



**Liberal or Illiberal?
Discord within the Danish-Swedish
Pacific Community**

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ABSTRACT

Rather than being amiable, the Danish-Swedish relations have more recently turned somewhat contested. Arguments like the other being quite illiberal have frequently been aired in the public debate. The aim of the paper is hence to explore the rift in order to pursue broader questions about the relationship between two neighbouring countries actually quite similar to each other and broadly recognized not only as liberal and democratic, but also seen as inherently peaceful due to their belonging to the rather pacific community of Nordic countries. Does the crux of the issue consist of similarity having turned too intimate and therefore intolerable, or are Denmark and Sweden instead on their way to sliding apart with their previously rather homogeneous nature in decline and the increase in differences then also amounting to discord and distrust? Answers are sought for by probing the debate and more generally by revisiting relevant theorizations, including the traditional ways of accounting for the pacific nature of Nordic commonality. The findings are then placed in a broader IR-perspective as to use of democracy and liberal values in the construction of similarity and difference, i.e. departures crucial in the ordering of political space.

PITTED AGAINST EACH OTHER

This paper aims at exploring the background of the strains recently present in the Danish-Swedish public domain. The findings are, however, also employed in passing judgment on the way similarity and difference have been theorized and comprehended in accounting for the formation and unfolding of security communities such as the Nordic ones. Focusing precisely on Denmark and Sweden is warranted, as pacific commonality has, for the part of Norden, largely rested on their non-securitized, friendly and in general rather trustful relations.

These relations, although still non-securitized, have now turned puzzling with the two countries being frequently pitted against each other in the more recent discourse. National contests pertaining to a large degree to immigration-related issues have spilled over, influencing also the bonds between Denmark and Sweden. New populist and radical parties pursuing more emergency-related policies have entered the political scene. They have subsequently impacted the way in which politics are interpreted, thus emphasizing the need to comprehend the nation in rather unitary and exclusionary terms. The passions and more conflict-premised comprehensions inherent in this discourse have then, it seems, been acted out and politicised also to include the neighbouring country.

The rift is largely atmospheric, but some of the consequences have also been quite tangible. This is so as the aspiration to pit oneself not merely against internal but also external otherness has, in one of its aspects, amounted to efforts to re-establish rather strict external borders. A case in point consists of the Danish decision in July 2011 – on the initiative of the Danish People's Party (DPP) – to introduce more stringent control of the country's borders with Germany and Sweden. The effort of restoring some of the regulatory competences of

the state in the sphere of border-policies has subsequently led to considerable strains – with Germany as well as Sweden openly criticizing such a move (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Herschend-Christoffersen, 2011).

It might thus be argued, as to the unfolding of the Danish-Swedish relations, that the Öresund strait has – rather than narrowing down owing to integration and increased interaction – become wider. It has done so at least in a symbolic sense despite of Denmark and Sweden being quite alike. They have often been viewed as 'cousins' if not 'twins', and yet, in the sometimes rather acrimonious public debate waged during the last couple of years, the emphasis has been on what separates rather than unites them. Of course, their relations do not just pertain to doom and gloom, but it is yet to be noted that the stress has recently been on remaining aloof from each other rather than staying close and in amiable terms.

It also appears puzzling that arguments pertaining to democracy and liberal values have in this context been employed as key benchmarks for difference. The use has been quite divisive, instead of generating trust and reducing alterity, as it has been assumed to do. This is the case despite of that the two Scandinavian countries have been commonly viewed as being quite similar in nature with both branding themselves as exceptionally democratic and liberal (cf. Browning, 2007; Gad, 2010: 346). In actual fact, both have ranked high in numerous international measurements and some of these have even posited them as belonging to the most democratic countries in the world. And yet, these achievements and qualities notwithstanding, liberal democracy has in the recent Danish-Swedish debate figured as a divisive argument. It has been predominantly used as a claim testifying to difference rather than similarity in the context of a hegemony-related contest with both of them claiming the right to speak in the name of democracy and liberal values as universally valid departures.

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN PLURAL

My aim is therefore, in elucidating the background of the othering discernible in some of the Danish-Swedish public discourse, to gauge what undergirds the discourse with democracy and liberal values being used to stake out difference/otherness. What drives these two countries apart and feeds a debate premised on their divergent being, despite – or precisely because of – their rather obvious similarity? And with the increasing stress on what divides rather than unites them, does this also entail that the Danish-Swedish commonality is in for a severe crisis?

As to the approach applied, I take it that freedom of speech, free and fair elections, respect of the rights of individuals and other liberal values as well as democracy are not fixed attributes. Instead, they figure as discursively established conventions delimiting the boundary of what is and what is not appropriate and acceptable. In outlining the appropriate, a normative superiority is established applicable for the establishment of value-based hierarchies but also more concretely in processes part of the ordering of political space.

Moreover, liberal democracy may, as a discursive strategy containing a broad variety of elements, appear as something consensual and harmonious. There may be emphasis on tolerance and equality, albeit the core aspects can also consist of the right to cultural autonomy and far-reaching freedom of expression implying that the pursuance of democracy can also take conflictual and almost antagonistic forms. As argued by Ido Oren (1995: 147), the understanding of the attributes seen as liberal and democratic varies. Comprehensions are not fixed and it is hence also possible that liberal democracy turns into a contested issue between two countries generally regarded as liberal and democratic. Moreover, the understandings tend to change over time and are also crucially

impacted by whether the framing of the issues at stake is alarmist in nature or premised on comprehension of normal politics.

As the meaning of liberal values and concepts such as democracy is embedded in the employment of these attributes, it would be rather pointless to explore whether Denmark and/or Sweden have really turned illiberal in nature. This may or may not be true pending on the way the attributes providing ground for passing judgment are comprehended.

It is more meaningful, I think, to explore what invites and allows for the accusations to be formulated and aired in the first place. How can liberal values and democracy be at least somewhat credibly articulated in a manner that casts Denmark and/or Sweden as illiberal in nature? In exploring this, an intertextual approach is applied. Such an approach appears warranted as each articulation of liberal values and comprehension of democracy has a history. They draw on conventions established through earlier articulations. As the comprehensions currently clashing in the debate are not built up from scratch, also a covering of the previous discourses seems relevant.

In consequence, an essential aspect of the approach applied here consists of probing the unfolding of and interplay between various we-concepts such as 'state', 'nation', 'society' and 'individual' as well as the way liberal values and democracy have been attached and related over time to the key conceptual constellations underpinning the two cases studied. Arguably, these constellations have a structuring impact – an enabling as well as a constraining one – on how liberal values can be credibly articulated and attached to democracy in various contexts.

As to the contentious issues at stake, it seems crucial to include debates pertaining to immigration within the overall constellation of the issues to be explored – taking into account that immigration, Islam, and Muslims

have turned into very central questions in the Danish debate and the somewhat xenophobic nature of the new Swedish political party, the Sweden Democrats (SD). An inclusion is called for as the theme of immigration spurs – as one aspect of border-breaking globalization and internationalization – debates on the essence of liberal democracy, including the way in which liberal values are related to democracy and how to connect and delimit these themes as to the unfolding of the core conceptual constellation underpinning respectively Denmark and Sweden. In particular the increasing movement of people across borders appears to challenge departures premised on tight territorial bordering, strictly delimited ethnicity and/or the existence of a rather homogeneous nation.

THE DANISH-SWEDISH PACIFIC COMMUNITY

In addition to exploring the Danish-Swedish debate as such, my effort is also one of positioning the recent rift in a broader context pertaining to the unfolding and theorizing of security communities. This may be done as Danish-Swedish commonality figures as an integral aspect of the Nordic one. As the contestations present in the Danish-Swedish domain also impact and resonate with the broader constellations, they can be utilized in exploring how similarity and difference play out in such a context. More particularly, does Nordic peaceful togetherness, as unfolding in the sphere of Danish-Swedish relations, rest on far-reaching similarity and lean on a down-playing of difference or are there some other ways of reading the impact of similarity as well as difference in the constitution of pacific commonality?

The question is warranted because of the way security communities such as the Nordic one have been conventionally theorized and comprehended. A trust in the positive im-

pact of similarity has been almost axiomatic since the days of Karl W. Deutsch and his path-breaking study (1957) on North Atlantic commonality, a study carried out more than 50 years ago. The study basically asserts that for enmity to be overcome, difference has to be traded for similarity. The theorization stood for a turning-point in providing the basis for a new IR-thinking, and it has gradually – as noted among others by Vincent Pouliot (2010: 11) – also impacted the very conduct of relations between states. It has turned into a rather influential mode of thinking, as the considerable rhetorical capital embedded in the theory has been extensively used by various practitioners of politics as well. In short, the Deutschean claim of positive identity interaction transforming security relations has succeeded in challenging the traditionalist realist rules: whereas the latter assume that anarchy, rivalry and self-help prevails in relations between states, the approach introduced by Deutsch asserts that peaceful forms of commonality are indeed possible and may materialize under particular conditions.

Stating explicitly that his theorization is contextually dependent and spatially specific, Deutsch and his colleagues focused extensively on the exemplary and amiable nature of relations between the Scandinavian countries. Given that the threat of war had been left behind already in 1814 and developments had since pointed to a far-reaching interdependence, the Scandinavians were depicted as a security community par excellence (Archer, 2003). The preconditions of trust and shared collective identities were arguably there and allowed Deutsch et al. (1957: 5) to assert that “dependable expectations of peaceful change” had in fact made war between the Scandinavian countries unthinkable.

It is also worth noting that the theorization rested, in one of its aspects, on the liberal essence of the Scandinavians, i.e. their political

and value-related likeness was elevated into a key explanation for their friendly and peaceful togetherness. It was stressed that they recognize each other as liberal democracies (with democracy and liberal values understood in quite essentialist ways), with the consequent trust, we-ness and perceptions of similarity then grounding their rather amiable association, premised on expectations of peaceful change. In other words, shared liberal norms were not just linked integrally with issues of security in facilitating regulation of conflicts and being conducive to peace. Liberal departures were actually depicted as constitutive of the very relationship – and in this sense even more important as to their formative impact than the existence of external threats. They allowed, as a sign of profound similarity and being very much alike, for a drawing of the distinction introduced above and a switching from emergency politics to normal politics. As interpreted by Emanuel Adler (1998: 170), ‘I’ had been extended to become ‘we’ with the new collective identity then enhancing a sense of mutual and reliable trust, that is conditions necessary for the creation of a mature form of security community.

The association of the Scandinavians was not idealized, however, as the assertion of peaceful togetherness was accompanied by the recognition that also conflicts remained present in the relationship. Disputes existed, but the point was that these could, due to the presence of “dependable expectations of peaceful change” (i.e. normalization of politics) and mutual identification, be settled in an amiable manner.

The theory coined by Deutsch, although broadly acceptable and thereby impacting IR-theory to a significant degree, has also been criticized. As pointed out by Adler and Barnett (1998b: 8; see also Adler, 1997), it is quite behaviorist in character and “fraught with theoretical, methodological and conceptual

difficulties”. The two authors further note that it never led to a robust research agenda in the sense of the theory being thoroughly tested, although considerable efforts have later been made to alleviate the various difficulties inherent in the initial theorizing of security communities (cf. Adler and Greve, 2009; Cox, 2006; Pouliot 2006, 2008, 2010). These efforts have primarily been constructivist in nature, with security communities seen as discourse-based and socially constructed.

Notably, the revised theorization has been premised on the assumption that the positive association is brought about and reproduced in discourses pertaining to identities, values and interests. It is argued that the increasingly mutual identification allows for a redefinition of interest, therewith facilitating the instilling of pacific dispositions. The critical revisions have also been extended to include the way liberal democracies recognize their likeness and represent each other – or fail to contribute to the formation of a collective and shared identity with this then assumedly endangering the peacefulness of their relations – as well as the role of power in the context of security communities being created and sustained (e.g. Oren, 1995; Williams, 2001).

However, and the various efforts of correction notwithstanding, the stress on similarity and the consequent aversion towards difference inherent in the theorization of security communities have not been revised to any significant degree. The very idea of transcending difference, i.e. the ‘I’ substituted by a ‘we’, has basically remained in place. Alternative ways of conceptualizing the nature and impact of difference have no doubt been developed (e.g. Hansen, 2006; Huysmans, 2006; Kupchan, 2011), but the insight provided by these efforts has in general not been extended to cover the issue of security communities. The homogeneity brought about by modern progress and integration is still largely viewed as indispensable

for commonality grounding security communities to emerge.

STAYING WITH THE DEUTSCHEAN THEORY

There are hence reasons, I suggest, for probing far more closely some of the central tenets inherent in the Deutschean theory on security communities, and the recent dynamics in the sphere of the Danish-Swedish relations appear to provide some ammunition for such a revisionist effort. These dynamics invite for the question how a reversal of the basically rather tight and trustful commonality and, as appears to be the case, the stress on difference rather than similarity impact the notion of pacific togetherness. Furthermore, what accounts for that any drawing on security as a constitutive theme seems to remain a foreclosed option despite the joint ‘we’ being increasingly traded for distinct forms of ‘I’?

These kinds of critical questions are rarely raised, as security communities have been viewed – in the sphere of standard theorizations – as unfolding in a rather linear fashion. They stand out, it appears, as end stations once the switch from an emergency-related reading to a normal mode of politics has taken place. No space has been provided in the stories told for their demise or, for that matter, further jumps into some different constellation with security void of constitutive impact. Pacific forms of commonality have instead been taken to form the ultimate outcome, as any reversals of the contributing processes, according to Adler (1998: 181), are “unlikely”. They are final in stretching, if seen from the vantage point of realism, too far to start with in having abandoned the standard alarmist and security-gear reading of politics and also optimal in the sense that the introduction of further options reaching beyond security communities,

such as the aiming at a world government, are taken to lack in credibility.

However, Emanuel Adler has together with Patricia Greve (2009) presented a somewhat more nuanced stance in admitting that the prospects for a comeback of anarchy exist in principle, albeit they add that a return is not very probable. This is so as similarity is assumedly conducive to peace, and peace in turn adds to further similarity. The assumedly cumulative nature of security communities, with the parties constantly getting closer to each other due to firmly embedded routines part of the public debate, implies that there has been little reason or ground to ponder on the assumedly quite negative impact and meaning of difference within commonality. The dominant storyline is simply that of peace being achieved by expelling difference. Setbacks may no doubt occur but they are nonetheless viewed as being at odds with the basic progress – and altered framing of politics – underlying the formation of security communities.

