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Norden in the European state system

A presentation of Einar Maseng's forgotten analysis

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In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a great interest in the peculiarities of the policies and institutional arrangements typical of the various Nordic welfare states. To the extent that these studies also covered the prehistory of the postwar success of these nation-welfare-states, they mainly relied on Stein Rokkan's comparative maps of nation building and state formation. Some even placed the Nordic area in the setting of U.S. hegemony, but mainly to account for influential changes in the world economic environment.¹ There were even some scattered studies of Nordic integration.²

But one major dimension is missing in all these studies: the geopolitical dimension. Although the Rokkan perspective is very important and could be fruitfully combined with a focus on the mobilization of various social classes (which guided most of the studies of Nordic welfare states), the absence of a geopolitical perspective is a serious omission. In this essay I want to indicate that such a geopolitical perspective is a missing link which fits nicely into a focus on small countries with important export staples and a strategic geographical location.³

Of course, there are extensive studies of such matters in the Nordic countries, but they are mainly focused on isolated, military-strategic matters or included in national historical narratives. There is, however, at least *one* main exception. Since that exception is completely unknown, I want to devote this essay to a presentation of it.

Four books that nobody reads

As far as I can judge, none of the recent scholarly works on the history of Norden or on varieties of Nordic security policies have related to the four books published

¹ It now strikes me that the section on comparative historical backgrounds and international context are among those I am still most happy about in the book that Jan Otto and I wrote together with thirteen other Nordic social scientists, cf. L. Mjøset, ed., *Norden dagen derpå*, Oslo 1986.

² Cf. the literature cited in Lars Mjøset, "The Nordic Model never existed, but does it have a future?", *Scandinavian Studies*, 64:4, 1992; and in Lars Mjøset, "Vesteuropeisk og nordisk integrasjon i etterkrigstiden", in Johan P. Olsen & Bjørn Otto Sverdrup, eds., *Europa i Norden — Europeisering av nordisk samarbeid*, Oslo 1998.

³ *Norden dagen derpå* had a focus on raw materials as export staples and their importance for the economic cycles typical of small states. This essay fills into this picture by adding a focus on the politics of raw materials.

by Einar Maseng.⁴ Maseng's personal history is linked to some of the events he analysed, in a fascinating and even fateful way⁵, but in this essay, I shall focus on his substantial analyses only.

Written by a retired, ageing diplomat and former officer, Maseng's books reflect no academic ambitions, they lack the footnotes and the detailed archival references that would satisfy the professional historian. The books were also written with a view to justifying the advice Maseng had provided during his long career as a civil

⁴ Einar Maseng, *Det kløvde Norden mellom de store stater*, Oslo 1952, 160 pp; Einar Maseng, *1905 og 1940 — en leksjon i maktpolitikk*, Oslo 1953, 278 pp, Einar Maseng, *Utsikt over de nord-europeiske staters utenrikspolitikk i de siste århundrer*, Del I, Oslo 1964, 323 pp; Einar Maseng, *Utsikt over de nord-europeiske staters utenrikspolitikk i de siste århundrer*, Del II. Nasjonalismens århundre. 1800-tallet, Oslo 1967, 291 pp. All four books were published by Johan Grundt Tanum publishers. There is even an unpublished third part: Einar Maseng, *Utsikt over de nord-europeiske staters utenrikspolitikk i de siste århundrer*, Del III. 1900-tallet. Det politiske samarbeid innen Norden opphører, unpubl. ms. Riksarkivet RA-P-0964, Hyllenr. 3B 036 5/4. — In the following, page-references are given directly in the text, after the publication year: 1952, 1953, 1964, 1967 and 1972 (the last year refers to the unpublished volume, using the year of Maseng's death). Rather than quoting Maseng in Norwegian, I have made rough translations of my quotes from him into English.

⁵ Maseng was born in 1880 and died in 1972. He was a military officer, having graduated from the Military Academy in 1907. On the back of his first book, we find the following brief biography which he probably wrote himself: "Einar Maseng belong to the circle which entered Norway's new foreign affairs diplomacy after 1905. In the years following 1905 he was also very active in implementing the new army organisation. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he also worked on the white papers that led to the strengthening of Norwegian defence during World War I. Through that war, he was head of the permanent office of the trade-, industry- and shipping commission, and one of the civil servants most closely working with Foreign Minister Ihlen on questions of trade policy towards the warring parties. He was also a state representative in the export-association which regulated the sale — to both warring and neutral parties — of Norway's most important strategic raw material, sulphur pyrite. He was also a board-member at the Norwegian Industrialists' Association (Norges Industriforbund). In the 1920s he led the Nordic negotiations on economic cooperation and also held diplomatic and consular appointments in South America and Germany. In the 1930s he was Norway's permanent representative at the League of Nations, following closely the escalation towards World War II. He also followed that part of Norway's foreign policy which — just as Denmark's and Sweden's — was determined in Genève. Between 1939 and 1941 he was Norway's envoy to Moscow. — Einar Maseng has thus for a long period been in a position to follow external political questions from three perspectives: military, economic and diplomatic" (1952: back flap). In his advice to the Norwegian government 1940-41 he opposed the "Atlantic turn" in Norway's foreign policy, suggesting a continued policy of armed neutrality, preferably in alliance with Sweden. This was probably the underlying reason why he was dismissed from the Norwegian foreign service in 1945. Rather than resignation and silent retirement, he sat down to write the books mentioned above.

servant and diplomat, 1905-45. Since that advice was a firm defence of the security policy of armed neutrality, he was probably written off as an uninteresting eccentric in the Cold War period, when most of the Norwegian intelligentsia shared in the “Atlantic alliance”-consensus. Those who did not — the “new left” — were either pacifists or regarded the military establishment with great skepticism. It is a telling example of the divisions in security orientation among the Nordic countries in the Cold War era that in Sweden, and also in Finland, Maseng’s views would have been uncontroversial!

What is most regrettable, in retrospect, is that Stein Rokkan and his followers never happened to pick up and read a few chapters in any of Maseng’s books in the 1950s or 1960s. If they had, they would have been hooked, and Maseng’s work would have been better known! This brings us to the substance of his work: whatever his special position, personal bitterness and non-mainstream views, Maseng wrote first-rate comparative social science!

In the field of geopolitics, Maseng was thinking along the same lines as Rokkan did in political sociology. Rokkan had one major, organizing research question: How do we explain the differences between the postwar political systems in Western Europe? Trying to answer that question, he looked at the historical development of all these cases, as well as at their interaction, with due emphasis on their geographical location.⁶ Maseng’s organizing research question was another one: How do we explain the fact that the Nordic area was never organized as one state? Seeking an answer, he looked at the emergence and development of the Nordic states, their interaction inside Norden and especially their interaction with the great powers that struggled to dominate the European state system. While accepting the importance of good monographic craftwork by nationally oriented historians, both Rokkan and Maseng insisted that the best way to understand longer-term historical developments was through comparative exploration of the units — both their interaction and their relative autonomy — of the state system in question.

A full evaluation of Maseng’s work would require two things: First, his framework of analysis should be critically evaluated in the light of recent synthetic work in comparative macro-oriented social science.⁷ Second, his detailed narratives should be assessed in the light of state of the art historical monographs on the events — e.g. great-power diplomacy, Nordic social, political and economic developments — he covers. In a short essay like this one, I can of course not accomplish such an evaluation. My main concern is to make scholars aware of Maseng’s contribution, to indicate how it can be fitted together with more recent synthetic efforts in comparative historical social science, and to sketch some of the answers he suggested to his main research question: Why have we never in modern history seen Nordic unification?

I thus concentrate on Maseng’s contribution, with some support from macro-historical schemes developed later. I make no efforts to judge Maseng’s work in the light of later historical research. If I am right that the historians have ignored

⁶ Lars Mjøset, “Stein Rokkan’s Thick Comparisons”, *Acta Sociologica*, 43: 4, 2000.

⁷ I have discussed this tradition in Lars Mjøset, “An Essay of the Foundations of Comparative Historical Social Science”, *Arena Working Paper*, 22, August 2002, cf. also the literature cited in Lars Mjøset, “Stat, sivilsamfunn og verdensøkonomi fra renessansen til i dag”, in Åsmund Birkeland, editor, *Den moderne staten*, Oslo 1997.

