, human rights, and gender equality. From a relatively apolitical and devalued position under social protection in *The Right to a Better Life*, gender equality is again an important issue on a par with other basic values.

In addition to the focus on refugees and migrants, the new policy features three other points. First, the paper emphasizes the need to integrate humanitarian relief and development cooperation. While this is not new, the issue is here presented in close relation to the priority of supporting refugees and host communities neighboring conflict areas and is based on the well-documented observation that displaced people often cannot return to their homes in the short or medium term. In a

world where climate change is likely to induce substantial numbers of people to move, the policy change is, however, fundamental as climate change risks jeopardizing long-term efforts to bring about significant progress. With an increasing allocation of resources to ever-changing locations of natural disasters and social conflicts, the accumulation of experience and trust gained through long-term partnerships with authorities and organizations in particular areas becomes difficult. This undermines the effectiveness of development cooperation though it may increase the sustainability of humanitarian relief.

Secondly, the policy wants to move "from charity to investment." The priority on inclusive, sustainable growth does not primarily concern support to better economic policies or strengthened institutions creating an enabling economic environment in poor countries which, internationally, has constituted the main approach to growth since the late 1980s. Instead, it is argued:

> Denmark will invest in inclusive, sustainable growth and development in the developing countries, focusing on energy, water, agriculture, food and other areas where Denmark has special knowledge, resources and interests. This will contribute to creating sustainable societies with economic freedom, opportunities and jobs – especially for young people. It will also benefit the Danish economy, trade and investments. (Danida 2017: 5)

Despite later discussions of the importance of an enabling business climate (Danida 2017: 28), there is an evident focus on mobilizing private capital and on creating opportunities for Danish companies.

Thirdly, the policy sets out three categories of cooperation countries: poor, fragile countries and regions; poor, stable countries; and transition and growth economies. It states that these categories have been elaborated "to create convergence between the need for support in the developing countries and the representation of Danish interests" (Danida 2017: 8). Moreover, cooperation with transition and growth economies is intended to stimulate sustainable development with poverty reduction only as a derived effect. This categorization seems to use the SDGs and the notion of sustainable development to support the move of Danish aid away from a strict focus on low-income countries.

The progression of policy papers documents a change of policy toward satisfying Danish commercial interests through development cooperation. Foreign aid is no longer directed only toward poor countries, growth is to be stimulated through investment, and Danish capacities will form the basis of the thematic and sectoral orientation of Danish aid.

Together with the strong focus on stimulating refugees and irregular migrants to stay away from Denmark, the move toward satisfying short-term, non-development interests through development cooperation shapes the policy papers, not altruistic motives of long-term poverty reduction. This change is strongly related to the economic crisis from 2008 onward and the increasing number of asylum seekers around 2015. In this sense, international events significantly influence Danish development cooperation, but domestic politics and contingent occurrences (the personality of development ministers, refugees marching on the highways) have been crucial in shaping recent policy papers. Notably the 2017 policy is much less in agreement with international trends than the development policies of the 1990s. Its superficial references to the SDGs and to climate change suggest that these significant international concerns are perceived as secondary in Danish development cooperation.

6.5 Changing Economic Support for Development Cooperation[3]

Entering the 2010s, Danish foreign aid amounted to 0.83 percent of GNI and the liberal government of the time decided to lock the nominal amount at DKK 15.2 billion, implying a slowly decreasing percentage of GNI, which began to speed up after the financial crisis. With the change of government in September 2011, the allocations were increased to maintain aid at 0.83 percent of GNI. While in opposition, the liberal party, Venstre, announced in September 2013 that Danish aid should be cut to 0.7 percent of GNI to save money and because this is the level recommended by the UN. When this party came to power in June 2015, the cuts were quickly made. This implied a reduction of the number of priority countries from 21 to 14 and a phasing out of Danish aid to Bolivia, Central America, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nepal, Vietnam, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Since then, Danish official development assistance has continued to amount to 0.7 percent of GNI, and in February 2018 the Social Democrats announced that they do not see any scope for raising foreign aid again if they form a government in the future. While in power (2012–2015) their intention had officially been to raise aid to 1.0 percent of GNI, but they never took initiative to do so.

[3] It should be noted that the following discussion is based on aid budgets rather than aid accounts, the argument being that budgets better reflect policy intentions than accounts because the latter are influenced by contingent events (e.g., natural catastrophes calling for a redirection of funds toward humanitarian relief).

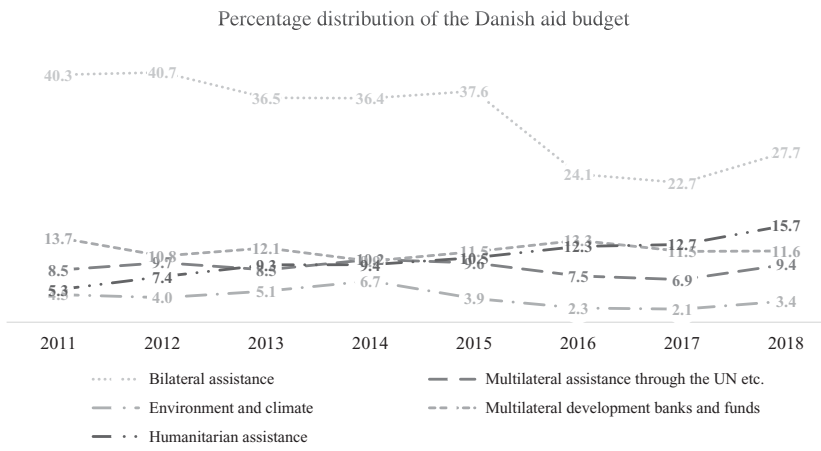

Figure 6.2 Percentage distribution of the Danish aid budget 2011–2018.
Source: Regeringens udviklingspolitiske prioriteringer (the government's development policy priorities) 2010–2017.
Note: The different categories are based on the organization of the financial bill. As there are other budget items (e.g. costs of receiving asylum seekers), these five items do not add up to 100 percent.

In terms of the distribution of the aid budget for different purposes, changes have also taken place. Figure 6.2 gives an indication of the distribution of aid between bilateral assistance, environmental and climate support, humanitarian relief, multilateral assistance through the UN system, and assistance through multilateral development banks and funds.

Four points can be highlighted based on Figure 6.2. Firstly, the role of bilateral assistance has declined significantly. This is partly because this budget item can be cut relatively easily, partly because Danida looks for others to implement the assistance, to some extent due to the continued cuts of the administration. Secondly, the share of humanitarian relief has grown substantially, reflecting the increasing needs, but also the changed political priorities. Thirdly, the share of resources for climate change adaptation and mitigation has declined, and fourthly, the share allocated to multilateral institutions has been relatively stable, albeit with a fluctuating balance of resources going to the UN system and to the development banks. Actually, multilateral institutions and arrangements may have increased their share of Danish aid as these institutions are used under other budget items, notably humanitarian relief.

Comparing the 2010s to the 1990s, the political support for development assistance has clearly waned. In the 1990s, the ambition was to

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spend altogether 1.5 percent of GNI on development, relief, stabilization, and the environment abroad whereas this ambition has been reduced to less than half of it now. This is even more noteworthy given that GNI per capita has risen from approximately PPP $20,000 in 1993 to $51,000 in 2016. Thus, the political consensus holds that Denmark can only use a smaller share of a much larger economy on development assistance. This is probably related both to the increased focus on "hard" means in foreign policy from 2001 onward, and a generally declining political interest in Denmark's international activities,[4] with the largest political parties on both sides of the aisle now subscribing to an aid percentage of 0.7. The lukewarm political support is also reflected in the composition of the aid budget where bilateral assistance, which was strongly defended 10–20 years ago, has lost a considerable part of its budget share without strong political reactions.

6.6 Development Aid Used for Asylum Seekers

Over a period of 15 months from August 2014 to November 2015, the budget for development assistance changed dramatically. This was related to the arrival of asylum seekers, primarily from Syria, the number of whom peaked at 5,094 in November 2015. In August 2014, DKK 980.1 million (5.8 percent of the total budgeted aid) was set aside for costs related to receiving asylum seekers in 2015. By November 2015 this amount had grown to DKK 4,436.9 million (30.0 percent of the total budgeted aid) for 2016. Obviously, this had a tremendous impact on other parts of the aid budget (see Table 6.1 and Figure 6.2). Bilateral assistance, support to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and multilateral aid channeled through the UN system were all halved. Given that Denmark was obliged to meet commitments to development banks and the EU and given that there was a political interest in maintaining the amount allocated to humanitarian relief, the cuts elsewhere in the budget had to be proportionally even deeper. The political willingness to use as much as possible from development assistance to cover the costs of asylum seekers without jeopardizing the OECD/DAC definition of ODA was very clear. In the November 19, 2015 agreement between the then government and three political parties together constituting a majority in parliament it is written: "The parties to the

[4] Thanks to a reviewer for pointing this out.

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Table 6.1 *Shifts in the Danish development aid budget 2015–2016*

Main budget items	Danish development policy		
	2015 (million DKK)[a]	**2016** (million DKK)[b]	**Change (%)**
Bilateral assistance	6,354.3	2,893.9	−54.5
Assistance through NGOs	1,103.0	744.0	−32.5
Climate change	652.0	301.0	−53.8
Multilateral assistance through UN	1,629.1	824.6	−49.4
Development banks and EU funds	1,941.6	1,968.5	1.4
Humanitarian relief	1,775.0	1,825.0	2.8
EU assistance	1,044.1	1,352.6	29.5
Asylum seekers in Denmark	980.1	4,436.9	352.7
Total Danish aid	16,893.0	14,777.7	−12.5

[a] The budget for 2015 published in August 2014.
[b] The budget for 2016 published in November 2015.

agreement concur that the possibilities for this [using official development assistance to cover the costs of asylum seekers] should be exploited fully – including if it becomes evident that asylum costs go up further during 2016 than has been budgeted for in the Finance Act for 2016" (Regeringen 2015: 19, authors' translation).

Although other countries were discussing whether a cap should be put on the share of ODA to be spent on receiving asylum seekers, this was not considered by the political majority.

Summing up, Table 6.1 demonstrates a substantial change of aid policy priorities taking place at a very rapid pace, due to what can largely be described as contingent events. The political willingness to use aid within Denmark is considerable and the share of aid reaching developing countries seems to be of secondary importance. However, with the reduced number of asylum seekers reaching Denmark the last couple of years this share has gone up again.

6.7 Mobilizing the Private Sector

Danida has, for a long time, sought to engage Danish companies in cooperation with companies in developing countries to establish long-term,

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commercially viable partnerships contributing to economic growth, social development, and poverty reduction. A recent evaluation concluded, however, that one of these programs, the Business-to-Business Program, had succeeded in the field of technology transfer, but failed with respect to broader development objectives (NCG and DevFin Advisors AB 2014). This prompted Danida to close the program and to rethink its cooperation with the private sector.

Given the political interest in integrating private companies into development cooperation and sustained by the obvious point that the SDGs cannot be achieved through foreign aid alone, but require an immense mobilization of private capital, a variety of instruments have been proposed or developed. Some of these are variations of the earlier programs in the sense that they try to get Danish companies to exploit business opportunities in developing countries. In addition, three other major instruments have been strengthened or developed in the field of development finance. First, the contributions to the Danish Development Finance Institution, *Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU)*, have grown in recent years, and IFU has established a number of special purpose funds (the Danish Climate Investment Fund in 2014, the Danish Agri-Business Fund in 2016, and the SDG Investment Fund in 2018) partly based on capital from Danish pension funds. The SDG Investment Fund is planned to consist of DKK 3 billion from IFU and the state plus another DKK 3 billion from pension funds. This amount is expected to generate investments of around DKK 30 billion in SDG-related projects in developing countries in the period 2018–2021. Although IFU has been formally untied from cooperating with Danish companies, it is still the expectation that most projects will have strong Danish components. Secondly, Danida Business Finance, which aims at helping finance large public infrastructure projects that would not otherwise obtain financing, is planned to grow in the coming years to DKK 400 million in 2019 (from DKK 350 million in 2010 and DKK 200 million in 2016). It provides soft, but tied aid. Thirdly, Denmark is a co-founder of, and investor in, the African Guarantee Fund which has provided guarantees for loans to small and medium-sized enterprises in Africa since 2012. The fund is viewed as a success as it has facilitated USD 800 million in loan disbursements to almost 8,000 enterprises in 38 African countries.

Although the results of these initiatives still have to materialize, they raise three questions in relation to the form and potential exceptionalism of Danish foreign aid. First, it is not clear how the new as well as existing business-related instruments will respond to the concern expressed in the

above-mentioned evaluation, namely that partnerships and development finance may succeed in commercial terms but fail with respect to poverty reduction and other development objectives. Secondly, the formal (Danida Business Finance) and informal (IFU) tying of aid to Danish suppliers has not been challenged. On the contrary, it appears that tying of aid is not perceived to be a problem given that more money is expected to be channeled through these instruments. Thirdly, in terms of the share of aid allocated to low- versus middle-income countries, several of the instruments allow for activities in lower middle-income countries and some, including up to 50 percent of the SDG Investment Fund, can be implemented in all countries on the DAC list of ODA-eligible countries (the upper limit being GNI per capita of USD 12,235 in 2016). Together with the creation of a category of growth and transition economies in the latest general policy paper, it seems likely that an increasingly smaller share of Danish aid will go to low-income and least developed countries.

6.8 Fragile Situations, Migration, Relief, and Development

Alongside the interest in the private sector and commercial opportunities, security, migration, and refugees have been growing concerns since the late 1990s. Until the deployment of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2003 onward, Danish cooperation countries were selected among poor but stable countries, partly because the sector-wide approach that was a cornerstone of Danish aid required a reasonably strong state in control of its territory. This changed, however, and Denmark began to provide development assistance to fragile states, particularly to Afghanistan and Somalia. The choice of Afghanistan was conditioned by the perceived security threat and the military intervention whereas the burden piracy was placing on Danish shipping companies explains the interest in Somalia. While Danida adopted a sector approach to education in Afghanistan, the support to Somalia has been channeled primarily through international organizations and NGOs with a foothold in different parts of the country. However, much emphasis has been put on getting Danish authorities better coordinated in relation to fragile situations. A policy on Denmark's integrated stabilization efforts was published in 2013 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and Ministry of Justice 2013) emphasizing cooperation between diplomacy, aid, and the military/police. Moreover, a Peace and Stabilization Fund was established in 2010.

In recent years, migrants and refugees have become a center of attention in foreign aid as discussed above. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has appointed an ambassador responsible for the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers, and the Minister for Development Cooperation and the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Housing have visited Nigeria together to pave the way for the repatriation of Nigerians. Moreover, funds (DKK 125 million in 2018) have been set aside for facilitating measures in this context, sometimes described by the ministers as *quid pro quo*. In February 2018 the Social Democrats, then in opposition, published a proposal for a new immigration policy, *Fair and Realistic,* in which they propose a "comprehensive reform of Danish development assistance" (Socialdemokratiet 2018: 24). They suggest spending DKK 3.5 billion more in areas neighboring conflicts and natural disasters which roughly means a doubling of the funds currently allocated to these areas. It is proposed to take the funds from long-term development assistance. While there are good reasons to consider how relief and development can be better integrated and how to support areas with a sudden huge influx of refugees, the suggestion of a comprehensive reform of development assistance in an immigration policy partly funded by reallocating DKK 3.5 billion presently used for purposes of long-term development evidences how little importance this major party attaches to development cooperation.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore and explain marked changes in Danish development cooperation over the past decades, against a background of self-perceived exceptionalism. While shifting development policies, perhaps predictably, have moved back and forth between sets of similar priorities that have been continuously repackaged, reframed, and reprioritized in their relative importance, remarkable changes have nevertheless occurred since the 1990s, and particularly in the last ten years. At its core, we find that Danish foreign aid has moved from a combination of a set of values (human rights, democracy, good governance, sustainable environments, gender equality, etc.) and a concern with the ideas in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (ownership, alignment, harmonization, and mutual accountability), toward a strong focus on short-term Danish non-development interests. The policies increasingly seek to satisfy Danish commercial interests, and choices of partner countries, sectors, and multilateral development activities are no longer strongly

related to perceived needs, but rather made on the basis of investment potential, security risk, migration concerns, and Danish (often commercial) interests. Over time, Danish aid has increasingly been expected to support military intervention, to combat radicalization, to facilitate commercial relations, to finance Danish municipalities' costs of settling refugees, and to limit migration to Denmark.

How come? How is it possible to explain this relatively fundamental change? Firstly, it should be noted that commercial interests have a long history in Danish development cooperation so the change builds on a long-standing concern with Danish interests in foreign aid. Secondly, the change clearly diverges from recent discussions in the international development community to which Denmark adhered much more 20 years ago. However, one may argue that the change mirrors an increasing focus on commercial and security interests both in the North and the South. In this sense, the change is not in contradiction with trends in other countries. Thirdly, Danish politics has been characterized by a strong belief in military interventions and a parliamentary situation creating an immense interest in migrants and refugees the last couple of decades. Thus, foreign aid has been decoupled from foreign policy concerns and reoriented toward domestic political interests.

It is obvious that the overall change of Danish foreign aid does not reflect a position of Scandinavian exceptionalism or of a "humanitarian great power." Rather, the overarching driver of changes in Danish aid seems to have been the shifting domestic political priorities that have greatly influenced, and, in some cases, subordinated development aims. These domestic policy shifts have largely been driven by contingent events, whether 9/11 and the subsequent decision to follow the US into war in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the surge of refugees finding their way to Northern Europe, or the personalities of particular strong development ministers. A strategic and persistent aid regime has given way to short-term interests that do not use development policy and aid only to promote Danish ideas about development, but allocate aid resources for purposes only distantly related to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Funds that could have otherwise made a difference in solving international issues, importantly also for the long-term benefit of Denmark, have been used to cover expenses under the auspices of domestic financial constraints. If a particular political culture has emerged in Denmark, as it concerns development cooperation, it is one driven by subordination, instrumentalization of development aims, and a will to shift priorities to fit domestic political concerns.

Does the (his)story of Danish development cooperation and its politically both vulnerable and volatile nature mirror or convey narratives of the *end of aid*? Not necessarily. While ODA has seen somewhat stable levels over the past decades or more, development cooperation itself has never really been in a static state of affairs. Fluctuations, changes, and sometimes tectonic shifts have been the rule more than the exception over the past half century, and development cooperation has always been in a simultaneous process of leaving past practices and approaches behind while adopting new ones, forming an incredible elastic policy field. More so than the end of aid, then, today is what we may call a new time of pragmatic ambiguity, interestingly drawing on "old" ideas, whether self-interest, tied aid, or political ambitions. Development cooperation will likely have to suffer a fate of subservience, instrumentalized by politicians to further other political concerns and priorities, which aid is so well suited for. This does not bode well for a future of aid characterized by objectives of poverty reduction or the elimination of global inequalities. But the resilience, elasticity, and ability to manage policy shifts of development cooperation and its accompanying community of professionals, from NGOs to civil servants, coupled with the continued needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, makes it difficult to buy into narratives of death and obliteration.

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7

How Democracy Promotion Became a Key Aim of Sweden's Development Aid Policy

JOHAN KARLSSON SCHAFFER

7.1 Introduction[1]

Why has Sweden come to occupy a special role as a promoter of democracy through official development assistance (ODA)? Among donor countries, Sweden stands out not just because of the state's comparatively high levels of ODA, but also because a comparatively large proportion of the ODA budget is channeled into promoting democracy, human rights, and civil society (Crawford 2001; Youngs 2008). Since the end of the Cold War, the previously merely nominal official policy goal of fostering democratic development has become a key cornerstone of Swedish ODA, broadly shared by political parties and other stakeholders. Policymakers also frequently claim that Sweden – owing to its own historical experiences of creating stable, peaceful forms of popular government – has a special mission to promote democracy, good governance, and human rights in countries less fortunate – a national brand of sorts.

Seeking to explain the seemingly exceptional role Sweden – often seen as an exemplar of the so-called Nordic model – has played in international politics in the post-World War II era, a line of existing research suggests that Nordic foreign policy exceptionalism results from distinct values of solidarity, (social) democracy, and equality prevalent in domestic society (e.g. Lawler 2005; Bergman 2007; Rosamond 2015; Witoszek and Midttun 2018). The internationalist orientation of Sweden and the other Nordic states comes to the fore not least in their comparatively generous development aid policies. The Nordic states occupy this

[1] I am very grateful to the editors Antoine de Bengy Puyvallée and Kristian Bjørkdahl for putting together this volume and for their generous and constructive comments on several earlier think pieces and drafts of this chapter. I also wish to thank Helena Lindholm and Erik Jennische for their insightful comments on a previous version.

exceptional role, this line of literature suggests, because they extend the egalitarian and solidarist values, upon which their domestic political and social institutions are based, to distant others, in a truly cosmopolitan fashion. Consequently, this view would locate the source of Sweden's seemingly extraordinary efforts to promote democracy and human rights in values of democracy, popular participation, and human rights deeply engrained in domestic culture.

However, such culturalist accounts of foreign policy exceptionalisms come with a number of analytical limitations. They tend to mystify rather than clarify the influence of values and beliefs on international outcomes and fail to specify the causal mechanisms through which domestic values get translated into foreign policy commitments. They also tend to reify certain interpretations of domestic values, thus neglecting that foreign policy, including development assistance and human rights commitments, is produced through contentious political processes where political elites mobilize different values and beliefs in their competition for dominance. And since societal values change only slowly, culturalist accounts have difficulties explaining variation in the shorter term. In brief, domestic culture is too blunt a tool to analyze the changing aims and strategies governing development aid policy.

In this paper, I seek to provide a different account of Swedish foreign policy exceptionalism, using democracy promotion through ODA as an illustrative case. For some time now, Sweden has sought to promote democracy through its development aid policy. While policy documents point to historical experiences and predominant conceptions of democracy in Sweden to justify policy, I shall argue that the beliefs governing Swedish democracy promotion efforts are not engrained in a primordial national culture, but rather produced through political processes that involve contestation and sometimes result in compromise, sometimes in conflict. The outcomes of such processes are also shaped to a large extent by international factors, including major geopolitical events and economic conjectures, changing international norms, and evolving global governance institutions. Empirically, the paper analyzes how policymakers have framed the aims and strategies of democracy promotion in development assistance from the 1960s to the 2010s. By moving beyond culturalist accounts, the paper thus both provides a better understanding of Swedish internationalism and a different empirical account of democracy promotion efforts in Swedish ODA.

This chapter is structured in four parts. First, I briefly seek to pinpoint how Sweden's democracy assistance compares internationally. Next,

I critically engage with culturalist accounts of Nordic foreign policy exceptionalism and present an alternative account which suggests that government policy results from domestic political processes that are partly shaped by international opportunities and constraints. Then, I analyze the emergence and evolution of democracy assistance in Swedish ODA through three episodes: (i) the first decades' relativist indifference toward democracy; (ii) the breakthrough of democracy and human rights promotion with the end of the Cold War; and (iii) its contested ascendance in the new millennium. Finally, in the concluding section, I reflect on the broader usefulness of this explanatory approach and on the shifts in policy that it helps us capture.