Yet the option is there to explore, along the lines of the Deutschean theory, whether homogeneity has in fact turned brittle in the Danish-Swedish case. As to the routines present, the processes of trust and identity are perhaps not as reciprocal and reinforcing with the development of trust-strengthening mutual identification as has frequently been assumed in the context of the Deutschean theory (e.g. Adler and Barnett, 1998a: 45, 47). There exists, it seems, misrecognition rather than recognition in view of the assumed and inter-subjectively shared rules of the game. The Danish-Swedish relations have over the recent years not developed as positively with stress on commonality in terms of shared liberal democracy and compatibility of core values, as one is invited to expect on the basis of a theory stressing the similarity-producing effects of modern progress and rationality. Instead, some of the previous weness appears to be waning and troubling lines

of division have emerged, this then calling for a revisiting of at least some aspects of the Deutschean theory on security communities.

OPENING UP FOR ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTS

Such a revisiting could potentially rest on the theorization premised on the narcissism of minor differences, one initially sketched out by Sigmund Freud (1918). It differs radically from the Deutschean theory in depicting far-reaching similarity as something potentially quite problematic. The domestication and down-laying of difference may, the theory asserts, reach too far. It can, in doing so and in undermining the difference that is always required for safe identities to come into being, bring about a considerable amount of unease and anxiety.

As noted among others by Anton Blok (1998: 39), the constitution of identities is unavoidably premised on devising of difference, and difference is asserted, reinforced and defended against what is closest and represents the greatest threat. Also being alike has its problematic sides as politics will, he claims, aspire to accentuate their differences and emphasize distinctiveness in order to guard their identity. Similarly, Slavoj Žižek (2005: 144) points out that too much similarity may be experienced as intolerable. It does not generate trust and bring about peaceful relations but spurs anxiety, and he goes as far as claiming that neighbours can be viewed as ‘monstrous’ in landing too close. Their intimacy becomes unbearable in erasing the protective lines of division needed for distinct identities to come about and prevail.

Anne Norton (2008) asserts, for her part, that the presence of likeness in the other can, in entailing the danger of selves being dissolved, even invite for intense forms of violence. Those who are almost as ‘we’, but nonetheless other

than ‘we’, have the potential of generating a considerable dose of ontological anxiety. Their presence may become quite overwhelming – as also noted by Hannah Arendt (1973) in her study on the origins of totalitarianism. Intense violence may follow from the demise and inability to symbolize, name and locate constitutive difference, as has arguably been demonstrated by the war in Bosnia.

Violence may no doubt break out, although it has to be added that the aim here is not to insinuate that this potential is present also in the sphere of the Danish-Swedish relations. The point is simply to argue that the option for security as an argument to return and impact the unfolding of the Danish-Swedish relations is by no means a foreclosed one, and the prevailing of a non-securitized state of affairs – such as the Danish-Swedish one – equally calls for an explanation.

A somewhat less radical and yet difference-friendly line of argumentation has been coined and applied by Jef Huysmans (2006) in his study on migration and the identity-related impact of the figure of a migrant. The key problem for the devising of durable togetherness, he claims, does not consist of the degree of similarity or difference. The difficulties do not just pertain to similarity or difference becoming too pronounced, as highlighted by Arendt, Norton and Žižek. They rather originate with the very distinction between similarity and difference being blurred. The emerging ambiguity implies that the other may at the same time be other and like and becomes, in the form of an undecidable, difficult to pin down and sort out. The strangeness inherent in the other raises the spectre of chaos and consequently anxieties are bound to ensue with the demise of clear-cut distinctions threatening the very act of ordering.

So, similarity may – as asserted by the Deutschean theory – be conducive to peace and friendly relations whereas difference needs to

be downgraded and, if possible, externalized. And yet it seems obvious that also an almost opposite theorization has its merits and may be quite relevant here in the context of exploring the dynamics part of the Danish-Swedish relationship. Far-reaching similarity may indeed turn problematic whereas difference calls, under some circumstances and some of its forms, for a rather positive reading.

In trying to relate these quite different theorizations to each other, I suggest that the impact varies and is highly dependent on how politics are being framed in the first place. The impact of similarity and difference varies and springs above all from the way politics are comprehended. The stress on emergency and exceptional conditions brings about an emphasis on similarity. It is conducive to aversion vis-à-vis difference but it can also amount to alarmism and panic if similarity turns too overwhelming. And in contrast, a framing premised on the normalcy of politics allows for a more flexible approach both towards similarity and difference. They can be co-present forming even complex patterns thereby dissolving any false unity resting on a strict separation between similarity and difference. A framing premised on normalcy invites for tolerate even in the case of far-reaching similarity and opens equally up the option of interpreting difference in basically benign terms. In sum, the impact of similarity as well as difference varies and is highly dependent on the way politics are being framed.

The above theorizations combined with an emphasis on the way politics are framed then open up for a rather broad repertoire of explanations. They seem to allow, in the first place, for the origins and nature of Nordic peacefulness to be cast differently from the Deutschean account. The peacefulness, inherent also in the Danish-Swedish relations, has perhaps not rested as firmly on homogeneity as assumed by the Deutschean theorization, and the current

strife does not necessarily hinge on return of difference in the form of illiberal policies.

Still, the crux of the issue could also consist of similarity having turned too prevalent for the discomfort than to be remedied by moves of distanciation. It is, however, also possible to think that the increased emphasis on difference neither threatens the similarity on which the relationship basically rests nor is it to be understood as a counter-reaction in regard to similarity having turned too overwhelming. It may rather testify to the basic flexibility of the relationship in the sense that similarity and difference do not figure as polar opposites. The relationship is not one of either/or. There is undoubtedly a shift to be traced towards increased emphasis on difference and a down-scaling of similarity. This, however, is in line with the very nature of the relationship and does not trigger any profound anxiety. The plurality with the neighbours seen as partly self, partly other that has been an integral part of Nordic commonality from the very start allows for shifts without changes amounting to anything of a crisis as long as the framing applied remains one of normal politics. However, if that approach gives way to a more alarmist framing, then there is also space for explanations resting on the two other theorizations.

These different options invite for questions to be asked concerning the very nature of Nordic commonality, and in this context also the Danish-Swedish relations. Does the pacific commonality present among the Nordics abide to a Deutschean theorization with the theory then also applicable and valid for the part of the more recent dynamics discernible in a Danish-Swedish context, or are there other accounts that seem more relevant or to put it differently, does the rift now present in the domain of the Danish-Swedish relations break with the Deutschean comprehensions, thereby also inviting for alternative efforts of theorizing the Nordic configuration?

REVISITING THE PUZZLE OF NORDIC PEACE¹

Unpacking the Nordic relationship and exploring other possible accounts is challenging, as it appears that the existence of Scandinavian/Nordic peace has over time turned almost self-evident. As noted by Ole Wæver (2008), there has been a "retroactive normalization obcur[ing] the analytical puzzle". The existence of profoundly trustful relations and thereby a pacific community has become conventional wisdom. It has turned so obvious that it does not invite for any critical questions even if the core countries – Denmark and Sweden – were historically wracked by war for some three centuries. This has, however, been followed by two centuries of peace with the war-like past erased from collective memory. The assumed normality of peace and friendly relations also impinge the public discussion: Efforts of addressing some of the Nordic neighbours as security-related threats are bound to be discarded, as moves of securitization have thoroughly lost their credibility in the sphere of the intra-Nordic relations.

In the Deutschean theorization of security communities such as the Nordic one, the stress on similarity in the form of "compatible self-images" goes together with the argument that the war system has been tamed by a gradual implementation of measures pertaining to de-securitization. These measures are then argued to invite for the emergence of a new and less war-prone security regime. Accordingly, Nordic peacefulness is viewed as a product of various facilitating conditions, i.e. similarity as to compatible values, shared language, religion

and culture, economies and social ties. The previous 'I' has arguably turned into a joint and shared 'we', and this process – one premised on perceptions of the Nordics being alike and void of any problematic differences – has then, according to the theory, been strengthened through enhanced levels of institutionalization and communication fostering a sense of regional community.

It seems apparent, however, that there remain several problems with this theorization. Empirically, communications and institutionalization were already well developed when war, not peace, still had the upper hand in the region. Moreover, a considerable dose of similarity was in place and did not increase to any significant degree with peace breaking out in the sphere of the Danish-Swedish relations. It appears instead, at closer inspection, that the way of interpreting difference changed with space opening up for views more tolerant vis-à-vis plurality. A previous 'I' did not turn, it appears, into a joint and shared 'we', and in general the dialogue waged across the Öresund strait was – during the formative years – not premised on an emphasis of similarity. It rather rested – as the way of framing politics changed from an exceptional to a normal one and thereby brought into view other, far more benign ways of interpreting difference – on showing respect if not appreciation towards the difference inherent in the other. Identities could consequently be devised with rather than against the Nordic others owing to a recognition of the legitimate and non-threatening character of the difference inherent in the neighbours. Recognition could be granted precisely because security – in being seen differently due to a change in the way of comprehending politics

¹ This chapter uses material and arguments from a joint study on Nordic Peace carried out together with Christopher Browning.

– ceased to be a major concern and lost much of its previous constitutive weight.²

In essence, the previously hegemonic and unquestioned framing premised on an emergency-related view of politics was substituted by a normal one on the level of civil society actors, and gradually these bottom-up processes turned dominant. In doing so they deprived the state actors of the option of utilizing security as a key argument in coining identities and in the moves of ordering within the intra-Nordic sphere.

Notably, this theorization of Nordic peacefulness contrasts with the Deutschean reading in the sense that the other seems to have retained, in the Nordic case, his/her otherness, and precisely the more benign and trustful approach towards otherness has allowed and invited for the constitution of ontologically safe identities. An interpretation aspiring to obliterate difference and the other becoming alike with stress on “compatible self-images” along the Deutschean lines could actually have diminished, if not wholly undermined, that option.

2 Interestingly, both the EU and NATO, once viewed as security communities, seem to differ from Norden in the sense that security has in both cases underpinned rather explicitly their establishment. The emergency-related framing of politics has stood its ground with the constitution of the EU and in particular NATO resting heavily on security-talk. In consequence, there been far less flexibility and more stringent limits present in the devising of identities. Similarity has – in line with the Deutschean logic – been the aim, and difference has been treated with suspect. The two polities differ from each other, though, in the sense that the otherness grounding the EU has been projected into Europe’s own past whereas the projection is spatial in the case of NATO with the exterior viewed as dangerous. The option of devising difference without immediately linking difference with arguments related to security has not been present, for the part of the EU and NATO, to the same degree as it has been there in the case of Norden. To put it differently, no ‘speech-act failure’ invited by a switch from an emergency-related to a normal framing of politics has been present for the part of the two latter polities.

It is equally to be noted that Nordic peace did not flow from security being framed differently and in a more cooperative manner or, for that matter, efforts of de-securitization. No peace treaties were signed, there was no talk on any confidence-building measures, not to speak of the construction of some balance of power, perfecting the functioning of deterrence or arms control and measures of disarmament. It seems, instead, that it came about by and rested on processes of silencing, i.e. silencing in the sense of the security becoming superfluous as an argument and consequently dropping out of the discourse. The move of silencing substituted the previous drawing on security in the constitution of commonality, and security became, with the switch to a normal mode of politics, less of a concern.³ One might, in leaning on a theorization coined by Ole Wæver (1995: 60), talk about a “speech act failure” in the sense of old referents and acts of security losing their power to securitize and maintain the existing, polarized and war-prone order.

This is to say that the vacuum and implosion of the previous limits of comprehending aspects of otherness were not utilized, in the Nordic case, by drawing on some alternative form of security-talk. It took, instead, place through an activation of the option of bring-

3 Jef Huysmans (1995) separates between de-securitization as a down-grading of danger, constructivist efforts with security seen as socially constructed as well as a de-constructivist strategy inviting for the story of security not only to be told in a different and less harmful way but refraining altogether from a re-telling of the story. My use here of the concept of silencing hence resonates forcefully with the de-constructivist strategy outlined by Huysmans in his work on the securitization of immigrants. His trilogy could be applicable to a distinguishing between Norden, the EU and NATO as security communities in the sense that Norden arguably rests on a de-constructivist strategy, the EU abides to a constructivist one whereas NATO pertains predominantly to securitization altering with de-securitization without any constructivist or de-constructivist approaches being present.

ing to the fore previously suppressed and unnoticed identities. More precisely, the existence of additional and more trustful forms of difference not brought into view in the neighbour and hidden by a constant stress on securitization were unmasked by critical reflection, and then brought to the fore precisely through a by-passing and going beyond security as a constitutive argument. Overall, the emergence of a new and more cooperative regime seems to have entailed processes of subtly escaping the former system, as the aim was not one of fixing some particular security problem but use the increasing openness – flowing from comprehensions of normalcy – in order to allow for identities to be grounded by themes other than security.

The stories told entailed, it seems, similarity in the sense that the idea of Scandinavia played an important unifying role in bringing people together across the previous divides. The different and emergent peoples-nations were located as part of the same historical heritage. This provided for identity-related safety, albeit it took place without efforts of turning war into a key constitutive story. The war-infested past was rather sidelined by the civil society-related actors central in the process through a focusing on the various new nation-building projects. Otherness and difference were neither constituted in radicalized terms, nor were they substituted by any far-reaching stress on similarity. They were, by employing new narrative resources that allowed for recognition of the other being simultaneously other and like, accommodated and embraced. The outcome was rather one of mild as well as friendly forms of difference being constitutive of peaceful Nordic commonality.

It hence appears, at a closer inspection, that the Deutschean take stands for and is split between two quite different interpretations of politics. It operates, on the one hand, with a normal framing, this then allowing for a re-

reading of difference. However, at the same time an emergency-related framing of politics has retained its position in the sense that difference remains linked to security-talk. Security is not ousted from the discourse as also indicated by that the outcome is conceptualized as a security community, and hence – with security standing its ground as a key concern – difference has to be traded for similarity. Going beyond and silencing security becomes an option only if the normal framing of politics is extended also to cover the meaning provided and importance allotted to security – this then in turn impacting comprehensions of both similarity and difference. Operating within a normal frame of politics unavoidably downplays much of the drama attached to securitization but precisely the utilization of that option appears to have opened the door for the coining of a non-homogeneous, pluralist and yet peaceful Nordic commonality.