Maseng completely, I could argue that in this essay, I will now ignore them, letting Maseng speak. But this is not the right way to put it. It is rather a question of space, not of principle. I characterize Maseng's approach as grounded theory, and such theory is open to critical revision. For the many intricate empirical details involved in an account of 500 years of European and Nordic history, I have no doubt that historians knew much about them before Maseng and that they have explored them in even greater detail later. But such an evaluation will have to wait until later.⁸

Still, I think Maseng's contribution is original enough to merit treatment on its own terms. Maseng insisted that the understanding of Nordic developments had to go beyond national monographs. It was necessary to analyse them in the context of a local system within the broader European state system. Fruitful explanations required a study of how these systems interacted. This implied that one had to be a historian not just of Norway, not even just of the Nordic countries, but of all the European great powers too! This is something that mainstream historians have tended to regard as impossible. But Maseng makes it possible by asking his very specific research question — why never Nordic unity — thus avoiding the inclusion of too much detail, which often burden conventional national histories.

Like most really good research questions, Maseng's question is also a burning moral and political question. Maseng writes history from the standpoint of a historical possibility that was never realised: one modern Nordic state. Whenever he sketches counterfactual alternatives to the historical trajectories he reconstructs, they represent slight alterations of causal factors that could have created conjunctures more favourable to Nordic convergence and unity. His counterfactual scenarios are not decontextualized thought experiments, they are reflections on lost opportunities, based on solid case knowledge. Often counterfactual reasoning determines which causal chains Maseng chooses to focus on. An example: Maseng claims that if the foreign policy line of the Swedish liberals had become Sweden's foreign policy line around 1900, the union between Norway and Sweden might not have dissolved, and he then goes on to explain why the Swedish liberals were not able to dominate foreign policies. Maseng's counterfactuals are not essential to the explanation offered, but help the author to highlight the most crucial aspects of the situations he analyses.

Both Rokkan and Maseng relate to the historical substance. But unlike a mainstream historian, who would cover only the events of the moment, they move upwards. Given their research questions, they try to synthesize various dimensions of a complex historical process. Such social science certainly aggregates, but not all the way up to alleged laws of human nature. Instead, motives are always situated in a context. It is easy to see that in Maseng's analyses, motives are stylized and related to collective actors, mainly to great powers (sea/land) and small states. But the motives cannot be generalized in any simple ways. Maseng applies the same principles as anyone who tries to decide how to act (or give advice) in an open historical present: one can rely on historical experience, but one must always

⁸ Two works stand out for those who want to proceed with this task: Patrick Salmon, *Scandinavia and the great powers 1890-1940*, Cambridge 1997, and the two volumes by David Kirby: *The Baltic world 1492-1772*, London 1990, and *The Baltic world 1772-1993: Europe's northern periphery in an age of change*, London 1995.

seek out those differences that will most likely prevent history from repeating itself. Educated in military strategy, he was surely aware of the classical fallacy of military leaders: fighting the old battle in a new situation! Thus, the emphasis on differences is typical of how Maseng addresses historical analogies, such as the analogy drawn between Denmark/Norway's inability to maintain neutrality in 1807 and Norway's inability to do the same in 1940.

Is this theory? In Rokkan's case, I have argued that he develops grounded theory, understood as limited regularities derived from explanatory studies with due consideration of context and related to one or more of the various subfrontiers of research in the social sciences. Among the main subfrontiers are studies of nationalism, of state formation, of contentious politics, of trade and economic development, etc. Such grounded theory accumulates knowledge that is then again related to cases in new substantial studies. The level at which knowledge is generalized depends on the research question.

Maseng mainly works at the explanatory level. He has long reconstructions of the complex shifts in strategic great power alliances, he classifies conceptions, judges interests and restrictions on the knowledge possessed by crucial actors, and he deals with both economic, social, political and military developments. When he relates these shifts to Nordic developments, he is not reductionist on behalf of geopolitical relations. Rather he combines external (e.g. strategies of the great powers) and internal factors (e.g. relations between nobility and the king). His analyses are analytical, he often assumes that we know the main processes (such as what happened with Copenhagen in 1807, how the Norwegian mobilisation for independence developed in the decades before 1905, and so on...). Maseng always strives to bring out the main causes of the developments — Nordic unity or non-unity — he is interested in.

A main reason why it is important to rediscover Maseng's work is the way he builds his explanations: he builds them via comparisons. For that reason, his work very often provides starting points for the discovery of grounded theory.⁹ Such theory relates to various levels: he now and then makes statements that apply to all great powers in the era of the European state system, but he also evaluates the extent to which knowledge derived from one historical turning point can be applied to other turning points (as in the comparison of 1807/1940).

Since Maseng's main research question is about Norden, his most important contribution is that he helps us to develop grounded theory relevant to the case of the Nordic subsystem within the European state system. But at times, he sees Norden as one case among many. Standard historical accounts nearly always relate to national or regional narratives, while the historically oriented social science practiced by Maseng relates to various subfrontiers of research. Empirical material is related to the research question by asking explicitly what they see their subject matter as a *case of*. Rokkan would see the European countries as cases of state formation, national building, political institution building, and so on. Maseng mainly sees Nordic history as a case of coastal regions with strategic relevance to the main units in a European state system of conflicting sea- and land-powers.¹⁰

⁹ B. Glaser & A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, New York 1965.

¹⁰ In contrast, rational choice-oriented international relations theory, so called "neo-realism", puts its pride in decontextualization. Such an approach hopes to accumulate

They are important for the great powers due to possession of strategic raw materials or to geographical location which tempts great powers to establish bases, bridgeheads or to maintain transport routes on or through the territory of these coastal countries.

In particular, Maseng focuses on the great powers' relations to coastal areas that connect the landed areas of Euroasia to the world oceans: Norden, the Channel coast, the countries by Gibraltar and the Turkish straits, the Persian Gulf and the Tsushima strait. In these areas he finds states that have been exposed to the traditional policies of great powers which "through centuries have aimed to control islands and peninsulas in the periphery of the landmasses, in order to use these as points from which they can project their naval power into the interior" (1952: 52, 72). But his contribution also has other aspects, for instance, he contributes to our knowledge on armed neutrality as a typical security policy preference of small states with a sensitive location (1952: 148 ff).

The geopolitics of the European state system

Recent comparative historical social science has given us a broad overview of the emergence, consolidation, expansion, contraction and — finally — integration of the European state system: Rokkan, followed by Tilly, has mapped the emergence of the "dorsal spine" of city states from North Italy to the North Sea and Baltic coastline. Braudel, followed by the clearly too stylized account of Wallerstein, has analysed the turn from a Mediterranean to an Atlantic economy in the long 16th century.¹¹ The development of Baltic trade and the emergence of the second serfdom in Eastern Europe at a time when feudalism declined in the West, were impor-

knowledge quite independently of what research questions that are asked, that is, outside the various specific subfrontiers of research. Such an approach gets into the same problems of model-platonism as the neoclassical economics that inspired it. For a criticism, see Lars Mjøset, "Les significations historiques de l'europanisation", *L'Année de la régulation*, Vol. 1, pp. 85-128, Paris 1997 (English version: *ARENA working paper*, No. 24, 1997). Geopolitics always differed from abstract realism by actually naming elements of the context. They also differ from the highly variables-oriented search for cycles (mentioned below). Both realism/neorealism and variables oriented social science — each in their own way — dream of grasping a small set of formulae from which to explain complex historical developments. I think they will always fail, at least, they will fail until cognitive biology gets to the stage where it proves able to predict the human mind, and I should think that is a situation which — for moral and thus political reasons — we all hope we will never live to see.

¹¹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), 2. Vols, London 1972, and *Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th century*, Vol. III: *The Perspective of the World*, (1979), London 1984, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, Vol. I, New York 1974.

tant aspects of this.¹² The dynamic links between territorial consolidation, recruitment of military manpower, and trade led to the dominance of larger states. When we add McNeill's classic analysis of the interaction between warfare and technological innovation in that same state system,¹³ we have a number of clues that allow us to fill into the picture of "Western specificities" that Weber began to draw.

Wallerstein's early efforts to stylize cycles and trends of the "modern world system" that was constituted by this Atlantic conjuncture since around 1450, have been taken up by a string of studies focusing on "hegemonic cycles". The empirical basis of such studies are the list of great power wars,¹⁴ as well as more or less solid time series indicating the power resources (economic and military) of the various states.¹⁵

The cycle of hegemonies can be specified as a sequence: global war — world power consolidation — delegitimation — deconcentration.¹⁶ As ambitious, variables-oriented theories, these analyses are not so interesting. Treating, for instance, the whole period 1914-45 as one era of global war clearly sacrifices too much in the interest of grand regularities. But as periodizing sketches, used in conjunction with comparative accounts of historical context, such schemes are useful.

Maseng's main focus is the fate of the Nordic area in periods of increasing great power tensions. Above all he focuses on the security policy challenges in the periods of "deconcentration", i.e. in the period leading into periods of global war, "great trials of strength" as he often calls them. It is no coincidence that the first pages of his first book outlines a scheme which can be specified and extended as follows (1952: 7-8):

¹² Robert Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: a critique of neo-smithian Marxism", *New Left Review*, No. 104 (July/August 1977), Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London 1974.