7.2 Sweden: An Outlier in Democracy Promotion through Development Aid

In some vital respects, Sweden's development aid policy is and has long been exceptional, by international comparison. Sweden is the largest donor in terms of net ODA in proportion to gross national income (GNI), and the seventh largest donor in absolute terms. In 1975, Sweden was the first country to meet the United Nations' target of allocating 0.7 percent of gross national product to ODA and has continued to meet it ever since. Sweden thus belongs in a small club of countries that have ever met the target, and one of only five (alongside Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark, and the Netherlands) to have reached or exceeded it consistently. Sweden has further set a national commitment to spend 1 percent of GNI on ODA (Ekengren and Götz 2013). Hence, in quantitative terms, both relative and absolute, Swedish ODA is uniquely generous.

High levels of ODA have been described as a traditional characteristic of the so-called Nordic aid model. Beyond its munificent signature, Nordic aid has also been characterized by giving aid mainly in the form of grants rather than loans; focusing on the least developed countries, with the bulk of aid channeled to Sub-Saharan Africa; being oriented toward poverty reduction, social infrastructure, and welfare; strong support for multilateralism, especially the United Nations' development aid regime; and an emphasis, at least nominally, on recipient ownership (Elgström and Delputte 2016: 31; cf. Kärre and Svensson 1989). While Nordic aid policy objectives and instruments have changed since the mid-1990s, for instance by an increasing ratio of bilateral to multilateral aid (Laakso 2002: 57), its basic structure and implementation on the

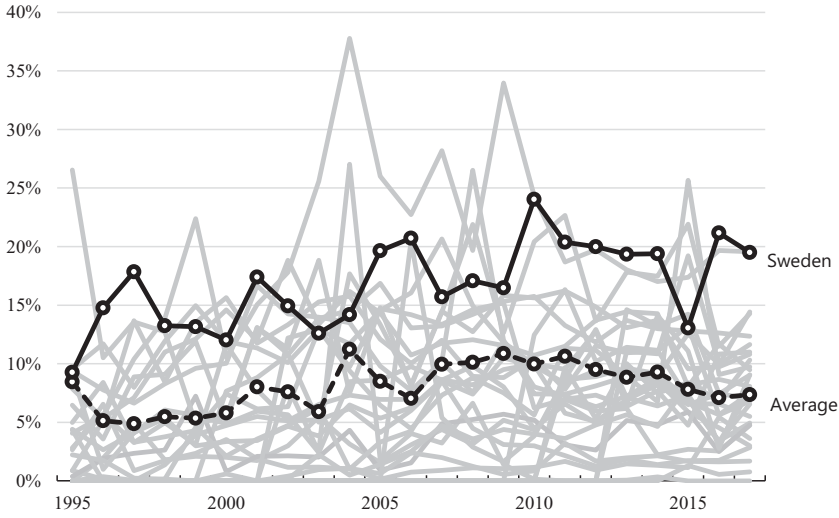

Figure 7.1 Proportion of ODA allocated to government and civil society, 1995–2017.
Source: OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System.

ground shows considerable consistency over time (Elgström and Delputte 2016: 34). Another distinctive trait of the Nordic model is that the states have long sought to coordinate their foreign aid policies and collaborate on joint development projects, to achieve greater impact with limited resources (Laakso 2002: 56f).

While all the Nordic states have come to emphasize support for democracy and human rights in their overall development cooperation policies since the 1980s, Sweden has stood out by international comparison in terms of its expenditures for democracy, good governance, and human rights promotion (Figure 7.1). In recent decades, democracy, human rights, and good governance have come to occupy an increasingly central role and development aid targeted at government and civil society has become a major sector of Swedish ODA. In the period 1995–2017, it amounted on average to 16.8 percent of the total ODA budget – twice the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donor average of 8 percent. Democratic governance and human rights has been the best-funded sector of Swedish development assistance (Youngs 2008).

Swedish political aid also has some peculiar features that set it apart from other donors that emphasize democracy in their ODA. In the

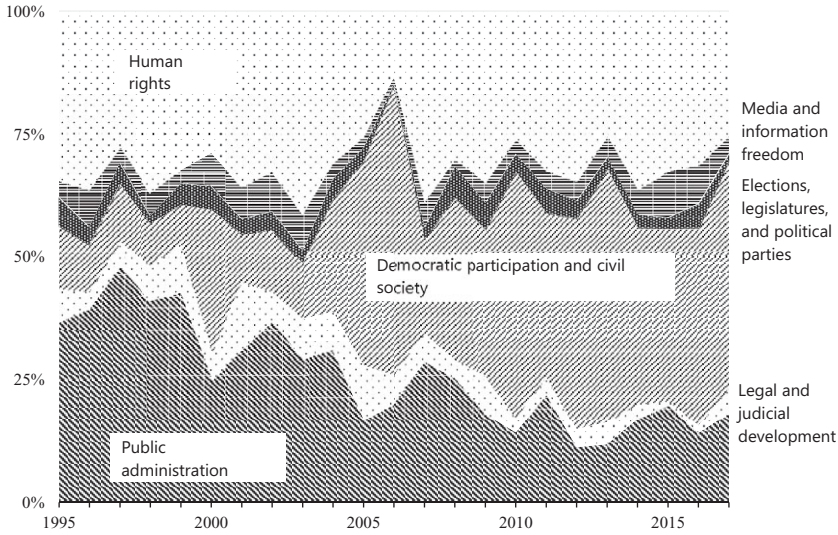

Figure 7.2 Swedish "government and civil society" ODA by subsector, 1995–2017. *Source*: OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. "Public administration" includes "Public sector policy and administrative management," "Public finance management," "Decentralisation and support to subnational government," "Domestic revenue management," and "Anti-corruption organisations and institutions." "Human rights" includes also "Women's equality organisations and institutions" and "Ending violence against women and girls."

expansion phase in the 1990s, Sweden's democracy promotion efforts were more focused, compared to other donors, on promoting a democratic civil society and less on strengthening democratic government institutions (Crawford 2000, 2001). A distinctive characteristic is the focus on "democratic participation and civil society," and "human rights," respectively (Figure 7.2) – subsectors that each have amounted to on average 28 percent of Swedish development aid in the "government and civil society" sector. By contrast, smaller proportions are allocated to democratic and rule-of-law institutions such as legal and judicial development, elections, and legislatures and political parties. In the "government and civil society sector," Swedish development aid has also devoted a considerable but declining percentage to supporting public administration reform, reflecting beliefs that state capacity building, good governance, and public sector efficiency and transparency are instrumental to democratization.

While these figures reveal that Sweden is somewhat of an outlier in development assistance generally and democracy promotion

specifically, they say little about Sweden's motivations for engaging in development cooperation and democracy promotion, about the overarching aims and specific strategies Sweden pursues, and whether its efforts are effective in reaching the stated aims of democratic development. For instance, while the support Sweden has given to elections, legislatures, and judicial institutions is small compared to support for civil society and human rights, it might well be the case that some low-cost or small-scale interventions are more indicative of donor commitment and/or have more significant impact on recipient state democratization than more costly or extensive types of support. Furthermore, figures of ODA flows say little about how development aid and democracy promotion fit into the bigger picture of Sweden's foreign policies, such as security, trade and investment, or multilateral cooperation within Nordic, European, and global governance institutions. What the figures do reveal, though, is an interesting puzzle to explain: Why does Sweden stand out, in international comparison, and even relative to its equally high-donating Nordic neighbors? The next section will turn to competing explanations for this seeming exceptionalism in Swedish development aid.

7.3 Culturalist Accounts of Nordic Foreign Policy Exceptionalism

In foreign policy and international relations research, Sweden – an exemplar even among the internationalist Nordic states – has been described as a "moral superpower" (Dahl 2005), an "agent of a world common good" (Bergman 2007), a "global good Samaritan" (Brysk 2009), or simply a "good state" (Lawler 2005). The flattering epithets seek to capture the peculiar role Sweden – which this literature often treats as *the* quintessentially Nordic state, so I will assume culturalist accounts of general Nordic exceptionalism are also representative of Sweden – has played in world politics over the past half-century, as expressed, e.g., in support for decolonization, third-world national liberation movements, and the struggle against apartheid in southern Africa; mediation and peacekeeping efforts in international crises and conflicts; comparatively high levels of foreign development aid; a high profile in multilateral organizations, especially the United Nations; and generous reception of refugees. Thus, this literature suggests that Sweden and the other Nordic states have a standing in world affairs that is not warranted by their minor size and conventional power but rather grounded in a particular form of internationalist orientation, the cornerstone of which

is a strong commitment to humanitarianism and human rights globally, that has guided Nordic foreign policies.[2]

Seeking to account for Sweden's and its neighbors' seemingly exceptional role in world affairs, existing literature chiefly locates the causal factors to values and ideas dominant in domestic society. For instance, Annika Bergman Rosamond (Bergman Rosamond 2007; cf. Bergman Rosamond 2015) argues that the particular brand of internationalism that characterizes Sweden's foreign policy is based on a "thin conception of cosmopolitan duty that does not exclusively privilege the rights of Swedish nationals alone, but recognizes the need to extend social and political rights to non-nationals as well." On Bergman Rosamond's view, this cosmopolitan foreign policy orientation is a product of a domestic welfare state regime based on the values of solidarity, inclusiveness, and universality, as foreign policy and domestic policy are co-constitutive. Alison Brysk (2009) claims that Sweden has come to reconstruct its national interest as humanitarian internationalism through a continuous dialogue between domestic values and ideology, and international society. Similarly, Peter Lawler (1997) argues that a Nordic public discourse, which emphasizes the value of solidarity, "has not only become socially embedded because of domestic legislation, but also because of the regional and foreign policies of the Scandinavian states." This Nordic exceptionalism is not just a pragmatic foreign policy of a set of minor states on the fringe of Europe, but "it is also driven by their distinctive domestic values, including that of solidarity" (Lawler 1997: 568). Looking at development aid specifically, Susan Holmberg concurs that "foreign aid, in effect, became an extension of Sweden's domestic welfare policy" (Holmberg 1989: 126), allegedly based on primary values such as humanitarianism, solidarity, equality, and justice. Adopting a longer historical frame, Mikko Kuisma (2007) suggests that the internationalist orientation of the Nordic states rests on a normative legacy that actually predates the modern nation state. Thus, from various theoretical perspectives, existing literature indicates that the Nordic states' presumed exceptional role in world affairs has been shaped by values, norms, and ideas prevalent in Nordic societies.

While locating the roots of foreign policy exceptionalism in domestic culture provides a seemingly coherent explanation, it comes with a number of inherent limitations (Langford and Schaffer 2015): First, given

[2] This section partly draws on arguments I've developed in previous works (Schaffer 2017, 2020; Langford and Schaffer 2015).

the complex system of a multitude of ideas and values that comprise a national culture, it becomes difficult to assess their relative importance in explaining foreign policy behavior. Second, explanations in terms of culture sometimes seem to mystify more than they clarify, or provide only superficial accounts of the domestic values that supposedly determine policy. For instance, research on Nordic welfare state regimes suggests that beyond rhetoric, their moral logic is not based on altruistic solidarity among citizens, but on conditional reciprocity (Rothstein 1998): Citizens accept to pay their high taxes knowing that others do too and that they get most of it in return as public services. Third, many culturalist accounts fail to specify the mechanisms by which values shape policy – at best, the causal link is implied. For values to influence policy, purposive agents need to mobilize ideas for policy purposes. Specifically, failing to specify the agents that mobilize ideas obscures how dominant discourses are the products of processes of political contestation (V. A. Schmidt 2008). Furthermore, prioritizing values and ideology in domestic society risks underplaying how international factors – both material and ideational – have shaped the Nordic states external engagements, through e.g. agenda-setting, diffusion of international norms, or simply by imposing geopolitical constraints on the choices foreign policy elites make. Finally, the culturalist approach has difficulties explaining change and variation over time or across issue areas, since historically rooted cultural values largely remain constant or change only over the long haul. In sum, the culturalist approach offers incomplete tools for unpacking the exceptional international behavior of Sweden and the other Nordic states.

Instead of theorizing Sweden's supposed development aid policy exceptionalism as an extrapolation of values predominant in domestic culture, I believe it is more fruitful to assume that development aid policy is made and remade pretty much like any other area of public policy – that is, through processes where various political elites pursue their aims, constrained by power resources, institutional frameworks, interactions with other players, and dominant beliefs. Since political elites have partly diverging aims and represent potentially conflicting interests, such processes are often contentious, but whether they result in conflictual disagreement, compromise bargains, or a consensus acceptable to most players may vary, depending on the various constraints, such as the line-up of actors, their relative power, their ideological preferences, and the patterns of their interactions. In foreign policy matters, there is often

a strong pressure toward consensus, in the sense of getting all key players to toe the line on key "high politics" issues of international security or trade, but the "low politics" of development aid policy may be an area that at times offers greater room for politicization.

In an externally oriented policy area such as development aid, policy processes are also shaped by international influences, ranging from the hard realities of geopolitics to the soft power of international norms. For instance, governments may be more likely to engage in promoting democracy and human rights abroad if they perceive the international context as less hostile, while strategic interests may prevail in a more threatening environment (Huber 2015). In the period I study here, the terms for pursuing a development policy have been altered fundamentally by events and processes such as the Cold War and its end, decolonization, recurrent financial crises and economic transformations, and the third wave of democratization. Moreover, international norms have also shifted, most importantly with the breakthrough in the late 1970s of human rights and democracy as principles guiding Western foreign policy objectives, which have arguably waned since the turn of the millennium.

Furthermore, development aid policymaking is also shaped by strategic interaction with other agents, ranging from the multilateral organizations seeking to coordinate and harmonize national ODA policies to competition with other donor states, pursuing their own set of political, diplomatic, and commercial aims through development aid policy. Hence, development aid policy is not made only from the inside out, but also by the constraints and opportunities set by world politics. While my theoretical ambitions in this chapter are modest, the approach I take seems loosely compatible with a range of approaches to international relations theory that emphasize the interaction between domestic and international politics.

Within this explanatory model, ideational factors play a causal role more specific than on the culturalist approaches. Political actors mobilize ideas for their purposes, and, if they are successful, embed them as governing norms in societal institutions. Once institutionalized, those norms can also influence how actors behave, for instance by restructuring the incentives and disincentives decision makers face down the road (Berman 2013: 230). In this chapter, I discuss how certain ideas about the normative values that ought to govern Swedish foreign aid for democracy promotion were inscribed in policy documents. Obviously,

these ideas are not traditions ingrained in a primordial Nordic culture, but rather *norms* – i.e., "collectively held belief[s] that [govern] thought and behavior in some specific and circumscribed area of political life" (Berman 2013: 224) – which agents have embedded in state institutions at a certain point in time. Thus, by defining ideational factors more narrowly, as purposive beliefs, delimited in time and space, and associated with specific actors, they become more useful for explanatory analysis than the amorphous notions of national culture or mentality.

In the following section, I will analyze the evolution of democracy promotion in Swedish ODA policy, from the inauguration of large-scale, state-led ODA in the 1960s to the present day. The analysis is divided into three historical episodes: In the 1960s–1970s, democratization was only a nominal aim of ODA policy and the coming to power of a nonsocialist government in 1976 entailed no major shift in priorities. In the 1980s–1990s, the Conservative party mobilized for greater emphasis on democracy and human rights in ODA, which became a key priority from 1990. Finally, in the 2000s–2010s, democracy promotion became the single largest sector of SIDA administered aid.

7.4 Promoting Democratization in the Very Long Term

While government-funded development aid has a longer history in Sweden, the founding moment of Sweden's official development assistance is a public inquiry commission, appointed in 1961. It included heavy-weight members such as prime minister Tage Erlander, minister of finance Gunnar Sträng, and, as secretary of a sub-commission, Olof Palme (then head of division in the Cabinet Office), as well as representatives of a broad set of interest organizations and civil society groups. The commission's report (Utrikesdepartementet 1962a) resulted in a government bill (Utrikesdepartementet 1962b) which for a long time served as a foundational document, often referred to as "the Bible of Swedish development aid," setting the aims and fundamental principles, guidelines and strategies, and the long-term structure for foreign aid (Hook 1995: 98; Wohlgemuth 2012: 5). While aid to developing countries had previously chiefly been administered by civil society organizations, government now also created a new national agency, with considerable independence from the foreign ministry, to coordinate Swedish development assistance, which with its expansion in 1965 was renamed as the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA).

Set in a context of Cold War rivalry and an accelerating process of decolonization, the 1962 bill aimed for Sweden to pursue a development aid policy untainted by the self-serving political motives it ascribed to other industrialized states. Among the key guiding principles, Sweden should concentrate aid on a small number of recipient countries and a limited range of activities; moreover, to secure the independence of aid vis-à-vis other domestic and foreign policy objectives, it should not be tied to procurement in Sweden (Brodin 2000: 28). The emerging developing policies were also part of a broader foreign policy orientation attributing to Sweden a special bond to the third world: because of its tradition of social reformism and democratic socialism, Sweden was especially well placed to understand the developing countries' demand for change (Lödén 1999: 192f).

The overarching objective of Swedish ODA set by the 1962 bill was to "raise the standards of living of the poor peoples" (Utrikesdepartementet 1962b: 7) – by targeting famine, mass poverty, epidemics, and infant mortality, and generally creating conditions for a decent life. A key operational goal to reach the overarching objective was to contribute to an increase in production that outpaces population growth. The bill also stressed political democracy as one of the key aims justifying Swedish ODA and its preamble approvingly cited recently perished UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld's interpretation of the UN Charter as based on "the fundamental democratic principle of equal political rights [and also] a right to equal economic opportunities." Swedish ODA would also "contribute, as far as assessable, to a societal development in a politically democratic and socially equalizing direction" (Utrikesdepartementet 1962b: 3). However, the bill ruled out political conditionalities and cautioned against imposing Western models of society on developing countries, as "it is not evident that the social and political system and principles to which we adhere are fit for purpose or achievable for all developing countries" (Utrikesdepartementet 1962b: 7). As foreign minister Torsten Nilsson clarified the primacy of poverty reduction over democracy and human rights, "*first*, the fundamental needs of human beings must be satisfied; *then*, one can begin demanding of them the kind of democratic responsibility and respect for the individual person's rights and liberties that has emerged in the more developed and stable societies in the West" (Lödén 1999: 146). To provide long-term planning for the expanding development aid sector, a 1968 government bill elaborated on the operational goal to further the economic independence of newly

decolonized states, as a precondition for "democratic societal development and real national independence" (Utrikesdepartementet 1968).

Thus, while Swedish ODA policy included democratization as an aim already in the 1960s, it was, in principle and practice, eclipsed by the aim of raising the standards of living of "poor peoples." The key objective was to contribute to social and economic equalization – both *within* the recipient states and, by fostering their economic independence, *between* them and the industrialized states. The government's policy regarded development and equalization as instrumental prerequisites for national independence and, in the long run, democratic development. As a result, the policies included no concrete strategies or instruments for furthering democratization.

Already in the 1970s, however, some of the key principles of Swedish aid would be compromised and stir controversy. In 1970, government launched the country-programming system, setting principles for the selection of recipient countries: Sweden should seek cooperation with countries whose governments pursued redistributive policies and that had a potential for democratic and economic development, yet also focus on poor, underdeveloped countries. The nonsocialist parties criticized the selection principle, disputing the politicization of aid that would follow if Sweden, like the great powers, allowed homegrown values to determine the choice of recipients rather than the needs in the target countries. Maintaining the needs principle, Conservatives proposed terminating aid to Cuba on the grounds that its GDP exceeded that of most other recipients and argued that selecting countries demonstrating a will to social and economic equalization had led government to prioritize socialist regimes (Brodin 1992: 31f, 2000: 29). The Communists, by contrast, endorsed selecting countries on the basis of their aspirations for economic and social equality, but argued that government failed to apply the principle consistently.

In 1972, the government appointed another parliamentary commission (BPU, *Biståndspolitiska utredningen*) to propose more detailed guidelines for development aid. In part, policy revision was necessitated by the expansion of Swedish development assistance, but also by the economic crisis of the 1970s which had inclined policymakers to make future ODA transfers more in line with domestic economic interests (Hook 1995: 101). For instance, finance minister Sträng conditioned expanded ODA to reach the 1 percent goal by 1975 on increased procurement in Sweden (Odén 2017).

When the BPU commission delivered its final report in 1977, the nonsocialist parties had formed government for the first time in more

than 40 years. While the cross-partisan commitment to expansive development aid remained, the new government sought to increase the domestic economic interest component and sought to shift the focus of ODA, from local ownership to more active donor involvement and stricter terms on the recipients, from capital-intensive investments to smaller-scale interventions, and from multilateral to bilateral aid (Hook 1995: 101). Furthermore, while the government largely maintained country programming, it reduced aid to e.g. Cuba (Crawford 2001: n. 25) due to its destabilizing military interventions in Africa, and also demanded more efficiency, evaluation, and accountability in the development aid sector (Brodin 1992: 49). While the Conservatives had long favored reducing the volume of aid, the development aid portfolio was controlled by the expansionist Liberal party in all successive nonsocialist governments between 1976 and 1982.

The BPU report and the resulting bill provided a new systematization of the goals laid down for Swedish development assistance in the 1960s. The report proposed specifying democratic development as an operational goal, yet raised several caveats against imposing a supposedly Western model of democracy on developing countries, called for a tolerant conception of democracy, and reiterated the need for a long-term perspective:

> [T]the economic situation often makes it difficult to bring about a democracy that is working in a Western sense. In its practical application, the democratic societal system in the Nordic countries builds not only upon the principled preconditions of free and secret elections, freedom of association and independent mass media. Important are also the economic preconditions – general literacy, an income distribution that begets economically strong organizations for different interest communities, participation in the decision-making process outside of the political field, and a tradition that reduces the ever-present threat against open societal systems. Against this backdrop, it is natural to connect the hopes of a democratic societal form to development in the long run and a relatively wide interpretation of the concept of democracy. (Utrikesdepartementet 1977: 234)

Thus, the commission argued, one shouldn't restrict one's view to the formal framework of democracy as understood in the West: Single-party systems could offer opportunities for broad popular participation in decision-making processes, to the extent that they allow for critical debate without fear of repression, and lay a foundation for further developing a democratic social order (Utrikesdepartementet 1977: 40).

The commission devoted only one single page out of more than 400 to the goal of democratic development, indicating its low priority (Crawford 2001: 56).

The commission's circumspect attitude to democratization was reflected in the resulting bill that Ola Ullsten, minister for development aid, presented to parliament the following year. The bill expressed hopes that economic development in the long run would lead to democratic development, but also cautioned that developing countries often lack the social and economic and, implicitly, cultural preconditions for maintaining democracy. For instance, "the majority of developing countries lack the political tradition and value community that made democracy the self-evident form of government in e.g. the Nordic countries. Thus, it is necessary to tie the hopes of fully democratic form of society to development in the longer run" (Utrikesdepartementet 1978). In line with the rise of human rights on the agendas of world politics from the mid-1970s, the bill also gave human rights a more central place in Swedish development aid policy, as a value more fundamental than democracy, yet did not elevate promotion of human rights to an official goal of Swedish ODA.