At large, it seems that the Scandinavian system – with the core consisting of the relations between Denmark and Sweden – abides to a logic somewhat different from the one underlying the Deutschean theorization, and that this logic still largely prevails. Silencing, in the sense of a non-concern, continues to be prevalent as to the way security is addressed within the intra-Nordic sphere and hence also narratives pertaining to similarity and difference work in particular ways. Difference may be accentuated and similarity can be downplayed without this amounting – as theorized by Jef Huysmans – to a backlash with security back of the agenda. There exists, in the aspiring for safe ontological identities, a rather broad repertoire of options to be utilized without the concern for physical and material security again coming to the fore, and this may well stand out as a relevant argument also in view of the discord currently present in the sphere of Danish-Swedish relations.

A RELATIONSHIP OF KINSHIP

As already noted, the Danish-Swedish relationship is far from harmonious. Strains have – as reflected in the public debate – been there already for a longer period of time,⁴ albeit they have, it seems, become increasingly aggravated during the recent years. The contentious issues that have been brought into the public domain consist above all of various questions pertaining to immigration and asylum, with the political approaches applied attracting a considerable amount of critical attention. This sometimes highly pitched critique as to the policies pursued by the neighbour on the other side of the strait has in essence been premised on the argument that the neighbour's policies are distinctively illiberal in character. In one of its aspects the critique – pointing to a rather oppositional mode of differentiation – appears to indicate that no common Scandinavian model of liberal democracy exists. The Scandinavians are not just different as to the degree of liberal democracy with some more advanced than others; allegedly there also exists qualitative differences. The critique also throws into doubt the rather general perceptions of a rather tranquil – if not even boringly harmonious and amiable – Scandinavian togetherness and points instead to democracy and liberal values being employed in a contest pertaining to hegemony.

It may be noted that the Danish and the Swedish national mythologies have in general been premised on outlining differences and otherness rather than similarities. A considerable bulk of research exceeding by far the

scholarly interest generated for example by the relations between Sweden and Norway testifies to this (cf. Gundelach, 2000; Linde-Laursen, 1995; Mouritzen, 1999; Nielsen, 2004; Petersson, 2006; Stenius, 1993). Most studies focus on the dynamics and features of the Danish-Swedish relationship at large or view the issues at stake from a Danish perspective. Orvar Löfgren is in this regard something of an exception. He lived for some years as a Swede and a university teacher in Copenhagen and argues, on the basis of the experiences gained, that the up-keeping of the general stereotypes pertaining to difference seems to matter more than the realities of the individual encounter. Increased contacts largely contribute to a foregrounding of differences rather than similarities, he asserts (Löfgren, 2003: 216).

Hanne Sanders (2008), a Dane by nationality but with studies and a long academic career as a historian in Sweden, provides a somewhat similar account of living and teaching on the Swedish side. A theme common to both Löfgren and Sanders seems to be that migrating to the neighbouring country part of a pacific community is not as problem-free as might be expected on the basis of the Deutschan theory on “compatible self-images”. Rather than amounting to increased well-being and demise of the ‘cognitive distance’ as expected by Deutsch (1957: 36), concrete encounters appear to highlight distinctiveness and lack of homogeneity. In sum, there is less self and more other present in the neighbour.

In reporting on her personal experiences and in providing reflections based on insight into history as to the encounter between Danishness and Swedishness, Sanders concludes that the relationship boils down to an uneasy and problematic one. In actual fact, the two entities contradict each other to the extent that also her own in-between position as a Dane in Sweden turned increasingly inconvenient.

⁴ For a study on the historical unfolding of the Danish-Swedish relations, see Anders Linde-Laursen (1995). Mogens Berendt (1983) stands for an interesting, rather elaborated and blunt case of Sweden-bashing in the 1980s with Sweden being accused of harbouring totalitarian tendencies.

One of her main observations is that the Swedish approach to Denmark remained somewhat detached over a long period of time, albeit being at the same time basically positive if not overly idealizing. There has been much stress on being alike but not altogether at the expense of otherness. Sanders notes that Sweden's significant others have in general consisted of America⁵ and occasionally also Germany. The neighbouring countries did not count, as Sweden viewed itself as having already surpassed them in terms of development.⁶ Denmark did hence not figure as a competitor or an alternative model but stood out in the Swedish discourse as being cosy, easy-going, relaxed and tolerant. The rather non-political, cultural and mundane perspective applied was in some sense that of a tourist. It was a consumerist one and in broader terms Denmark was often depicted as being more 'continental' and 'southern' in character than Sweden. In short, Denmark was idealized rather than depicted in negative terms and it was not included in a contest on Scandinavian hegemony.

Notably, liberal values and democracy do not stand out as mutually exploited and dividing issues in the account provided by Sanders. The emphasis is mostly on various issues part of everyday life singled out in order for a distance to prevail. Moreover, she points out that the Danish-Swedish pattern has lacked in sym-

metry in the sense that Danes have for long harboured a rather engaged view on Sweden. Their neighbour figures, she contends, as an important other with stress on various features seen as predominantly negative. Sweden has, as to the more value-oriented issues at stake, been frequently purported as being ruled by a big-brother state. The state arguably interferes forcefully in the daily life of citizens, this then contrasting with the Danes perceiving themselves as 'free'. Denmark is hence regarded as being far less restrained by the power of the state or, for that matter, by an excessive bureaucracy eroding freedom and narrowing down the individuality of the citizens.

Overall, Sanders notes that Sweden has been quite important for Denmark as a source of various ideas, but also functions as a kind of non-me to mirror oneself against. She goes as far as claiming that the Danes are actually plagued by feelings of inferiority, among other reasons because Sweden has in many cases succeeded in turning itself into a template of a modern welfare society on the international scene.⁷ This then

5 For a more detailed account, see Arne Ruth (1984). Ruth stresses the future-oriented nature of Sweden as "a second new nation". It is to be noted, though, as to degree of development that Denmark has historically been much better off than Sweden, and Sweden has been able to catch up relative recently mostly in the aftermath of WWII. For more detailed analysis, see Tøgeby, 1998 and 2003.

6 It is to be noted, though, that the period with Sweden growing affluent is of relatively recent origin and historically Denmark was over a long period of time clearly ahead of Sweden with Sweden being viewed by the Danes as a poor and relatively undeveloped country.

7 Anders Linde-Laursen (2007: 269) presents a similar argument, although he also endeavours to provide it with some historical depth. He thus points to a "foundational schism" present in the Danish society between groups sympathetic or adverse to modernity, this then also materializing itself "as hegemonic disapproving narratives about the modern, over-developed Sweden". These Danish narratives hold, he asserts, that the desire of the Swedes "for modernity and development make them willingly accept modern executions of power that erode the freedom and individuality of the citizens". One of the Danish assertions entails the argument that the Swedes, in contrast to the Danes themselves, are humourless. They are taken to be unable to grasp the arguably sophisticated humour with emphasis on irony. The argument appears to be an outgrowth and projection of claims advanced in the intra-Danish debate positing that the elite and intellectuals fail to get the more populist messages aimed at expressing dissatisfaction and frustration through the use of language and concepts, advanced in the name of freedom of speech. Instead of receiving the message, the elite and intellectuals are accused of interpreting the contents as unduly offending and forms of blemishing.

accounts for why the various negative myths, as she prefers to call them, are quite insensitive to factual developments. They seem to prevail and have a life of their own for example in the sense that the various myths seem to have grown rather than diminished in strength despite increased interaction between the two countries. The discrepancy between functional and identity-related integration has increased rather than diminished, it appears, this then inviting for a theorization of the relationship along the lines of Anne Norton, Anton Blok and Slavoj Žižek.

However, Sanders also notes that the pattern is far from stable. It has more recently changed radically with Sweden's previously detached idealization now traded for a considerable and also far more critical interest in the Danish dynamics. In particular, the policies of immigration and the nationalism articulated in that context have attracted interest and consequently met with some degree of disbelief and disappointment. Denmark is seen, she posits, as having abandoned its previously cosy and tolerant nature. The country has turned – despite clinging formally and out of old habits to rather liberal values – conservative as well as defensive. Furthermore, assumptions pertaining to xenophobia – pointing to the introduction of an increasingly emergency-related framing of politics – have more recently turned into a lens that impacts in general the Swedish interpretations and views on Denmark, Sanders concludes.

This then boils down to Denmark being increasingly used in the Swedish discourse as a prime source of othering. The previous one-sidedness of the relationship has changed and been substituted by a Danish-Swedish pattern of mutual othering. In other words, the Danish critique present in the public domain concerning Sweden has been complemented by equally critical Swedish interventions arguing, as Sanders puts it, that the Danes are “treating people in morally a questionable and

undemocratic fashion”. The occurrence of infringements of human rights contrasts with the Swedish more humane and democratic approach as, according to the dominant Swedish view, “everybody should have the right to participate in societal affairs” (Sanders, 2008: 13). In other words, her reading of liberal values and democracy rests on a normal framing of politics rather than abiding to any alarmist interpretations.

The Danish response to the controversy rests, she notes, on arguing that the Swedish attitudes towards immigrants and asylum seekers are actually not much different from the Danish ones. In fact, the difference is seen as the Swedish guardian-state not allowing for critical views to be aired freely. Problematic issues are not discussed openly and democratically, yet they are present also for the part of Sweden. The effort to stay with a normal framing of politics is in some sense deceptive and artificial. The media are not seen as free and people do arguably not dare to express their opinions, i.e. there is a well-founded fear present in Sweden as well, albeit it is not have an outlet in the context of the Swedish political system and way of framing politics. These Danish perceptions of Sweden's deceptive standing then allow for side-stepping and circumventing the critique put forward in the Swedish discourse. It surely brings about a Danish debate and is conducive to some self-reflection but the key reactions nonetheless consist – rather than testifying to the existence of some Danish problems – of arguing that the critique testifies, as to the bottom-line, to Sweden having considerable problems of its own but remaining unable to face them head on. Swedish approaches to liberal values and democracy still rest on comprehensions of normalcy, whereas the framing of politics should, according to a considerable number of Danish voices, also for the part of Sweden rest on an emergency-based reading.

THE CARTOON CRISIS

In probing the Danish-Swedish othering, there is no way around the Danish Muhammed cartoon controversy of 2005-06. The incident provided much ammunition to be used by Swedish critics but it is to be noted, though, that Sweden also had a case of its own two years later. It occurred with three Muhammed-drawings produced by a Swedish artist being initially censored but then subsequently published – although not commissioned as in the case of Denmark – by a local newspaper (Larsen and Lindekilde, 2009). Although freedom of speech and the right of the media to publish even provocative materials – if deemed to be politically and socially relevant – enjoys broad support in both countries, the issues involved seem to have been granted far more importance in the Danish discourse. In essence, unrestricted and almost absolute freedom has in the latter case been turned into a master signifier underpinning Danishness, whereas the formative impact has been far less conspicuous in the case of Sweden. This then also implies that there exists, in the Swedish discourse with the prevalence of normalcy, space for somewhat broader and more nuanced views concerning the pros and cons of unrestricted freedom.

The reactions in regard to the Muhammed cartoon controversies evidence, in one of their aspects, that the issue of immigration figures rather differently in the Danish and the Swedish identity-related discourses. Sweden is basically at ease with immigration, whereas the framing in the Danish case tends to relate far more to fear, anxiety and what is sometimes called ‘moral panic’. Whilst freedom of expression and democracy as arguments advanced in the public sphere have frequently been used by various actors in Denmark in a rather offensive manner and seen as particularly Danish qualities to which various ‘newcomers’ – especially Muslims – have to adapt, Sweden has, on the

level of principles, pursued a rather different approach. It has displayed much more consideration and willingness to accommodate the Muslim concerns, including the recognition of migrants as a particular and collective group with rights of their own. There has, in the case of Sweden, been space for doing so as the difference seen as inherent in Muslims is taken to confirm Sweden’s multiculturalist self-understanding rather than to threaten it. It is in line with a normal framing of politics rather than inviting for an emergency-related one. Hence, and despite having been confronted by somewhat similar challenges, Sweden has succeeded in defusing the explosive potential inherent in the issues involved. Denmark, in turn, has experienced a considerable amount of internal turmoil as well as its worst foreign policy crisis with the reverberations still unfolding. The frequent use of the word ‘crisis’ is telling as such in testifying to an emergency-related rather than normal framing of politics for the part of Denmark.

The publication – and the frequent re-publications – of the Muhammed cartoons and the crisis that ensued has been seen by some scholars as pointing to a general political pattern (Engelbrecht Larsen and Seidenfaden, 2006; Kunelius et al., 2007). For the part of the Danish state, there was at least initially little interest in engaging and responding to the complaints positing that the publishing amounted to a mocking and ridiculing of the feelings of the Muslims. This contrasted with the approach applied by the Swedish authorities who, spearheaded by the Prime Minister, endeavoured at recognizing the problems. They have, in being less inclined to define the difference positioned in Muslims as a threat and engaging hence in various acts of securitization, been far more prepared to open up for contacts. The prime strategy has consisted of waging a dialogue in order for mutual respect and peaceful co-existence to emerge. The Swedish authorities have

been prepared to share some of the burden of adaptation for a multicultural society to prevail rather than just requesting the Muslims – being outlined as carriers of rather problematic if not threatening difference – to adjust. The blame has not merely been placed with the Muslims as there has also existed efforts of self-reflexion as well as scrutiny of the policies pursued.

The differences in the preparedness to carry responsibility and position blame also became apparent on the level of prime ministers. Göran Larsson and Lasse Lindkilde (2009: 373) argue, on the basis on their comparative effort, that the Danish and Swedish prime ministers “disagree fundamentally about how to deal with religious diversity and multiculturalism”. Sweden had in general a clear advantage over Denmark owing to its broader and differently delimited conceptualization of liberal democracy. The Swedish action space turned out to be broader and allowed for the establishment of dialogue – whereas Denmark refrained initially from such a move in defining liberal democracy in more restrictive and exclusive terms. Sweden was able to aspire for normative high ground together with the Muslim communities and it seems to have been easier also for the these communities – with their difference being recognized and not interpreted as something problematic *per se* in view of a given, naturalized and strictly delimited self-understanding – to position and make themselves heard through the normal channels of communication existing within the Swedish public sphere. Significantly, they were able to do so without being compelled and pushed in the direction of exceptional forms of politics such as arranging demonstrations and drawing in various ways on support from fellow Muslims abroad. The differences in the Danish and Swedish approaches as to normalcy and emergency as well as the very way of comprehending liberal democracy then implied, in one of their aspects, that the issues at stake remained

basically internal in the Swedish case, whereas the ramifications turned broadly international for the part of Denmark.