¹³ W. H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*, Blackwell 1983.

¹⁴ Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975*, Lexington 1983. Levy's main empirical source is the Correlates of War-project at the University of Michigan, whose databases can be accessed through <http://www.umich.edu/~cowproj>.

¹⁵ This literature is summarized in Joshua Goldstein, *Long Cycles*, New Haven 1988.

¹⁶ George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics*, London 1987, Table 2.1, George Modelski & William R. Thompson, *Seapower in global politics, 1494-1993*, London 1988, Table 1.1.

Table 1. Maseng's periodization of seapower dominance

Seapower (hegemon)	Landpower (challenger)	Secondary landpower (assists hegemon)	Global war	Ends	Restructuring treaty
Britain/Netherlands	France	German states/Russia	War of Spanish Succession	1713	Utrecht
Britain	France	German States/Russia (late point)	Napleonic wars	1814	Vienna
Britain	Germany	France	World War I	1918	Versailles
Britain/US	Germany	France/ Russia	World War II	1945	Yalta
US	USSR	(EU/Japan)	(none)	1989	(none)

Source: 1952: 7-8. Global wars and restructuring treaties, as well as information on the periods after 1918, have been added.

Through the long 16th century (1450-1600), the Iberian states were important due to the discovery of the new world, interacting with the Italian city-states that had dominated Mediterranean trade. But in the same period, the centre of shipping activity moved northwards along the Atlantic coast. The crucial great powers became France, England and Holland. In the Dutch and Spanish wars 1580-1608, these three great powers opposed Spain. While Holland was little more than a city state, France and Britain came to exemplify two crucial state categories in any geopolitical scheme, also in Maseng's: the seapower and the landpower.

Economic and technological developments since the Atlantic turn in shipping had favoured the seapowers. The far fastest communications until the railway age was by sea, of course. The dominant powers have always been seapowers and the challengers have always been landpowers.

England discovered the oceans rather late, properly only in the mid-16th century, but its location as an island off the continental coast allowed it to gain dominance over the Dutch — by blocking their access to main trading routes — in the late part of that century (1953: 223, 1972: Ch. 15). Maseng's scheme then recounts how the main tension in the 17th and 18th century was between Britain as hegemonic and France as the challenger. Russia, the massive and populous landpower in the Eurasian heartland soon became a crucial second power and a focal point in the formulation of geopolitical thinking in the late 19th and early 20th century.¹⁷ Since Norden lies inbetween landed Russia and the Western European seapowers, Russia is particularly important in Maseng's overview of the "emer-

¹⁷ Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", *Geographic Journal*, Vol. 23, 1904. This was one of the first entirely global theories in the history of social science. A good overview is G. R. Sloan, *Geopolitics in United States strategic policy 1890-1987*, Brighton 1988.

gence of the Northern European state system” (this is how he characterizes his work in the preface to 1964). In fact, the first sentence of that work is: “If one wants to understand the policies of the great powers towards Norden, one must primarily understand Russia” (1964: 9).

Early in the first chapter of his grand work, Maseng lists six stages of Russian expansion since the early 18th century, and all of them play important roles in his analysis:

- 1) Around 1700, a thrust towards the Baltic and the Black Sea.
- 2) Before and after 1800, advances towards the Black Sea/Mediterranean and towards the Baltic area.
- 3) Through the 1850-1878-period, expansion towards Constantinople and the Balcans.
- 4) Progress in Asia during the 1875-1905-period.
- 5) Renewed activity towards the Balcans and the Baltic 1906-15.
- 6) Inclusion of the Balcan- and Donau-areas in the slavie bloc in connection with World War II. (1964: 11)

In all the violent clashes between the seapower and the land challenger, the seapower would strike alliances with secondary landpowers, according to the following formula: “the most dangerous landpower should be kept in check by that combination of landwards states that ranked closest to it in terms of power, so that the seapower would remain safe as the master of the situation” (1952:8). The geopolitical game often implied attempts by one great power to play the others out against each others, and/or to “direct the energies” of a challenger in a geographical direction that suited the other (1972: Ch. 13).

This refers to the nature of the European state system, which had been consolidated as a system of larger territorial states linked by foreign policy diplomacy and trade relations with the Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years’ war 1618-48.¹⁸ With the consolidation of territorial states, and the greater volume of trade, geography became increasingly significant. States guarded their strategic areas given existing political borders as well as available shipping and weapons technologies, and they considered the location of the raw materials of importance to them.

Besides its superior strategic location (natural defence), England was able to secure a growing extra-European empire, and — later on — also became the site of a peculiar economic dynamism (the transition to industrial capitalism). Maseng holds that England was the dominant great power since about 1650 (1964: 294). Its grand strategy was to maintain the continental European balance of power. British hegemony would be safe as long as no single state gained control over the continent. As long as the various continental great powers balanced each others, hegemony would be cheap. Unlike the continental great powers, England needed no large standing army. European stability would be a “subsidy”¹⁹ allowing England to concentrate on its empire and the “rule of the waves”. If the European balance was about to crumble in favour of one large state, Britain would have to side with

¹⁸ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, Oxford 1990.

¹⁹ Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations*, Cambridge 1988, p. 49.

others and commit her forces in more expensive ways. Never in its entire history, writes Maseng, had England “been at war with the two largest landpowers at the same time” (1952: 43)! Too high ambitions would lead to exhaustion, which is most often what determines the outcome of a war. The periods of deconcentration, leading into world wars, were marked by a weakening of the British capacity to manipulate the European balance of power.

This basic British strategy involved a military strategy of “harassing offensives”:

through several centuries, the ‘historical strategy’ of the seapower has been to try to hit at whatever landpower that was its enemy through actions in peripheral areas. The British calls this the indirect approach and has pursued it with great success. Their weapon was the navy and Britain’s financial force, and in addition to this, a small expeditionary corps which would — preferably by surprise — be thrown on shore in the flanks and back of the enemy. The purpose was partly to win and aid assisting states in these areas, and partly to force the landpower to spread its forces and tie them down in outer areas. The classical example is the actions against France in the Pyrenean peninsula. The method also played an important role in Lloyd George’s and Churchill’s warfare against Germany. The basic principle was that the seapower would never tie itself down permanently in any coastal area, but would evacuate rapidly, as soon as the landpower had gathered larger forces at this place. The evacuated troops would then immediately be used elsewhere in a similar way. ‘The army was a shot fired by the navy.’ (1952: 21, the last quote is from Sir John Fisher).

The main instrument of the seapower was the use of economic pressure, above all naval blockade. Additional instruments were financial power (supplies and finance to allied nations) and military power. As for the latter, the seapower used a limited expedition corps, that is army troops on the ground. Since this was costly, such actions should be reduced to a minimum (1952:91). The coastal territories of interest to the seapower were the peripheries to the core continental areas and also central passage points for trade from the inland: Norden, the Channel coast, the northern Mediterranean shore, the Persian gulf and the Korean peninsula.

A geopolitical perspective typically comes with a related sociology of knowledge relating to the interests producing knowledge. A distinction between basic motives (forces) and the ideological strategies mobilised is clearly involved. More broadly, Maseng refuses to analyse any struggle between great powers in idealistic or ideological terms. Typically, the Cold War to him was just another way of using ideological visions and threat perceptions in the struggle between great powers. A fear of Russia was, as he points out, quite frequent long before the Cold War. This fear — “Russerskremsele” — was something the seapower would use to gain support from small partners on the mainland (1952: 39, cf. 1953: 255 ff on its use in various Nordic conjunctures). With the emergence of modern mass media, the seapower was enabled to conduct “modern psychological warfare”, thus influencing even more popular propaganda, threat-images and risk-perceptions (1952: 68 on the Hearst press).

From this followed also a rather pessimistic judgement on the role of international institutions.²⁰ When great powers were exhausted after great trials of strength, Maseng wrote, they would employ international institutions such as the League of Nations or the United Nations for their own geopolitical purposes. Using propaganda, they would try to maintain the power positions they had won, without fighting wars. "Power politics is something wonderful, also in that it allows the world to declare, that power politics is simply not power politics, but simply an exercise of the principles of international law. When it has been repeated sufficiently often that the raven is white, people start to believe that it is white" (1952: 67).