To sum up, although democratic development was explicitly stated as an aim for Swedish ODA policy from the start, it was demoted to irrelevance in principle and practice. Seeking to relate the aims laid down in the 1962 bill to one another, the BPU presented economic and social equality as the principal aims, for which growth, equalization, and democracy were instrumental. The 1978 bill instead specified the four aims as equally important, yet emphasized economic growth, and considered democratic reform – in a sense so wide it could include single-party rule – a goal for the longer term. As a result, throughout the 1970s democracy promotion largely remained a nonissue, and while Conservatives had charged the government with prioritizing socialist regimes and condoning their lack of democracy (Boréus 1994: 215; Brodin 2000: 29), the government shifts in 1976 and 1982 caused no dramatic changes in Sweden's preference for socialist recipient countries (Kärre and Svensson 1989). On the dominant view, Sweden should support developing countries without interfering in their domestic political systems. For instance, in Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam in the 1970s, policy documents did not draw on Sweden's experiences of democratization and avoided questioning the democratic legitimacy of the Communist regime (Brodin 2000: 38n1), and politicians criticizing the Bai Bang paper mill – the single

most expensive Swedish development aid project ever, with a final tab 260 percent over budget – chiefly framed their critique in technical terms (Bjereld and Demker 1995: 285ff). Similarly, Conservatives arguing for terminating aid to Cuba chiefly pointed to its comparatively high GDP and its destabilizing interventions in Africa, rather than to its autocratic regime. Political considerations were more decisive, however, in the case of authoritarian rightwing regimes: Sweden provided so-called humanitarian assistance to liberation movements in Southern Africa and to victims of political oppression under military dictatorships in Latin America (Crawford 2001: n24; Laakso 2002), and terminated a development cooperation agreement with Chile after the coup in 1973 (Axell 1989).

7.5 The Breakthrough of Democracy and Human Rights Promotion

In the 1980s, the previous decade's hopes for a "new international economic order" were crushed by the escalating Third World debt crisis. International financial institutions gained a new prominence in development with their focus on macro-economic reform and structural adjustment programs, and Western development policies increasingly turned from a focus on the state to civil society and the market. The Carter administration had spearheaded democracy and human rights as foreign policy objectives, and the United States began engaging in democracy promotion more consistently by the mid-1980s, while the European Community followed suit only toward the end of the decade (Huber 2015). The previously popular belief that authoritarian regimes might be better equipped than democratic governments to lead economic development was falsified by widespread corruption and kleptocracy, and the international institutions increasingly associated development aid with good governance (Mikaelsson 2008: 174). With the so-called third wave of democratization, numerous countries in Latin America, Asia Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa transitioned to democracy, while the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union implied a major geopolitical shift with global consequences for both donor and recipient countries.

This changing international landscape provided opportunities for forces that sought to reform Swedish development aid policies. Having thus far hardly prioritized the issue, the Conservatives now increasingly began challenging the cross-partisan consensus on development aid,

arguing that aid should not be exempted from the budget cuts necessitated by the economic downturn, that commercialization and tying of aid should be encouraged, and that the selection of recipient countries should be balanced toward nonsocialist regimes (Kärre and Svensson 1989: 233, 252). Increasingly emphasizing freedom, democracy, and human rights as foreign policy objectives (Bjereld and Demker 1995: 145), the Conservatives also pointed to violations of human rights in recipient countries and demanded a strategy for democratic reform (Brodin 2000: 32). Moreover, while the Liberal and Centre parties only marginally diverged from the government's recipient selection policy and criticized Conservatives for abandoning the needs principle, they successively sided with the Conservatives in increasingly disputing the country-programming system, demanding more influence and control for SIDA (Kärre and Svensson 1989: 233, 252; Brodin 1992: 58f). The Social Democrats, with a strong support base among industry trade unions, were susceptible to demands for laxing the 1 percent target and increasing return flows, but often met pushback against reform proposals from the other parties and internal opposition.

Back in government after the 1982 elections, the Social Democrats resisted the opposition's demands for terminating ODA transfers in case of human rights violations and their first bill on development aid failed to mention the democracy promotion aim (Brodin 1992: 68). According to official doctrine, humanitarian needs would guide Swedish ODA. As democracy promotion began dominating aid discussions from the mid-1980s, government successively gave it a more prominent role, but insisted on regarding democratization as a long-term goal and "direction of movement," and promoting democratic development in recipient countries through dialogue rather than demands and conditionality (Crawford 2001: 57) following the principle of "assist rather than abandon" (Laakso 2002: 59). In practice, however, ideological affiliations were more influential, with socialist regimes receiving ca 80 percent of Sweden's foreign aid to Africa in the 1980s (Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998). Yet the Social Democratic government did not roll back its predecessors' reforms, but rather continued increasing the commercialization of aid, moving toward the so-called OECD model, with a shift from grants to loans and from "recipient ownership" to conditionalities (Kärre and Svensson 1989; Brodin 2000: 30f).

When democracy promotion had its symbolic breakthrough in Swedish ODA policy toward the end of the decade, the Social Democratic government took the first step. Following the rapid fall of

Communism, government launched development cooperation with Eastern Europe in 1990, with a focus on democratic consolidation, economic transformation, and environmental protection in the Baltic Sea region. This initiative followed international trends where major donors, including the US and the EU, redirected substantial resources from the third to the second world. Yet except for the Conservatives, all opposition parties opposed this policy shift, as it compromised the 1 percent target and the principle of aiding the poorest people (Brodin 2000: 33), by transferring funds from the ordinary development aid budget – in effect, as a Centre party politician put it, forcing Africa to foot the bill. A push for change also came from Nordic policy coordination: In 1989, a joint Nordic agreement declared democracy promotion as one of the primary aims of Nordic development cooperation and in 1990, the Nordic ministers of development cooperation met in Norway to issue a declaration that insisted on free elections and questioned single-party systems, especially in Africa (Crawford 2001: 57; Laakso 2002: 57, 60): "The connection between democracy, human rights and sustainable development has become more and more evident. . . . open democratic systems and respect for human rights give impetus to efforts to achieve development, economic efficiency and equitable distribution" (Molde Declaration, cited in Crawford 2001: 57).

After the 1991 elections, the new centre-right coalition launched a major reorientation of development aid policy toward "a considerably stronger support for democracy and market economy" (Riksdagen 1991). Minister of development aid Alf Svensson (Christian Democrat) stated democracy and human rights as not only ends in themselves, but also preconditions for development (Crawford 2001). Expecting recipient countries to pursue policies that actually ensured respect for human rights and progress toward democracy and market economy also required stricter control and evaluation (Utrikesdepartementet 1993), while the economic crisis prompted budget cuts and organizational reforms in development aid. The new policy included an increased conditionality approach, a shift away from country-programming toward individual projects, a greater involvement of civil society both in Sweden and in recipient countries, and reduced aid to single-party regimes. Government cut aid to Vietnam, whose involvement in Kampuchea had already prompted discussions about decreasing aid in the late 1980s (Kärre and Svensson 1989: 256), terminated development cooperation with Cuba (Brodin 2000: 33f; Crawford 2001: 58), and continued supporting the transitioning states in Central and Eastern Europe. In

1993, the official doctrine's goal of promoting democratic development was revised to also include "respect for human rights" (Laakso 2002: 60) and SIDA presented a strategy for democracy and human rights assistance. Democracy promotion prompted a range of new strategies and instruments, such as training for journalists, police forces and lawyers, support to NGOs, strengthening legislatures, combating corruption, and supporting elections, voter education, and election monitoring (Brodin 2000: 84). In short, the focus had shifted toward a model of liberal democracy and the rule of law as valuable not only in their own right, but also as important preconditions for development in poor and rich nations alike (Crawford 2001).

While in opposition, the Social Democrats charged the government with an impoverished understanding of democratization, lacking the insight that democratic institutions presuppose a democratic culture that only evolves over decades and centuries (Riksdagen 1992), but when they returned to power in 1994, they continued the predecessor's emphasis on democracy promotion in development aid. In 1995, the government founded the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an international organization seated in Stockholm devoted to furthering democracy across the world (Brodin 2000: 85). It also initiated a system (proposed by the previous government) of democracy support through party-affiliated organizations, which aimed to contribute to the development of pluralistic party systems and democratic societies in development countries and in Central and Eastern Europe, and carried through a reform pooling all public development aid agencies under SIDA's roof.[3] By entering the European Union in 1995, Sweden also increasingly needed to coordinate its foreign policies with the EU, which had a stronger emphasis on conditionality in its development policy, for instance mandating human rights clauses in all EU treaties with third countries (Laakso 2002: 60), but Sweden also found ways to take a leading role among like-minded states in EU development policies (Elgström and Delputte 2016). On the other hand, government also received massive criticism for reestablishing development cooperation with Cuba in 1995.

While the increasing emphasis on democracy and human rights implied that Swedish ODA increasingly adopted a conventional liberal

[3] The acronym SIDA was kept, now spelled out as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

model of electoral democracy and the rule of law, it also created new opportunities for combining these ideals with supposedly uniquely Swedish values and traditions. For instance, a 1998 government communication cites Swedish values and experiences as steering principles for democracy promotion efforts:

> It is those values we in Sweden associate with democracy that we want to promote in other countries too. Experiences from Swedish practice is a natural frame of reference when Sweden enters dialogues with representatives of other countries and cultures ... A characteristic of Swedish democracy has been the emphasis on political solutions based on consensus, a high degree of organization and participation by popular movements, as well as a strong pursuit of equality. (Utrikesdepartementet 1998)

Thus, while the turn to democracy promotion represented a major shift in Swedish ODA priorities, government officials could also frame it as policy continuity, by linking back to the idea of Sweden providing an egalitarian, participatory model for societal reform developing countries ought to emulate. Furthermore, the government also paraphrased the founding era's notion of democratization as a long-term goal and the difficulties of developing the institutional and cultural preconditions for a viable democracy: "[T]he transition to democracy often comes gradually. A first election can take a couple of years to prepare. Building democratic institutions can take decades, developing a democratic culture can take generations. All democratic forces must have reasonable expectations and show patience" (Utrikesdepartementet 1998: 7f).

In sum, the 1980s and 1990s entailed that democracy promotion was elevated from irrelevance to a central goal of Swedish development aid policy, due to the norm entrepreneurship of the Conservative party and facilitated by geopolitical upheavals and the emergence of international norms of democracy and aid conditionality in the 1980s. The period also substituted the previous wide notion of popular participation tolerant of single-party regimes with a distinctly liberal notion of electoral, multiparty democracy, and respect for human rights and the rule of law, although one key bone of contention concerned how to get there, with the Social Democrats emphasizing democratization as a long-term, gradual process whose societal preconditions could take decades to develop. Yet even as Sweden changed course and followed an international trend, policymakers could still find ways of justifying a unique role for Sweden in exporting its homegrown notions of democracy as a model for the developing world.

7.6 Agents of Change in Shrinking Spaces

After the optimism of the 1990s, international development aid faced a new set of challenges after the turn of the millennium (Odén and Wohlgemuth 2010; Odén 2017): In 2000, the United Nations adopted its eight Millennium Development Goals, which focused on poverty reduction and conspicuously excluded democracy. Realizing that the great variety of donor aid programs were causing problems for recipient countries, the OECD sought to achieve greater coordination and harmonization of donor development aid policies, a process that resulted in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Meanwhile, following the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, the war on terror led to the increasing securitization of foreign aid. Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrated the futility of exporting electoral democracy to collapsed states, while the hopes of democratic transformation after the Arab Spring in 2011 were quickly crushed. The rise of China entailed that Western donors increasingly faced a new rival in developing countries (one that never raised any demands for democracy and human rights) and some former recipient countries also became development aid donors. While a billion people were alleviated out of extreme poverty, migrant remittances to developing countries started outdoing global ODA flows and proved more stable than foreign direct investments, not least during the 2008 financial crisis that had complicating repercussions for donor and recipient countries alike. Finally, stalled processes of democratization and rising authoritarian populism in many countries prompted challenges to the liberal multilateral world order, increasingly making the 1990s look like a parenthetical phase in world politics.

This backdrop set the external terms for reforms to Swedish ODA policy. In the early 2000s, a broad consultation process with civil society and state agencies resulted in a new overarching bill – Policy for Global Development (*Politik för global utveckling*, PGU) – setting priorities for development cooperation (Utrikesdepartementet 2003). The new policy entailed a major revision of Swedish ODA goals. Originally laid down in 1962, systematized in 1978 and revised incrementally with the addition of economic independence (1968), sustainable resource management (1987), and gender equality (1995), six goals, all supposedly equally important, governed Swedish ODA policy. Following OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) review recommendations on increasing focus, coherence, and priority among the numerous goals (Mikaelsson 2008: 175), the new policy stated only one goal for Swedish ODA policy: To reduce

poverty. Yet ODA would also be guided by a poor persons perspective and a rights perspective, and under these general principles, the bill listed the six former goals as "directions" – and also added two new "directions": conflict management and human security, and global public goods. The implementation of this policy also entailed a greater emphasis on evaluation, accountability, transparency, and quality control. However, despite these efforts to provide coherence and coordination for Swedish ODA policy, the OECD-DAC would continue to express concern over the fuzziness of Swedish aid policy (Mikaelsson 2008: 176f), as trying to do too many things in too many recipient countries.

The rights perspective in the new policy rested on the normative foundation of the equal dignity and rights of all human beings, and described democracy and human rights as instrumental for securing those values. Hence, on this view, the right of all persons to influence and participate in the governance of their society is accomplished through democracy "in the principles of one person, one vote and equality before the law" (Mikaelsson 2008, citing the bill). Beyond democratic participation, the rights perspective also entailed a new emphasis on countering discrimination as an obstacle to development. The rights and the poor persons perspectives further entailed a normative shift: Where traditionally Sweden had earlier identified the recipients of its aid as "peoples," which mostly meant states, cooperation would now focus on empowering individuals as active participants in the process of development. Pointing to Swedish historical experiences, the bill also stressed the importance of having democratic mechanisms for peaceful management of conflicts and antagonisms to create a will to compromise among different interest groups (Utrikesdepartementet 2003: 24). "Even if complete models cannot be exported," the bill noted, Swedish modern history shows how central social security, the welfare state, and close collaboration between the social partners are for social stability – experiences that "are important in global perspective too" and motivate a "special Swedish engagement" (Utrikesdepartementet 2003: 29, 56).

A new centre-right government coalition gaining power in the 2006 elections raised the level of political contestation over development aid policy and again brought democracy promotion to the forefront. The government shift provided an opportunity to debate fundamental ideas in ODA doctrine, such as the 1 percent target, which made the Swedish ODA budget fluctuate with domestic growth, and whether development aid was actually promoting development at all. The new Conservative

minister for development Gunilla Carlsson launched an ambitious reform agenda, seeking to reduce the number of key recipient countries from 70 to 33, to scale down Sweden's participation in multilateral development organs and to rationalize the Swedish aid bureaucracy, with a greater emphasis on aid efficiency and results-based management. While the minister failed to convince coalition partners to abolish general budget support altogether, it was conditioned on stricter democracy and anti-corruption criteria (Larsson 2018). Furthermore, the government also initiated a major overhaul of Swedish democracy assistance (Utrikesdepartementet 2008), focused on promoting civil and political rights; strengthening democratic and rule-of-law institutions, including elections, party systems, and judiciaries; and supporting the "agents of change," chiefly pro-democratization groups in civil society. The minister declared her ambition "to fill the democracy aim with new content. Dictators [. . .] should fear Swedish aid" (Orrenius 2008), and democracy assistance doubled in a ten-year period, growing to the largest sector of bilateral aid.

In 2014, seeking to clarify the hierarchy of objectives in Swedish ODA policy, government introduced a new "aid policy platform," which proposed a new overarching goal: "improved living conditions for people who live in poverty and oppression" (Utrikesdepartementet 2014). Hence, political oppression was put on a par with poverty in the official doctrine, thus codifying the increasing focus on democracy and human rights, yet the proliferation of goals continued, as the policy also included six broad and diverse sub-objectives, among them "strengthened democracy and gender equality, greater respect for human rights and freedom from oppression" (Utrikesdepartementet 2014). Echoing previous claims to a unique role for Sweden, Carlsson's successor Hillevi Engström maintained that unlike new donors that hardly care for human rights and democracy, "Swedish aid has a special added value in the area of democracy and human rights. We have extensive experience of working with these issues. We live in a society where democracy and human rights are seen as self-evident and are deeply rooted" (Engström 2013). Yet Sweden's mission was now based on a causal belief where liberal institutions were seen as prerequisites for socioeconomic development, rather than the other way around: "Respect for civil and political rights and the rule of law are decisive for building democracy and reducing poverty and oppression."

When a Social Democrat and Green Party coalition took office in 2014, a key concern was how to promote democracy in times of

democratic backsliding and shrinking spaces for participation, thus continuing the previous government's focus on activists in civil society. Government ambitiously declared that "democracy, human rights and ... the rule of law would permeate Swedish foreign policy in its entirety" (Utrikesdepartementet 2016) and that Sweden would pursue a feminist foreign policy, which translated into an even stronger emphasis on gender equality in development aid, including a more equitable distribution of political power, influence, and resources. Dusting off the 2003 PGU, the new government pledged to align its policies, including ODA, to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (which however lacked an explicit democracy goal).

While the government claimed that Sweden's international credibility depended on consistently pursuing the ambitious agenda (Utrikesdepartementet 2016), critics argued that government compromised the democratization aims through budget cuts and reallocations, partly due to rising indonor costs for refugee reception, and foreign policy objectives, such as Sweden's campaign to get elected to the UN Security Council. Government also continued downsizing general budget support due to its politically sensitive nature. Moreover, following a pattern from previous government shifts, government also resumed bilateral aid to Cuba, partly on occasion of the EU's negotiating a bilateral trade agreement.

In sum, while policymakers in the post-millennium period were initially struggling to make sense of the multiplying aims of Swedish development aid, the Conservative-led government aspired to make democracy and human rights its guiding principles. Occurring at a time when other donors largely regarded democracy export on the transition paradigm a failed project (Carothers 2002), Sweden seemingly resisted an international trend. On the other hand, the more dominant, multifaceted and all-sector permeating the principles of democracy, human rights, and rule of law became, the more malleable they also became in their practical operationalization. Sweden thus also reflected an international trend where broader ideas about participatory self-governance came to pervade most fields of development aid, such as state-building, conflict management, and climate change (Schmidt 2015).

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed how democracy promotion became a central aim of Swedish development aid policy. Today, support for democracy,

civil society, human rights, and good governance comprises the largest single budget post in Swedish development cooperation, and is being touted by leading policymakers as a special role for Sweden – a national brand, if you like. Positioning my argument in contradistinction to existing culturalist accounts that would assume the exceptional role of Sweden to result from deep-seated values prevalent in domestic society, I argued that the central role of democracy assistance in Sweden's development aid policy rather results from political contestation in domestic politics partly influenced by international events and conjectures, as political parties and other groups mobilize different ideas with a view to determine public policy, in aid as in any other policy field.

The first thing to note is that if seeking to promote democracy through development aid were just a reflection of values predominant in Swedish culture, we would expect it to stay fairly constant over time and largely unaffected by international conjectures. Yet in fact this analysis has revealed that reflecting international developments (arguably even with some lag), democracy promotion remained in practice a nonissue in Swedish development aid until it had its breakthrough around 1990. From its inception in 1962, Swedish development aid doctrine rested on a notion of democracy so wide it could allow for single-party regimes, a theory of development that prioritized resource growth, social equalization, and political independence, and a conviction against imposing allegedly Western values or donor conditionalities on Third World countries. In its focus on economic growth and tolerance of authoritarian regimes, Swedish aid was not so different from other donors at the time. When the international aid discourse gained a focus on democracy, human rights, good governance, and conditionalities in the 1980s, while the third wave of democratization and the demise of the super-power conflict raised a new set of challenges, Conservative norm entrepreneurship contributed to making democracy promotion a key priority in Swedish development aid, leading to a range of new strategies and instruments. Democracy and human rights were more extensively codified in doctrine by the early 2000s, and the 2006 centre-right government initiated a major reform of development aid, expanding democracy assistance to the largest sector in SIDA's budget. Hence, while official doctrine and its interpreters sometimes claim continuity in Swedish ODA policy goals (e.g. Wohlgemuth 2012), democracy assistance rather represents a remarkable *volte face*, influenced by international trends and domestic political contestation.

Second, as these shifts also reveal, there has at times been considerable politicization of democracy as an aim guiding development aid policy. Swedish development aid policy is often described as rooted in a broad consensus in both elite and popular opinion. Yet looking back at six decades of development policy evolution, policy aims and strategies rather seem formulated through compromises that result from a contentious process where the relative strength and preferences of political parties have shaped the outcome. Moreover, the democracy-promotion aim has evolved in a strikingly dialectic fashion, where doctrines formulated by Social Democrat governments are challenged by the nonsocialist opposition parties, whose policy innovations once they are in government form the basis of a new partial consensus when the Social Democrats resume power. For instance, the centre-right coalitions in the 1990s and the 2000s–2010s made the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law leading principles of Swedish development aid, while their Social Democratic successors largely accepted both the policy aims and the resulting strategies.

Third, beyond such partisan politics, however, it is intriguing to see the use of development aid as a nation branding strategy, where democracy and human rights have successively come to be a defining feature. One aspect of continuity is the idea that Sweden, by virtue of its historical experiences and its special relationship to developing countries, has an important role to play in world affairs. While the notions of democratization and democracy implicit in Swedish ODA have changed drastically since the Cold War era, the idea that Sweden has a mission in providing a model to the world is strangely resilient. Moreover, Sweden's ODA generosity paid off by boosting its standing in international affairs: By reaching and exceeding the UN 0.7 percent aid target, Sweden gained an authoritative status to criticize other countries and a wider hearing on its point of view on international issues (Ekengren and Götz 2013: 30). The expansion of democracy and human rights promotion may have contributed to enhancing that national branding effort, in an era when aid quantity alone no longer served as a key marker of moral distinction.[4]

[4] Tellingly, Sweden's public diplomacy agency the Swedish Institute now also funds development aid projects that promote democracy.

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8

From Unconditional Solidarity to Conditional Evaluability

Competing Notions of Conditionality and the Swedish Aid Model[*]

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8.1 Introduction: Solidarity's Conditions?