It also appears that the lessons learned differ in general between the two countries. Sweden views itself as having coped rather successfully with the challenges. It has been possible to tackle the issues at stake without stepping outside the normal framing of politics. The country managed, in being flexible and without imposing strict limits as to the identities at stake, to de-escalate the tensions. The episode could thus be regarded as vindicating the Swedish integrative and inclusive approach and in particular the state was provided with an important option of demonstrating that it was up to the task of managing a multiculturalist Sweden. The prevailing self-understanding, in not being built on some particular taken-for-granted category pertaining to purity and homogeneity or resting on interpretations of threatening difference, gained recognition instead of being undermined. Remaining until very recently short of a political party like the Danish People’s Party in the parliament has undoubtedly contributed to the success and, conversely, led to the conclusion that the emergence of such a party could potentially endanger the persistence of the Swedish approach premised on a normal framing of politics as well as a rather benign reading of the difference inherent in immigrants, including Muslims and Islam.

Denmark, in turn, has been thoroughly shaken by the episode. In fact, the contention escalated to a rather severe crisis not only in the domestic sphere but also internationally. Some steps have subsequently been taken to improve communication and add to the recognition of Muslim communities, albeit it has also been extensively thought that the crisis indeed revealed the seriousness of the challenge posted by issues related to immigration and Muslims in particular.

The experience was, in some of its aspects, taken to confirm that the difference inherent in the ‘newcomers’ endangers Denmark’s purity, cohesion and durability. Accordingly, a situation emerged which also provided the state with an opportunity to deal with the dual challenge: To show on the one hand its competence in shielding the nation and coping with the task of managing a *de facto* multicultural Danish society on the other. The engagement with diversity then also implied that a number of Danish politicians, supported by key voices in the media, found reasons to detach themselves from what they called the more reserved ‘Swedish model’ and a normal reading of politics.

Conversely, a number of Swedish voices gradually joined the debate by aspiring to add to the political, cultural and identity-related distance in regard to Denmark. A landmark in this rather media-driven debate (Larsson and Lindekilde, 2009: 364) consisted of the Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt as well as the then leader of the opposition Mona Sahlin both pointing in an interview on TV1 (12th of September 2010) to Denmark as a non-encouraging model. The Danish approach concerning the policies of immigration did in their view not represent an avenue that Sweden should aspire to follow. The two top leaders thereby repeated on high level an argument that had, as such, been frequently advanced since 2001 in the Swedish public discourse (Brandin, 2010: 19-23; Lawler, 2007: 114; Nielsen, 2004: 155-58).

THE ‘BROTHERLY FEUD’

With the pattern of othering having been grounded in the discourse sparked off by the cartoons, the Danish-Swedish relations seem to have retained their aggravated nature. Bo Bjørnvig (2010) and Mikael Jalving (2010)

both talk somewhat journalistically about a “brotherly feud” in referring to the constant needle pricking and quarrelling that took place, particularly in the context of the run-up to the Swedish parliamentary elections in September 2010. The debate in the public sphere, with extensive news coverage and a broad stream of almost daily commentary appearing for weeks in most of the media, was this time sparked off by the previously rather insignificant Sweden Democrats, a party riding on nationalist and xenophobic (albeit not racist) themes, gaining increased prominence on the Swedish political scene. It was, owing to a considerable growth in support, bound to achieve a break-through and gain seats in the parliament (the outcome was some six percent of the votes and 20 seats turning the party to the third largest one in the Swedish Parliament).

This implied that also Sweden now, along the lines of Denmark, has a rather populist, nationalist and xenophobic party represented in the national parliament, thereby forging a far more explicit link with the public discourse on immigration and the conduct of politics. The Swedish party has rather close contacts with *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People’s Party). It is socially conservative in character with a longing for the social democratic and nationalist Sweden arguably abandoned in the era of Olof Palme. The complaints pertain to, as articulated by Matthias Karlsson, part of the leadership of the Sweden Democrats (see Jalving, 2011: 26-32) that Sweden “no longer has an identity or a history”. The country is claimed to have lost its temporal anchorage, with the drift then generating a considerable degree of alarmism and anxiety. The programmatic aim of the party is hence one of re-narrating the national story. It is one of restoring nationalism with liberal values and democracy then comprehended in that perspective. The party is quite traditionalist, as noted among others by Anders Hellström (2010: 28), rather

than endeavouring at breaking altogether fresh ground through the introduction of new issues on the political agenda. It aspires back to the past through struggles in which anti-elitism, resisting the European Union and criticizing the policies of immigration stand central. The latter issue of opening Sweden up for immigration is viewed as a profound mistake. It has arguably spoiled the country, Karlsson asserts. The argument advanced is that Denmark has been able to avoid the loss of nationalism and constitutes in this sense (but not many others, he adds) a model to emulate.

The party thus brings about increasing ambivalence and it challenges the very way of framing politics. It does so by aspiring to contribute to a Sweden increasingly like Denmark and by threatening to bring about a Danish-Swedish we-ness premised on more recent Danish development. The break-through of the party in September 2010 – described by Jalving (2011: 20) as “the Danish People’s Party in blue and yellow colours” – not just broadens the repertoire of national narratives but aims at changing the very framing of politics with more space provided to emergency-related readings. It has, in that context, installed profound identity-related issues on the national agenda. Questions have emerged that do not merely pertain to the integration of immigrants, with the bordering between what is basically Danish or Swedish turning somewhat more diffuse. The issues at stake rather relate more broadly to the nature of the two respective polities, this then also unavoidably impacting the unfolding of the relationship between Denmark and Sweden. Questions pertaining to similarity and differences and, importantly, the framing of politics, have indeed taken a new turn with the appearance of a Swedish political party aspiring for similarity on Danish terms.

A considerable number of contributions in the Danish media have allotted much importance to that the new party has in some ways

been discriminated against by an activist and interventionist Swedish state. In other words, the party has not been allowed to pursue its policies of likeness. The website of the party was at some juncture closed down on the order of the Swedish secret police (SÄPO),⁸ and SD has occasionally been censored in the media (TV4 refused to air an electoral video prepared by the Sweden Democrats in the course of their election campaign as it was seen as standing for incitement to racial hate and hence regarded illegal). Furthermore, members of the party have on occasions been harassed and discriminated against (Orrenius, 2010: 33-49). Considerable attention has in general been devoted in the Danish discourse to that the party did not get fair play in the media, pointing for example to that it was excluded from the final TV-debate prior to the national voting arranged between the various Swedish parties on STV. These clampdowns have then – instead of being seen as Swedish efforts to protect the country’s democratic and political system against breaches of the rules – been taken to testify that Sweden is not fully democratic, open and prepared to allow for freedom of speech, i.e. freedom being also utilized in accentuating difference and pointing to its threatening aspects. The complaints seem to pertain to that liberal democracy continues, for the part of Sweden, to be exercised within a normal framing of politics rather than in the context of emergency being viewed – as seems increasingly be the case for the part of Denmark – as an integral aspect of the conduct of politics.

⁸ Information was released pointing to that the then Swedish Foreign Minister, Laila Freivalds, had actually – although initially denying it – intimidated a website provider to shut down the website of the Sweden Democrats as the party was actually about to publish the Danish cartoons. As a consequence of the revelation she resigned from her post (see Linde-Laursen, 2007: 265; Larsson and Lindekilde, 2009: 367).

This discrepancy in the approach and reading of politics has been frequently evidenced by the employment, in the Danish media, of some quite derogative expressions. To provide some snapshots of this Sweden-bashing at its worst: Sweden has been categorized as ‘a Nordic banana republic’ (an expression used by the leader of the Danish People’s Party) and seen as a ‘Prozac nation’ (i.e. doped into tranquillity). It has been positioned in the ‘Balkans’ and labelled as being ‘East European’ (an expression employed by a Danish People’s Party MEP). It has further been talked about as being ‘Asian’ as well as ‘totalitarian’. At large the discourse turned, at least for a while, quite aggravated. Sweden has been confronted with a considerable number of Danish contributions drawing explicitly on arguments pertaining to universal liberal values as well as democracy in a rather exclusionary fashion.⁹

The Swedish replies have sought to deny the relevance of the critique and have done this by employing two different types of arguments. It has firstly been asserted that the Swedish way of coping with the challenges posed by the Sweden Democrats has not been in breach of democracy or liberal values in general. The aim has rather been one of upholding and defending those values, and emergency-related measures may arguably be employed in a justified manner in defending the prevailing normalcy of Swedish politics. Secondly, it has been emphatically refuted that Sweden would in some regard be on its way to becoming similar to Denmark owing to the appearance of the Sweden Democrats on the Swedish political arena. Suggestions to this effect have been firmly refuted and it has been vocally assured that Swe-

den remains determined to stay its course. It is, the frequently used argument reads, bound to remain a vanguard of multiculturalism. It has, in other words, been forcefully denied that the country would be on its way of moving over to an assimilationist and monoculturalist approach, i.e. the type of policies that Denmark has been comprehended to pursue or, for that matter, to switch over to an emergency-related way of framing politics.

PROCEEDING ALONG DIFFERENT PATHS

Although aggravated during towards the end of 2010, the cleavages and the somewhat polarized situation between Denmark and Sweden as to immigration and asylum policies is not just recent in origin. In fact, the constellation has developed gradually over a longer period (cf. Green-Pedersen, 2009). The ground was in principle laid already in the 1970s with Sweden developing an active policy of immigration and settling, in principle, for inclusive policies. The previously rather assimilationist policies were quite drastically traded for multiculturalism as a key departure (Rungblom, 1994). Somewhat later the country declared itself – part and parcel of its quite successful modernization – to be multicultural as well as pluralist in essence. Denmark is, in the perspective of devising specific policies, a latecomer as the pursuance of quite exclusive policies has taken place since the parliamentary elections in 2001. The policies pursued have been based on the assimilation of differences in order for ethnic homogeneity of the country to prevail.

It is also to be noted that whilst the issues of immigration and granting of asylum until recently, in the Swedish case, have remained largely on the normal agenda without being excessively politicized, Denmark has stood for a rather different outcome. The national

⁹ Janus Brandin (2010) has rather systematically covered the debate in the media from 2001 onwards, although he is somewhat less systematic and detailed as to the more recent turns in the Danish-Swedish discussion.

political scene has turned, as testified by Ulf Hedetoft (2003: 393), into a kind of “battle-ground” with Danishness being constantly played against the difference seen in the ethnic and religiously defined minorities, immigrants (often called “aliens” or alternatively “new Danes”) and asylum seekers. Muslims in particular stand for the Danish other. Taken together, Denmark intends, in contrast to Sweden, to remain a monocultural society.

These differences in approach then account for why the mainstream public debate waged in Denmark has more often than not departed from the view that there must be something wrong with the Swedish policies. It has, in this vein, been widely assumed that the Swedes do not fully comprehend the seriousness of the issues involved. The assertion is that some kind of political correctness (cf. Petersson, 2006: 7), or perhaps even outright prohibitions (cf. Gundelach, 2002), hamper a free debate. Various inhibitions prevent an open acknowledgment of what and how huge the assumed problems really are. Serious issues are being suppressed in the public debate – as claimed by *Jyllands-Posten* (1st of September, 2010) – “in order to avoid being seen as hostile towards immigrants”. Denmark, for its part, is viewed as being far less cautious as to the approach applied and not similarly inhibited by political correctness. At large, the policies pursued by the Swedish government are viewed as difficult to comprehend and the Swedish public debate is lambasted as timid and evasive (Petersson, 2006: 8).

It has in general been difficult on the Danish side to grasp that Swedes tend to frame the issues at stake quite differently. It has been found puzzling that the neighbour is far less alarmed even if some of its key constitutive departures are allegedly in danger. Why are the Swedes not worried about the values that bind the nation together being threatened, overly concerned about a loss of their sovereignty or,

for that matter, fearful of a break in the consensuality of the policies pursued?

These issues have been found quite troubling and difficult to grasp in the Danish discourse and the dialogue that has emerged has usually been less than helpful in grounding a better understanding of the essence of the other. As noted by Jan Guillou, a Swedish columnist and author of rather popular novels, in an intervention published also in the Danish media (*Jyllands-Posten*, 2nd of September, 2010, written by Heidi Joy Madsen), Sweden does not attach much importance to issues of immigration and Islam, i.e. the interpretation is not an emergency-related one. Migrants do not, in the case of Sweden, figure as the categorical others as they seem to do in the construction of Danishness. They are not depicted as entities to be cleansed of their otherness in order to be accepted into the nation. The constitutive move is thus in the latter case one of exclusion with security as a formative argument, whereas it tends to consist of non-securitized inclusion in the Swedish one (cf. Jensen, 2004).

Arguably, there prevails – instead of a rather openly pronounced existential fear – a far more relaxed Swedish attitude. The attitudes remain relaxed despite of Sweden having accepted a far higher amount of migrants and people with a different ethnic background than Denmark. Guillou therefore views many of the Danish accusations and expressions of fear as “both humorous and bizarre” in pointing to that immigration as an issue has a far less pronounced position on the Swedish than on the Danish political agenda.

Also Göran Rosenberg (*Information*, 5th of December 2010), equally a Swedish columnist and author, emphasizes – in line with the dominant structures of the Swedish discourse – the value of tolerance rather than freedom of expression. In doing so, he posits that there is a difference between freedom of expression and debate as a culture. He also concedes, in

trying at least to some extent to address the divergent interpretations and application of liberal principles, that the campaign video of the Sweden Democrats (censored in Sweden) would presumably have been shown in Denmark. Actually, “it would not have caused any problems or raised particular concern” as “almost everything can these days be publicly said in Denmark regarding immigration and Muslims in particular”.¹⁰ Yet there is, he claims in line with a broader Swedish debate, no essential difference between Denmark and Sweden. This is also the case in regard to freedom of expression, albeit the respective debate cultures are – or at least have been – different, with Denmark having a culture entailing “that nothing essential can any longer be discussed within the public sphere as all are talking past each other”.