Norden's geopolitical position

The 'historical strategy' of the seapower implied harassing offensives in peripheral areas. A lot of British diplomatic skills had been used in order to win coastal states to provide bases or to act as friendly regimes. England offered "aid against attack" (1952: 92). Areas of specific interest were peninsulas, islands off the coast and straits, above all if they were located close to vulnerable areas such as industrial regions, raw materials or power-sources. In fact, Western Europe as such could be seen as a great peninsula surrounded by the Baltic sea and the Mediterranean sea (1952: 97), and as the reach of the great powers increased, the seapower would find such strategic points on the whole coastline of the Eurasian landmass.

In World War II, for example, the Western front was not the decisive front, it was the main link in a more extensive system of fronts: There would never be an offensive on any front unless there was at this point clearcut superiority, either due to surprise attacks or because the resources of the opponent had been diverted to other fronts. This "strategic system" was based on offensive exploitation of the opponents "soft spots", on surprise, on movement, and on concentrated efforts.

Maseng here relies on the standard literature on grand strategy.²¹ His really original contribution lies in the incorporation of small states, in particular the Nordic ones, into this framework. As we shall see below, the Nordic states became small states. As soon as their leaders got rid of their "ancien regime"-ideas, they realised this and opted for neutrality.

On the modern world map we may find some small states with little or only moderate importance to the great powers. For such countries, a policy of neutrality may be easy to implement, although when most states have become organized as territorial states, there will also be regional state systems, with local geopolitical tensions. The Nordic states, in any case, belong to a group of small countries that are "squeezed inbetween the great powers". As small countries, they prefer neutrality, their power resources will always be inferior to the great powers, so they want to remain outside their bloody clashes. But they are vulnerable to involuntary in-

²⁰ Echoing E. H. Carr, *The twenty years' crisis 1919-1939*, London 1941.

²¹ Maseng's main source on "indirect approach" (1952) seems to be Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Defence of the West. Some riddles of war and peace*, London 1950.

volvement in great power wars for two basic reasons: strategic location and raw materials sources. Here is one of Maseng's typical statements:

England, the leading sea- and financial power, has on several occasions in our history sought to pull Norden into its wars, and has also tutored others in the policy of exploiting one Nordic state against the other. The reason for this has not been that England has pursued less noble goals than other great powers. The reason is rather that they have been inclined towards such a policy by geographical strategic relations. The same is now the case with the U.S. (1953: 258).

Maseng sketches a comparison between the strategic locations of the Nordic countries and the Low Countries. The Nordic region forms the north-western, seawards front of the Eurasian landmass towards the Atlantic. It has no great defensive importance to the seapower. If the continental countries wanted to attack Britain, they would approach it across the British channel. But the Nordic area was of great *offensive* importance to the seapower in a situation of war. This was partly because the opposed landpower could be forced to divert its forces to this peripheral area, and also because it possessed important strategic raw materials. Below, we shall see which ones. Furthermore, the geography of the Nordic realm implied certain passage points of great importance to the surrounding great powers: above all the Øresund strait and the Danish "belts", but also the Gulf of Finland in relation to Russia. In addition, there were also locations on the North Sea coast that in specific strategic situations would represent important "supporting positions" for one or more great powers.

In contrast, the Low Countries, located on the continental channel coast, had both defensive and offensive importance, to both the land and the seapower. Britain was always particularly interested in the Low Countries since they were bridge-heads from which French industrial areas (Flandern, Paris) and later the German Ruhr-area could be reached. Manchuria had a similar attraction in the East, China had been invaded by seapowers through that area several times (1952: 97).

Since Norden was of only defensive importance to the landpower, Maseng argued that the Nordic area stood a better chance of retaining neutrality than the Low countries.²² The landpower mostly would prefer it to remain outside the great-power war! It would then avoid diversion of its forces away from more important war theatres, and escape the naval blockade which was the main instrument in the seapower's efforts to force it to the point of exhaustion given the pressures that the war efforts meant to its resource base.

Since the seapower might be tempted by its offensive option in the area, the political will to deter it from intervention should be a cornerstone in the security

²² Switzerland, of course, is the classic case of armed neutrality in Europe: but in modern European conflicts its totally landed, mountainous nature has made it less interesting to the seapower. Thus, that case of armed neutrality falls outside the specific category that Maseng focuses on: small states in coastal areas, that are interesting to the seapower. The Alpine countries, in contrast, are caught between the landed powers. For a formal grounded theory of armed neutrality, however, the Alpine states would also be relevant *cases*.

policy of any Nordic country. Small countries had inferior military capabilities compared to any great power, but when the great powers were fighting global wars, even a reasonably armed small state could deter the seapower from pulling it into the war (1972: Ch. 17, comparing Denmark before World War 1 with Norway in 1939/40). The basic requirement was a firm commitment to armed neutrality (1953: 245). This would also deter the landpower from preemptive strikes. Armed neutrality should deter both parties of the great power conflict.

As we shall see, Maseng did argue that in the early modern age, a united Norden could have sustained a position as a great power longer than what Sweden managed. But for his own time, he did not argue that the Nordic countries should unite in order to become a great power. Rather, Nordic cooperation should take the form of a "defence association" that would enable the participants to strengthen their commitment to armed neutrality. It was in fact the "historical mission" of the small states to show that armed neutrality could work in practice. In his unpublished third volume, Maseng discusses at great length the link between these ideas and the Norwegian author Bjørnson's scandinavianism (1972: Ch. 2) as well as the principal philosophical and legal arguments in favour of neutrality as argued by the Swedish liberal leader Alfred Hedin (1972: Ch. 3). He also analyses the inter-parliamentary conferences of the 1890s which worked to establish the "principle of neutrality" as a basic element in international law. We understand why Maseng took such interest in tracing the turning points at which the units of the Nordic state system could have unified. This was simultaneously an interest in studying how the linguistic-culturally quite homogenous Nordic people could have insured themselves against the temptation of the seapower to involve the region in great power wars.

But these small countries would have areas that could serve as support points (*støttestrukturer, oppmarsjzoner*) or passage points (that could be blocked) at times of war. "The unification of such coastal countries to larger and therefore more independent groups therefore thus something that did not fit the interests of the trading power" (1964: 294). Any kind of splits would be in the interest of the seapower. In a typical statement, Maseng relates this general point to the Norwegian postwar situation:

in London, one had seen over several generations that the four Nordic states, who all shared the same interest, had been rubbed against each others unable to unite their forces in order to keep the great powers out. No wonder that their estimate was that whatever happened, they would have Norway at their disposal. When the standard of living had become close to being the only meaning of life, one could always, in the case of a country with such a small population, win the necessary goodwill with the aid of some crumbs from the table of the rich (the dollar country) (1953: 276).

In Maseng's view, Norway's failure to pursue an active policy of neutrality in 1939/40 led to a British provocation which made Nazi Germany conduct a preemptive occupation of Norway and Denmark. This experience led both countries to join the Atlantic alliance in 1949, a move that made Nordic cooperation on armed neutrality quite illusory. In such bitterness about this Atlantic turn — which also cost him his job — Maseng spent the last 27 years of his life researching the

questions of Nordic efforts to unite and to practice neutrality. In the following, I give a brief and condensed reconstruction of some of his main findings. We shall see that the general account of Norden's security situation — based on the 20th century constellation with which Maseng himself had practical experience — has to be modified for earlier periods.

The following summary is organized with reference to a periodization of the various versions of the Nordic subsystem within the larger European state system. Maseng is less systematic, but it is obvious that his historical discussions focus on those critical periods through which the structure of this system changed. This is where his accounts become really detailed: meticulous tracing of alliance shifts, treaties, secret agreements, and the related geopolitical considerations made in the various foreign policy headquarters — so complicated to follow for scholars (like us) who grew up in the stable and permanent security structure of the Cold War!

Given his focus on efforts at unification, Maseng also traces a number of arguments and strategies favouring Nordic unification, that is: various "scandinavianisms". These analyses yield another set of *potential* turning points: historical conjunctures at which the various projects of Nordic unification had some chance. I shall mention some of these too, but my treatment of them will be less systematic.

Kalmar — the weak early union

The Kalmar union (1397-1521) was a loosely consolidated personal union, joining three weak "states" in the Nordic area under the Danish King. Since 1428, the Kalmar king had charged customs from ships passing through Øresund, on the condition that the area was kept clean of pirates. These customs were one of the most lucrative incomes any king could have at the time.

The North Atlantic trade along "nor-way" was based on *fish* (with Bergen as the main trading center), the earliest among Norway/Denmark's export staples. Baltic trade was based on grain and raw materials from the eastern inland (but its main period of expansion came after 1550). Another main Nordic asset at this time, was the highly skilled seamen along the Norwegian and Danish coast, and especially the large Norwegian trading fleet (1964: 321-23).