> Sweden led the Nordic bloc with a style of aid that was unashamedly ideological and in conflict with that of the United States, and that had an explicit goal of targeting the poorest groups. By the 1980s, with the Cold War coming to a close, the altruistic intentions began to make way for more pragmatic commercial self-interest.
>
> (Usher 1997: 73)

Sweden has been described – together with the other Nordic countries – as "the darling of the 'Third World'," much due to its long-standing dedication to the United Nations' recommended norm of allotting 1 percent of GNI to official development assistance (ODA) (Lödén 1999; Brodin 2000: 35; see also Engh 2009; Ekengren and Götz 2013; Bergman Rosamond 2016; Borring Olesen 2018; Jakobsen 2018). Beyond this comparative generosity – in relation to the OECD's (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) recommendation of 0.7 percent ODA/GNI and with exception of the Gulf states – one of the key characteristics of the special relationship between the Scandinavian countries and their partner countries in the Global

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South has precisely been the ambition to provide development assistance unconditionally to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where underdevelopment, poverty and inequality are the most prevalent (for drivers of ODA, see Stokke 2019; for the first decades of Swedish ODA, see Berg, Lundberg, and Tydén, 2021).

The aim has been to minimize the degree of undue influence which development research has identified as a corollary of "tied" development aid and export credits, a kind of influence which has also been criticized politically as another form of neo-colonialism. This has been a defining feature of the so-called "Nordic aid model," as distinct from the development aid policies pursued by other OECD members (Odén 2011; see also Elgström and Delputte 2016; Engh forthcoming). Over the past decade, however, the Swedish aid model has converged with overall OECD positions since the passing of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) as well as in connection to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Nairobi Outcome Document (OECD 2016; see also United Nations General Assembly 2015). Gradually, the Scandinavian countries have begun to profile themselves as pioneers in terms of promoting transparency as a means towards aid effectiveness and against corruption. This can be viewed as a confirmation of a long-standing Scandinavian "brand" in promoting democracy (as well as good governance) through development aid. But given previous Scandinavian focus on the primacy of the conditions of the donor and the principle of non-conditionality, it has also been viewed as an end to Scandinavian exceptionalism by critical observers (cf. Odén and Wohlgemuth 2013).

This chapter analyzes how competing notions of conditionality – primarily tensions between efficiency and solidarity – have played out in debates and discourses on development aid since the 1960s in one Scandinavian country and a key donor – Sweden. Repeated and shifting demands for accountability and transparency serve as a probe into the complex, competing, and often fluctuating aims, goals, and motives of international development aid. This chapter is organized in line with the main principles which have guided these persistent demands for accountability and transparency in development aid – i.e., aid on the conditions of the donor, the recipient, development as such, and aid on the conditions of the market, respectively.

It is argued that current debates on "the end of aid" are informed by a historical and unresolved tension between ideals of "unconditional solidarity" on the one hand and "conditional efficiency" on the other: The

supposedly novel concern with accountability, evaluation, and transparency in development aid (as well as in other policy fields) neither appears as a neutral demand for "more knowledge" or "better facts" on development aid and its effects among donors and beneficiaries alike, nor as a neoliberal policy designed to hollow out both aid and Scandinavian uniqueness. Instead, it emerges as an element in a longstanding struggle between government-sponsored ODA and government-sponsored foreign direct investment (FDI) as the preferred instrument of development. As such, it has been used on both the left and the right, in the defence as well as in the critique of existing development aid discourses, goals, and practices, illustrating how presumably neutral calls for openness can be used quite flexibly to serve opposed political aims (Götz and Marklund 2014; see also Götz, Brewis, and Werther 2020). In conclusion, it is argued that the various demands for openness elucidate competing aims of aid, indicating a paradox in the transparency paradigm in contemporary development aid discourse, whereby efficient aid – as manifested in economic growth – eventually leads to the *end of aid* while its alleged inefficiency – as evidenced in social inequality – ensures its continued legitimacy.

8.2 From Unconditional Solidarity …

> It is fantastic that all this [broad public acceptance of foreign aid in Sweden] has come about so fast regarding the developing countries. While the US and the Soviet Union, already situated at the centre of world, have taken the leap to the moon, we have taken the step out into the world from our island. It is a big step.
>
> (Michanek 1969: 6)[1]

Few geopolitical shifts have been anticipated for so long as the decolonization of the early 1960s. Yet, not many have caused so much longstanding consternation. Not only the super powers and the former colonial powers sought to prepare themselves for this momentous shift in global politics. Also, minor and neutral states tried to adapt to the new world, including the Scandinavian countries (Borring Olesen et al. 2013). After the setting up of a coordinating committee for civil society and governmental efforts in the early 1950s, the foundation of Sweden's development aid policy was laid out in 1962, which also stated the four

[1] All translations by the author.

aims of Swedish development aid as: resource growth; economic and social equality; economic and political independence; democratic social development (Proposition 1962:100; see also SOU 1977:13; cf. Chapter 7). However, concerning the fulfillment of these aims, the proposition was cautious, noting that: "It is a delicate task to state social and political aims for the provision of development aid. It is not self-evident that the social and political systems and principles to which we subscribe are purposive or attainable in all developing countries" (Proposition 1962:100: 7).

This caution was in part motivated by the gradual transition from Minister of Foreign Affairs Östen Undén's legalistic interpretation of Sweden's neutrality policy towards a more "activist" stance (Ekengren 1999; Lödén 1999). Yet, while the declared goal of 1962 was international solidarity and reduction of poverty it was also acknowledged that this could only be achieved through resource growth – as underdevelopment remained the core cause of poverty, and lack of capital posed a serious obstacle to development. Already in 1960, Swedish business and industrial circles had taken an interest in the new global situation caused by decolonization. That year, the Centre for Business and Policy Studies (Studieförbundet Näringsliv och samhälle, SNS) published a report on the relations between Swedish business and the so-called "under-developed countries" (SNS 1960; see also Gustafsson 1969; discussion in Glover 2019). In 1962, Swedish Export Credit Corporation (Aktiebolaget Svensk Exportkredit) was formed to facilitate government credits to Swedish corporations willing to invest in high-risk "Third World" countries (Berg 1987; see also Dohlman 1989).

International solidarity, business interests, corporatist structures, and an initial shortage of government resources, personnel, and know-how for the new emerging policy field of "international developmental questions" contributed in various ways to an early integration of popular movements, private sector, and government – a kind of regime – combining both idealized and actual Swedish relations with the decolonizing Global South, encompassing domestic interests, norms, and power relations (Elvander 1966; Berntson and Persson 1968; Faragó 1969; for a contrary view, see Englund 1991). The initial focus on development in the sense of modernization also meant that "technical assistance" would often be practically indistinguishable from "foreign investment" and *vice versa*. The free trade for a free world-doctrine as pioneered in US President Harry S. Truman's Point Four Program of 1949 also played a

role in the formation of early Swedish development aid (just as in the development programs of the other Nordic countries, cf. Borring Olesen et al. 2013). A governmental report delivered in 1963 by a working group within the Board for International Development Issues (Beredningen för internationella biståndsfrågor) noted that:

> the Swedish Government has long conducted a liberal trade policy, characterized by viz. low tariffs and absence of quantitative restrictions. By and large, our market is already open for the export products of the developing countries, and Sweden can be said to be in pole position regarding the liberal, free-trade-friendly character of trade policy. (SOU 1963:37: 83)

The traditional free trade stance on the part of the Social Democratic Government – "with exception of restrictions caused by agricultural regulation," as the report observed – "seeks to achieve more liberal world trade by also taking the interests of the developing countries into account." The report concluded that it therefore appeared important "that both government and business assist the developing countries to find more outlets for their products" (SOU 1963:37: 83). At the time, Swedish trade with developing countries was on the rise in 1956–1961, not the least due to considerable Swedish investments in iron mining in Liberia, e.g. the Liberian-American-Swedish Mining Company (LAMCO) (Bruno 2018). Close cooperation between government and business was thus expected in the early formation of Swedish development aid (Glover 2018). While Swedish development aid took institutional shape in the form of the establishment of the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) in 1965, Swedish economic exchange with the developing countries continued to grow, although irregularly.[2]

However, doubts had already been expressed in the congress program adopted by the Swedish labor movement as represented by Swedish Social Democratic Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, SAP) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (Landsorganisationen i Sverige, LO) in 1967. Entitled *Solidaritet med de fattiga folken* (Solidarity with the Poor Peoples), the emerging scepticism regarding trade as a vehicle of development eventually made its way from the congress program into the government's 1968 proposition for reform of development aid (SAP and LO 1967; Proposition 1968:101; see also Berntson and Persson 1968;

[2] In 1995, SIDA was reorganized into the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

Gustafsson 1969). In 1968, SIDA thus added to the quote from Proposition 1962:100, noting that the neutrality of Swedish foreign policy and the principle of noninterference would not preclude the "attempt to guide the direction of development aid so that it, as far as one may assess it, contributes to a social development in the direction of political democracy and social equality," thus indicating a continued preference for the conditions of the donor on the part of development aid (see also discussion in Markensten 1967: 11).

Around the same time, increasingly radical opinion-makers, intellectuals, and scholars began to question that free trade within the capitalist system could help alleviate poverty. For example, Gunnar Myrdal (1969) – Sweden's most profiled expert on "Third World" issues, not the least in his role as founding Director of the Institute of International Economic Studies at Stockholm University and author of *Asian Drama* (1968) – argued that free trade would largely cement existing global power relations. Instead, aid, democracy, planning, public health, and social reforms would be necessary to provide the needed capital investment and institutional frameworks for world development to turn into "virtuous circles." Here, the small and neutral countries of the world could find a special role to fulfil, Sweden perhaps more so than others, Myrdal argued.

This optimism concerning Sweden's possibilities in shaping world order was perhaps most vividly expressed in SIDA General Director Ernst Michanek's (1969) analogy between the 1 percent goal and space race of the super powers, cited above. The most enthusiastic accounts of this view also involved attempts at translating what was interchangeably called the "Swedish model," "the Swedish middle-way," or "functional socialism," in economist Gunnar Adler-Karlsson's influential formulation, with its paradoxical combination of capitalism and communism to international situations as a pragmatic and realistic alternative to the Cold War rivalry between these principles (Adler-Karlsson 1967; Myrdal 1970; see also discussion in Reid-Henry 2017). Some noted that growing US disillusionment with development aid for failing to achieve the intended effect of Truman's Four Point Program in stemming communism in the "Third World" would allow "the middle powers" to play a more decisive role (Kalderén 1969; Michanek 1969: 7). Others argued that Swedish development aid could fulfil an important function for domestic economic policy in Sweden itself, by checking the rise of private consumption and the risk of inflation (Lindbeck 1969) as well as controlling Sweden's balance of payments (Kragh 1969). Noting that

Swedish aid was primarily dependent upon Swedish economic growth, it must be developed in a strategic partnership combining the two, otherwise Sweden would "neither be able to assist in correspondence with its resources, nor can it answer to the needs of the developing countries," economist Ingvar Svennilsson (1969: 183) warned.

By the time of this Swedish debate on development aid, the notion of the "needs" of the so-called developing countries also took on a new sense of acuteness, as decolonization was increasingly viewed among prominent leaders of the Global South as opening for a new wave of neo-colonial patterns of subordination. On the one hand, the problem was one of necessary, yet unconditional financing of development projects: In the words of Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, "all the money in this world is either Red or Blue. I do not have my own Green money, so where can I get some from? I am not taking a cold war position. All I want is money to build it [i.e., the TAZARA Railway]" (1965, cited in George 2014: 65). On the other hand, development aid came under fire from the New Left – both in the North and in the South – for allegedly facilitating the needs of export industry, in addition to the already existing criticism from cultural radicals and liberals for not paying enough attention to human rights.

In Sweden, this tension sparked scathing criticisms of the government's development aid policies, spearheaded by economic historian and radical left politician Bo Gustafsson's (1964) and public intellectual Jan Myrdal's (1989 [1965], 1971) highly publicized positionings. Especially, Jan Myrdal's weekly Sunday chronicles in Stockholm newspapers 1959–1971 – culminating in the satirical and much debated 1968 television film *Hjälparen* on the alleged hypocrisy of Swedish aid workers. Myrdal turned against SIDA's support for the training of local employees at LAMCO in Liberia. The dumping of surplus Swedish paper in the decolonizing countries were often singled out as key examples, alongside Swedish investments in apartheid South Africa, prospective hydropower dam construction in war-ravaged Portuguese colonies and the marketing of arms to Latin American and South Asian dictatorships. Furthermore, the selection of recipient countries was heavily criticized for allegedly being based upon either the interests of Swedish business (e.g. Pakistan and India) or the traditions from the Swedish missionary movement in the 1800s (e.g. Ethiopia), rather than either the poor's needs or reform capacity of the recipient (Berntson and Persson 1968; for a critical analysis of this tension, see Stokke 1978).

The "shady" language about the aims of Swedish development aid in Proposition 1968:101 was put under scrutiny by Bo Gustafsson (1969),[3] alleging that official Swedish prose on development aid was vague on purpose: Under the pretext that development aid is difficult to evaluate due to the complex nature of the problems and the vast tasks ahead, advocates of ODA could easily obscure the way in which it was being used to promote Swedish business interests globally, he argued. The radical critics, by contrast, demanded that development aid should be opened to public scrutiny, just as any other public sector, as "a basic democratic value" (Bohm 1969: 211–212). The implicit assumption was that such assessment and evaluation would prove that the Swedish development aid does not fulfil its stated aims of reducing poverty and should be dramatically redesigned (Markensten 1967; Berntson and Persson 1968; Djurfeldt and Lindberg 1969: 61, 72–73). In fact, the young, mostly left-wing academics concluded it would be naive to expect a capitalist country – albeit small, social democratic, and neutral – to engage in any other relation with the "Third World" than a purely exploitative one (Gustafsson 1969: 60; see also discussion in Tängerstad 1988; Salomon 1996).

This tension would continue to trouble Swedish relations with the decolonizing world even as Swedish policymakers shifted from the cautious legalistic neutralism of the early 1950s to the active foreign policy from the late 1960s and onwards (Ekengren 1999; Lödén 1999). Arguably, Sweden took a higher profile on global issues and "Third World" politics from Olof Palme's take-over as Chairman of the Social Democratic Party and Prime Minister in 1969. Previous neutral or moral aims of poverty reduction and improved living conditions were increasingly aligned with explicit statements in favour of "Third World" solidarity, expressed in gradually more open, if strictly humanitarian support to liberation movements in Vietnam, but also in South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies from 1969 and onwards (Öberg 1985; Sellström 1999; 2002).

[3] In 1967–1970, Gustafsson served as Chairman of the pro-Chinese Communist League Marxists-Leninists (Kommunistiska Förbundet Marxist-Leninisterna, KFML), which played an important role in organizing the Swedish popular movement United NLF Groups (De förenade FNL-grupperna, DFFG) in support of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (FNL) (Tängerstad 1988; Salomon 1996).

These conflicts were regularly viewed by Swedish representatives in terms of a global anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle for national liberation and self-determination, rather than in terms of the bipolar Cold War logic. While developmental theorists both in the North and in the South began to question the modernization-rationalization paradigm represented by Gunnar Myrdal and the earlier generation of developmental economists and planners, most developing countries could at the same time witness the outwardly impressive results of Chinese and Soviet models of development, including large-scale industrialization, collectivization, and central planning (Bauer 1971; Caiden and Wildavsky 1974). The insight that development aid under present conditions would not substantially alter global power relations provided one of the basic tenets of the vocal demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the early 1970s and as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 (UNGA 1974) in the wake of the oil crisis following upon the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Under the NIEO agenda, the Group of 77 countries of the Global South demanded higher foreign aid ratios, more fair rules of world market exchange, set price controls for raw materials, and increased technology transfers from the First World to the Second World, securing not only true sovereignty and self-reliance for the decolonizing states, but also a shift towards a more equal world. Among the first of the so-called "like-minded group" of Western countries, Sweden welcomed the NIEO agenda (Stokke 1978; Dolman 1979; Huldt 1979; Hveem 1980). This stance also tapped into ongoing debates on the actual conditions of development, where capitalist or communist emphasis upon economic growth was contrasted with the depletion of human and natural resources it implied, followed by a marked turn towards both indigenous knowledge, post-materialist values and the promotion of alternative development models, thus qualifying the implication of what "development" would really entail and how to best achieve it (Borowy and Schmelzer 2017; Marklund 2020).

Despite this growing enthusiasm for Third World perspectives on development among both official representatives of Swedish development aid as well as the growing number of civil society solidarity organizations, it is not self-evident that the Swedes would evade skepticism because of their declared support of the interests of the "Third World" – whether through development aid, diplomatic action, or support of the NIEO. In the late 1960s, for example, leading North Vietnamese politicians were wary of the "real" interests of the Swedes in North Vietnam. According to Sweden's Beijing ambassador Lennart

Petri, Vietnamese Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyễn Duy Trinh asked "Why are you so interested in us? What do you really want?" (Petri 1996: 414). Whether convinced by the Swedish declarations of solidarity or not, the Vietnamese proceeded to produce a "shopping list" including items they figured would fit with the aims of both Swedish and Vietnamese *realpolitik*, among others a large paper mill, given Swedish business interests and technical expertise in this area (Jerve et al. 1999: 35).

The Swedish solution to this tension was to provide aid "on the conditions of the recipient," possibly best formulated in an anthology of that name, edited by SIDA official Lennart Wohlgemuth (1976; see also SOU 1977:13). The logical assumption here was that only the recipients can know what they need: If development aid is provided in dialogue between donor and recipient it will not only be more legitimate, but also more efficient. The difference between these two perceptions of aid was reflected in the 1975 setting up of the Swedish Board for Industrial and Technical Cooperation (Beredningen för internationellt tekniskt-ekonomiskt samarbete, BITS) which offered aid finance for Swedish companies' export activities and financial investments in the Global South, as well as the Swedish Import Promotion Office for Products from the Developing Countries (Importkontoret för u-landsprodukter, IMPOD), in addition to the already existing Swedish National Export Credits Guarantee Board (Exportkreditnämnden, EKN) (Proposition 1974:57; SOU 1977:77).

The NIEO agenda assisted in reframing Swedish economic interests perceptibly subjugated to the requests of the recipient. In effect, the Swedish government took upon itself a more active role in promoting Swedish business operating in the Global South, resulting in an increase of "industrial aid" from 2 per cent to 20 per cent of SIDA's aid budget from 1970 to 1975, while Swedish ODA expanded from 128.8 million USD equivalent of 0.47 per cent of Swedish GNP in 1968 to 1.45 per cent – 1134.4 million USD – in 1976 (Frühling 1986: 288–289). Similarly, Swedish direct investments in "developing countries" expanded threefold from 206 million SEK in 1973 to 673 million SEK in 1976, Swedish bank credits accumulated to some 12 billion SEK in 1974–1976, while Swedish government's lending to developing countries reached some 1.4 billion SEK in 1976, signalling the public-private commitment of Palme's Sweden to a significant economic global outreach during this turning point in the global Cold War (Sveriges riksbank 1977: 102, 104, 172–173).

8.3 … to Conditional Evaluability?

> The Swedish taxpayer would be disappointed if he [sic!] saw what came out of the billions that have been used for development aid. In a few years, many of the Swedish projects will not be possible to trace in the material world. Piles of PMs and programs is all that is left.
>
> (Henning Hamilton, Forester, cited in Braw and Rubin 1979: 5)

Under the caption of recipient's conditions diverging sets of preferences regarding development unfolded under the aegis of the NIEO agenda. On the one hand, capital intense, complex and large-scale aid projects, requiring high-level managerial skills and technological competence – such as hydro power (e.g. Uri Dam in India, Kotmale Dam in Sri Lanka), paper mills (e.g. Bai Bang in Vietnam), infrastructure (e.g. TAZARA Railway in Tanzania, constructed and built by People's Republic of China, but supported by Sweden), or state farms (e.g. the joint Nordic MONAP agricultural project in Mozambique) – could either be rationalized as pilot efforts which would generate economic, social, and technological spin-offs or criticized as "white elephants." Yet, it could be argued that recipients, trying to offset Cold War instabilities, acted rationally in demanding concrete, long-term investments which would typically ensure a steady resource flow over a longer time-period in a way which vaguely formulated and open-ended "programs," subject to constant revision could hardly match.

On the other hand, the NIEO agenda not only aimed for the industrialization of the Global South. It also engendered visions of "another development" – environmentally balanced and socially sustainable, in line with traditional values in the recipient countries. For example, President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere's conception of African socialism and *ujamaa* ("familyhood") as formulated in the famous Arusha Declaration and TANU's Policy on Socialism and Self Reliance (Government of Tanzania 1967; see also Pratt 1976) was enthusiastically embraced by Olof Palme in a September 1971 speech in Dar es Salaam upon his tour in Tanzania and Zambia, drawing parallels between SAP and TANU on the basis of the governing parties' shared belief in democratic socialism (Palme 1971; see also Lödén 1999: 188; Ottosson 2001; Silén 2007: 25; Östberg 2009).

However, as the *ujamaa* collectivization and villagization process, involving the resettlement of some 13 million people, ultimately failed to achieve the intended self-reliance (Simensen 2008; Paaskesen 2010; see also Scott 1998), Swedish and Nordic aid entered a conundrum,

which was exacerbated by the internal tensions among the TANU leadership in 1979 on whether to continue with the villagization or to accept the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) offer of debt relief in exchange for a program of austerity measures which would effectively cancel Nyerere's African socialism (Bjerk 2017: 118–120). As the means and ends of Swedish development aid directed to Tanzania should be determined by the recipient, the divergent views in the Tanzanian leadership spelled consternation for the Swedes, as noted by Counsellor Per Lindström, charged with responsibility for Swedish aid at the Swedish Embassy in Dar es Salaam at the time (Braw and Rubin 1979: 59). Eventually, Nyerere stepped down as President in November 1985, giving way to Ali Hassan Mwinyi's economic liberalization policies. This spelled the end to the Nordic–Tanzanian partnership in developing a middle way between the recipient conditionality favored by the Swedish aid model and market conditionality underpinning the IMF's and the World Bank's emphasis upon structural reform which would evolve into the Washington Consensus during the next decade (Selim 1983; World Bank 1984; Cassen 1986; Odén and Tinnes 2003; see also Selbervik 2008). However, this marked shift in one of the most stable allegiances of North-South solidarity apparently had little impact upon the self-understanding of Swedish aid practitioners, as can be evidenced by the view of Sten Rylander, Deputy Director General of Sida, speaking of Swedish aid to recently independent Namibia: "I feel we can do this better than France, Germany, Canada or the Americans. They are just there to rip off Namibia. [. . .] I feel that in Sweden and Norway, we have a track record in Africa about the building of hydro-power plants. In Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia. That's why they like us. Our people give confidence" (Rylander, cited in Usher 1997: 73).

While public support as well as political commitment across the party spectrum remained rather strong for development aid in Sweden (Brante 1976; Hedman 1977; see also Ekengren 1997; Ekengren and Oscarsson 1999), a growing body of researchers – inside and outside the Swedish aid administration – begun to raise questions about aid effectiveness as well as human rights during the early and mid-1980s. Noting that neither human rights nor poverty reduction seemed to improve faster in countries that received the most aid if compared with those that received proportionately less, demands for increased accountability in the interest of efficiency and legitimacy in Swedish aid intensified (Andersson, Heikensten, and de Vylder 1984; Anell and Rydén 1984; Forss 1985; Johansson and Paues 1985).