In essence, Rosenberg is somewhat vaguely pointing out that an unrestricted application of the freedom of expression can in some cases boil down, in being employed in the context of an emergency-related framing of politics, into something quite illiberal. He asserts – in problematizing the dominant Danish narratives – that restrictions in the freedom of speech do not amount to political correctness. They can be quite justified as the singling out of weak and marginalized groups of people may add to their estrangement, alienation, discrimination and stigmatization. Cautiousness may actually help to avert these problems (see also Jørgensen, 2006: 267; Rostbøll, 2011). Crucially, freedom of expression is not viewed as an ab-

solute right overriding other liberal concerns such as human rights and equal treatment. Freedom of speech should be employed, together with other liberal approaches, to guard and strengthen a normal framing of politics rather than employed as one of the means part of a more emergency-related reading. An awareness of the potentially rather problematic consequences of the ‘right to offend’ and the use of freedom of speech as part of a majority-rule without regard for minorities undergirds the Swedish approach, whereas this awareness seems largely to be lacking in the mainstream Danish discourse, Rosenberg claims.

AN INTENSIFIED ENCOUNTER

The unfolding of the ‘brotherly feud’ towards the end of 2010 is, as such, nothing altogether new or isolated. It rather reflects a broader pattern of increased interest in the waging of a cross-border dialog with the neighbour as evidenced for example by the recent investigative journalism and literature with focus on Danish-Swedish relations.

Lene Sundström, a journalist at the Swedish *Aftonbladet*, contributed to the debate by moving in 2009 over to live for three months at the outskirts of Copenhagen. She did so in order to explore Denmark more closely and with the aim of reporting on recent Danish developments. Her findings then appeared in a book with a somewhat provocative title “The World’s Most Happy People” (published both in Danish and Swedish). The title no doubt points to the perception of Danes being rather self-centred. In her report she focuses in particular on the Danish People’s Party and explores Denmark in order to shed light on what also Sweden might sooner or later have to encounter, taking into account the increasing support enjoyed and gathered by the Sweden Democrats. The point of her reporting consists predomi-

¹⁰ In fact, Ulf Hedetoft (2004: 79) has in the Danish debate articulated a similar view far more explicitly by referring to “slogans almost routinely put forward in the debate in the name of ‘freedom of speech’ in order to back up and justify the spread of the most vulgar stereotypes concerning immigrants”. In other words, freedom of expression is employed in accentuating difference and providing it with connotations of danger.

nantly of demonstrating that strange and to some extent unpleasant things are underway in Denmark. The aim of the book is then to contribute to the growth of an increased awareness in order for Sweden to be better able to avert similar developments if the likeness inherent in the Sweden Democrats spreads and undermines the current divergences present between Denmark and Sweden with Denmark turning less self and increasingly other.

In addition to the treatment and focus on the Danish populist party provided by Sundström, three other books have recently been published on that theme (Mattsson, 2009; Ekman and Pohl, 2010; Orrenius, 2010), and there is also one focusing on the Danish and the Swedish populist parties in a comparative perspective (Uvell and Carlsen, 2010).

One of the unintended consequences of Sundström's book was that it prompted the publishing of a somewhat similar book, albeit written from a Danish perspective. The counter-offensive, as it might be called, was initiated by *Jyllands-Posten* and authored by a columnist, Mikael Jalving (2011). The basic message, premised on extensive travelling in Sweden, meeting and interviewing a considerable number of experts and probing a variety of basically historical studies, consists of arguing that Sweden is on its way to turning into something rather different. The problem is, according to Jalving, a temporal one. Sweden aims, he claims, at transcending its past instead of endeavouring at returning to its former being of a nation-state. It has stepped out of the pattern concerning the past, present and future typical for nation-states, this temporality then also setting Sweden apart from Denmark. Strangely, the Swedish state does not aim at saving the nation as it should, but rather contributes to the emergence of quite different constellations. Moreover, it does not seem to be overly concerned about the nation being undermined

as a master signifier and ultimate nodal point of politics.

And in consequence, Sweden is in deep trouble. It is arguably in demise, Jalving claims, due to its nature as a messenger of the future, moral guardian and entity premised on self-sufficiency as well as social experiments. The fact that Sweden has turned over-ambitious and pursues erroneous policies further strengthens this perspective. Arguably, the project cannot be accomplished and the break away from what the country should be and the utopian effort of becoming a multicultural polity do not carry. The aspirations have therefore led Sweden into a rather self-destructive state of denial. Except for some dissident voices closer to Danish views (interviewed in the book), Sweden has arguably turned into a "realm of silence" in refusing to politicize ethnic and religious issues. The utopian elements in the Swedish policies allowing for a normal and rather pragmatic framing of politics are illusory in nature, Jalving asserts. This is so as normalcy does not prevail. In reflecting on the Swedish confidence in progress and the option as to the transcending history, he suggests that these beliefs should be abandoned. The efforts of making temporal jumps, with the state having abandoned its traditional protective functions and instead aiming at contributing to post-national developments, do not carry, Jalving posits. Normalcy as a way of framing politics is, he claims, hence not just misleading but also highly problematic.

Although the general aim of the book is one of searching for entries that allow and invite for a critique in the dominant Swedish narratives (while viewing the Danish ones as given and closed), it also entails some quite accurate and informative analyses. Among other things, Sweden's historical track is described quite elegantly and it is perceptively pointed out that also the Swedish approach entails some bordering. In order not to slip into the advocacy

of cosmopolitan universalism there are also limits, in the case of Sweden, in the embracing of difference.

But the merits of the book notwithstanding, Jalving's analysis remains quite aggravated due to its rather Danish qualities, including the application of an emergency-gearred way of framing politics. In addition to the Swedish state elites being blamed for pursuing erroneous and ill-advised policies, various cultural radicals, humanists and left-wing participants in the Swedish debate are condemned and criticized. They are hanged out very much in line with the way the Danish debate has unfolded over the recent decades. Basically the argument is that they are leading Sweden astray due to a false, i.e. tolerant and post-nationalist teleology. Instead of defending nationalist constructions as they should, they tend to engage themselves in re-shaping and going beyond the established conventions. In consequence, they are blamed for having contributed to the crisis which Sweden is assumedly experiencing and therefore also denied a legitimate standing in the debate.

A REALM OF SILENCE

It is, against this background, quite unsurprising that Lisa Bjurwald (*Dagens Nyheter*, 25th of February, 2011) reviews the book under the title "The Danish Disease". The choice could have been impacted by Jalving himself appearing a couple of days earlier in the Danish *Politiken*, (22nd of February) under the title "The Swedish Bacillus", with the author arguing that Denmark should avoid turning into anything resembling Sweden in the sphere of values. Bjurwald claims, as a mirror image, that it is actually Denmark which stands for "the realm of silence". She denounces the whole book by insisting that Jalving and his publisher are far too much to the right in the debate in order to

be taken seriously. Her comments clearly testify to the rather tough and polarized media climate that labels the Danish-Swedish relationship with emphasis on difference instead of similarity.

Mattias Gardell (2010), professor in the history of religion at the University of Uppsala, has for his part contributed to the discourse by writing on Islamophobia and he has, in that context, devoted considerable attention to the occurrence of such fears in Sweden as well as in Denmark. One of his main points consists of arguing that the growing fear of Islam resides in the loss of the 'good' enemies of the Cold War era (Gardell, 2010: 81). Islamophobia compensates, he alleges, for this loss of radical otherness, fits the bill and fills the identity-related vacuum by providing a new significant other. The national 'we's' are hence increasingly defined by Islamophobia with religion (and not just individual carriers of religion) purported as a problem per se. In addition, Gardell (2011) asserts that the spread of the new fear restrains the conduct of democracy in inviting for and legitimizing various undemocratic practices as part of the struggle waged against Islam. It could be argued, in line with Gardell's claim pertaining to the appearance of an identity-related vacuum, that Denmark and Sweden have gradually started also to draw upon each other with an emphasis on difference as to their reading of religion in the context of politics, and Islam in particular. They draw on difference rather than similarity in their endeavours of filling the vacuum.

Without much surprise, the book has quickly prompted – clearly spurred by the occurrence of a terrorist act in Stockholm in December 2010 – a considerable amount of debate as well as some pointed reviews. Pernilla Ouis (2010), a researcher living in southern Sweden and a specialist on Islam, sides with the claim put forward by Gardell that the cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten* do not bear

testimony to values such as freedom of expression, but rather stand for Islamophobia, i.e. an emergency-related framing of politics. However, she also asserts that there is nothing in the book on how to cope with the consequent efforts of restraining opinions or conducting moves of censorship. Is censorship not as such in breach with normal comprehension of politics? Discussion would be needed, she contends, on how to respond to claims of religious feelings being insulted. The issue of liberal values being under threat is pertinent also in the case of Sweden and would, in her view, have deserved explicit and a more thorough treatment.

The debate generated by Gardell's book has equally touched ground in Denmark. While welcoming the publication and praising the aim of attacking too simplified thinking on Islam and the Muslim culture, Bjørn Bredal (2010) – a journalist at the Danish *Politiken* – nonetheless thinks that more attention should have been devoted to the factual situation prevailing in some of the Islamic regions. This is required, he asserts in a contribution also published in the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter*, in order to avert the danger that the picture provided becomes too rosy. Moreover, Bredal joins Pernilla Ouis in arguing that some of the dilemmas which Sweden has recently been confronted with call for more thorough and self-critical treatment, albeit he concedes at the same time that Sweden has in general fared much better than Denmark as to the policies pursued. Moreover, and in line with a number of voices critical of the Danish developments, he concludes that the tone in the Swedish discourse on immigration, Islam and Muslims is more dignified and respectful, i.e. basically non-alarmist as to the underlying comprehensions. On that basis he then argues that this is actually something that Denmark should try to emulate. Being a Danish journalist, he clearly breaks with the one-sidedness and inability to

transcend national borders often present in the Danish-Swedish discourse.¹¹

QUESTIONING NEIGHBOURLY TIES

It seems, overall, that neither Denmark nor Sweden are at ease with the increased attention and scrutiny. The debate waged over the recent years has, in fact, on occasions been described as “hysterical”, seen as “unserious” or it has even been described by the Danish daily *Politiken* (1st of September, 2010) as reflecting a “highly charged political warfare across the Öresund”. Arne Ruth (2006) argues that the cleavage setting Denmark and Sweden apart from each other as to various values has turned “ocean-wide”. This broadening has taken place, he notes, despite of Malmö and Copenhagen increasingly figuring as a common urban conglomerate due to the integrating impact of the new bridge. Increasing closeness does not seem to bring about, contrary to the anticipations part of a Deutshean approach, merely feelings of similarity and togetherness, but is also conducive to a considerable amount of othering and stress on difference.

At large, space has been opened up for the airing of quite populist themes such as the one put forward by Pia Kjærsgaard, leader of the Danish People's Party. She proposed that the Öresund bridge ought to be closed. The discord should be settled by even re-drawing bor-

11 As noted by Ulf Hedetoft (2006: 392), voices of opposition as to the Danish policies have been inspired by perceptions of Swedish tolerance and normalcy and tolerance has in general also been a significant theme in the Danish debate as noted by Carsten Stage (2011). For a Swedish analyst showing considerable appreciation and respect for the policies pursued by Denmark, see Aje Carlbom (2003 and 2006). Carlbom is also extensively interviewed by Mikael Jalving (2011: 45-52).

ders, thereby adding to the spatial separation between Denmark and Sweden, while some voices on the Swedish side recommended, in turn, a handing back of Skåne to Denmark (the region located in southern-most Sweden forming a stronghold of the Sweden Democrats and prior to 1658, along with some other regions in southern Sweden, a rather central and important part of Denmark).

Crucially, the neighbourly ‘feud’ appears to cover the whole political spectrum stretching from the right to the left, although it has been particularly visible in the relations between the parties to the right. Hence, the impression of Sweden suppressing democracy in the context of the parliamentary elections prompted key politicians from the Conservatives, Venstre (center-right party) and the Danish People’s Party to air the idea of inviting the Council of Europe to send electoral observers to Sweden in order for them to cover the 2010 parliamentary elections. There was obviously little trust in Sweden’s ability to conduct elections in a fair and democratic manner. However, and quite unsurprisingly, this move was rejected, condemned and sharply criticized by the Swedish conservatives and liberals. They criticized the proposal by regarding it as highly “populist” and “unserious” in nature (*Jyllands-Posten*, 1st of September, 2010).

As to the media, the recent Danish public debate has been spearheaded by tabloids, but has also entailed interventions in the more serious papers. The critique articulated in the discourse appears in general to have a dual kind of character. Sweden has, on the one hand, been blamed for having a rather authoritarian political culture that quells and censors critical voices in an undemocratic fashion but, on the other hand, it has also been seen as showing signs of a return to ‘normalcy’ (Hardis, 2010; Jalving, 2011). The country is, in other words, compelled to struggle increasingly with the same issues which also Denmark has encountered

already for quite some time. And with this increased ‘normalcy’, the need for mutual othering, for long present in the Danish-Swedish relations, would be considerably reduced.

This is to say that the considerable intake of immigrants and the attendant ethnic diversity has gradually turned into a contested issue in Sweden as well. Finally also the alternative and more Denmark-like Swedish self – which according to a broadly held Danish opinion has been there all along among the Swedish people albeit in a suppressed form – turns visible and gains political influence. It is out in the open as the Swedes seem to comprehend – despite various persistent efforts of quelling the issues – the severity of the situation. They no longer stay with their alleged “naivety” and “state of self-deception” but comprehend “that their essence is truly in danger” (*Jyllands-Posten*, 15th of September, 2010).

The appearance of the Sweden Democrats hence figures, once interpreted in this perspective, as a sign of Sweden’s recovery: The difference inherent in migrants is increasingly seen as problematic and conducive to conflicts. It signals, according to quite a number Danish views, the arrival of a far more healthy state of affairs. The new party contributes to a change in perspective by stressing the need for more emergency-related interpretations, and there is consequently scant understanding in the Danish debate for the Swedish efforts of purporting the Sweden Democrats as “contagious” or to view them as “pest-infected”, i.e. an entity that in essence endangers the Swedish nation (*Folkhemmet*) (Kristensen Berth, 2010; Hardis, 2010). The perspective held by the SD should, according to dominant Danish views, be seen as a remedy helping Swedes to see things in a correct perspective.