Historians have seen the union as an effort to counteract the power of the Hansa league city state merchants in North-Atlantic and Baltic trade. Hansa power peaked in 1370. Its power in the Nordic area was parallel to the power of the Italian city states (especially Venice) at the Southern end of Europe's "dorsal spine". In both cases, the city state merchants had gained many trading points and other possessions by lending money to local rulers and heads of state. Spain and Portugal were larger political units fighting Venice, becoming early territorial states. In parallel, the earliest modern Nordic state formation, Kalmar, attempted unity to curtail Hansa power.

Maseng's account starts with the break-up of the Kalmar union, but in an appendix (1964: 314-8), he provides a short summary of its dynamics. In particular, he notes that it depended on the king gaining dominance over the nobility. When noble resistance grew against centralized royal power, that resistance was centered

in Stockholm (a group of Swedish economic elites) and in the Danish German areas (the German nobles were eager to weaken Copenhagen's dominance). The German nobles received direct support from the Hansa traders, who also set up an economic blockade which frustrated the Swedish elites. The Lübeck Hansa traders also supported Gustav Vasa who led the Swedish secession in 1523, establishing the Swedish Vasa kingdom (1964: 14)

The Danish King Christian II (who reigned 1513-23) tried to save the Kalmar union. Three years earlier, he had brought his mercenaries to Stockholm and had executed eighty Swedish aristocrats in the "Stockholm bloodshed" (1964: 316). But his efforts to save the Nordic union were in vain. Maseng regrets this failure. He recalls the stories about the King's fighting companion, Skipper Klemet,²³ a renaissance figure who took up the Hansa legacy and sailed his ships all over the expanding world economy. Maseng refers to Johannes V. Jensen, who in his novel *Nordisk ånd* claims that if the King had succeeded, the European-based maritime empire of early modern history would have been a Nordic, not a British one!

Denmark had as good chances as the other European states to become the leading world power. If the King had succeeded, we could have encountered our language wherever we traveled in the world, from New York to Singapore and Melbourne. (1964: 37)

Had the process of mercantilist and absolutist consolidation happened in a united Denmark/Sweden, Norden could at least have played a game with the other great powers from a more equal position. In a longer term perspective: with a united Norden before the coming of nationalism, 19th century nationalist mobilisation might *not* have focused on separate national regions, but on the whole of Norden (see 1964: 64).

Maseng counterposes two movements for Nordic unification. Kristian II's was a broad one, a movement for a "bourgeois kingdom" against the noble elites (1964: 316). Maseng clearly sees this as a forerunner for the popular Scandinavianism that emerged in the 19th century (1964: 14-15). Kristian II had tried to liberate the farmers that the nobles now chained to the land by feudal ties. Gustav Vasa's movement was a narrow one. It was a movement for forced unification based on a "national" king in harmony with his "local" noble elites.

We shall now see how both the Danish and the Swedish mercantilistic states fought each other in attempts to achieve this kind of unification. Maseng's general point is that divided, they were too weak. Thus for two centuries, the dominant Western European seapowers could "exploit politically this Nordic dissension, which was the result of Gustav Vasa's efforts" (1964: 317). Rather than Nordic unity, two hundred years marked by frequent Nordic internal warfare followed.

²³ I first met Jan Otto at the 1976 Tvind session of the Nordic Summer University. Although I think few of us knew the background to the song "Skipper Klemets morgensang", it was always included in the NSU songbook and one of the songs most frequently sung.

The Nordic two state system

Between 1523 and 1814, the Nordic state system was a two state system. These states were not small states. A main point in Maseng's analysis is that even though the Kalmar unity could not be maintained, European history at the time show us several processes of consolidation of larger political units (such as Spain, France and England). The European state system became a hierarchy where the great powers were among those who succeeded in unifying into relatively strong territorial states. These would then relate to regional subsystems of smaller states that they would pit against each other in order to avoid their merger into broader political units.

Swedish secession had produced two states and in the war-ridden mercantilist age of the 16th and 17th century European state system, Sweden or Denmark could either have fully absorbed the other, or they could deepen their national integration as two separate states. Largely, they achieved the last by trying to do the first. Maseng emphasized that the two states did not rank below the others in their command of power resources such as population, skills, navy, naval stores and other crucial raw materials. However, at critical junctures where a forced unification might have been possible, two factors counteracted this: the actions of other aspiring great powers, influencing the local Nordic balance of power, and the local noble classes. Reflecting on why it was not a united Norden, but rather Amsterdam and then London, that established leadership in the world economy, Maseng postulates a general connection between the internal Nordic wars and the strategies of the seapowers:

it did play some role that the latter were closer to overseas supplies of raw materials. But the real cause of the dominance that the Western European "seapowers" gained must be sought in their greater *political abilities and will*. These political skills were not the least expressed in the way the Western powers were able to pit the two Nordic centers against each others in an intense internal conflict. (1964: 35)

But there were also, argues Maseng, "in the 17th, 18th and 19th century quite a few occasions at which the option of Nordic unity was in fact to some extent a possibility". But on these occasions, "Sweden's governing elites did not possess the necessary amount of prestige among that country's noble strata" (1964: 56). This indicates that the chances of merger between the two states should have been largest when there was fierce fighting between the great powers, while at the same time, the local noble strata actually agreed with, or had been successfully subdued by the ruling royal elites.

In conjunctures where both these conditions tended to prevail, Maseng sees the most obvious chances of "scandinavianism". He uses the terms "great danish" and "great swedish" scandinavianism, indicating projects of unification from above, based on a bloc between royal and aristocratic forces. However, it does not seem that strong such blocs were ever seen in situations where the great powers were unable to commit resources to measures — above all support to the weaker party in a Nordic war — that counteracted Nordic unity.

With reference to the ebbs and flows of the internal Nordic wars, we can sketch a sequence of three sub-periods — each lasting about 100 years — of the Nordic two state system.

The first period, 1523 to around 1620/30, is a period of Danish offensives and Swedish eastwards expansion. Denmark was the strongest and most populous country, with very lucrative incomes from both Øresund-customs and staples such as fish (from Norway) and grain (from Denmark). The Danish kings could rely mainly on mercenaries when they went to war. Sweden was a poorer state and in this period pioneered military conscription by forced requisition and land-for-service bargains which increased the autonomy and strength of the Swedish peasantry.²⁴ The Nordic states were “coercion-intensive”²⁵ in two different ways: The Swedish state made direct deals with peasants, forcing the noble upper class to accept such state command of agrarian resources (they also utilized Swedish iron and copper as well as their proto-industries to bolster the military strength of the state), while the Danish state allowed estate owners to retain feudal ties on the peasants (but the Danish case also had “capital-intensive” aspects: the taxing of international trade through Øresund).

In the second half of the 16th century, the Baltic areas gained enormous importance for trade and politics. Agrarian products and raw materials were brought from the Russian inland and shipped from Regal, Riga, Königsberg and Danzig to Western markets, while products from Western proto-industries were imported. These cities were “the world’s largest and richest trading cities” (1964: 23).

From about 1510, the specialized naval ship (capital ships), which could fire a broadside, had been developed.²⁶ Both Denmark and Sweden were among the earliest states to develop strong navies. Their large contingent of skilled sailors were here certainly important. In the “dispute of the duke” (1534-6), the Nordic navies beat Hansa. During the Seven Years’ war (1563-70), Sweden probably had the largest fleet in Europe.²⁷

Maseng notes the curious fact that while Sweden expanded eastwards, it was unable to counter its Nordic adversary in the west. Sweden competed with the Poles in the east and by 1580, Russia was shut out of the Baltic. But southwards, westwards and northwards, Sweden was at this time encircled by Denmark/Norway: Sweden only had one small coastal area (Göta river mouth) facing the open ocean in the west. Skåne was Danish and Denmark had kept control over Småland and Vestergötland when the union broke up in 1523 (1964: 24f). In the Kalmar war (1611-13), Sweden had tried to break this encirclement, but instead, the Danish King took Kalmar on the east coast and Elfsborg by the Göta river, two points from which Sweden could be penetrated. But like in the earlier Nordic Seven years war (1563-70), the Swedish King managed to buy back the conquered region. In the 16th century, Maseng claims, Copenhagen was the dominant centre, but the

²⁴ Cf. the discussion of early modern Sweden and Denmark in Lars Mjøset & Steve van Holde, “Killing for the State, Dying for the Nation. An introductory essay on the life cycle of conscription into Europe’s armed forces”, *Comparative Social Research*, Vol. 20, 2002, p. 17-19.

²⁵ Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*.

²⁶ Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution*, 2nd ed., Cambridge 1996, p. 160.

²⁷ Harald Gustafsson, *Nordens historia*, Lund 1997, p. 89.