In a timely response to the demand for more public scrutiny, i.e. from 1982 and onward, SIDA (1982–1994) began to produce a series of aid assessment reports. These reports revealed that Swedish aid was in fact being "tied" up in various ways – "taking back with one hand what has been given with the other," in the words of SIDA economist Karlis Goppers. In 1984, the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionsverket) criticized how these subventions served as an unconditional support for the recipient regime, without necessarily helping the poor (Riksrevisionsverket 1984). In Fiscal Year 1985/1986, moreover, no less than 41 percent of the bilateral aid channeled through SIDA returned to Sweden in this way (Berg 1987: 147; Linnér 1988: 34). Critics remarked that import subventions and so-called *u-krediter* (development credits) had evolved into a method for disbursing funds from the aid budget to fulfil the one percent goal annually, without requiring much administration and without risking Sweden's balance of payments (cf. Berg 1987: 148).

In response to this criticism, Gösta Edgren, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for development aid issues, claimed that the attempts at scrutinizing these disbursements under the so-called *Landöversyn 1980* (SIDA 1980) had been prevented by the then center-right government which did not endorse "us washing our dirty linen in public," as he put it (Edgren cited in Berg 1987: 143, 224). In the ensuing parliamentary debate, the center-right parties shot back by attacking the current SAP government for favoring trade union-owned companies in aid-related public procurement (Riksdagen 1984). Now, however, the motivation for evaluation was less focused on revealing the hidden imperialism or business interests behind development aid, than its concrete results, its effect upon the poor, and its alleged ideological tilt to the left in terms of which countries and projects received support (Englund 1991; Karlström 1991). Despite the flood of reports and evaluations which followed, Swedish development aid debate had by the late 1980s largely become concerned with either minute technicalities or partisan domestic politics, despite the fact that public opinion support for continued Swedish development aid remained high and rising, growing from some 73 percent in 1984 to 85 percent two years later (Ekengren and Oscarsson 1999: 14ff; for a discussion, see Linnér 1988).

Under the pressure of the Swedish banking crisis in 1990–1994 as well as long-standing criticism from organized business interests, the incoming center-right government with Moderate Party leader Carl Bildt as Prime Minister in 1991–1994 undertook a review of the organization of

Swedish development aid, assigning the task to the Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance, SASDA (Kommittén för utvärdering och analys inom biståndsområdet). This working group referred to the preceding Swedish approach, characterized with recipients' conditionality as "overly optimistic – to the point of being naïve," proposing that a greater proportion of aid to be tied to Swedish industry in the interest of mutual benefits (Hveem and McNeill 1994: 9; Usher 1997: 73). The links between development assistance and donor country exports were highlighted (Ds 1994:58; Ds 1994:75). The working group suggested that BITS should be integrated with the reorganized SIDA and IMPOD restructured into SwedeCorp. This shift should also be seen in the perspective of the former "Second World" emerging not only as a global region in need of both investment, development and aid in the wake of post-communist democratization and transition, but also an adjacent region long obscured in Swedish public perception. In 1995, a year after SAP had returned into government, the two agencies were merged to form a new organization, embodying the new converging setup – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (Usher 1997).

This convergence is epitomized in the World Bank's (1998) report *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*. The report argued that aid is most efficient in countries with functional institutions and sound macroeconomic policies, while underdevelopment and poverty are largely anthropogenic – caused by dysfunctional institutions, unsound policies, and misguided development aid which serves to protect the former (Lensink and White 1999). The World Bank's (1998) report was criticized on methodological grounds (Isaksson and Keller 1999), sceptics arguing that the report basically recommends giving aid to those who do not need it while closing it down for those who do, thus facilitating aid exit strategies in an era when countries such as Vietnam have evolved into high-growth mid-income economies (Fee 2012; Mawdsley 2012). To the sceptics, the report signaled that the World Bank – long a key player in the "foreign aid regime" (Lumsdaine 1993) – contrasted the "inefficiency" of development aid to the "efficiency" of market forces, thus confirming free trade and institutional reform as the preferred means of world development and the primacy of the market's conditionality, also in Swedish aid policies (for an argument predating the report, see Dahlgren 1992). The pre-1995 setup is in fact often regarded as the epitome of the erstwhile "Nordic model of development aid" (Cedergren and Odén 1991; Ds 1994:58; Hveem and McNeill 1994; Odén 2011).

8.4 Conclusion: Evaluability's Conditions?

While domestic observers on the center-right have often criticized Swedish development aid since its inception in the early 1960s for its presumed leftist bias, progressives, radical liberals and left-wing social democrats have pinpointed the longstanding and close association between Swedish aid and Swedish business. While this structure has been typical of the high degree of market and state coordination characteristic of the "Scandinavian model" domestically until the globalizing and neoliberalizing 1990s, its international reflection in the Swedish model of developmental and economic outreach to the Global South has provoked intense debates on the moral and ideological paradoxes of this "corporatist" setup: To the progressives and radicals, Swedish development aid has largely been ineffectual because it has not sought to alter the structural imbalances of the global market, despite its focus on "progressive" regimes in the Global South. To center-right commentators, by contrast, Swedish development aid has partly failed, precisely because it has not been channeled through the global market, supporting global value chains. To the former, the market has been the primary problem. To the latter, the market has been a promising solution. It is in this context we must understand the successive demands for accountability, evaluation, and transparency in the field of development aid and the shifting aid conditionalities which they reflect.

The essence of evaluation lies in assessing the correspondence between aims, means, and outcomes. Thereby, the processes of evaluation can also serve as a mirror. The debate on the need for openness, evaluation, and accountability in development aid as studied in this chapter emerges as a kind of test chart of the donor's self-image and motives, beyond official declarations and policy statements. Today, however, development aid is currently under political pressure from two perspectives, both of which express competing self-images and motives: Neoliberals and populists criticize development aid for alleged inefficiency in reducing poverty and promoting good governance, while progressives operating through the framework provided by post-colonial and subaltern perspectives turn against its assumed intrusiveness, asymmetric power, and cognitive colonization, if not outright racism. Both these sets of criticism pose high demands on the quality of development aid projects to be assessed – efficient and solidaristic, purposive, and participatory. But, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, the issue of accountability and evaluations, openness and transparency are no novelties to the debate

on development aid. Yet, a set of remarkable reversals can be identified when it comes to their political usage.

There appears to have been a reversal of the traditional objectives for development aid over the period under study here: During the 1960s, it was the left that criticized aid for being inefficient and for not being directed to the poorest, demanding that aid should be closed off to private interests but also voicing skepticism about aid's efficiency at all, given the capitalist world system. Today, conservatives and liberals demand that aid should be terminated once markets begin to grow as aid should only be disbursed wherever the poverty is greatest and be coordinated with free trade, corporate social responsibility and promoting economic growth, whenever possible. On the one hand, this appears logical, as (neo)liberal policies tend to request public support for investment where risks are high and profitability low, demanding it to be closed once risk is reduced and returns are bound to increase. However, in the view of the policy adaptations following upon the Great Recession of 2008, the LDCs not the least in Africa register some of the highest growth rates globally. Supporters of traditional Swedish development aid policy have thus moved to defend the continuation of aid with reference to the potential for sustainable business opportunities – such as in the debate following the former center-right government's decision to end Swedish aid to Vietnam in 2007 – thus reducing the imagined contrast between the "Nordic" or "Swedish aid model" on the one hand, and the public–private partnership model evolving in international aid discourse over the past decades on the other hand. Primarily, this fusing is steeped in the language of efficiency and hence in the demand for evaluability.

This is also where a double paradox of conditional evaluability can be observed. Continuous and seemingly endless evaluation runs the risk of overshadowing the underlying basic motives of aid to begin with, causing aid exhaustion or exasperation: A situation in which efficient aid by necessity must lead to the end of aid while inefficient aid must ensure its continuation – to the extent that the causes of the level of progress and human development at all can be determined or associated with any specific form of external assistance. Previously around 1970, evaluation was primarily prompted by a wish to put the unspoken motives into focus and place the aims under discussion, while leaving efficiency and impact largely aside. Today, in the 2020s, some fifty years later, an otherwise similar preoccupation with evaluation appears to do exactly

the opposite, rendering the debate on development aid largely a question of impact evaluation and efficiency assessment, rather than scrutinizing motives and questioning drivers (cf. Stokke 2019).

In one sense, then, the productivity of the present aid paradigm of evaluation appears to surpass the previous paradigms of planning and recipient conditionality, as the piles of PMs and programs concerning planned development projects alluded to above is slowly becoming dwarfed by a growing mountain of impact evaluations, accountability reports, and aid assessments produced over the past decennia, constituent parts of a growing facts infrastructure on development cooperation, the value of which will eventually have to be measured itself against the persistent inequalities of the world.

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9

The Pragmatarian Style

Environmental Change, Global Health, and Gro Harlem Brundtland's Nordic Internationalism

SIMON REID-HENRY

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the internationalism of Norway's former prime minister, and one of its most successful internationalists, Gro Harlem Brundtland. This chapter suggests that during the 1980s and 1990s Brundtland pursued a distinctive form of pragmatic humanitarianism in her efforts to influence the international agenda. The distinctiveness of this approach emerges during her two main appearances on the world stage: first in her role as head of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1983–1987), where I suggest she brought a distinctly Nordic brand of humanitarian internationalism to the emergent environmental politics of the time; and second, through a reconsideration of her role as Director General of the World Health Organization (1998–2003) and the reform program she oversaw there. The argument I make is that, across these two moments – resulting, respectively, in the birth of a new concept and the realization of a new institutional arrangement – it becomes possible to observe the workings of a distinctive style of international politics that we might term "pragmatarian."

By pragmatarian I mean an approach to "doing good" in the world that combined altruism with a willingness to compromise on humanitarian idealism in the name of political realism (something particularly strongly ingrained in the social democratic mind). In that sense the pragmatarian style, as it emerged to address some of the pressing social and environmental problems coalescing through globalization in the early 1980s, was part ethical imperative and part contingent practice of globalization itself, bound together in a distinctive political form. But this was more than just the self-conscious deployment or working out of a political brand (Moisio et al. 2011; de Bengy Puyvallée 2018). In his 1964

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essay, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, Richard Hofstadter examined the historical development of what he called a "style of mind" in American domestic politics. The conspiratorial framework of Hofstadter's analysis is a long way from someone like Brundtland's brand of solidarism, and US domestic politics are not the international realm. But as coherent political styles the paranoid and the pragmatarian share certain traits in common. Above all they each conform to the observation that a political "[s]tyle," as Hofstadter (1964a: 5) noted, "has more to do with the *way* in which ideas are believed than with the truth or falsity of their content" [my emphasis].

In developing his argument Hofstadter borrowed loosely from clinical psychology. My aim here is to borrow loosely from his political insights in turn, and to suggest that paranoia need not be the only psychological or social basis of a given "style" in politics. What prompted the paranoid style, for Hofstadter, was a sense of dispossession: be it earlier incarnations in the nineteenth century, which saw illuminism, masonry, and Catholicism as threats to an imagined prelapsarian image of American life; or the mid-twentieth century form that most interested Hofstadter, which was animated by what US conservatives in those years perceived as the national treachery committed by immigrants, cosmopolitans, communists, and the intellectuals who for many conservatives combined those various traits. Transposing Hofstadter's analysis to the later twentieth century, a very different provocation could be said to give rise to the pragmatarian style, and this time it is one to which social democrats, rather than conservatives, were prone. This was the sense of disempowerment that social democrats felt before the great structural forces of economic development that were wreaking havoc, from the 1970s onwards, at the international scale (Ferguson et al. 2010; Reid-Henry 2019).

After all, more than any other ideological grouping, social democrats had appeared to be able to tame these forces nationally. Yet with globalization emergent they roiled still at the international level. In place of conspiracy and betrayal, then, we find for social democrats in the later twentieth century a newfound powerlessness. In both cases it is a sense of political and intellectual awe before the scale of a newly discovered problem that animates the political style. In a way that Hofstadter does not fully explore, we might go so far as to say that these political styles emerge, in other words, when there is a prevailing sense among protagonists that something like such a style *has* to emerge: and that only by acting in conformity with such a style is redemption of the prior political identity (or "brand") a possibility. Here the similarities end. For where

the paranoid style is conservative, the pragmatarian style is progressive, and where the former developed in the real world as it "mixed its fortunes with American party politics" in the mid-twentieth century, the latter enfolded itself within the international bureaucracy of the late twentieth century (Hofstadter 1964a: 22). There, in place of treason as the favoured enemy motif, one finds instead the moral vacillation and ignorance of mankind at large: waiting to be fixed, as we shall see, by the technocrats and the doyens of market signalling.

Of course, much of what I have said about pragmatarianism thus far could just as easily be lain at the feet of do-gooding humanitarianism writ large: consider the crusading style of a Bernard Kouchner and his *Médicins Sans Frontières*, for example. But like its conservative American counterpart, the pragmatarian style has a more specific purpose than change *per se*: It seeks not just social improvement (or even social activism) but rationally and energetically to convert that desire for change into a common-sense framework, and to insist that political and institutional reform only makes sense from within the uncontestable logic *of* such a framework. The marshalling of evidence – not simply the use of evidence, or even necessarily its veracity in the case of the paranoid style, but rather its calculated political presentation and display – is key, in both styles, to the mobilization of such reforms. Again, however, there are important differences between them. In place of a black and white world view and a militant puritanism (two traits that strongly shaped the paranoid style), the pragmatarian sees complexity and takes compromise to be a political virtue. Where the paranoid style "all but obsessively" (Hofstadter 1964a: 36) accumulates evidence precisely so as to avoid the give and take of open political debate – to "ward off the profane intrusion of the secular political world" as Hofstadter (1964b: np) put it in the Harper's version of his essay – the pragmatarian style deploys evidence precisely in order to politic*ize*. What unites them however, and warrants their consideration alike as political styles, is the fact that each seeks these ends not merely in order to bring about change but to redeem some fundamental mistake undertaken by others. Its proponents are thus by contrast the "elect," the sitters on panels (like Gro herself in her later engagements with The Elders), the committee members and figureheads of global commissions. It is here that each style may ultimately come to be a matter of belief, rather than ideology or moral commitment. And it is this that perhaps also encourages adherents of such a style to subvert their own critique: be it the conservative demagogue abusing the law to fight perceived infringements of the

law, or the pragmatarian turning to the market to circumvent the problems of the market.

As I want to explore in this chapter, Brundtland embodies important elements of this more progressive – yet equally paradoxical – pragmatarian style, and via the two unparalleled opportunities she was afforded to deploy it at the international level (though not, I should stress, in any way self-consciously I think), we are also granted the means to examine the pragmatarian style in action. Though it should be stated that such a style is subconsciously articulated, its traces are hardly invisible. Self-effacement, it turns out, does not sit any better with the pragmatarian style than it did with the paranoid incantations of Hofstadter's analysis. And the four-time prime minister with "her Harvard degree and her Calvinist roots," as *Time Magazine* put it, was "seldom apologetic" (Dalton-Bradford 2000: 113; Gibbs 2001). Yet there can be no denying that Brundtland's politics also conformed to an underlying attitude of beneficence, even "noblesse oblige," likely stemming from her training as a doctor. And despite frequent comparisons to Margaret Thatcher (often simply because they were both female prime ministers) she was no ideologue. She was far more "a coalition builder" (Henderson 2013: 76), which is further indication of the extent to which her political world view was unified more by a certain style than a rigid ideological framework. In Brundtland's world view, in other words, one finds that to "do good" one first and above all has to "do."

Brundtland's sense of higher obligation was further shaped – unusually so, for a rich world head of state at the time – by her "astute comprehension of the necessity of global solutions" (Dalton-Bradford 2000: 114). Her husband was a scholar of international relations, and this may have reinforced the fact. Gro was anyway ahead of her time in seeking to *normalize* a commitment to international solidarity among the citizens of the advanced industrial economies (in contrast to the moral exceptionalism preached by the likes of the Live Aid concert at the time). As one of her staunchest critics, fellow Norwegian politician Carl I. Hagen of the Freedom and Progress Party once put it of the Norwegian nation under her prime ministership: "We are world champions at solving other countries' problems ... We behave as though we are a superpower" (cited in Gibbs 2001). It may be fair to say, indeed, that it was "solving problems" that animated Brundtland more than her predilection for social activism per se. To see solutions where others see only bottlenecks, and to be committed, moreover, to advocating on behalf of those solutions, as if possessing some "special authority" to do so (Hofstadter

1964a: 35); to want to speak in fact on behalf of mostly *imagined* communities – the "global poor" being no less a work of political fiction, after all, than Nixon's "silent majority" – these traits, too, fit well the definition of a political "style."

The pragmatarian style, as I seek to describe it here, thus trades in part on the self-proclaimed neutrality of the "altruistic" identity of the "Nordic brand," but allies this – in the manner outlined above – with a pragmatic political vision for its fulfilment. The motivation for the pragmatarian style, and its particular resonance in a Nordic context, was in this sense identified somewhat earlier by a rather different Nordic internationalist, Gunnar Myrdal. For Myrdal, writing in the 1950s and the 1960s, the challenge of internationalism was precisely to scale up the political insights (and associated institutional architecture) of *national* social democracy. If not, he warned, the result would be "mere" humanitarianism internationally (Reid-Henry 2017). In many ways Myrdal was proven right after the upheavals of the 1970s and the failure, in particular, of the vision of the non-aligned countries for a new international economic order based upon cooperative multilateralism. And yet in Brundtland's two internationalist moments, we see a genuine attempt to adhere to that prior social democratic impetus and to put its insights to work internationally.

In order to contextualize the emergence of the pragmatarian style through Brundtland's two principal acts on the international scene both also need to be set against the wider backdrop of an emergent "global" public opinion, economic globalization (specifically in its post-NIEO form) and the closing of the Cold War. For while a style may be articulated by individuals, it requires social changes to take root in the world: "[C]ertain historical catastrophes or frustrations may be conducive to the release of such psychic energies, and to situations in which they can more readily be built into mass movements or political parties," as Hofstadter (1964b: np) puts it. The upheavals of 1970s – the oil shocks, stagflation, the political crises and mass social movements of the age – provided just such a context for pragmatarians in the late cold war years. But it is equally necessary to contextualize this political style in relation to the Nordic roots of Brundtland's own approach to international politics. The emergence of the pragmatarian style suggests a more practical alternative identity to the "moral superpower" brand of the Nordic nations as explored elsewhere in this volume.

For a country such as Norway, the pragmatarian style as embodied by Gro Harlem Brundtland offered, most basically, a means for a small

nation to reassert itself in an era of emerging powers and acute geopolitical crises. By hitching Nordic diplomacy to the institutions of liberal internationalism and the techniques of market globalization, Norway was able to maintain its status as an important international actor. Today, at a time when multilateralism is said to be in crisis and when Norway's traditional "peace" brand has been challenged through its engagements in Afghanistan in particular (and more recently still via Jens Stoltenberg and its leadership ties with NATO), as well as by its diplomatic scuffles with China over the award of the Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo in 2010, the pragmatarian style is again proving popular as a basis upon which to refashion the Nordic brand: well embodied, for example, by the recent UiO-Harvard-Lancet Commission on Global Governance for Health (2011–). Indeed, the whole trope of "global governance" rather nicely articulates core aspects of the pragmatarian style. And there may also be lessons here for those governance agendas that, like the pragmatarian style and the paranoid style before it, ultimately propose solutions so askance from the underlying causes that the problems which first animated them are unlikely to ever be reformed out of existence (not least since, to do so, would be to deprive the style's adherents of a cause).

In what follows I cannot hope to address all of these issues. Instead my aim is simply to sketch out the emergence and development of the pragmatarian style. My account begins with the launching of Norway's then young female prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland upon the international scene in 1983. That year, in what was the most substantial international act of her career so far, Brundtland was selected, from among a list of candidates that included former US President Jimmy Carter, to chair a new World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) recently formed by the UN to address growing concerns over the environment. Contrary to most accounts of the work of the Commission in the literature, in the first part of this chapter I set out to understand the WCED as a "site" where the pragmatarian approach to international politics can be seen emerging. This is not without reward: doing so in fact helps us to resolve one of the principal conundrums of the WCED and its legacy, namely how a process which initially cleaved to a quite radical agenda ended up providing one of the late twentieth-century's most powerful bulwarks against committed social action on the environment. This "lost" radicalism of the WCED can now be accounted for, since it was in keeping with the pragmatarian style that the Commission's initial embrace of a *political* account of the problem of climate change could be reworked into the distinctly more

values-based solution that the WCED ultimately bequeathed to the world: the ur-concept of "sustainable development." Such a move not only helped to shape the outcome and the legacy of the WCED for the environmental movement going forward. It also transformed the nature of liberal humanitarian internationalism more broadly: opening up a new path for addressing structural problems via market logics and instruments, giving succour (whether intentionally or not) to the idea that efficiency-maximization offered the best way to tackle large-scale challenges arising out of globalization, and that global-scale political change in turn required the mobilization not of solidarity but of self-interest. The pragmatarian style made each of these fundamental contradictions seem like practical steps towards a robust and doable solution.

It is Brundtland's second act on the international scene which allows us to confirm this thesis and to map the ongoing development of the pragmatarian style over time. This later reprise came about through her election to the position of Director General of the World Health Organization in 1998, shortly after her prime ministership in Norway had ended. By now the thrust of Nordic internationalism more broadly was geared to the institutions of a post–Cold War liberal order. Free of the constraints of the Cold War – and its formerly precarious position bordering the USSR – Norwegian internationalism in the 1990s more actively adopted the ostensibly de-politicized and "solutions-oriented" approach to international diplomacy that Brundtland had in some senses tested at the WCED. Aid and development were now no longer an adjunct to Norwegian diplomacy as abstract goals or moral imperatives; rather, they were an important channel of diplomacy in their own right. Here, as I try to show in the second part of the chapter, is where a more mature form of pragmatarianism found its niche. Brundtland's efforts to transform the World Health Organization can again be shown to articulate elements of the pragmatarian political style, whose core now consisted in mapping onto the international domain the ideal of equality of opportunity emerging out of the "new" social democracy of the 1990s, with its echoes of "third way" managerialism and poverty reduction as a more depoliticized way of addressing inequality and the sources of social and economic injustice. The outcome of this later variant of pragmatarianism was not a new concept, as above, but this time the elaboration of a managerial technique. Translated to the context of the WHO this meant ensuring that the WHO's vast global bureaucracy was streamlined, primarily so as not to get in the way of new entrepreneurial initiatives that could assist the poor, and in which the pragmatarians placed the bulk of

their faith. The resistance to her reforms that Brundtland encountered at the WHO equally well represented the limits to this more mature variant of the pragmatarian style. Setting these two elements together (the birth of a concept and the elaboration of a technique) thus also allows us to reconceive the history of two touchstone moments in the history of Nordic internationalism. Perhaps above all, it allows us to reconceptualize the Brundtland Commission and the restructuring of the WHO in the 1990s as two overlooked stepping-stones on a path – the pragmatarian path – from the structural radicalism of the NIEO to the neoliberal individualism of contemporary global governance and rights-based approaches to development.