Thus, what is often termed as a ‘crisis’ as to the unfolding of the Swedish multicultural society (cf. Trägårdh, 2010) has in the Danish debate been predominantly viewed as a kind

of comforting fact. It provides comfort in the sense that it testifies to the potential of change in the previous temporal and hierarchic order with Sweden now showing signs of following the Danish monoculturalist route instead of figuring as an alternative and multiculturalist model for Denmark to emulate. It opens up the option of the 'I' to turn into a joint 'we' on Danish rather than Swedish terms, i.e. changes in the sense of problematic difference being converted to similarity. The Danes may, instead of being on the defence as has previously been the case, apply more offensive approaches in denying the Swedes the option of "looking down [on Denmark], as they have always been doing" (Jalving, 2011: 13).

The 'crisis' may thus be seen in the Danish discourse as relieving the country's own "disgrace and shame" (Guillou, 2010).¹² By reminding the Danish voters of the alleged failure of the Swedish model, it alleviates feelings of inferiority in the sense of merely being Sweden's "little brother" (cf. Brandin, 2010: 84). It undermines the hierarchy that has for quite some time been present in the Danish-Swedish relations and allows Denmark to aspire for a more equal standing. Issues pertaining to democracy and liberal value are in this sense employed as devices for re-ordering political space.

It is further to be noted that quite a number of Swedes seem, as such, to share the view that the break-through of the Sweden Democrats is formative in character and impacts the essence of their country in a rather profound manner, although most of them perceive the challenge as pointing to something unwarranted, negative and quite un-Swedish. The difference as-

sociated with the pursuance of rather illiberal policies appears to be on its way of penetrating the inside instead of the nation instead of remaining firmly on the outside. The entry of the Sweden Democrats into the Swedish parliament has hence been accompanied – at least in the aftermath of the elections – by relatively large public demonstrations in various parts of Sweden. And more profoundly, the established parties have pledged not to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats or allow them to influence the setting of the national agenda. They further aspire to stay aloof from situations which would enable the newcomer to the parliament – seen very much as an intruder and carrier of unhealthy difference – to gain influence by balancing between the government and the opposition. In other words, the SD is, despite being a legitimate political party present in the parliament, treated as an exception. The normalcy of liberal democracy is defended by some degree of exclusion. Göran Greider (2011) testifies, among others, by probing the record of the party on various liberal issues, that "they are not like the others". They are inside Sweden and undoubtedly present in Swedish politics, and yet partly self and party other.

There seems, in general, to be the feeling that the success of the Sweden Democrats augurs something new and ground-breaking. There are references to a formative moment and a kind of cultural upheaval along the lines experienced by Denmark due to the outcome of the parliamentary elections in 2001, with the outcome then leading to the formation of a Liberal-Conservative minority government, a government hinging – in order to stay in power – on the backing of the Danish People's Party. In any case, the spatiality as well temporality of the Danish-Swedish relations appears to have changed. The Danish type of critique is now, and inconveniently from a Swedish point of view, also furnished with an outlet inside Sweden and no longer confined merely to positions

¹² Notably, Brent Steele (2005) has included the concept of shame in his analyses of processes of identity-formation between states, by asserting that shame points to ontological insecurity.

located outside the country. Similarly, it is less safe to assume – with the Sweden Democrats using the space that has opened up and offering alternative ways of framing politics, and comprehending in that context the country's national being – that Sweden is different in the sense of being ahead – within the context of an established hierarchy – of Denmark.

IMMIGRATION AS A CONSTITUTIVE ARGUMENT

It is to be noted, as to the background to the 'brotherly feud', that Denmark and Sweden clearly relate in ways of their own to the difference inherent in immigration. They abide to quite different grammars. In the first place, Danes have remained far more worried and have even categorized the difference encountered as standing for threat and danger. It is taken to have the potential of undermining the established national self by derailing the peacefulness of the society, destroying welfare as a crucial aspect of Danishness and by endangering the country's cultural identity. The Swedish approach has, in turn, been far less alarmist and fearful. One could go as far as arguing that immigration has in the Swedish case been viewed – rather than standing for something quite problematic and perhaps even undermining the imperative of survival – as contributing to the emergence of something new, challenging and basically positive. It allows and provides opportunities for Sweden to display its supposedly unique character as standing for a vanguard country, one fully embracing liberal and universal values. The country thus exemplifies what democracy and liberal values mean as universally valid departures in a changing world.

But these differences notwithstanding, Denmark and Sweden are quite similar to each other in the sense that the impact of the differ-

ence inherent in immigration is in both cases constitutive in character. It is formative but differs as to its structuring effects and is therefore also part of the unfolding of two rather different types of polities. These differences may be outlined by exploring how the various we-concepts such as 'state', 'nation', 'society' and 'individual' (cf. Hansen, 2003: 311) have been unfolding historically.

Thus, the relevant conceptual logic at stake in the processes of self-definition and steering the debate pertains in the Danish case almost exclusively to the concepts of nation and state. The coupling between these two concepts is, according to a number of studies, quite tight (Lawler, 2007: 113), although it is also one in which the nation has had the upper hand while being at the same time almost 'organically' tied to the concept of *Folk/People* (Hansen, 2002: 60). Yet, and as noted among others by Linde-Laursen (2007: 267), the state and nation – with the latter forcefully represented by a folkish civil society – have remained largely detached from each other in figuring as distinct entities. The concept of *Volksnation* may thus aptly express the essence of the overall constellation. The integrative evolution between the state and the nation never occurred, he elucidates, with the civil society having a power base of its own. This then allows the nation to figure as an alternative public sphere – with democracy, freedom and liberal values as key points of departure – independent from and in parallel to the state (see also Stenius, 1993; Østergård, 2004).

The basic conceptual constellation underpinning Sweden is in some sense quite different. There is, and to some extent in contrast to Denmark, a considerable dose of integrative evolution to be detected as the civil society forces establishing themselves as key power-holders have done this through the state rather than by opposing and staying aloof from the state. Integrative development has clearly

gone further in Sweden than in the case of Denmark, thereby narrowing the distance between the key components of the constellation with the emerging state-nation being largely based on conditions imposed and influenced by a rather strong civil society. It is also to be noted that with the constellation grounded in the pre-eminence of the civil society, there has been a considerable amount of breeding-space present for the Swedes to be part of and integrate themselves into the basic constellation as individual citizens. Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh (2009) endeavour at catching a crucial aspect of this integration by coining the concept of “state-individualism”.

These latter features have then over time also opened the door for a strengthening of the civil society and position of the individual as reflected for example in Sweden being frequently denoted as *Folkhemmet* (People’s Home). Stated differently, the emphasis on Sweden as a nation-state has been in decline with the country aspiring for universality. It has been guided by feelings of being “the most emancipated country in the world” (Ruth, 2006: 2). The crucial aim has been one of leaving behind and abandoning narrow nationalism. Individuals have been depicted as individuals without immediately casting them as either nationals or non-nationals, thereby also restraining their individuality. This liberation and employment of a different constitutive logic has, according to Arne Ruth (2006: 2), been “the way out of a cumbersome historical tradition”. The traditional nationalism has, instead of carving out more progressive and democratic alternatives within the logic of nationalism, in fact been “turned upside down” amounting to anti-nationalism as a national paradigm. This must be the one of the strangest social paradoxes of political history, he concludes. Swedish politicians and diplomats have been convinced, Ruth further asserts, that “they had a privileged insight into the future of humanity” thereby

projecting the Swedish attitude onto the world stage as a special sort of idealism.

Obviously, the Swedish elements of feeling morally superior and rather self-confident in having transcended the past and being called to show the way into a non-nationalist/post-nationalist future differs sharply from the key constitutive moves applied in the case of Denmark. This is so as the latter project has been very much about preserving the country’s national distinctiveness and not to turn into anything post-national. As noted by Linde-Laursen (2007: 267), the temporal perspective of the discourse sets the two countries apart from each other with Sweden gearing itself increasingly towards the future rather than pursuing a kind of preservationist struggle – as has largely been the case for the part of Denmark.

Furthermore, the more flexible, citizen-based and future-oriented nature of Sweden premised on modernity and progress also accounts for that immigration is viewed as less of a treat. As underlined by Heidi Avellan (2010: 16), “xenophobia denotes something rather un-Swedish”. Therefore, the pursuance of basically inclusive policies based on compassion vis-à-vis migration figures as an integral part of a broader setting in signalling “openness towards the world”. It is there in order to provide further support to the underlying conceptual constellation grounding Sweden as a polity.

But this does not imply that immigration would, as an issue, be somehow less significant. It rather stands out, as aptly noted by Aje Carlbom (2006: 32), as an integral part of the Swedish ‘model’. He points out that the Swedish discourses on migration “carry the state” (“utgör en statbärande ideologi”). This is the case as being a Swede, Carlbom observes, is not determined or prioritized by history, culture and language. Swedishness is not viewed, due to its diffuse and relatively weakly defined nature in the first place (cf. Johansson Heinö,

2011: 36), as something original or positioned above other ethnicities. Rather, as argued by Jonathan Friedman and Kaisa Ekholm Friedman (2006: 77), it has turned into one privileged ethnic category part of a larger pluralist constellation, i.e. eminence among those well on their way towards universality. These departures and conceptual constellations invite immigration to be positioned as an aspect of renewal rather than being related and seen as threatening something which is already there and part of the nation's very being.

NATION-STATE AND STATE-SOCIETY

This, therefore, appears to allow for the conclusion that immigration has a rather different constitutive meaning in the Danish and Swedish cases. The path providing access to Danishness – in the sense of the dominant conceptual codes pertaining to state, nation, society, people and individual – seems to be more narrow and better guarded than the one allowing for entrance into Swedishness. The general tone of the Danish debate has, as noted by Ulf Hedetoft (2006: 408), been “acrimonious, bordering on vengefulness” with immigration being projected as the most imminent and most serious threat to the history, culture, identity, and homogeneity of “little Denmark”. The debate, he posits, has been “pervaded by diffuse fears, moral panics, and unspecified enemy images”. The effort has been one of putting a stop to the inflows of “undesirable aliens” in order to reinstate Denmark to its imagined former status as a peaceful, stable, ethnically homogeneous, and politically sovereign welfare state. Yet the expectations for this to happen remain, he asserts, “unrealistic” in view of the effects of globalization and Europeanization.

Thus, whilst Denmark employs the otherness seen as integral to immigration in order

to remain within the confines of its historically premised constellation of a nation-state, Sweden has utilized immigration as an argument pertaining to change. Whereas the theme functions in the Swedish case as a necessary condition for the society premised on a direct relationship between the state and the individual rather than coming about via the mediating effect of some civil society organization (Trägårdh, 2002: 141), immigration is for the part of Denmark seen as endangering not just comprehension of a rather homogeneous nation but also the very bond between the nation and the state.

Overall, the nation-state and state-society constellations appear to set the tone and filter the way the issue of immigration is approached and argued in the public debate. The two countries ground the conditions, account for the clash and provide the background to the cleavages that set the politics of Denmark and Sweden apart from each other. They are neither unified in what they aspire for nor similar in their way of using immigration as a constitutive argument. In fact, Denmark seems to endeavour at preserving and staying with what in the Swedish case figures as something already left behind – with the new constellation called ‘an immigrant-nation’ by Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh (2009: 27. And for sure, if defined as a ‘migrant-nation’, questions to purity, origin and common descent decline in relevance. Similarly, the concept informs that something crucial has emerged once the previously dominant departure has been left behind.

Lars Trägårdh (2009: 173) further elaborates the issues at stake by employing the term ‘neonational’ in endeavouring at grasping some key aspects of Sweden’s developmental path. Sweden is, he asserts, “again ahead of others”. It is defined by an aspiration for betterment, i.e. preservation and defence are secondary in view of development and efforts of staying in tune

with the incoming (see also Sanders, 2008: 25). The future-oriented aspiration, premised on a normal framing of politics, provides the country with meaning. Accordingly, history is in the case of Sweden narrated above all in the sense that it is there in order to be overcome and left behind, whereas the logic carrying Denmark appears to be almost opposite to the Swedish one.

Probing the constitutive impact of immigration thus points to the existence of a mismatch between Denmark and Sweden in substantial as well as in temporal terms. Whilst Denmark aspires to remain a rather tight and defensive nation-state (cf. Hansen, 2002: 60) premised on moves of either/or and self/other, Sweden has since the 1970s opted for the appearance of a pluralist society with this society then kept on track by the state. Notably, the conceptual constellation underpinning Sweden as a polity and an identity does not call for the delineation of strictly binary divisions but allows also for the formation of both/and configurations. Sweden too is undoubtedly premised on border drawing and differentiation but it invites, as a political project, for difference to be included. This is needed for multiculturalism to come about. The borders delineating various cultural entities run within the entity and are not categorical or exclusive in nature. Instead, the country's identity as a 'vanguard' and a 'forerunner' invites inclusion rather than exclusion and favours plurality instead of homogeneity as core constitutive departures.

There is then consequently also less stress on a preservation of the strong emotional bonds to the past as in the case of Denmark – with the neighbouring country therefore viewed as a temporal non-me. Besides, and as noted by Lars Trägårdh (2002: 152), economic success has figured as a crucial aspect of Sweden's more progressivist and future-oriented self-understanding with migrants having already since the 1960's contributed significantly to this aspect

of Swedishness. They are hence not just 'new-comers' but recognized as having contributed early on to the development making Sweden a future-oriented project. In essence, they have been provided with space in the stories about Sweden having turned exemplary in the sphere of modernity with wartime refugees such as Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky contributing to the spreading of the model.

Even Mikael Jalving (2001: 273-4) concedes that Sweden stands for a kind of "migration nationalism". "The whole world is in Sweden, and Sweden would not exist if deprived of immigration", he notes. One type of nationalism has been replaced by another "with Sweden being a product of migration", Jalving concedes.

Taken together, whereas the formative impact of immigration relates in the case of Sweden to a future-oriented process pertaining to progress rather than fear and with considerable openness as to the outcome, the setting appears far more pre-given for the part of Denmark. It is, in the latter case, determined by history and moves of closure. Clearly, the direction of the time's arrow remains different for the part of the two neighbours. It allows in the Swedish case, in pointing towards the future, for a dismissal of fear as a basic constitutive argument underlying also the way democracy and liberal values are comprehended and implemented. It invites and allows the country to pursue basically inclusive policies with liberal democracy coming into being as part of the process. Dealing with the liminality and ambiguity inherent in migrants does not cause – with the migrants being both in and out – panic. It rather figures as a worthwhile engagement providing Sweden with meaning and purpose.