Swedes were able — supported by German military and financial power — to block Copenhagen's attempts to unite Norden (1967: 38).

Maseng points out that Sweden much easier could project its growing forces eastwards (1964: 25). Sweden aimed at control over all passage points for Russian trade with the West. While Denmark/Norway was able to maintain control over the Barents ocean passage point (the Vasas tried to claim both Finnmark and the Kola peninsula), Sweden succeeded in pushing back the Poles on the southern Baltic coast (1964: 26). Keeping Russia away from the ocean was a crucial feature of this trade-motivated strategy and Sweden's position in the Baltic corresponded to Turkey's expansion around the estuaries on the northern Black Sea coast (1964: 31).

Sweden continued to expand in the east and south. In the peace of Stolbova 1617, she became the major force shutting Russia out of the Baltic, giving a better defence of Finland and direct control on both sides of the Gulf of Finland.²⁸

The sequence of bloody European wars called 'The Thirty Years' war started in 1618. First the Danish King involved Denmark/Norway, an adventure which ended in disaster, with Jutland occupied by the Habsburg Kaiser in 1626. A peace treaty followed and Denmark/Norway withdrew from the war without territorial losses.

Sweden, in contrast, came out of The Thirty Years War with great gains, taking more Baltic areas in 1628. Following a solution with Poland in 1629, Sweden could cash in customs at all main Baltic trading ports (30 percent of all the fiscal incomes of the Swedish state). Like Denmark earlier, even Sweden now had huge incomes from Baltic trade. These incomes, as well as other taxes on transit and transport of goods to and from the "Slavic raw materials area in the east" (1964: 27) enabled Sweden to enter into the war between the other European great powers. Sweden invaded Germany in 1630, but was driven back in 1632. In the final bloody showdown 1635-48, Sweden allied with France to block the progress of the Habsburg empire, and confirmed its position as the dominant Baltic power. This expansion also spurred foreign investments in Sweden's mining industries.

In the second period, from the late 1620s and on to 1720, Sweden was the Baltic great power and expanded into Danish/Norwegian territory. Towards the end of the Thirty Years war, they attacked Denmark (Thorstensonkrigen/Hannibalfejden 1643). The peace at Brømsebro (1645) gave Sweden areas in Germany, just south of Denmark. When the seapowers now entered into their Anglo-Dutch "Thirty years war at sea" (1964: 48, Ch. 2), Sweden and Denmark interacted with these great powers in various constellations.

Øresund had long been important as a trade route. During the Anglo-Dutch naval wars it became even more important because of a new, crucial Nordic export item: naval stores, which became important in a strategic sense. These were export products of great importance for sailing ships: wood, especially wood for masts, and related products such as tar, deals, pitch, rope and hides (1964: 47). The clearing of land and cutting down of trees for fuelwood had over centuries depleted the forest resources of the core European area. With the development of specialized warships through the many naval wars since the 17th century, the specific kinds of timber required for good masts had become scarce for seapowers such as England

²⁸ Gustafsson, *Nordens historia*, p. 101.

and Holland,²⁹ especially as they confronted France, which had its own supplies of such strategic raw materials (1964: 49).

Thus, the Nordic countries here had a crucial monopoly position vis-a-vis the seapowers: "Nordic products were the basis of the greatness of Western seapowers" (1964: 33). Maseng quotes Cromwell's worry that the Nordic states together could "shut us out of the Baltic sea" (1964: 33), and also a typical message from the British to the Dutch government: free access to the Baltic is an imperative since this region is "the Indies of the materials of shipping" (1964: 34). In the 17th and 18th centuries, naval forces were the most crucial elements in foreign policies (1964: 323).

Sweden had a grip on Baltic trade, while Denmark controlled Øresund. In the early 1650s, when Denmark sided with the Dutch, a convoi of 20 ships carrying timber could not get out of Øresund. English shipyards had to use Scottish pine, "an inferior substitute", and only when seven Swedish ships arrived some months later, refitting and building of new ships could continue (1964: 47).

The Sound was no longer just crucial as a trading route and source of customs, not just as a passage for naval ships, but as a geographical point where the supply of one of the most crucial strategic inputs to naval warfare could be controlled. The interest of the seapowers was of course sharpened. It should be noted that from Norway, one could in principle get naval stores independently of passage through the straits (see 1964: 49 f): specific networks between Norwegian and British elites related to this. But as long as Norway was a part of Denmark, this mattered less.

The question of the straits — the option of a closed Baltic sea as a consequence of a disturbance of the "Nordic equilibrium" — was over centuries one of the world's great questions. "The freedom of England's access to the Baltic" became one of the major concerns of British foreign policies. (1964: 34 f)

In 1657, Denmark tried to revenge Sweden's progress at Brømsebro, but Karl X Gustav took his forces from Poland, crossed the frozen Belts and stood at Sjøland. At the Roskilde peace of 1658, Sweden made large gains from Denmark/Norway, most particularly Skåne.³⁰ But when Sweden tried to take Denmark in an attack on Copenhagen in October 1658, the seige was broken by the Dutch navy.

To Maseng, this was a master example of how the great powers acted to block Nordic unification. In the 17th century, he states, Stockholm was the dominant centre, but the Danes were able — supported by Dutch financial and maritime power — to block Stockholm's attempt to unify Norden (1967: 38). By 1658, Sweden had conquered most of Denmark, but the Dutch intervened and saved Denmark in the battle of Øresund on the 29th of October 1658 (1964: 60). This was classical balance of power manipulation, and England and Russia would later make similar moves. It suited the seapowers well that Sweden took Skåne, as there was then one state on each side of Øresund. But they both feared Swedish rule on both sides.

²⁹ Robert G. Albion, *Forests and sea power*, Cambridge, Mass. 1926, p. vii, mentions 1652 (beginning of the First Dutch War) as the starting point.

³⁰ Gustafsson, *Nordens historia*, p. 103.

As already noted, Maseng holds that together, Denmark and Sweden could have countered the great powers. They had three trumpcards (1964: 35): (1) Export sales to Western and Southern Europe of most of the then crucial raw materials based on production in their own area. (2) Self-sufficiency in naval stores. (3) A population not significantly lower than the other seapowers (1964: 32), and with a large share of skilled, experienced sailors (1964: 47).

Several North-European countries offered naval stores for sale (also Finland, Russia, Poland, and north-German territories did), but:

Out of these, there were, however, only two states, namely Sweden and Denmark, that had any naval power worth mentioning. If these two united, they could close the gate to the Baltic, the Øresund, thereby being able to submit the importing countries of the West to their law. It thus became crucially important for these importing countries, especially for the Dutch and the English, to block Nordic cooperation. (1964: 32 f)

But as long as they were divided these advantages were not enough:

Thanks to the fact that the Nordic kingdoms had their bases and resources close at hand, and that they themselves possessed everything that was needed for warships, they need not have been, when they stretched their forces, inferior to the Western seapowers. But if Denmark and Sweden stood against each other, and only one of the Western great powers operated in Nordic waters, that great power would dominate all positions here, needing the support of only one of the Nordic states. (1964: 61)

Maseng regards that 1658-60 as a turning point with long term implications even for the economic and political transformations of the 19th century.

If Sweden in 1660, despite the Dutch countermeasures, had been able to hold on to Trøndelag, or to the alternative suggested by the Swedish King, Akershus and Agder, there would have been no "Nordic balance". Most likely, the completion of Nordic unity would have been a question of time alone. And the lucky situation that the Nordic people was locked into when the ideology of national unity reached Norden in the early 19th century — that each of the Nordic peoples stood united within their natural borders — would not have emerged. (1964: 64)

The string of Nordic wars put great pressures on the state, leading to growing tension between the heads of state and the noble elites. These struggles were decided to the advantage of the kings, and absolutist rule was introduced following setbacks in war in Denmark in 1660 and in Sweden in 1680. Like in the other absolutist states at the time, this led to many measures that strengthened direct rule.³¹

On this basis, the Swedish King once more tried to consolidate Sweden's great power status, but now faced an alliance of all its adversaries: Denmark/Norway, Brandenburg/Prussia, Saxony/Poland and Russia. The Great Nordic War (1700-21)

³¹ Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*.

basically concerned control of the Baltic, and Sweden lost her leading position to Russia.

In the broader European state system, a complex process of consolidation took place in the late 17th century. France had strengthened royal rule, and tried to gain Dutch and German areas. France thus supported England's unification under Cromwell, and England started its empire by annexing Spanish positions in the West-Indies, since France had beaten Spain. The late 17th century saw complex diplomatic manoeuvring between England, Holland, France and Russia. But in the war of Spanish succession the earlier enemies England and Holland (with Germany and Russia as allies) fought France (see Table 1).