9.2 Act I: The WCED (1983–1987) – A New Nordic Internationalism Is Born

Our first act opens at the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). When the United Nations under then Secretary General Pérez-Cuellar initiated the idea of a global environmental commission in the early 1980s, it was responding to the first great wave of ecological concerns that had arisen during the 1970s. Such concerns had led to the rallies and marches attending the launching of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, while the era's ecological fears had long since been ignited by books such as Rachel Carson's bestselling *Silent Spring* (1962) and concerns about runaway population growth articulated in Anne and Paul Erlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968). These were also the years that brought us the first vistas of the Earth afloat in space, captured in photos like Earth Rise (1968) and broadcast widely around the world. When this first-generation environmentalism burst onto the political scene at the start of the 1970s it took two distinctive forms. On the one hand was a brand of alarmism variously linked to millennialist and "alternative" lifestyles. This reached its apogee in reports such as 1972s Club of Rome report, *Limits to Growth*. On the other was a more state-oriented party-political movement that treated the environment as a stake in wider (mostly western) social struggles (Du Pisani 2007: 89–90). From out of the Club of Rome report, came a third path forward, however, and this was one that held out a promise of redemption with respect to the other two: the potential role of technology in meeting socio-economic needs without doing undue damage to the environment. This was echoed in the Stockholm conference of 1972, chaired by future WCED member Maurice Strong, which began to float the idea of a more "sustainable"

path to development (Thacher 1992; Smith 2005: 78). The central debate at Stockholm was whether technology would worsen or alleviate the global environmental situation, and at decade's end experts were still divided on the matter. With inflation and spiking oil prices, the public meanwhile had become increasingly concerned about the rising cost of living, which only further underscored the scale of what it would cost to address these burgeoning global scale environmental concerns.

The launch of the World Commission on Environment and Development (UN General Assembly Resolution 38/161 of 1983) sought to resolve some of these as yet unanswered environmental questions by linking them to heightened concerns about the state of the macro-economy and the fate of heavily indebted poorer nations within it. Via its shift in scale to the global, the WCED would chart the path of sustainable development as an antidote to the more localist "limits to growth" (Carruthers 2001: 98; Smith 2005: 78). Gro Harlem Brundtland was appointed to head up the Commission in 1983. Brundtland had been in office for a little over eight months in 1981, but she brought with her the experience of her stint as Minister of Environment in Norway from 1974 to 1979. Moreover her selection conformed to a certain global common sense at the time regarding the status and standing of Nordic internationalism, coming as it did on the heels of two prior, Scandinavian-inflected "commissions": the Brandt Report (1980, the Commission on International Development) and the Palme Report (1982, the Commission on Disarmament and Security). The Brundtland Commission, as the work of the WCED would become known, ultimately overshadowed both of these prior reports. This was not simply on account of the scale of the UN's ambitions for the WCED (Brundtland's official mandate, from UN Secretary General Pérez-Cuellar, was to construct nothing less than "a global agenda for change"). It was also – as we shall see – because of the way in which Brundtland organized and took control of the work of the Commission itself. It is here that a door onto the pragmatarian style can begin to be cracked open.

Brundtland was joined at the WCED by 22 commissioners from around the world. No sooner had she set about selecting them, than she immediately confronted the two fundamental geopolitical axes that dominated the 1980s: the North–South divide and the East–West tensions of the Cold War. North–South tensions emerged from the start, with northern nations favouring stricter future regulation, and southern nations concerned at the extent to which this would undermine their

own present development (Borowy 2013: 200). As a female leader Brundtland confronted at the same time a patriarchal political environment (Smith 2005: 94). Alongside Brundtland was appointed Mansour Khalid, Sudan's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, as first Vice Chairman. The two of them, representing different lines of authority over the Commission – Brundtland to Cuellar and the UNGA, and Khalid to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), which had hosted an initial conference on the topic in Nairobi in 1982 (and whose Executive Director, Mostafa Tolba, strongly felt that the Commission ought to have been UNEPs to lead). To make matters worse Brundtland and Khalid did not get along (Smith 2005: 82). Such personal tensions would ultimately be kept in check, but conflicting worldviews persisted within the Commission, and one of the southern Commissioners, Pablo Casanova, went so far as to resign his position feeling that the Commission was pursuing primarily a "northern" agenda. East–West tensions made themselves felt as well, not least since the US believed its interests were likely to be threatened by such a Commission, while the USSR was more than a touch suspicious: the Soviets providing Russian commissioner, Vladimir Sokolov, with a KGB assistant up until around late 1985 (Borowy 2014: 68). Solving the riddle of how to meet the twin goals of environmental protection and economic growth simultaneously thus meant, in practice, that the commission would need to secure points of view from across the north–south and east–west divides of the time, analyze that information in real time, condense any findings into concrete policy objectives, and then advocate on behalf of its conclusions to a distinctly sceptical global audience.

With its inaugural meeting held in October 1984, and the Report itself due in the fall of 1987, the Commission would also need to do all this within three years. As Brundtland herself recalled: "Our mission was more a matter of politics in general than of traditional environmental protection" (Brundtland 2002: 197). For all that the WCED initially looked set to follow the pattern of the Brandt and Palme Commissions before it, therefore, the WCED in fact soon veered on to an altogether different path. Brundtland, it was clear, wanted to make sure that things got *done*, and to this end one of her first acts as Chair was to appoint the experienced Canadian James MacNeill, head of environment at the OECD and former Deputy Environmental Minister in Toronto, as (full-time) Secretary General of the WCED, which now also was afforded rooms in the Palais des Nations as its official base in Geneva. MacNeill was an obvious choice for the role. It was he who had helped set the ball

rolling for the WCED in Nairobi in 1982 and his work on environment and economics at the OECD in many ways provided the intellectual framing for the entire Commission's work (it was also a source, in its own right, of pragmatarian thinking). He was joined by Warren Lindner of the World Wildlife Fund as head of administration. Lindner too was given a clear steer as to how the Commission was going to work. Of Lindner's interview Brundtland recalled, "The American heard a great deal that day in Oslo, about Scandinavian concepts of democracy and leadership, and about the style I call my own" (Brundtland 2002: 197).

At this stage of proceedings that style involved consultation with all stakeholders (something Brundtland practiced during her various stints as prime minister as well) and an emphasis on collecting evidence couched in the inclusive principles of Nordic democracy. This way of approaching the Commission's work was shared by Lindner and MacNeill in particular (Montgomery 2016). Hence for all its global ambitions and entanglements the Commission articulated from the start as well a distinctly Scandinavian organizational culture and style. The WCEDs wider institutional parameters further supported such an approach. Four of the eight governments that committed to financing the Commission during its four years of work (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) were Nordic nations. Three of the most critical figures of the 22-person Commission were familiar from before with Nordic political and developmental thinking: James MacNeill himself was half-Swedish and had studied for his masters in Stockholm (1951) and he was assisted by several Norwegian advisors; Mansour Khalid, for all he otherwise differed from Brundtland, had toured Scandinavian countries in 1971 seeking funds from development NGOs to assist in the resettlement of Southern Sudanese refugees; and then, of course, there was Brundtland herself.

Brundtland was critical in determining both the consensus-based manner of the Commission's work, but also its ultimate legacy. To begin with Brundtland was committed to trying to resolve the paradox of how to combat poverty and ecological destruction at the same time: she genuinely sought change for the better and was one of the earliest heads of state to fully grasp the full implications of the environment question. But for all she would oversee Norway's official development assistance rising from 0.7 to 1.0 per cent, she was not, in the manner of a Raúl Prebisch, seeking major structural reforms. Moreover the international context for the Commission's work involved tackling head on some of the most basic questions of economic development at a time when the

third world debt crisis was reaching its height. The latter would increasingly come to preoccupy the Commission: culminating in a dramatic showdown at its final meeting in Japan. Brundtland's later comment – "Norwegian political values were well represented by the WCED report" (Brundtland 2002: 268) – needs evaluating in this light. For as against the oft-cited "neutral" or "humane" nature of the moral agenda that is usually taken to be the Nordic brand's central feature, Brundtland's management of the WCED increasingly in fact gave vent to a distinctly results-oriented approach which began to push those classic Nordic concerns that problems of global welfare needed addressing as political problems above all, towards a form of diplomatic triage that could be aided by recourse to the mobilizational power of market signalling.

In the Canadian literature the Commission's work has accordingly been cited as an example of "pragmatic idealism" (Melakopides 1998). Perhaps the primary register of this is to be found in Brundtland's own instance that the environment should never be considered separate to questions of development. A commonplace today, this was innovative in its time. But it was a reduction of the commission's initial commitment to the belief that economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability all went hand in hand – if managed properly. At the core of the intellectual case that the Commission initially began to explore, was thus a relational analysis of the nature of world poverty that tied the state of the environment to economic growth and which structured both domains as distinctively political problems. This much was radical, but following on from that analysis was a further constant invocation throughout the meetings to focus on the "practical" – as in Oslo, where the minutes of discussions report a debate on science and technology, wherein: "The discussion on this subject illustrated that science and technology has a tendency to become philosophical and it was therefore suggested that the Commission should address the *practical* implications of science and technology."[1] Ultimately it was the latter practical approach which won out. In so doing it altered what was perhaps the single most radical component of the WCED: its commitment to organizing itself around a series of revolving public hearings and stakeholder submissions (WCED 1988: 2).

The idea to organize the Commission around a central spine of global public hearings was MacNeill's and at first garnered a mixed response.

[1] Minutes of the 3rd Meeting Oslo June 1985 – WCED_v40_doc28, p. 15. My emphasis.

As one historian puts it: the suggestion provoked scepticism among some of the Commission members and outright irritation around the world. Few countries of the world were open democracies where such events could have been considered normal. Many governments, including those of countries of origin of most commissioners, were bound to react with suspicion, creating the question of whether to prioritize governmental sensitivities or broad interchanges with people who were affected by the issues being discussed. But the role of public hearings became central to the operation of the WCED and the ability to host them in turn became a central prerequisite to actually hosting one of the six meetings in any given city (Borowy 2014: 66–69). During the hearings, literally "[h]undreds of organizations and individuals gave testimony ... and over 500 written submissions constituting more than l0,000 pages of material were received by the Commission in connection with them" (Melakopides 1998: 155).[2] The iterative nature of this process proved significant to the outcome of the WCED, not least since the Commission's final report was written all the while and so absorbed these changes in thinking along the way.

The length and intensity of these "deliberative meetings" varied, however. While usually they took place for around 3–4 days (as in Indonesia, Norway, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Kenya, the Soviet Union, and Japan) they lasted for over a week in Canada (Melakopides 1998). The quality of the "public" varied as well. Prior to the Sao Paulo meeting the hearings tended to be quite carefully convened by host states in dialogue with commission members. But still, commitment to a form of deliberation was real and meaningful and the hearings helped the Commission to "transcend national boundaries and disparate cultures." Brundtland herself placed a good deal of emphasis on the ideas emerging from them, though it is less clear whether they in fact unearthed anything unexpected. As Borowy suggests (2014: 70), what the hearings ultimately provided was testimony and, over time, a clear sense of the pervasiveness of certain types of problems. Their real contribution, then, was to provide a common language otherwise missing at the start of the process, and through which the otherwise very differently positioned commissioners could engage one another in generating a distinctive set of arguments.

[2] See also annex 2 of the Brundtland Report: "At its Inaugural Meeting, the Commission also decided that its processes would be open, visible, and participatory and that in conducting its work, strategies would be employed to ensure it of receiving the broadest range of views and advice on the key issues it was addressing."

This became apparent after the fourth meeting, in Sao Paolo. In the context of the recent fall of the military dictatorship in Brazil, the arrival of the WCED with its call for open public debate was welcomed in that country as a breath of fresh air. As a result the meetings were inundated with citizens and community groups, as on the final day when, by all accounts, the audience seemed reluctant to let the new wind of open public debate blow out. From Sao Paolo the Commission moved on to Ottawa, where the relationship between these public inputs and the outputs of the Commission's own work began to shift, as the pragmatarian style took over. In stark contrast to the noisily peopled character of the Sao Paolo meeting, for example, the post-Ottawa drafts onwards reveal the language of Sustainable Development in formation – as the Commission moved away from concrete matters of environment and development into a more abstract mode. This was no doubt necessary to keep the Commission's transformative ambitions in play diplomatically. But it meant that at the same time as there was possibly even a *growing* radicalism to some individual commissioners' private interpretations of the problem (as some came to see that all meaningful change required changes in rich countries as well as in the global South), the public presentation of the Commission's work was more carefully toned down. The Commission had by now acknowledged, in other words, that it would not be able to state its views explicitly. As Nitin Desai, one of the Commission's many advisors observed after Ottawa, "the note [coming out of this meeting] glossed over the challenges of dealing with discounting the future and with uncertainty" (cited in Borowy 2014: 63).

The breakthrough for the pragmatarian style in the context of the WCED's work came in December 1986, when the Commission arrived in Moscow just eight months after the Chernobyl disaster. The Committee was now at its "conclusion" stage (Brundtland 2002: 208). But how could a global commission on the state of the environment not take a stand on a disaster on the scale of Chernobyl (for all that the true scale of Chernobyl was not, it is true, yet known to the world)? Moscow thus confronted the Commission with its own inherent paradoxes: for while it confirmed the Commission's instincts that matters of the environment were increasingly shot through with politics, it also nourished an interpretation of that problem which was projected out of the prior assumptions of the pragmatarian style, and which supported a very different solution: the idea that sustainable development (that is a vision of social and environmental entropy balanced by capitalist economic growth) was

"apolitical" when, in reality, it was every bit as political as the state socialist managerialism which had resulted in Chernobyl (cf. Sachs 2000: 34).

To be sure, Chernobyl was raised by the Commissioners in Moscow, and preemptively addressed in the Soviet delegation's welcome and opening remarks. But the topic was largely airbrushed throughout. The most revealing exchange occurred when, on the afternoon session of December 11, MacNeill asked A. S. Timoshenko, a member of the legal panel of the Commission, directly what he thought, in light of Chernobyl and other transboundary ecological crises, international law *should* do to avoid a similar catastrophe. Timoshenko's answer is in effect no answer at all. "[L]aw should basically follow events not prevent them," he says. "Well whether it is good or bad as far as environmental protection is concerned it is bad, but it is objective reality which reflects the conditions under which we all living."[3] This lack of political will to which Timoshenko alluded, but also and perhaps less consciously reinscribed, was the nub of the problem here. And one wonders whether, at this stage, with even the force of Chernobyl at their back, the Commissioners had simply come to accept that the best one could do was to provide a language in which change might be debated rather than create the framework for change itself.

The public birth of the concept of sustainable development, as it was finally articulated coming out of the last meeting in Tokyo just a couple of months later, thus needs understanding less as a breakthrough in ecological thinking, and more as a breakthrough for the pragmatarian style itself. This is not to criticize the concept out of hand. If much of the advice of the Brundtland Commission has gone unheeded this is hardly the fault of the Commission itself. Sustainable Development is today one of the most widespread public policy discourses: compare the lack of influence of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, for example (Pederson 2005: 273). It has become a developmental "buzz-word." Yet arguably its status today owes less to what it offered in practical policy terms and more to the fact that it provided a means of depoliticizing the politics of environmental change at the moment of that movement's mainstream emergence: "the world has vanished into the earth" in Sachs' (2000: 127) memorable verdict. The Commission, after all, had begun its work adamant that it was inequities in the world system

[3] Moscow Public Hearings, Afternoon Session December 11 Transcript, p. 160: 0041P/cm/PH/Moscow/Tape 6.

that were driving ecosystem destruction and the uneven apportionment of the effects of this. Yet it concluded, through its promotion of the idea of sustainable development, and despite two years of public testimony largely supporting its original and more radical analysis, that further economic growth was the best solution for resolving the problems of economic growth. Sustainable development was thus itself mostly a solution to the political problem of reconciling the antagonistic positions of the Commissioners and their respective world views – those "contending intellectual streams . . . and tensions exposed at Stockholm and later UN conferences," as one scholar has put it (Dierwechter 2018: 55). Perhaps, too, it was the first example of post-Cold War capitalist triumphalism occasioned by the death of alternative approaches in Moscow. The geopolitical tensions that the Commission began with were in any case, in a practical sense at least, not so much resolved as simply incorporated by its end.

Sustainable development thus enabled the WCED, with Brundtland at its helm, to reformulate the terms of its original mandate. The problem had been reduced in scope and the Committee, on those terms, appeared to have succeeded in its task. The Commission's final Report, *Our Common Future*, was launched to a media fanfare in London in April 1987 (WCED [1987] 2009). Tellingly, and of a piece with the pragmatarian style, no actual objectives or procedures were outlined (Linnerid 2017: np). Equally in keeping with the pragmatarian style, the central concept of sustainable development itself was framed less as a technical description – something which immediately antagonized critics (e.g. O'Riordan 1988) – and more as a way of "framing" the problem: simplified, asserted, and somewhat stripped of its political history.

Our Common Future was presented to the UN General Assembly in October in New York. By then Chernobyl and the Ozone layer were each topics of widespread conversation the world over, allowing the concept of "sustainable development" to be received as the necessary reform that capitalism needed to continue its onward march, while state socialism was already writing itself out of the picture. A UN general resolution (42/187) committed states to considering the recommendations of the report and a centre opened in Geneva to popularize its findings. In due course *Our Common Future* gave on to the work of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration of 1992 and ultimately to the MDGs at the turn of the millennium. But in all of this, something of the report's original radicalism, not least its emphasis on inequality, was lost as the pragmatarian style, through purpose and – as at Moscow – serendipitous intervention,

gradually emerged. Along this pathway those signs pointing back to the NIEO were written over, and others pointing forwards towards the age of global governance were put up.

The legacy of the WCED thus turned out *not* to be the legacy that Brundtland herself perhaps initially sought or the impact that the Commission long strove for. This is not Brundtland's fault so much as it is something we can observe taking place around her leadership of the WCED. MacNeill's formulation coming out the Commission, for example, was that public opinion was now "far ahead of governments": more global and more forward looking at the same time. "The politics of greening," as he put it, "will continue to drive the greening of politics well into the twenty-first century" (MacNeill 1990). Yet what the WCED had ultimately shown was that redemptive simplifications could disrupt this sort of political circuitry, as the currents of idealism and efficiency at the heart of the pragmatarian style took a concrete shape in the world of international politics.

This was seen as a victory at the time: *Our Common Future* was hailed as "the most important document of the decade on the future of the world" (Gerasimova 2017: np). Simply for existing, perhaps that was true. But within just a few years certain of the flaws in the pragmatarian style were already becoming apparent. As the *New Internationalist* captured well in a 1992 feature it ran on the legacy of the WCED, indicting the report for its managerialism dressed up as good intentions:

> In effect the Brundtland Report incorporated ecological concern into the idea of development by erecting "sustainable development" as a conceptual roof under which the environment could be both violated and healed ... Systems language purges reality of local particularities, of quality and uniqueness ... [it] cannot resist looking at living communities from the standpoint of control. (New Internationalist 1992)

If somewhat acerbic, this was nonetheless a fair description of the outcomes of a political style that was committed above all to ensuring its solutions appealed as widely as possible, even as they moved away from its own original diagnosis of the problem.

9.3 Act II: The WHO (1996) – Pragmatic Internationalism Enshrined

In her work leading the WCED, Gro Harlem had been at one centre of the emergence of a pragmatarian style in international politics.

Her return to the international sphere, at the helm of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1998, opens up a further window onto that pragmatarian style a decade later. By now not only was the international context substantially different; Brundtland's articulation of the pragmatarian style had also deepened. Brundtland arrived at the WHO at a critical moment. Prior to her appointment, the organization, which had been set up in 1948, was in danger of being eclipsed by other actors, such as the World Bank, which were moving into the health arena (Walt 1993; Ruger 2005). In response the WHO had begun a process of internal reform, officially known as the Response to Global Change working group. Established in 1992, amidst calls for a "radical restructuring" of the WHO (Smith 1995; Godlee 1997: 1359), the working group set out to examine how better to equip the WHO to respond to the emergent "global" challenges of the post-Cold War era: the shift, in effect, from *international* to *global* health (Yach and Bettcher 1998; Brown, Cueto and Fee 2006: 69; cf. Clift 2013: 34).

The group reported back the following year. If the WHO was to retain its leading role in the health sector, the report suggested, it needed both to raise its ambitions to a global, rather than regional, level and overhaul its management structure in pursuit of that end (Brown et al. 2006). International health, in other words, needed to follow the path towards the global already lain out by the environment sector. Accordingly, when the WHO looked around for a new Director General to champion this change, one "who could restore credibility to the organization and provide it with a new vision," as Brown et al. (2006: 69) later put it, Gro Harlem Brundtland was in many ways an obvious choice for the role, not least with her experience as both medical doctor, politician, and chair of the WCED.

In canvassing for the post, Brundtland herself placed substantial emphasis on the deep roots of her public service "internationalism" and, of course, her professional understanding of the health sector learned as a practicing doctor in Norway. Although she would this time be dealing not with a small group of Commissioners with strong personalities but with a major international bureaucracy, her approach to health as a policy problem was broadly the same as her approach had been to the environment. She sought to put the WHO firmly on the map by bringing to it a sense of its *political* mission. She wished, she said, to make it a "department of consequence" (Brown et al. 2006: 70). To do so she linked health improvements to the yardstick of economic growth, just as

she had linked the economy to the environment before.[4] To this end Brundtland frequently referred, while at the WHO, to "better health and better economic development," and to "good investments, in terms of health dollars spent" (cited in Davies 2010: 39). This time, however, she was in a position to oversee the means of actually implementing such a vision, rather than simply reporting on it as before. Under her leadership WHO programming would henceforth become more disease-specific, more "vertical," and less focused on health systems in the round (as had been the once-influential vision, back in 1978, of the Alma Ata conference and approach to global health policy). It would partner with a range of "private" actors, such as the Gates Foundation, and was at times accused of being too accommodating of powerful donors.

As a global institution the WHO was duly retrenched around a core mission in Geneva, providing oversight functions of an increasing variety of semi-autonomous (and issue specific) public–private partnership programs. This moved it away – though here Brundtland would encounter resistance – from the regional leadership that had dominated the organization to date, divided as it had been historically into a series of regional sub-organizations (Ruger and Yach 2008). Even more sharply than was the WCED, the WHO was now to be organized in accordance with the basic tenets of the pragmatarian style: with the role of *evidence*, *norms*, and *efficiency* each being emphasized in particular. This time, however, the *evidence* base for change put forward by Brundtland would be sourced not by public hearings, but through professional (often private) consultancy, by the establishment of a new Evidence for Information and Policy cluster at the WHO, and via the introduction of Disability Adjusted Life Year (DALY) metrics which had begun to be used at the World Bank from 1993 (Homedes 1996) and would be taken up also in the new Global Fund for Aids, TB, and Malaria after 2002. The *normative* orientation of Brundtland's reforms, by turns, was directed less at "public opinion" and focused instead on changing the actual function of the WHO: strengthening its role as a "norm-coordinator" – in essence a governance function – rather than as the enactor of programs itself. Finally, the *efficiency* of the reform program would be obtained not by harnessing "growth" in the name of sustainable development (as before) but by arguing for the positive contribution that good health could make to economic growth, via the reduction of political

[4] This was undertaken by, inter alia, the formation of the Commission on Macro-Economics.

bureaucracy, and by amplifying the role of the market in decision-making mechanisms within the WHO.