By contrast, the significance of history and the grip of the past appear to be far stronger in the case of Denmark. The many lost wars and being occupied during WW II add to the strength of an emergency-related framing of

politics and imply that arguments pertaining to threats and danger are easily mobilized. It also appears that the approach and way of implementing liberal values remain more defensive in character, and there is in this context obviously more stress on homogeneity than heterogeneity. Liberal democracy has been there, with narratives of the folkish Denmark having early on successfully mobilized itself in order to shed off various forms of domination. In short, democracy is viewed as an integral part of the heritage to be defended.

Immigrants – and in particular Muslims – figure predominantly as ‘non-us’. They are the strangers to be cleansed of their otherness and converted into becoming part of ‘us’ for the pre-given nation to prevail within a broader configuration of a tight nation-state. The more exclusionist aspiration subsequently sets the tone of the rather restorationist – and hence also emergency-related – Danish debate whereas Sweden, in being defined through the employment of the concepts of society and individual rather than that of nation, actually gains its meaning by tackling and accommodating the very difference part of immigrants.

DIVERGENT INTERPRETATIONS OF LIBERAL VALUES

As already noted, there exists a conspicuous similarity between Denmark and Sweden in the sense that both regard themselves as intrinsically – if not exceptionally – democratic, liberal and freedom-loving. Narratives pertaining to democracy and freedom have in both cases a central role in grounding their national self-understanding.

Yet it appears at closer inspection that the ways in which universal liberal values have been incorporated into their respective national cultures and invoked in the context of the national stories are far from uniform. The

facilitating factors as well as obstacles hampering the aspirations pertaining to democracy, equality and freedom of speech have not been identical. The respective struggles have rather had logics of their own, this then also implying that the two countries have their specific views as to the way their particularity as a carrier of these values resonates with the assumed universality of liberal democracy.

It may also be observed, in exploring further the different ways in which liberal values are comprehended in the sphere the two national cultures, that in the case of Sweden the state has a more prominent and autonomous position. Arguably, the country stands out as “an extreme form of statism” (Trägårdh, 2002: 131). It has not been a problem but has rather stood for a solution in having historically facilitated the liberation of the individual from the grip of various social institutions: the nobility and bourgeoisie, but also those embedded in the civil society as the family, neighbourhood, churches and charity organizations. The inequalities and dependencies preventing individual self-fulfilment have been pushed aside to be replaced, with the help of the state, by a rather egalitarian social order.

What counts in the Swedish case consists of allegiance to such a polity rather than a sense of belonging together. The Swedish state thus stands out as “a good state” contributing to the emancipation of the culturally rather than ethnically premised citizens. The Swedish state is actually there in order to protect citizens against ethnic or religious discrimination whereas the Danish one has been somewhat different in essence. As already noted, Trägårdh (2002: 143) coins perceptively the concept of “statist individualism” in accounting for the relationship. This is also to say that the state has been experienced as a “liberator”. Such a conceptualization contrasts sharply with the Danish constitutive narratives emphasizing liberation from below. The Danish stories are

overwhelmingly about taming the state for it then to shelter and guard a basically homogeneous nation.

It was initially important for the part of Denmark, with the whole-state – sometimes also called the composite state – existing as a dynastic and multinational construction, to articulate a difference between the state and the nation. For the second, the nation had to be nationalized into a truly Danish one by leaning on ethnic and cultural nationalism. And finally, correspondence had to be established between the state and the nation with the outcome being one of the tightest, genuine and conceptually intertwined nation-states on the international scene. Importantly, neither the nation (with strong emphasis on the Danish *Folk*/People defined according to descent) nor the individuals were liberated by the state as the nation has predominantly been seen as having liberated itself.

Put somewhat differently, the liberation entailed and was followed by the nation establishing a state of its own with “the Danish nation and the Danish state becoming so closely knit together that Denmark could enter the textbooks as one of the few true nation-states in the world” (Hansen, 2002: 60). The key emerging conceptual constellation was premised on the slogan “Denmark for the People”, or as articulated by Lene Hansen (2002: 61): “...the politics based on the ‘People’ implies that the state being formed consists of the nation’s state”. In other words, the people have built a welfare state to nest the unfolding of the inner qualities of the nation (for such an articulation, see also Gad, 2010: 250). It then also follows that in order to be fully legitimate and with the state having been more of an obstacle than anything integral to the bottom-up process of emancipation, the state has constantly to provide assurances that ‘the People’ are “adequately represented by the state” (Hansen, 2002: 67). This evidently testifies to a tight

Volksnation rather than *Staatnation*, and there is no room for the application to concepts such as ‘statist individualism’.

Moreover, the state is not depicted as a neutral guardian – as liberal theory would have it. It is not expected to pass fair and principled judgment from above but instead required to provide active support for the nation in the endeavours of the latter to stay unified, coherent and solidarist. Denmark hence boils down, as a political construct, to a kind of people’s democracy. This comprehension invites, among other things, for a strong emphasis on the parliament as the undivided voice of the (undivided) people (Mouritsen, 2006b: 164). And with the nation – rather than the individual citizen as in the Swedish case – as the key political vessel for belonging, there is much concern for preserving the traditions understood as liberal that once dispelled the various threats, brought about the liberation and allowed Danes to stand out as a very homogeneous national nation, i.e. an entity qualified by being inherently egalitarian and freedom-loving (Læggaard, 2009).

The preservation calls – with multiculturalism seen as being at odds with solidarity and also conducive to conflict – for loyalty and solidarity, and for unity as well as cohesion to prevail. Overall, it is taken to be natural that newcomers actively demonstrate their identification and loyalty. They have to adapt and fit in on terms dictated by the nature of the polity formed in order for the previous state of plurality not to return.

As to liberal values, it is to be noted that N. F. S. Grundtvig – priest and poet but also viewed as the founding father in the sphere of early Danish nation-building – stood for the idea that that the Danish *Folk*-based culture, in resting on an egalitarian concept of popular participation, is particularly conducive to democracy. His brand of nationalism was premised and tied to images of a rather heroic national past. It rested institutionally, as sum-

marized by Henrik Breitenbauch and Anders Wivel (2004: 423), on a “fundamental congruence between ubiquitous Grundtvigian religion and was carried by the large commerce-dependent middle-class comprised of farmers. There was, with protestant beliefs serving as a basic point of departure, stress on the importance of education, including ways of life that denoted “egalitarianism, anti-authoritarianism, speaking one’s mind, deliberation and consensual decisions” (Mouritsen, 2006b: 174).

The strength of the nation then also implies, in one of its aspects, that there has been relatively little space for individuality to unfold within the Danish nation-based configuration, albeit it has been catered with considerable space in the sphere of religion with the link between comprehensions of liberty, personal autonomy, secularization and Lutheranism seen as quite tight. Importantly, it also appears that the discourse on liberal departures has been quite closely related to religion with stress on rationality and pragmatic approaches rather than comprehended as originating with Enlightenment and rationalism (see Stage, 2011: 66-72). A liberal outlook has been taken to be guaranteed by and embedded in a particular kind of faith. As posited by Per Mouritsen (2006b: 171), religion has in general had a crucial constitutive impact in the sense that it is commonly regarded that “the type of religion that prevents political culture from becoming illiberal is Danish Lutheranism”. However, at the same time he finds reason to underline that the Lutheran church still remains tied (contrary to Sweden) to the state. In fact, the linkage combining religion with politics remains so tight that “failure to respect the popular religious sentiment means faltering readiness to stand up for liberal values” (ibid.: 173). Islam might, no doubt, be seen as presenting such a faltering readiness inviting for the historical understanding of liberal democracy to be mobilized once again in defence of Danishness.

PARTICULARITY VERSUS UNIVERSALITY

On a somewhat broader note, the Danish political culture holds a particular universalism as also stressed by Christian Rostbøll (2010: 405), with the universal values seen as intrinsically Danish. The values – regarded as given, vulnerable and non-negotiable – are also taken to be critically dependent on homogeneity, shared faith and preservation of historical achievements. They are, according to Per Mouritsen (2006b: 177), “very ancient, very distinct and very important for the form of welfare democracy, which is represented in turn as almost unique in the world”. He also points out that this variation of universalism is of a certain brand. It is particularly Danish in essence with individualism and tolerance for difference circumscribed by strongly held collective norms and values nested in a free-spirited (*frisindet*) reading of Lutheranism (Mouritsen, 2006a: 78). Universalism can also be employed, owing to its restrained and assumedly incontestable nature and the way it is tied to national culture and history, for purposes of exclusion. It essentially underpins what Denmark stands for, and in this sense it also impacts what others have to accommodate and take on board in order to have a chance of being included into the Danish ‘we’.

The same paradox of universal values being invoked as inclusive but still employed nationally for purposes of delimitation, exclusion, preservation and outlining something seen as quite particular (cf. Lægaard, 2007: 51) is not to the same extent present in the Swedish case. Liberal values are instead drawn upon in the context of change and border-breaking rather than the enhancing of existing and established borders. Ethnicity does, for the part of Sweden, not qualify the nation in any categorical manner, as nationness pertains above all to the quality of the individuals part of the nation.

Ethnicity has, no doubt, some importance, but it is by and large relegated to the sphere of inter-personal affairs and therefore viewed as something of minor relevance in societal and national contexts – with the latter premised on civic rather than ethnic departures. Moreover, the stress on individuality implies that individuals are assumed to qualify on their own merits rather than on the basis of some collectively held qualities. They are not depicted as inherently different to start with and they may – with the deterministic logic of national homogeneity broken – be subsequently treated in an inclusive manner as newcomers without much emphasis on traditions and the depth of their roots in society.

It also seems that Denmark and Sweden situate and interpret the relevant contests pertaining to liberal democracy somewhat differently. The crucial struggles are fought, according to dominant Danish views, between a liberal democratic interior and an inherently illiberal exterior with the values integral to the interior then to be defended against unwarranted external intrusion that may potentially undermine the liberal nature of the interior, whereas the Swedish reading is different. It is different in the sense that the nature of the exterior is not viewed as categorically different and hence incommensurable with the interior. The option of a dialogue and tolerance for difference arises as the exterior is neither delimited in the Swedish discourse as something inherently illiberal nor differentiated as adversarial in character. At large, there is much more normalcy present in the framing and flexibility in the interpretations at hand.

The Swedish approach has also a nature of its own in the sense that the opening up of a dialogue does not merely aim at applying some pre-given liberal principles. Instead, the aspiration pertains to the creation of a process and setting which actually brings liberal democracy into being. It is also to be noted that the as-

sumedly illiberal elements are in the key Swedish constitutive discourse neither positioned exclusively in the sphere of the exterior nor merely approach through monologue; they can also be located within the interior in the form of forces refusing dialogue and recommending instead monologue as an exclusive approach as indicated by the claims advanced by *Sverigedemokraterna* and their supporters. Forces that according to a Danish reading portray and defend liberal democracy can hence according to the dominant Swedish views actually endanger the very same aim. They may do so by abusing and downplaying the option of dialogue if not disciplined by and subordinated to the overall requirements of future-oriented liberal democracy put forward by the dominant Swedish forces.

In displaying openness as to the underlying delimitations in terms of time and space, the Swedish understanding of liberal values clearly differs from the Danish one. It draws, as does the Danish approach, on universality but deviates from the Danish understanding as it does so without insisting on liberalism to be reconciled with nationalism. In a nutshell, Sweden's more post-nationalist essence structures the understanding pertaining to liberal democracy in a way of its own. It remains particularistic in essence, although does so quite differently from the Danish approach as it does not depart from the nation and nationality as categories to be reified through the pursuit of liberal democracy. The Swedish openness as to the country's key constitutive features and anchorage in the present and future rather than past clearly allow difference to be seen in a more benign and challenging rather than threatening light.

Both Denmark and Sweden are undoubtedly provided with an ability to uphold a sense of identity and purpose, although the approaches applied differ markedly and have different consequences. Above all, Sweden appears to be less

immersed in established routines and prone to the temptation to fall back on the past. It is therefore also less inclined to experience feelings of anxiety once circumstances change and more able to construe new constitutive stories in tune with the challenges at hand. Stories about migrants and in particular Muslims are helpful in keeping similarity apart from difference in the Danish case, whereas Sweden has basically refrained from narrating such strictly divisive lines. The narratives also impact a number of other things, including the position allotted to the two populist parties. Both are radical in essence in questioning the previously dominant national stories, albeit the radicalism and alternative offered by the Danish People's Party (DPP) seem to have made considerable inroads in having turned into a relatively normal part of the Danish political setting, whereas the Sweden Democrats have been met with considerable resistance. The SD continues to figure as a kind of internal non-us discriminated against by the other Swedish political parties despite having, as such, a legitimate position in the parliament. Their emergency-related framing of politics is rejected and the party continues to generate considerable resistance not only on the political scene but also in the public domain more generally. This treatment tends to strengthen Danish perceptions of Sweden's somewhat illiberal nature, whereas it is in the Swedish debate basically viewed as testifying to the opposite, i.e. the prevalence of liberal values and democracy as cornerstones of Sweden's being.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In a broader perspective, a considerable number of actors on the scene of international relations assert that they represent the common good in terms of democracy and liberal values. In doing so, they do not just endeavour at bol-

stering their own position but also impact the way international relations are ordered at large. Their efforts of discursively establishing a hegemonic setting premised on the centrality of democracy and liberal values have in general been quite successful with almost all countries accepting, at least in principle, the argument. This has allowed for that the countries at the core do not just aspire to secure and improve their own standing but also aim at downgrading the position of some other actors arguably less advanced and universal in the sphere of democracy and liberal policies. In addition, hegemonic moves have been accompanied by counter-hegemonic ones as evidenced for example by the Russian efforts of purporting the country as a 'sovereign democracy'. Fareed Zakaria (1997) has coined the concept of 'illiberal democracies' in order to illuminate and catch some crucial aspects of the struggles underway with the term indicating that democracy as a discursive strategy is at the core of contests pertaining to the unfolding of current-day international relations.