Maseng implies that the great powers — England in particular — during the Great Nordic War supported Russia in order to avoid the emergence of a Nordic political unit dominated by Sweden (1953: 255 f). British dominance over the Dutch allowed them to counteract Swedish expansion, and this contributed to Swedish decline. By the late 17th century, Britain was dominant in Nordic waters (1964: 59-61).

Sweden had to join Denmark/Norway as a second rate great power. A united Norden would have stood a better chance:

The short duration of Swedish greatness — only about one century — was mainly due to the fact that it was a Swedish, not a Nordic regime. (1964: 34 f)

Maseng provides this broad speculation:

It is not the task of a writer of history to discuss possibilities that were not realised, but still the thought presses forward: what would have happened if the Kalmar union had been maintained during the 17th century? The seapowers then would have had to come to terms with the Nordic monopoly on strategic raw materials. Norway would, within a unified Norden, have served to complete this monopoly. — It was a major Nordic weakness that outside Øresund there was one raw materials country to which the Western sea-powers could recur if their operations in the Baltic were impaired.

Had the unity of Norden been maintained, the Western seapowers would have assisted Russia during its modernization in less crucial ways than they did. Thus, that modernization process would have been slower. It was a misfortune for Norden that already in the 18th century, the region was so strongly exposed to Russia's power. (1964: 49 f)

France had gained importance in the Nordic area since its alliance with Sweden in 1635. Maseng notes that France had supported British unification and expansion. The same might have been the case with Nordic unification:

It is full well possible to imagine that with greater benevolence and support from this rising great power, also the Nordic efforts at consolidation could have been completed. (1964: 49, 65)

The absence of such French support had long term consequences:

A united Norden cooperating with France could have avoided the alternating dependency on England, Russia and Germany characteristic of Nordic history from about 1700 and through till this day. (1964: 34 f)

Maseng thus regrets that the century long cooperation between France and Sweden ended by the early 18th century. The seapowers (particularly England) in the early decades of the 18th century fought France in one war and pitted Sweden against its neighbours in another. The two theatres were not linked.

Let us now turn to the final period of the Nordic two state system: 1720-1807. With the end of the great trial of strength 1700-20, the relative seapower of Holland and France declined significantly and the British share rose to nearly 50 percent.³² Some scholars regard the 18th century after 1720 as a first long period of British hegemony, although the great powers were involved in numerous wars during that period. The most general pattern was that England and Holland opposed France, and Russia was a huge new partner that the various great powers strove to include on their side.

In Norden, the 1721-solution established a balance, ending the period of internal Nordic warfare, with the exception of 1788-90, when Russia was joined by Denmark/Norway in its war with Sweden (also in 1741-3, Sweden had been at war with Russia).

There was a new interest in cooperation among the two Nordic states, but cooperation was mainly seen as a tool for one state that needed to block the other state from recovering as a great power.

In the 18th century, Maseng notes, there were times when the seafaring Norwegian people were attracted to some kind of alliance with England, and that it was "no small achievement" (1964: 38) that the Copenhagen King managed to keep the long political unit from Passvik to Elben together.

The great-powers had assisted Russia in order to counteract Sweden, now they felt the effect of that strategy. Russia had become a full actor in the European balance of power. But due to the competition between the Western great powers, Russia was often also assisted in its efforts to modernize further. This complicated the situation for Norden in the 18th century! While Sweden had rolled back Russia in the 17th century, now the Swedes began to fear Russian expansion into the Nordic area. This "fear of the Russians" was stimulated and exploited by the seapower. The balance between two Nordic states was only shattered in connection with the next period of chronic great power war (see Table 1).

England's dominance was challenged in the period which started with the escalation to revolution in France. France supported the independence movement among England's North American colonies, even before the Declaration of Independence (1776). Only once England had found herself in a situation with no strong ally on the European mainland. Through the 1780s the French support was so costly that it contributed to the huge state deficits of the ancien regime, one factor behind the French revolution of 1789. But France had still been able to deprive Britain of its

³² Modelski & Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics 1494-1993*, Figure 5.10, p. 129. (The shares are percentages of the naval capabilities of all great powers, cf. p. 128.)

first empire (in North-America) (1952: 43). As a result, England stepped up its activities in the Orient, particularly in India.

From this period of French pressure against England stems the story of British Admiral Keppel, who was put before court martial in 1779. The year before, he had retreated to an English port instead of fighting back against a superior French fleet. To his defence, he emphasized that he knew that the supply of masts and other naval stores was very low, so he feared it would be difficult to repair the loss due to scarcity of naval stores in a situation when the French were superior in the Channel. He actually claimed that he saved the country by his decision.³³

After 1789, France emerged as a revolutionary republic that had thrown away the absolutism of the ancien regime. The new regime was able to mobilize huge numbers of enthusiastic conscript soldiers in what ended in Napoleon's bid to control the Continent as such. As indicated, France also had strong seapower capabilities, catching up on the British share particularly in the 1770s and around 1810.³⁴

In the Wars of the French revolution (1792-1802) and the Napoleonic war (1803-1815), England launched at least four coalitions against France. The two countries established mutual blockades against each other. Napoleon could not beat England at sea and thus not occupy the British isles, so the strategy was to block British exports in order to prevent her from earning the financial surplus which allowed her to buy support from other continental states. Maseng describes this as a mercantilistic kind of blockade, aimed to hurt the financial surpluses of the state. It differed from the 20th century blockades, which aimed at both imports and exports, trying to restrain the productive power of the adversary, as well as its ability to cater for the home population.

During the late 18th century situation of French pressure against England, Catharina II moved to improve Russia's position (1952: 43). England's main fear was clearly that an alliance would be struck between two such populous states with disciplined armies: Russia with its feudal peasant army and France with its revolutionary, reformed army.³⁵

Maseng places Sweden and Denmark/Norway into this bloody Anglo-French struggle on the European geopolitical stage. The crucial events in the destruction of the Nordic two-state system were: Sweden's alliance with England since 1805, England's provocation of Denmark/Norway in 1807, Sweden's loss of Finland to Russia in 1808/9, and Sweden's union with Norway in 1814. Maseng deals with these crucial events in great detail. Let us just survey some of his main claims.

Although weakened, Sweden was still the strongest state in the Nordic area, with two major strategic interests (1964: Ch. 10). First, to consolidate the country as a raw materials-based power, such as the other continental states, generally opposing England's seapower rule. Naval stores and certain metals were the most important items. There were various schemes for a Nordic monopoly and even a bloc involving Russia. Second, political and social elites were eager to recover Sweden's status as a first rate great power, either by adding Norway (west), areas

³³ Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, p. viii.

³⁴ Modelski & Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics 1494-1993*, Figure 5.10, p. 129.

³⁵ Comparison in Mjøset/Van Holde, "Killing for the State, Dying for the Nation", p. 25, p. 29 ff.

in the Karelia (east) or in the South (Baltic coast). This “great Swedish scandinavianism” was increasingly focused on annexing Norway.

While relations with England had been tense at the turn of the century, the Swedish King struck a “speculative” alliance with England in 1805 (1964: 264). Maseng claims that without this alliance, Norden might have remained neutral in the Napoleonic wars.

In the summer of 1807, the alliance that the British had tried to avoid, was formed again. The Tilsit agreements between Russia and France (1964: 202) were to be a crucial precondition of the events that transformed the Nordic state system. Despite the Tilsit-agreement, the Swedish King ignored his advisors and confirmed the alliance with England in 1807 (1964: 201). Had the alliance been broken, Maseng claims, the British attack on Copenhagen in August 1807 would have been out of the question.

Denmark’s fate was a string of setbacks. Denmark/Norway had tried to pursue something like a policy of neutrality, being loyal to British demands. But England doubted that Denmark would be able to retain this stance given the French pressure from the south. For the same reason, there had been British actions against Øresund also in 1800 and 1801. After Tilsit, France and Russia used the continental blockade to try to force England to sign a peace treaty. 1806-7 was the one period through which Napoleon’s economic warfare was extensive and rigorously enforced. The Baltic and its entry point — Øresund — became a focal point in the British attempts to evade the blockade. The British doubted Danish neutrality more than ever. Backed by 27 ships of the line, the British demanded that Denmark hand over its fleet so that it could be kept as a deposits in England until the war was over. When the Danes refused, the Royal Navy in July 1807 landed 20 000 men, bombarded Copenhagen for three days, defeated the Danish militia and conveyed 18 ships of the line and some smaller vessels to England (1972: Ch. 9). Although Denmark/Norway then fell to the Napoleonic side and supported the Continental system, England was able to protect its Baltic trade, with yearly fleets sent to the Baltic until 1813, and with convoys for merchants.³⁶

Maseng describes this as a catastrophe, without historical parallel, a British betrayal of Denmark. Danish authorities should have learned in 1801 that a small country with strategic geographical points or a large navy, must remain mobilized, in order not to be “overrun”. But they were not mobilized in 1807, they were humiliated by British “machiavellian” policies (1953: Ch. 8, 1964: 194).