Such changes were institutional in the first instance. But they were again animated by the moral imperative to "do something," one generated this time by a new suite of post-Cold War global health security challenges that had begun to emerge: from HIV/AIDS to Ebola (Lakoff 2016). In many respects it was this that gave the second articulation of the pragmatarian style, as represented by Brundtland's reforms, such traction: enabling in just a few short years a major overhaul of the centrepiece of the global health bureaucracy. Unlike at the WCED, Brundtland and her reformers at the WHO were not leading the charge from out in front: they were supported this time by the political leadership of the G8 countries struck as they too had been (belatedly now, in the mid-late 1990s) by the moral force of HIV/AIDS. This afforded a certain humanitarian impetus to Gro's reform agenda (Lidén 2013), especially when that force was conveyed through the cold logic of numbers. Here an interesting inversion of the paranoid style becomes apparent in the pragmatarian variant. Where Hofstadter (1964a: 35) could observe that, "[o]ne of the impressive things about paranoid literature is the contrast between its fantasied conclusions and the almost touching concern with factuality it invariably shows," the pragmatarian style was interested only in such conclusions as the evidence might support (conclusions reached long after empathy, for example, may have pointed in the same direction).

It would be wrong, of course, to paint the entire reform process at the WHO as the product of pragmatarian thinking. Not least, the desire to transition the WHO from provider of health programs to a norm-coordinator, for example, had already been articulated in another influential WHO reform document produced prior to Brundtland's arrival: the UN Nordic Project led by Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Sweden (Clift 2013: 30). Similarly the move away from a structure of powerful and semi-independent regional offices, towards a more centralized executive (and a more executive centre) based in Geneva, was supported by the report of the UN's own Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of 1993.[5] What Brundtland's reform process achieved, rather, was to bind each of these ambitions together with the sense of institutional failure emerging from

[5] Joint Inspection Unit, "Decentralization of Organizations within the United Nations System. Part III: The World Health Organization," Geneva, 1993, www.unjiu.org/data/reports/1993/EN93-02.PDF (cited in Clift 2013: 21).

that decade's stark confrontation with a new scale of *global* health security challenges and a set of arguments which encouraged all actors to see that, with the right levers and managerial systems in place, health problems might "clear" just as well-managed markets always would. Taken together the result was a form of the pragmatarian style whose legacy, this time, was not a novel concept (as before) but a deep swerve in the direction of WHO policymaking (a new organizational technique).

What did this new technique look like? In contrast to the Commission-based work of the WCED, leadership of the WHO afforded Gro the opportunity to actually implement a range of policy measures. Within just the first three months, Brundtland had downsized fifty departments into thirty-five and re-organized those that remained according to new strategic priorities (Yamey 2002; Clift 2013). At the top of the organization, the leadership structure of the WHO was overhauled, with the previous Assistant Director General positions replaced by new Executive Director posts given to individuals with technical expertise. Further down the hierarchy she oversaw an increase in the use of public–private partnerships to address the funding inconsistencies at the WHO (though in the view of many critics it also simply transferred the influence that donors had from states and their voluntary contributions to private actors with their self-defined agendas). Alongside this she also championed the turn towards data-driven policymaking, notably within the two signature health programs she introduced: the Tobacco Free Initiative, leading to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and the Roll Back Malaria campaign. To oversee all this work she brought in experts from Harvard to operate a new Evidence and Information policy unit at the WHO, prompting one observer to comment that the WHO was becoming "a branch of Harvard and the World Bank" (cited in Yamey 2002).

There was more than just sour grapes in such a comment. The change in personnel and programs reflected a larger change in priorities and approach. As Brundtland herself put it: "What is our comparative advantage?" Often it seemed that the answer to this was bringing governments and the private sector on board and making the case that good health is good economics. When *Our Common Future* was launched this approach was widely lauded. The second time around Brundtland encountered more resistance, not least from within the very bureaucracy she was seeking to overhaul. Brundtland had set out to (re)define the WHO's mission in the world not on the basis of an analysis of what the world needed in terms of health provision, but in terms of what a more

streamlined WHO would be "best" positioned to deliver. It was a subtle, but as Lerer and Matzopoulos (2001) point out, significant difference in approach, and Brundtland even incorporated the "Commission" format within the WHO to bring this about, via her Commission on Macro Economics and Health. As Jeffrey Sachs, the man she appointed to head up the Commission, later put it, what the macro-economic Commission advocated for was a form of "science-based politics" (cited in Clift 2013: 42). In a sense this is what Brundtland successfully introduced across the WHO at large. But with hindsight it becomes easier to see that this was always a very specific politics, focused on the ways in which wealthier nations might demonstrate the terms on which they were willing to help provide global public goods, and thereby underscore their utility to the management of world affairs. It was not obviously in keeping with her vision, "[a]s a social democrat," as she put it at around this same time, to "strive to change society in such a way that it is healthy for people, enhances equality and distributes primary needs in an honest way" (cited in Ribberink 2006: 1).

Alongside her deepening embrace of the pragmatarian style, Brundtland's understanding of international politics had also developed in the years since the WCED. "Fifty-three years of life experience and 18 years of political work in government and the parliament of my country have brought me to the following view of the most fundamental challenges of our time: The forces of technology, of finance, and of electronic communication have increasingly taken over the powers that were vested in democracy to shape our future," she declared to an audience of Ivy League alumni in the US in 1992. "What should be our global village is threatening to turn into a global jungle. We need to replace international anarchy with international governance" (Brundtland 1992: 161). Such a view was afforded a boost in the context of the closing of the Cold War. "The challenge of the 1990s," Brundtland went on "is to deepen and widen the forces of democracy and to lift democratic decision making also to the international level" (Brundtland 1992). Such a view was also, of course, in keeping with arguments made by other liberal internationalists of the era, notably Anne-Marie Slaughter's outline of a "new world order" of multilateral, trans-boundary governance playing out within and across sectors (such as health and the law) as much as between national sovereign states, and where democracy – public participation – per se was somewhat less prioritized (Slaughter 1997). The appeal of the pragmatarian style extended beyond the particular rendering of it provided by Brundtland.

At the same time, the challenge at the WHO was a good deal more specific than such rhetoric allows for, and in a way that complicated things for a pragmatarian such as Brundtland. In particular, with her reform agenda, Brundtland had promised to change the way in which the WHO was funded and to restore coordination across its regional offices (two of the most serious problems confronting the organization in the years prior to her arrival under former Director General Nakajima). To be sure, what Brundtland achieved at the WHO was hugely impressive, given the diminished status of the organization when she took over (Yamey 2002). Yet if there were two reforms that eluded Brundtland, when she left the WHO after just a single term in office, it was the need to coordinate the operations of her newly empowered WHO headquarters in Geneva with that of the older regional offices, and to grant – via funding reform – greater decision-making power to the World Health Assembly, which still functions as the only real democratic chamber within the WHO.

This narrowing of the sphere of decision-making agency ultimately demonstrates just in what ways her conformity to the pragmatarian style had changed between her time at the WCED in the 1980s and at the WHO a decade later. What was gained was the post-Cold War globalism of the elites; what was lost was the prior, and distinctly *Nordic*, notion of democratic inclusivity with which Brundtland had first experimented at the WCED. Perhaps most fundamentally, her initial emphasis on "deliberative" public engagement at the WCED was almost entirely absent at the WHO a decade later, and not just because of the different mandates that she took on at the WCED and the WHO. The enactment of a form of global "town hall" hearing was arguably the greatest innovation coming out of the WCED – certainly as significant as the (ultimately watered down) conception of sustainable development itself. Yet while the latter persisted to influence the work undertaken by Brundtland and her team at the WHO, the deliberative approach did not – and this despite the fact that the WHO itself already had an annual "assembly" that could have fulfilled such a role. The WHO instead saw the centralization of authority around the office of the Director General, one marked by Brundtland's own mantra of there being "One WHO, not two." In the end it was also this that represented the limits to Brundtland's pragmatarian approach to reform of the organization. Her call for a global health politics conjoined to the conflicting imperatives of humanitarianism, efficiency, and technocratic control ultimately fell on deaf ears amongst many at the WHO. Frustrated from within,

Brundtland never sought re-election as Director General for a second term. International bureaucracies, it seems, can be harder to change than global public opinion.

9.4 Conclusion: Nordic Legacies of the Pragmatarian Style

In setting Brundtland's two principal appearances on the world stage alongside one another it becomes possible to see how the Norwegian prime minister enacted a distinctive vision for humanitarian internationalism during the 1980s and 1990s. That vision took as its starting point the altruism of the Nordic brand but channelled this towards reform of the (then much less fully articulated) international scale in keeping with the tenets of what I have here described as the pragmatarian style. As the tensions inherent to the pragmatarian style played out, the redemptive intentions of Gro's leadership of the WCED and the WHO – to save the environment from economic growth and to save the world's health from the failures of the global health bureaucracy – were each ultimately subverted. But so too, along the way, was the kernel of a unique, even valiant, effort to democratize the international domain. Brundtland's primary concern to ensure that her prescriptions *first* secured the mobilizing force offered by the proponents of economic growth – that they become "effective" in this way – led the solutions devised at the WCED and the WHO to very often undercut the ends that had been intended. In the process, moreover, the political project of a social democratic vision for internationalism (a radicalism which focused on the need to democratize international policymaking, to incorporate the emergent power of social movements, and to maintain public accountability) lost out to a more "doable" set of solutions (the concept of sustainable development, the introduction of greater "efficiency" at the WHO) that could be sold to a narrower grouping of "stakeholders" and international elites.

If this reading in part explains the "lost" radicalism of the Brundtland Commission, equally it helps explain why Brundtland's reform program at the WHO was initially welcomed only to steadily become less popular among its more permanent staff. The reduction in Brundtland's political horizons, her move away from the utopianism of the era of the NIEO to her later more pro-market commitments of Third Way social democracy, are characteristic of the pragmatarian style. And here it is not merely Brundtland's contributions that need assessing; for such a reduction points as well to the costs of Norway's more general embrace of the pragmatarian style over recent decades in its approach to international

development. In place of the paranoid style's future redolent with doomsday scenarios and precise and unwavering prophecies, adherents to the pragmatarian style see the future as always having somehow averted disaster. The pragmatarian future is populated by rights bearing citizens who have secured substantial advances at little or no cost to the present generation. It is filled with the statistical reward of the "lives saved," as at GAVI, or even of the life years gained, as with the Disability Adjusted Life Year (DALYs) and Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALYs) measures that became standard fixtures during Brundtland's time at the WHO and which her vision of calculable governance enhancements meshed so well with. It is as if the stakes, while millennial in the case of climate change, and tragic in the case of a global burden of disease gone unchecked, are somehow merely another externality effect awaiting to be properly priced. It is questionable, in light of this volume's consideration of the brand of the Scandinavian countries, whether this leaves Norway in fact anything like as distinctive as once it was.

It was not just "sustainable development" that proved to be a structural critique too easily defanged, in other words; or Brundtland's efforts to create a more vertical structure within the leadership of the WHO that proved to be an institutional reform too easily turned back to its prior reliance on the power of capital. The pragmatarian style of thinking that shaped Brundtland's (and to some extent Norway's) engagement with environmental and health politics in the late twentieth century, and which was mirrored in other leading countries (perhaps most notably Canada), was itself ultimately a way of "discussing" structural change without really undertaking it. In both cases Brundtland was, as a politician, successful to the extent that she brought two crucial issues – environment and health – to the attention of powerful states and international actors. There can be little disputing this, whether one compares the impact of Rio (1992), which was born out of the WCED, to the legacy of the Stockholm conference (1972) that preceded it, or whether one compares the inadequate response to HIV/AIDS at the global scale prior to Brundtland's time at the helm of the WHO relative to after, not least in the formation of the Global Fund itself. Or indeed if one considers the more general rise in political attention to health spending in the wealthier nations during and after her tenure (such as the establishment of a health-related MDG in 2000; or the increased focus on international health within the G8 nations' own development ministries, for example). Yet in both cases that legacy has also been a mixed one. Perhaps via the pragmatarian style, in other words, we can

begin to see just what it is that links Silicon Valley entrepreneurialism, philanthropy, and global governance policy elites of the sort that convene in Davos each year. Along the way, the altruism with which the Scandinavian brand is traditionally associated has been diluted by those aspects of the pragmatarian style that seek a return on its investments, and the political alloy that results is a complex and at times contradictory achievement: speaking still in the language of social democratic inclusion and compromise, while acting more often than not to reproduce the logic of a system that awakens humanitarian empathy in the first place.

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10

Global Public Goods

A Threat to Nordic Humanitarianism?

DESMOND MCNEILL

10.1 The Notion of Global Public Goods

A "global public goods" (GPG) approach to reducing poverty and countering other major challenges has gained increasing support in recent years. Does this sound the death knell of traditional development aid? And what might it imply, more specifically, for the Scandinavian countries?

The concept of a "global public good" is rather new, and can best be understood against the background of the more well-established term "public good," which derives originally from the work of the famous economist Paul Samuelson (1954). A public good has two properties: First, it is "non-rivalrous," meaning that consumption of the good by one person does not reduce the quantity available to others. Second, it is "non-excludable," meaning that it is impossible to prevent anyone from consuming it. A lighthouse is sometimes used as an example: The light it emits is not "used up" by ships benefitting from it; nor can one prevent them from doing so.

Until recently the term was used to relate to the level of the nation state, one of whose purposes, and duties, is to provide such public goods: roads, a police force, and so on. It is interesting to note that a public good is one which will, by implication, necessarily be undersupplied by the market; the state therefore needs to step in, in the interests of all citizens. But this responsibility applies only at the national level. Now, thanks largely to an initiative led by Inge Kaul, the first Director of the United Nations Human Development Report, the concept has been extended to the global level (Kaul, Grunberg, and Stern, 1999). Examples of global public goods that are typically cited include control of communicable diseases, combatting climate change, and well-regulated international trade and finance systems. But it is apparent that the original definition,

by Samuelson, is very restrictive, and there are in practice few cases that strictly fulfil both criteria – "non-rivalrous" and "non-excludable." Recent policy debates concerning GPGs, however, generally adopt – if only implicitly – a somewhat less demanding interpretation, as discussed below. For the purposes of this article, I shall adopt a rather simple definition: A GPG approach is one which finances global initiatives that benefit all, not only the poor.

Just as in the case of national public goods, a GPG approach necessarily implies that some entity needs to step in – because the market will not serve. Ideally, the United Nations system would be that entity, and it has to some extent served this purpose. But it is weak and underfunded. Finance for global public goods is therefore very limited, relative to what is spent on public goods at national level. It is possible, however, that the severity of major, shared global challenges – such as climate change and pandemics – may be enough to generate an increased level of support, perhaps even financed by some sort of global tax. Some have, as I shall discuss, proposed that a GPG approach should replace traditional development assistance. This view may be understood against the background of a long history of criticism of foreign aid, dating back almost as far as aid itself. Apart from more "ideological" critiques of aid as imperialism (e.g. Hayter 1971), aid has been criticized for simply failing to achieve its intended purpose. In *The Contradictions of Foreign Aid* (McNeill 1981), I analyzed some of the reasons. These seemed to be built into the very structure of the system, which created the bizarre situation that while the total volume of aid was woefully small, a major problem for donors was simply how to get the money spent. This was primarily because of the complex procedures surrounding aid funding, put in place because recipient governments were not sufficiently trusted, a situation which still persists today. The apparently unending challenge facing donors is reflected in the titles of two books by the same author that span a period of 20 years: *Foreign Aid Reconsidered* (Riddell 1987) and *Does Aid Really Work?* (Riddell 2007), and, perhaps, in the fact that my book was republished in 2019.

The GPG approach was designed partly in response to these criticisms of aid. But what are the implications for Scandinavian humanitarianism? I will discuss this question by first summarizing some of the debates concerning the idea of global public goods, followed by a presentation of two specific examples of this approach: a programme to counter climate change, REDD + (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), and a global initiative for producing a vaccine against COVID-19.

Claims to the effect that foreign aid is an inefficient instrument for development have, in the last couple of decades, been made with increasing force and frequency, and many have been professing the "end of aid" (Gill 2018). It is against this background that a GPG approach has become increasingly promoted. Sumner and Mallett conclude that "a significant shift in the aid system is required" from "aid as resource transfers to something different ... collective global action" (2012: 72). According to them, recent interest in GPGs

> is fuelled, in part, by an understanding of globalization and its impacts. Certainly globalization, on the basis of several measures, has greatly increased in this century, as has concern about its impacts. The main rationale behind providing GPGs is to regulate or compensate for the negative effects of global public "bads," or "products" which generate negative externalities across borders and reduce utility, such as air pollution, civil war and violent conflict, disease, HIV/AIDS, international terrorism, and financial shocks (Sumner and Mallett 2012: 63).

In this same vein, Severino and Ray (2009: 5) have argued that "our conventional understanding of ODA is looking more and more outdated, becoming increasingly irrelevant as a tool for action." According to them, the global public goods theory brought to light "the fantastic disconnect between old concepts and new realities. It was the first time that the task of dealing with market failures that characterize world commons was given the statute of public policy" (Severino and Ray 2009: 7). They list the provision of GPGs as one of the three key tasks of international development assistance today. They also observe the relative reduction in significance of bilateral donors since the 1990s; a phenomenon also noted by Sumner and Mallett (2012).

> Not only have the size and number of major international NGOs (e.g. Oxfam) expanded but we have also begun to witness the emergence of a range of new actors, from private foundations (e.g. the Gates Foundation) and businesses (e.g. Project (RED)), to transnational thematic funds (e.g. GAVI). Additionally, there is now an array of different sources of funding and aid channels. For example, at the 2010 MDGs Summit, the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development proposed a "Global Solidarity Levy" which would be used to finance global public goods. (Sumner and Mallett 2012)

Fifteen years ago, a major study was undertaken entitled *The Future of Development Financing: Challenges, Scenarios and Strategic Choices* (Sagasti, Bezanson, and Prada 2005), with substantial support from

Sweden, which also hosted the Secretariat. It is interesting to quote what this study had to say about GPGs in relation to aid. The following is extracted from table 3.2. Motivations for development assistance:

> *International solidarity and religious* motivations: 1) Altruism, ethical and humanitarian concerns; 2) Religious proselytism:
>
> *Narrow and enlightened self interest:* 1) Strategic and security interests; 2) Political interests, which focus on obtaining political support for foreign and domestic policies: 3) Economic and commercial interests.
>
> *Provision of international public goods:* 1) Emergence of regional and global problems, which concern both donor and recipient nations; 2) Maintaining stability of the international system, to foster the long-term interests of donor countries. (Sagasti et al. 2005: 51)

In summary, motivations for financing GPGs are very mixed, and range across the full spectrum from self-interest to altruism. Some would locate GPGs in the middle of this spectrum. But Smith and MacKellar are more skeptical about motives: "[T]he GPG concept is firmly rooted in the self-interested use of domestic monies" (Smith and MacKellar 2007: 4). They also see a number of problems with the GPG approach (especially within the health sector, with which they are well acquainted). Three of these may be briefly stated.

According to Smith and MacKellar, the concept of global public goods encourages policymakers in rich countries "to view health assistance not only as humanitarian but as a selfish investment in protecting the health of their *own* populations" (Smith and MacKellar 2007: 1). Also, "Since a GPG calls for collective action, then, clearly, one's favourite program must be producing a GPG. This has given rise to 'fuzziness' and 'trendiness'" (Smith and MacKellar 2007: 2). They argue that "the GPG perspective has informed a number of major new initiatives to provide ... communicable disease control. These include the GAVI Alliance ..., Stop TB, Roll Back Malaria, and others" (Smith and MacKellar 2007: 3). But this has, unfortunately, "encouraged so-called 'vertical interventions' (e.g. provision of vaccines rather than support to public health systems)" just at the time that "many in the public health community moved ... from towards broader approaches." "The danger is that the GPG agenda will promote focused interventions easy to 'sell' to voters at home because they address an identifiable menace, at the expense of broader health system strengthening" (Smith and MacKellar 2007: 3). A third important issue they raise is whether international assistance for GPGs comes at the expense of aid. They refer to a study

by Reisen, Soto, and Weithoener (2004) that "concluded that the average bilateral donor's allocation of US$1 to GPG production reduced its spending on non-GPG foreign assistance by US$0.25" (Smith and MacKellar 2007: 3).

The highly influential development economist Jeffrey Sachs, "a great fan of the Nordics" (see below), sees GPGs as the future. Giving evidence to the UK parliament Select Committee on Economic Affairs, he said: "This does not mean the end of international financing; it just means that we would move to international financing for truly global public goods, whether it is the environment, disease surveillance or other things, but not aid per se."[1]

The issue of global public goods is discussed in Simon Reid-Henry's contribution to this volume. Here, he presents "the history of two touchstone moments in the history of Nordic internationalism" and describes how Gro Harlem Brundtland displayed a policy of what he calls pragmatarianism, first in her role as head of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1983–1987), and later as Director General of the World Health Organization (1998–2003): driven by the political realism that characterizes social democratic politics, and seeking to mobilize technological and market-driven solutions in pursuit of this end. Gro supported the technical argument of economists, such as Jeffrey Sachs whom she commissioned to lead the World Health Organization (WHO) Commission on Macroeconomics and Health. This kind of approach replaced idealism and altruism by hard-headed analysis. This appears to align closely with GPG thinking. The rationale underlying global public goods is technocratic, dispassionate. It is a logical way to address the challenges of the world, motivated by the mindset of the economist more than the idealist. Or, indeed, the revolutionary. GPGs represent a stark contrast to the aspirations of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1974 (UNGA 1974) in the wake of the oil crisis following upon the Yom Kippur War in 1973.[2] Rather, GPGs may be seen as a sort

[1] House of Lords, Select Committee on Economic Affairs Inquiry on the Economic Impact and Effectiveness of Development Aid. Evidence Session No. 13. 6 December 2011. www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/economic-affairs/DevelopmentAid/ucEAC06122011Ev13.pdf.

[2] See Marklund, Chapter 8, who writes: "The insight that development aid under present conditions would not substantially alter global power relations provided one of the basic tenets of the vocal demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the early 1970s."

of global welfare state. This is something which one might regard the Scandinavian countries as particularly well placed to promote.