The Danish-Swedish rift is, in this perspective, part of a more general pattern. However, at the same time it is also something of an exception in the sense that the disputes have mostly taken place between the allegedly fully democratic and less democratic actors. The Danish-Swedish one does not fit with this pattern as it has played out between two countries clearly on top of the hegemonic constellation. Their dispute, with two broadly recognized Scandinavian democracies questioning the credentials of the other, breaks with the rule of the liberal democracies staying together and refraining from efforts of bordering pursued within the hegemonic constellation. Critique has, instead, been ordinarily directing against those at the margins of the constellation.

It is conceivable, against this background, that the Danish-Swedish discord could have considerable repercussions in representing ef-

forts of bordering at the core of the hegemonic setting instead of just using it as a strategy directed against those at the margins. Such an approach could, taking in particular into account the rather broad and worldwide attention generated by the Danish cartoon issue, weaken the discursive position of the countries seen as established democracies. It may invite for the argument to be made that there remains much to be hoped for also at the core of the democratic/liberal hegemony. Overall, the Danish-Swedish dispute could be taken to evidence that there is not much of an agreement among the impeccably democratic countries regarding the meaning of liberal democracy. Clearly visible and loudly communicated rifts at the very core of current-day international relations would hence weaken the impact and perhaps even undermine the use of democracy and liberal values as discursive strategies.

However, these points remain speculative in nature as there are, in fact, no signs pointing to that any of these arguments would have been raised and employed by countries not part of the inner ring of liberal democracies. In the first place, the Danish-Swedish discord has not attracted international attention. Firstly, it has merely been viewed as a local and seen as an internal issue of concern to the parties themselves if noted at all and it might, for the second, well be that their credentials are so established that it takes far more than a somewhat limited quarrelling unfolding primarily in the Danish and Swedish media for any significant re-evaluation to take place.

Yet there are reasons to believe, I suggest, that the rift between the two Scandinavian countries points in an embryonic form to rather far-reaching changes. Obviously, frictions have occurred also within the inner core of the established hegemony and the discursive practices part of upholding the hegemony are not just directed against countries allegedly less democratic and liberal but have been extend-

ed, in some cases, to be applied to question the credentials of the fellow liberal democratic states as well. The discord of these two countries thus opens up new perspectives as to the contests pertaining to democracy and liberal values. It testifies to that also the countries at the core may in some regards be vulnerable and challenged, and hence the application of liberal democracy as a discursive strategy in various contests pertaining to hegemony and hierarchies does not boil down to a one-way street. It may, as a discursive strategy, backfire and to do this in particular as the meaning of democracy and liberal values is bound to change over time. The meaning is not fixed as new definitions have to be searched for better in tune with a changing world. Hegemonies are not stable and even rather established hierarchies can be challenged as indicated, in one of its aspects, by the Danish-Swedish discord, although thus far the challenge has remained potential rather than real.

It is, against this background, of importance to raise the question whether the Danish-Swedish rift has merely been related to a particular situation in the relations between the two countries or if it reflects something more general and persistent. Is there ground to assume that the discord may drag on and perhaps grow in magnitude to such an extent that it does indeed attract broader attention as a contest unfolding at the core of the international hegemony?

The different theorizations of Nordic peacefulness might be helpful in addressing this question. They provide for deviant conclusions in the sense that what according to a Deutschean theorization – with shared democracy and liberal values carrying the pacific relationship – would amount to something of a crisis, figures as a small shift and modest change within a rather normal setting in view of the account provided by Jef Huysmans. The latter type of reading points equally to changes, but

does not connote changes with stagnation, demise and the unravelling of a previously rather ideal and peaceful state of affairs.

The latter theorization of the Danish-Swedish relations – as part of a broader Nordic constellation – merits attention in allowing for the simultaneous presence of similarity and difference. The two attributes are not viewed as opposites and played against each other but are instead taken to form a complementary relationship. These qualities then entail that difference does not have to be substituted by similarity (in terms of democracy) for friendly and pacific relations to prevail and the increased emphasis on difference does not, as such, signal threat and danger. In fact, the presence of difference and the neighbour remaining other is as crucial for endurance of the relationship as is that of similarity. Both aspects have to be there for a well-functioning and peaceful constellation to come about. They have to co-exist with similarity bringing about closeness and difference, in turn, providing the ground for the pin-pointing of a benign non-me and outlining a partly other. At large, similarity as well as difference are necessary ingredients and required for safe identities to come into being.

Thus, the flexibility that grounded Nordic peacefulness has also shown its value as well as strength in the more recent Danish-Swedish debate. As such, the debate turned particularly pronounced and vocal in the context of the Swedish parliamentary elections in 2010, and did so especially because of the break-through of the Sweden Democrats not just into the domain of the public debate but also the parliament and Swedish political life in general.

The debate undoubtedly testifies to an increased emphasis on difference. On the one hand, the Danish rather defensive employment of liberal democracy in order for a rather tight and traditional constellation of a state-nation to be preserved and directed to some degree against immigrants for the latter to adapt to some pre-given and historically defined standards has in some of the Swedish

interventions been viewed as quite illiberal. And on the other hand, the discriminatory policies pursued in relation to the Swedish Democrats by the other Swedish political parties as well as some of the media despite of the SD having gained its standing through normal and democratic elections testify – as claimed by a considerable number of Danish interventions – to Sweden's illiberal nature. In consequence, views have clashed on rather relevant issues in the recent Danish-Swedish debate. They clash as the comprehension regarding liberal values and democracy are, above all for historical reasons, somewhat different.

There are equally differences to be traced between Denmark and Sweden as to the way politics are framed in general. It appears, in this respect, that emergency-related comprehensions have a more pronounced position in the Danish than in the Swedish debate. This then contributes essentially to that the parties tend to talk past each other and the rather systematic application of different framings no doubt adds to the intensity of the rift.

Yet the discord may be viewed – once the assumedly positive aspects of similarity are downplayed and difference seen as a necessary ingredient of a healthy relationship – as something basically positive. It accentuates the meaning of difference without endangering the rather friendly nature of Danish-Swedish relations. The row amounts to a quarrelling among friends and does not augur danger and demise as the Deutschean theorization of pacific commonality would have it. Moreover, the debate pertains to the very nature of liberal values and democracy and unavoidably brings, in some of its aspects, about a broader reflexion than the one present in the national debates.¹³ The encounter has, and done so perhaps precisely

¹³ The recent article by Christian Rostbøll (2011) on the tension between freedom of expression and democracy shows that the issues at stake have also fertilized and stimulated a scholarly debate.

due to its conflictual nature, also amounted to a rather broad exchange of views. Important issues have been related to and pondered upon in the context of changing internal and external conditions.

It also appears unlikely, given that the shift takes place within a flexible rather than a dichotomous relationship, that the rift amounts to similarity being traded for any profound form of difference. Instead, Denmark and Sweden will remain simultaneously other and alike. Flexibility will presumably prevail and allow them to view each other similar and different, partly other and partly self. In some sense the crux of the issue might – paradoxically – consist of pressures towards increased emphasis on similarity flowing from the growth of closeness, intimacy and integration. This may, as theorized by Anne Norton, Anton Blok and Slavoj Žižek, among others, bring about identity-related anxiety. The strains pertain, in this perspective, to efforts of compensating for and minimizing the impact of an overdose of border-breaking similarity. The accentuation of similarity will, however, most probably remain within bonds. It will not amount to any major ‘moral panic’ as similarity can rather safely be down-graded within the Danish-Swedish relationship with the neighbouring other purported, in a hegemony-related contest, as somewhat more other but still basically alike.

Similarity as well as difference are quite likely to remain part of the constellation with the neighbour embraced as integral to a rather brotherly relationship. The increasing similarity may be compensated by some additional stress on difference without the difference having to be entirely ousted and externalized and also framed, in this context, as something profoundly threatening and security-related. The duality embedded in the other being both different and alike upholds the flexibility of the relationship. It allows, somewhat paradoxically, for safe identities to be devised through a stress

on difference rather than similarity without difference translating into alterity and security having to be re-introduced and brought back as a key constitutive argument.

There are, in fact, good chances for plurality to remain and ground friendly togetherness also during the years to come, albeit it seems equally clear – taking into account that the different comprehensions of liberal values and democracy are deeply embedded in the way Denmark and Sweden have historically emerged as specific conceptual constellations – that the discord will continue in one form or another. The need to pit oneself against benign forms of difference remains and it might even grow with the border-breaking effects of intensified Europeanization, internationalization and globalization. The neighbourly non-me part of the Danish-Swedish relationship stands in this perspective out as a resource – and does so in particular if also theorized along the lines suggested by Jef Huysmans rather than Karl W. Deutsch.

Overall, the peacefulness part of nordicity appears to be firmly in place despite of liberal values and democracy having recently turned into rather contested issues within the Danish-Swedish public domain. It might well be argued that the Deutschean account, setting basically similarity and difference up against each other in the context of a somewhat emergency-related reading of commonality, is not applicable for a variety of reasons. In the first place, accusations of the other being illiberal do actually not boil down to pronouncements of profound Danish or Swedish otherness. They rather pertain to efforts of bolstering one’s position within a firmly shared liberal order. With Denmark and Sweden sharing and being both part of a hegemonic international order premised on liberal democracy, it is hardly in their interest undermine that order through some laud and persistent quarrelling.

This is to say that the arguments advanced do, at closer inspection, not entail that the neighbour has turned altogether different with no traces left of similarity. Instead, the neighbour is depicted as not-yet-fully-me rather than regarded as radically different. Importantly, the discursive aim is not to oust the neighbour from a particular, liberal and pacific order owing to the neighbour's problematic, if not threatening, difference. It rather marks contests within that constellation with arguments pertaining to the other being 'illiberal', 'undemocratic' or 'authoritarian' questioning about in some sense also validating that order. In some of their aspects the claims put forward also contribute to the constitution of a common sphere of politics and testify to contests as to the setting of standards and competitions in regard to positions occupied jointly within the established order. 'Illiberal' means, in this context, that the neighbour is taken to remain incomplete rather than seen as wholly different. The distinction is temporal in nature with the time's arrow pointing to that the neighbour may and should catch up as the potential to do so is there. Whereas the assumedly liberal party has already arrived and therefore carries the hegemonic order, the neighbour is arguably still in the process of transformation remaining a second-best, incomplete and muted form of the liberal party. In short, the neighbour is viewed as liminal in essence rather than taken to stand for some form of profound otherness.¹⁴

Crucially, the liminality of the neighbour allows for the co-presence of similarity and difference and points to a shared order. This is in line with the theorization presented by Jef Huysmans whereas the Deutschean account seems unable to follow suit owing to its rather dichotomous way of depicting the relationship between similarity and difference. The latter

theorization approaches liberal democracy as a benchmark of similarity as well as trust, and views trust as integral to the very constitution of the similarity needed in the grounding of security communities such as the Nordic one. In addition, a pacific order tends to be pitted against a non-pacific one in the context of a Deutschean approach, and in order for the pacific order to come into being and stay around, there is stress on bolstering the impact of similarity and, conversely, forcefully minimizing the impact of difference. Struggles pertaining to forms and degrees of liberal democracy are depicted as order-producing. They uphold or undermine particular orders instead of being more moderately seen as related to contests within a given and liberal order.

This then implies that the application of a Deutschean take leads to overly dramatic interpretations. Contests such as the Danish-Swedish one become easily attached to security-related issues and associated with the danger of pacific commonality breaking down. A Deutschean framing is inclined to amount to a somewhat dramatic reading with security and peace as central concerns even if the aim of the Danish-Swedish discord aims merely at inducing the liminal non-me increasingly to resemble and copy the more advanced me. The difference inherent in the neighbouring almost-me figures, according to the latter reading, as a promise rather than a threat.

And more broadly, a revisiting of the Nordic configuration, and in that context the constitutive aspects of the Danish-Swedish relationship, does not just invite for a critique of the Deutschean stand; it also challenges the predisposition present in much of the liberal and constructivist IR-scholarship with homogeneity viewed as a necessary ingredient for ontological security and safe forms of community to emerge. This is to say that most liberal and constructivist accounts of community adopt what may seem the commonsense view that

¹⁴ For an elaboration of the theme of liminality, see Bahar Rumelili (2010).

communities are primarily held together by that 'which makes us common'. This has also been evidenced by the debate on democracy and liberal values. Such accounts appear to focus too much on the need of homogeneity in terms of values, culture and identity. Tensions, disputes and discord such as the one pertaining to the essence of liberal values and democracy tend to be interpreted as destabilizing for community-building. They are depicted as representing rupture and seen as undermining the properties that enhance the peacefulness of relations. Moreover, the explanations mostly on offer to miss – in assuming that security is always present in a way or another in the devising of commonality – the options of forgetting, silencing and opting out of security-talk with security ousted from the discourse.

It is hence important to recall, in order for the Deutschean reading to be circumvented, that there exist alternative theorizations that point to the potentially rather problematic impact of similarity and/or bring into view the positive impact of difference. Far-reaching similarity may under some conditions, pending on the way it is narrated and framed, undermine commonality, whereas difference has always, in one form or another, to be present as a key ingredient of identity-construction. It provides for clear and unambiguous selves in the form of alterity, albeit it may also be theorized as conducive to the construction of peaceful commonality rather than seen as a source of threat to be minimized or ousted. Moreover, and instead of depicting the relationship between similarity and difference in strictly dichotomous terms as has usually been the case, there exists the option of a more nuanced reading. As noted above, the other can also be viewed as similar as well as different, alike and other, and the consequences of this duality vary pending on the way such a state of affairs is theorized, narrated and framed. A reading premised on comprehensions of emer-

gency amounts to perceptions of difference as a source of danger, chaos and demise of order, whereas views premised on normalcy bring into sight flexibility and the existence of options that go beyond the customary.

The argument advanced here has been that Nordic peacefulness, and the Danish-Swedish relations as part of the broader Nordic constellation, should be accounted for by drawing on the latter option. It is the flexibility brought about by the application of a normalcy-based framing of politics which has allowed for the co-presence of similarity and difference. Similarity remains relative within such a setting and difference takes forms which can be embraced and perceived as friendly. It hence appears rather unlikely, against the background of this theorization, that the Danish-Swedish cleavages of the recent years would accentuate further and seriously impact the broader constellation of international relations. However, the issues at stake in the Danish as well as Swedish cases are quite relevant as such. The two cases are quite different from each other but both – with Denmark pursuing a policy of shielding and endeavouring at anchoring itself in the past and Sweden instead reaching out in order to cope with the challenges posed by transnationalization and globalization – very much of general interest.

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