To quote Jeffrey Sachs again,

> As I have worked around the world for the past quarter century, I have repeatedly – some would say relentlessly – pointed to the Nordic model as the proof that modern capitalism can be combined with decency, fairness, trust, honesty, and environmental sustainability. The Nordic Way – essentially the Social Democratic Way – has been the proof of concept to help convince the world that there is indeed a path between the vulgar inequalities of US capitalism and the failed central planning of so many moribund economies. (Sachs 2015: 36)

But is there perhaps a cost – for Scandinavian countries – in moving from traditional foreign aid to GPGs? How well does the latter approach fit with humanitarianism, so important for the international reputation and national identity of these countries? To provide some empirical basis for discussion of this issue, I will illustrate the dilemma by reference to two relevant examples of a GPG approach: REDD+ and vaccine production.

10.2 REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation)[3]

Climate change is a massive challenge facing Scandinavia, and indeed the whole world. As a result of a series of United Nations Climate Conferences – so-called Conference of the Parties – and lengthy technical reports by the International Panel on Climate Change (almost) all nations have agreed on the need to take concerted action to reduce carbon emissions. To express it in the technical language of economics, these countries have all agreed to contribute to the provision of a "global public good." One of the major initiatives that falls under this heading is the so-called REDD+ program (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). As its name implies, REDD+ involves seeking to reduce carbon emissions by – to put it simply – paying people, firms, or countries not to cut down trees. The intention was that REDD+ would create the basis for an international ("cap and trade") system of tradeable emissions quotas which would be self-financing. A "cap" would be placed

[3] The additional "plus" sign refers to conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

on each country's permitted level of annual emissions. A country (typically rich) could exceed this level by buying part of the assigned quota of another country (typically poor) which had a level of emissions lower than their assigned quota.

The idea of REDD+ was first presented during the Kyoto protocol negotiations in 1997, but formal recognition of REDD+ was not achieved until December 2007 at the 13th Conference of the Parties under the Bali Action Plan. Here, Norway announced that it would commit an amount of 3 billion NOK (approximately 500 million USD) annually, for five years, for rainforest protection. This is a huge sum by any standards. (And Norway is still by far the largest REDD+ donor, accounting for about 50 percent of all global funding.) To put the matter in perspective: This financial pledge corresponded to about 0.1 percent of Norway's gross domestic product, a figure that is comparable (in relative terms) to the total amount of aid given by some donor countries, such as the USA (0.15 percent). Not only was this a massive financial commitment, the decision was taken with lightning speed. "The decision came as a surprise to the general Norwegian public and most of the public administration" (Hermansen et al. 2017: 8). The story began in September 2007 when the leaders of two Norwegian environmental NGOs sent a letter to leading Norwegian politicians, proposing that Norway should allocate 6 billion NOK p.a. to the initiative (Hermansen and Kasa 2014). Only two months later, in December, the Prime Minister made a massive financial commitment at the meeting in Bali (a sum amounting to exactly half of that suggested by the two NGOs). And approximately one month after this, Norway formally initiated its International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) as part of a cross-party climate settlement. During this process, however, a decision was taken that this – a seemingly classic example of a global public good – would nevertheless be classified as aid.

In the context of this book, it is appropriate to raise two questions. First, how come such a huge financial commitment could receive such overwhelming support: from all but one of Norway's seven political parties? Second, why was it classified as aid? Both these questions lead to interesting insights into the motivations of Norwegian "humanitarianism." I will address each in turn.

REDD+ was initially presented by its advocates as a "win-win," and later "win-win-win" policy: In other words it was argued that this program would not only counter climate change, but also reduce poverty and protect the world's biodiversity. Later on again, in Colombia, REDD + money was suggested to be used as an incentive in peace negotiations:

yet a fourth "win" to add to the total. REDD+ would thus appear to be a perfect fit for a Scandinavian approach to fulfilling their duties as good global citizens, ticking all the boxes referred to in this book.

For Norway, especially, one can see the attraction of this particular GPG. Some have expressed the matter very simply: It diverts attention from Norway's embarrassing role as a major exporter of oil and gas and, some would add, the investments of its massive sovereign wealth fund in fossil fuel-related activities.[4]

In their article "Norway: A Dissonant Cognitive Leader," Boasson and Lahn (2017) describe the very active role played by Norway in the United Nations Climate Conferences: "Government documents and officials frequently stress Norway's ability to act as a bridge builder, aiding the negotiating process by facilitating agreement among other actors" (Boasson and Lahn 2017: 198). And Norway was generous in financial terms also, quite apart from REDD+: "In the period 2008–2012, Norway ranked highest in absolute terms among countries' voluntary contributions to the UNFCCC process" (Boasson and Lahn 2017: 198). But, as they point out, the country lacked a comprehensive domestic climate policy. Instead of focusing on domestic GHG reductions Norway preferred "contributing to solutions that work well on a global scale" (Boasson and Lahn 2017: 200). In terms of international politics this has been quite a successful strategy, since Norway has not received much criticism in the climate debate. But the situation is rather different at the domestic level, where the oil industry has been a controversial political issue for more than 20 years. This is the background against which the huge – and very rapid – commitment to REDD+ funding was made (Boasson and Lahn 2017: 201). The initiative arose "in the middle of the run-up to the negotiations of a cross-political climate settlement in the Norwegian Parliament" and it "became one of the hottest proposals in the climate policy 'bidding war' between the government and the opposition." Against the background of the long-standing debate about Norway's climate policy, the red–green coalition government did not wish to be seen as less ambitious than the more conservative opposition (Sølhusvik 2012: 181).

But why – to turn to my second question – was REDD+ classified as aid? Reducing carbon emissions is clearly a classic GPG: Norway

[4] Following criticism, especially from NGOs, the Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM) finally, in 2013, included "severe environmental damage" among the criteria for excluding companies from the investment portfolio. (Hermansen et al. 2017).

contributes, but also benefits, by virtue of countering climate change, yet the government chose to define the money as development assistance. This was particularly tempting, since it enabled Norway to achieve the magic figure of 1 percent of gross domestic product devoted to aid. In parliament, there was little resistance to this decision, although "some NGOs working with poverty and development, as well as the Christian Democratic Party and the Socialist Left Party, have from the very start been critical of the possible negative effects on poverty reduction by redirecting aid money to rainforest projects in relatively rich countries like Brazil" (Hermansen and Kasa 2014, 16).

Not only are there principled reasons for not treating REDD+ as aid, it also led to very anomalous situations. Brazil, a middle-income member of the G20, appears – to their irritation – as a major recipient of Norwegian development assistance (Hermansen and Kasa 2014: 16). So too does Indonesia, not a particularly poor country.

Another anomaly is that the program has been administered not by either of Norway's normal aid organizations – Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) or the Ministry of International Development – but by the Ministry of the Environment. The latter Ministry does not have experience or competence in dealing with aid – and very little with tropical forestry. (In order to implement the programme they relied very heavily on a Norwegian NGO, the Rainforest Foundation, and foreign consultants). The decision to break from past practice was agreed between Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Erik Solheim who was at that time, and most conveniently, both Minister of the Environment and Minister of International Development. According to an interview with Solheim, part of the reason for this decision was that

> this is a political project to drive the climate fight. To locate it within Norad was never an alternative as I see it, because the leaders of the program needed daily access to me as the Minister. This was a signature Norwegian effort to change global behavior and could only succeed at the highest level of politics, meaning at the center of the Ministry. (Hermansen et al. 2017: 8)

This could be seen as a minor, and "one-off," bureaucratic decision. Or it could be seen as a portent: the implementation of global public goods initiatives may in the future be the responsibility not of aid agencies but line ministries.

REDD+ certainly turned out to be a very difficult program to implement. One of the greatest problems was how to get the money spent.

This is because REDD+ is based on "performance-based" payments, i.e. funds are, in theory, paid out only on the basis of proven reductions in emissions – which are not easy to establish. Furthermore, there are certain conditions attached which derive from Norway's policies for development aid, which would perhaps not apply if this were classified as GPG funding.

The REDD+ programme would appear to be a good example of a GPG approach, since combatting climate change benefits both rich and poor. But for reasons of national interest and political convenience, Norway chose to define it as aid. This may perhaps not be possible in future. It is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) that determines what may properly be included in each country's annual development assistance statistics,[5] and they are beginning to be restrictive on this issue, as my second example will show.[6]

10.3 Vaccine Production

In the health sector, it is arguable that a shift from foreign aid to more of a GPG approach is already well underway in Norway. According to Sandberg and Andresen, "the transition of global health from being a subject of development aid to becoming part of the foreign policy agenda started at the turn of the millennium with the creation of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and the leadership of Brundtland in the World Health Organization" (2010: 302). They identify the government white paper on foreign policy, entitled "Interests, Responsibility and Opportunities: Key Strategies of Norwegian Foreign Policy" (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009), as marking "A new and expanded understanding of national interests in the face of globalization" (Sandberg and Andresen 2010: 306). This contrasts with the past, when, according to Lunde (2008), Norway was reluctant to

[5] By a great irony, Erik Solheim, the Norwegian minister who was instrumental in classifying REDD+ as aid, left that post to become head of OECD-DAC. In that role he had to inform Norway that they had not – in the relevant year – achieved the 1 percent target, because, according to OECD-DAC rules, aid statistics are based on expenditures not commitments, and REDD+ money was not getting spent.

[6] There is also ongoing discussion, not only referring to Norway, about whether expenditure on migrants should count as aid. As Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (Chapter 2) notes, the migration policy of the Scandinavian countries potentially clashes with its nation brands more generally.

assert foreign policy in terms of its own national interests. According to Andresen and Sandberg, national interests have "come to include new issues, where securing global public goods, such as improved environment or control of infectious disease, is seen as essential to secure Norwegian societal interests" (Sandberg and Andresen 2010: 306).

The case of global health, which they explore, is one "where an issue that has traditionally been confined to the development aid and public health specialists, has changed to become part of new and broader conceptualizations of Norwegian interests in a globalized world" (Sandberg and Andresen 2010: 310). Here, Jonas Gahr Støre, the Norwegian Foreign Minister, played a key role. He had earlier worked as Chief of Staff to Brundtland in WHO, and "[T]he deliberate move to place health on the foreign policy agenda was therefore a continuation of Støre's engagement with health in WHO" (Sandberg and Andresen 2010: 315).

Sandberg and Andresen identify GAVI – the Vaccine Alliance – as "a key starting point for the broadening of the Norwegian global health portfolio" (2010: 310). GAVI was established in 1999 when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) donated the sum of $750 million to fund the production of vaccines against certain diseases associated especially with child mortality and morbidity in poor countries. This is an extreme example of the increased scale of private foundation finance, noted above, which has resulted in a huge shift in the balance of influence at international level, at the expense of WHO. As noted above (see also Blume, McNeill, and Roalkvam 2013), although GAVI has brought very considerable benefits, it has also been the subject of some criticism – most notably for favoring "vertical," hi-tech programs at the expense of strengthening national health systems (Storeng 2014). The funds provided by BMGF have since been far more than matched by national donors – especially Norway. During the first five years of GAVI, Norway not only remained the largest donor country in the GAVI Alliance, but GAVI was also the biggest single program in the Norwegian development aid budget with NOK 500 million yearly.

Whatever criticisms there may be of GAVI, the benefits accrue almost entirely to poor countries, so this is not a case of a GPG. Financing for research into a vaccine against COVID-19, however, is very different. As is well known, COVID-19, at least initially, hit rich countries much harder than poor. Every country had an immediate and powerful interest in producing a vaccine. They also had strong motives for collaboration: sharing information, non-patenting, etc. (By contrast, the Ebola outbreak

impacted almost entirely a small number of poor countries. There was a rapid, and rather successful, global response which was very largely driven by national interest, and aimed at preventing its spread to rich countries.[7] This proved successful; and as a result Ebola returned to the category of "neglected diseases," as the subsequent Ebola epidemics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrate (de Bengy Puyvallee, and Storeng 2017; Honigsbaum 2017)). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Norway, like many other countries, has devoted very significant funds to counter the disease, some spent in Norway, others as a contribution to a collaborative international effort. This would certainly appear to count as a good example of a GPG.

Here, as with REDD+, there has been debate in Norway as to whether such funding should be classified as aid. The following account relies heavily on the online journal *Development Today* (DT), a source of independent comment on aid in Nordic countries.

CEPI (The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations) was established in 2016 by a consortium including Norway, India, the Gates Foundation, and the Wellcome Trust, to coordinate and fund research on vaccines for pathogens prevalent in low-income countries. (Swedish aid for research on vaccines has, at least until 2020, been channeled through the Seoul-based International Vaccine Institute, which only targets neglected tropical diseases.) Since January 2020, CEPI has provided support to eight consortia around the world working on COVID-19 vaccine candidates. "CEPI has launched an appeal of USD 2 billion for this work, and has received pledges amounting to USD 765 million, most of this funded by bilateral aid."[8] (By comparison, donors have so far contributed USD 550 million to the United Nations' USD 2 billion humanitarian appeal on COVID-19.)

Norway proposed to the OECD that grants to CEPI be reportable as official development assistance (ODA). The DAC Secretariat initially accepted this, but stated in early 2020 that they would re-visit the question. But soon after, DAC concluded that "research for a vaccine for COVID-19 would not count as ODA as such a vaccine would benefit

[7] This stimulated debate as to how the international community could best respond to future pandemics. See Moon et al. (2015). One initiative was the World Bank's Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF). See Stein and Sridhar (2017).

[8] D. A. Usher, "Donors Strongly Defend Use of Aid to Fund Coronavirus Vaccine Research," *Development Today*, 21 April 2020. www.development-today.com/archive/dt-2020/dt-3-2020/donors-strongly-defend-use-of-oda-to-fund-coronavirus-vaccine.

developed countries as much as developing countries, and should therefore be considered as contributing to addressing a global challenge." The OECD makes a distinction between CEPI's original core work, which targeted vaccines for infectious diseases affecting primarily developing countries, and the recent focus on supporting research on coronavirus vaccines. As for funding related to research on a vaccine against COVID-19, this does not count as ODA because the novel coronavirus is "not a disease disproportionately affecting people in developing countries." Since COVID-19 is a virus that targets the whole world, it could be difficult to argue for the use of ODA to develop a vaccine.[9]

In a recent short article, James Love questions whether financial support for the development of a COVID-19 vaccine constitutes a GPG approach.[10] The author starts by citing several entities that make such a claim: the South Centre ("aims at ensuring that the technologies needed to address the pandemic are considered, as a matter of principle, global public goods"); Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) ("COVID-19 medical tools should be considered 'global public goods'") and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, ("African countries should also have quick, equal and affordable access to any eventual vaccine and treatment, which must be considered as global public goods") and the European Union (which in their draft resolution to the World Health Assembly (WHA) on the COVID-19 pandemic, asserted that it "recognizes population-wide immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good . . ." But the Chair of the WHA drafting committee on the resolution apparently concluded that "population-wide vaccination" was a global public good for health but the vaccine itself was not. Love challenges even this view. He demonstrates how restrictive Samuelson's definition of a GPG actually is, while also acknowledging that "There are certainly non-excludability aspects of both herd immunity and the elimination of the colossal cost of the pandemic responses, as well as robust non-rivalry in consumption characteristics of inventions, data, know-how and knowledge from testing and evaluation of

[9] D. A. Usher, "OECD: Grants to CEPI for Corona Vaccine Research Do 'Not Count as ODA'," *Development Today*, 16 June 2020. www.development-today.com/archive/dt-2020/dt-4–2020/oecd-grants-to-cepi-for-corona-vaccine-research-do-not-count-as-oda.

[10] J. Love, "The Use and Abuse of the Phrase 'Global Public Good'," *India-China Institute*, 9 July 2020. www.indiachinainstitute.org/2020/07/09/the-use-and-abuse-of-global-public-good/.

products."[11] As indicated above, and demonstrated here, it is difficult to precisely identify what is, or is not, a GPG. Perhaps the *knowledge* that will, hopefully, be created, and lead to the development of an effective COVID-19 vaccine is a very good example. But, as Love points out, intellectual property rights could render also this "excludable."

Rather than entering a more extended discussion of definitions, it is sufficient for my purpose to note that in the international development policy debate a GPG approach is interpreted more widely than Samuelson's definition would imply: to refer to financing global initiatives that benefit all, not only the poor. It is clear that both developing a COVID-19 vaccine and REDD+ are examples of such initiatives. And both have been supported not only by Norway but also – to very varying extents – other Scandinavian countries.

10.4 Implications for Scandinavian Countries

Norway is not the only Scandinavian country to be promoting GPGs. Schaffer (this volume) describes Sweden's revised Policy for Global Development (*Politik för global utveckling*) which entailed a major revision of Swedish ODA goals, and added two new "directions": conflict management and human security, and global public goods. The government of Sweden has been very supportive of the GPG concept. They recently even described the UN system itself as a global public good.[12] (It seems unlikely, however, that they would apply the same term to weapons exports, though this has apparently been argued by some in Sweden: see Chapter 5.) Schaffer shows how Sweden likens their global approach to their social democratic domestic policies: "Even if complete models cannot be exported," the bill notes, Swedish modern history shows how central social security, welfare state, and labor market policies are for social stability – experiences which "are important in global perspective too" and motivate a "special Swedish engagement" (Utrikesdepartementet 2003: 56).

[11] J. Love, "The Use and Abuse of the Phrase 'Global Public Good'," *India-China Institute*, July 9, 2020. www.indiachinainstitute.org/2020/07/09/the-use-and-abuse-of-global-public-good/.

[12] Swedish statement at the UN Security Council Open Debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Strengthening Multilateralism and the Role of the United Nations." Published November 9, 2018.

In partnership with France, Sweden established a task force in 2003, responding to The Development Financing 2000 initiative (Financing and Providing Global Public Goods: Expectations and Prospects) which recommended establishing an International Task Force on Global Public Goods, largely to reduce "fuzzy thinking" and clarify "what part of any good is global and what part is not" (Sagasti et al. 2005: 28).

The Task Force on Global Public Goods reported in 2006, and identified six priority global public goods (GPGs): (i) preventing the emergence and spread of infectious disease, (ii) tackling climate change, (iii) enhancing international financial stability, (iv) strengthening the international trading system, (v) achieving peace and security, and (vi) generating knowledge (Sankar 2008). The Secretariat was located in Sweden, which provided substantial support and commissioned the study: "The Future of Development Financing: Challenges, Scenarios and Strategic Choices," referred to above (Sagasti et al. 2005).

Denmark, too, has been supportive of GPGs. As noted by Engberg-Pedersen and Fejerskov in Chapter 6, this is partly out of a recognition of the importance of policy coherence but self-interest also plays a part. It has become legitimate to prioritize Denmark's national self-interest in development assistance across the political spectrum.

Scandinavian countries are proud of their leading the world in terms of the amount of aid they give relative to GDP. But this achievement could be negatively affected by a shift to GPG financing. As noted above, it is OECD/DAC that determines what may be classified as aid and they are becoming increasingly restrictive. A less technical, but for the Scandinavian countries perhaps more fundamental, question is what a shift to GPGs may mean for Scandinavian identity and reputation. While it is recognized that self-interest does enter the picture, it is nevertheless the case that the high level of aid from Scandinavian countries is widely perceived as evidence of their altruism, their humanitarianism. As discussed elsewhere in this book, this is positive for both their international reputation and identity. The question is whether replacing aid by GPG would negatively affect this situation.

It may here be helpful to refer to the reflections of Lars Trägårdh (2018). He asks whether the basis of the Swedish model of social democracy is based on altruism or "reciprocity and conditions," and suggests that a Swedish citizen is not expected "simply to demand rights or expect compassion but to perform duties and uphold their own end of the contract" (Trägårdh 2018: 98). "Above all it is a social contract based on institutions, taxation, borders and a common legal space"

(Trägårdh 2018: 98). This is how it works at the national level; and Trägårdh asks the question whether it is possible to "scale up" to the international level: social democracy on a world scale.

The answer, according to Trägårdh's thinking, would appear to be that it depends on the nature of the relationship. Do poor countries "demand rights or expect compassion" or do they "perform duties and uphold their own end of the contract." Let us consider the two examples, REDD+ and development of a COVID-19 vaccine, in the light of Trägårdh's analysis.

In the case of REDD+, poor countries do not "demand rights or expect compassion." The programme is based on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" that has been adopted by the UNFCC (United Nations Framework on Climate Change). Poor countries do therefore perform duties; by reducing deforestation – at a cost to their economies in terms of reduced revenues. This would appear to constitute "reciprocity and conditions," in Trägårdh's words. What makes the matter more complicated is that they are compensated for their loss.[13] If the system does indeed come into full effect, it will represent a transfer of resources from rich countries to poor countries, because the emissions quotas will be such as to benefit the latter. In summary, this is a complex case, and what the outcome will be is yet unclear. It seems to resemble an international tax which redistributes from rich to poor; but all do benefit, and all have responsibilities.

The case of a COVID-19 vaccine is also complicated, and will depend on how the situation develops. Consider, for the sake of argument, the case that best resembles a GPG, i.e. where intellectual property rights over the vaccine are not exercised. Here, there would appear to be no reciprocal responsibilities for those countries which are not involved in the research that leads to the development of the vaccine. But does this imply, following Trägårdh's binary distinction, that this is necessarily a case of altruism? Surely not. It could be argued that it is altruistic of whoever develops vaccine that they share it without enforcing their intellectual property rights; but the vaccine would, nevertheless, benefit all – rich and poor.

[13] More accurately, they will be compensated if or when the proposed system of tradeable emission quotas comes into effect. The funds so far provided, by Norway and others, were intended to "jump-start" such a system.

10.5 Conclusion

In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency – among Scandinavian and other countries – to shift from traditional foreign aid to a GPG approach. Such a system of international relations contrasts dramatically with the radical New International Economic Order (NIEO) of the 1970s. Indeed, these might be said to constitute two extremes on a spectrum. To exaggerate somewhat, the latter represents world revolution, the former a global welfare state. Somewhere in between we have aid; motivated, at least in the case of the Scandinavian countries, primarily by humanitarianism. But "pure," altruistic foreign aid is beginning to be replaced by a different approach: the financing of GPGs that benefit the rich as well (and perhaps even more than) the poor.

It is hard to deny the rational, technocratic argument that financing global public goods is a better approach than aid, and should replace it. The Scandinavian governments, at least in principle, accept this logic. But would such a shift deal a blow to the identity and reputation of the Scandinavian people? For an individual citizen, less satisfaction is surely derived from being a dutiful payer of one's national taxes than a generous philanthropist. Similarly, citizens of the Scandinavian countries might be expected to derive limited satisfaction from being transformed from humanitarians into (merely) dutiful global taxpayers.

But the impact on international reputation, as opposed to national identity, may be less damaging. To be a dutiful (international) taxpayer can surely enhance a country's reputation – especially if there are no sanctions for nonpayment, and many countries are not so dutiful. If, as seems likely, many countries are slow to accept the shared responsibility that a GPG approach implies, then the reputation, and perhaps even identity, of the Scandinavian people may be maintained if they establish a position – as they have so far often done – among those in the vanguard.

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