Earlier on, we surveyed Maseng’s general discussion of the possibilities that small Nordic countries could maintain neutrality. But in the case of Denmark 1807, he finds an exception (1953: 245) to the rule that a small state “when it guarded itself against the seapower, it could count on the landpower to leave it to itself”, that is, respect its neutrality. In 1807, France (the landpower) wanted to gain control over the Sound to complete its continental blockade, and also to include the Danish/Norwegian fleet in its forces. France here moved offensively against Denmark. In this case, the two adversaries, both the sea and the landpower had a mix of preventive and aggressive motives (1953: 245f). Thus, in that his-

³⁶ Derek McKay & H. M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815*, London 1983, p. 324.

torical conjuncture, the Nordic (Danish) situation was like that of the Low countries in the 20th century.

France and Russia stood against England and Sweden, Russia feared an English attack on St. Petersburg from Swedish territory in Finland. Sweden was not willing to discuss any kind of compromise in the Baltic (1964: 204). Russia considered this an attempt to establish a Nordic raw materials block (Sweden, Finland, Norway) against Russia. War ensued between Russia and Sweden in February 1808. Sweden lost at Oravais and the Tilsit great powers dictated the terms of peace. Sweden had to cede Finland to Russia in the Peace of Fredrikshavn. Finland was made a grand duchy under Russia in 1809. Since then, the wish to regain Finland periodically played an important role in Swedish politics. Maseng describes the 1807-9-events as the final collapse of the "great-Swedish" policy (1964: 261).

Russia's war with Sweden was "undertaken on French urging to compel (Sweden) to enter the Continental System".³⁷ It gave Russia more security on its north-western frontier. But Sweden continued to let British trade flow uninterrupted, undermining the French blockade. In that respect, it was no big gain for Napoleon that he by 1810-11 had annexed the North Sea coastline and even most of the southern Baltic coast.³⁸ Even Denmark/Norway could not be fully included in the continental blockade, since Napoleon was aware that this could have provoked Denmark/Norway back into an alliance with England. Norway was therefore periodically allowed regulated trade (*lisensfart*): she could get certain products from Britain.

The defeat undermined Swedish absolutism: Gustav IV Adolf was dethroned in March 1809. The traditional nobility aimed to resurrect its pre-1772 rule, but the revolt was also backed by certain elite personalities that were inspired by the French revolution. The breakdown of great-Swedish scandinavianism, Maseng implies, opened up for a voluntary approach to Nordic unification (1964: 261f). It was implied by Adelsparre, and by intellectuals such as Tegner and Grundvig, and Maseng surely regards it as a revival of Kristian II's line, discussed above. This anticipated a sentiment that would erupt more strongly in the mid-19th century (1848-64), what Maseng calls *popular* scandinavianism (1964: 261f). One of the crucial great powers, France, was relatively indifferent: If Norden united by its own free will, France would not mind.

Following the overthrow of absolutism, a Swedish-Norwegian elite network tried to establish conditions for Nordic unity by suggesting the Danish Prince Christian August as the new king of Sweden. Maseng has a detailed discussion of this option for Nordic unity (1964: Ch. 13-14), but the efforts came to nothing as Christian August died soon after his arrival in Stockholm. Instead, the Swedish nobles recruited Karl Johan (Bernadotte), one of Napoleon's best officers, who later became king, but was influential already from 1810. He secured no tight Franco/Swedish-alliance, rather he began to play his own part in the great power game. Soon after moving to Stockholm, he revived great-Swedish scandinavian-

³⁷ McKay & Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815*, p. 331. Maseng also notes this, but in addition he emphasizes the impact of Finnish upper classes and of Sweden's own aristocracy (1972: Ch. 2).

³⁸ McKay & Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815*, p. 324.

ism (1964: 284), with the main objective of getting Norway as compensation for the loss of Finland. His strategic shifts were many and he contributed in serious ways to the coalition against Napoleon. No amount of detail is possible here.

When Napoleon's continent wide thrust eventually faltered in 1813-14, the situation in Norden was a challenge for the British strategists: Sweden was important for the anti-French coalition, and one of its goals was to get Norway. However, the British held Norwegian independence to be preferable to a union either with Sweden, or — an even worse scenario to the seapower — a union of all three Nordic units. It seemed obvious to them that the foreign policies of an independent Norway would be consistently British-oriented. But the coalition with Sweden was not that solid: the British were aware of the imminent danger of a new Franco-Russian alliance — a new Tilsit. Sweden had lost Finland partly because of its alliance with England and the English strategists understood that they had to let Karl Johan satisfy the "great Swedish" claim to Norway (1964: 290). In the end, England went for the second best solution — a union between Norway and Sweden — but:

The association had to be made as loose as possible, so that — as time went by — it could be untied. — What was particularly important to England was that a united Nordic group could possibly come under the influence of Russia (a raw materials front against the West). Now, as earlier, Britain regarded a Northern League, inspired by Russia, as a great danger. (1964: 296)

The concern for the supply of naval stores had been growing through the French and Napoleonic wars. As always, the seapower was eager to resist that one state controlled the Sound. In the Kiel treaty of January 1814, England blocked Karl Johan's claim to Danish areas (Sjælland). They also had Karl Johan agree that Norway should enjoy a free and independent role in the union, which was defined as a personal union (1964: 300f) with constitutional home rule. A full confrontation was avoided in July 1814 (1964: 306) as Karl Johan was able to restrain the more wide-ranging "great Swedish" ambitions of the Swedish upper classes. Norway's Eidsvoll constitution was accepted by the Swedes. The main element of Swedish dominance was the King's firm control of foreign and security/military policies of both countries (1964: 310).

The fact that Norway's new order could be established with so little pain, was due to a lucky coincidence: England preferred a personal union, Norway preferred a personal union, Karl Johan preferred a personal union, and to Norden's popular feeling of unity, the Swedish-Norwegian personal union was a step in the right direction. (1964: 310)

In this way, the Nordic two-state system had been turned into what can be labeled a three-state system, since Norway gained autonomy enough to establish its own national institutions within which a sense of national Norwegian identity could thrive. Sweden had lost Finland, and the compensation England granted them was a loose kind of union with a Norwegian state that was able to gain its own constitution. Finland was a Russian grand duchy in the 1807-1917-period, but Maseng does not discuss it as a part of the Nordic 19th century state system. Most

efforts at unity in that system aimed at a union of three states. Finland played a more negative role, in the sense that Sweden at times would accuse Denmark and Norway of unwillingness to support its efforts to win Finland back into the Swedish state. In this context, the Nordic countries entered the period of nationalism, increasingly thinking about themselves as small states.

The Nordic three state system

The period between 1815 and the early 20th century is the second and most celebrated period of British hegemony: *Pax Britannica*. It is called a period of peace because in the core European area, there were few wars, while the great powers kept on fighting wars in the periphery, thus globalizing the European balance of power, a process that culminated in the imperialist rivalries of the late 19th century.

In this period, the economic, social and political transformations spurred by the industrial and political-national revolutions of the late 18th century and early 19th century played themselves out in Western Europe. Since this did not lead to any major changes in the Nordic three state system, we shall only mention a few changes of great relevance to Nordic developments.

The transition from sail to coal-driven steam engines in international shipping had several consequences, one of which was the declining importance of Øresund: naval stores lost their importance as strategic raw materials in the 1860s.³⁹ Maseng generally claims that with the new surge of industrialization in the late 19th century, the divergence between great powers and small states increased (1972: Ch. 2).

In the second volume of his grand work, Maseng devotes much attention to the growth of popular scandinavianism. Above all, he discusses in detail (1967: Ch. 9-10) the events that unfolded when tensions gathered on Denmark's southern border in connection with Bismarck's cunning geopolitical manouvers to unify large German areas under Prussian leadership, excluding the Habsburg areas. Maseng argues that if Sweden/Norway had supported Denmark in the war of 1864, the Prussian forces could have been defeated. In such a situation, the conditions for more extensive cooperation between the three units of the Nordic state system would have been greatly improved. In the end, however, Denmark had to fight that war alone, and since no modification of the Nordic state system followed (except for Denmark loosing more of its German areas), we provide no further analysis here. But the episode illustrates how the question of links to Germany became very urgent. One of the moves that started the development towards a new critical period (1905-1914) was King Oscar II's conviction that the union between Sweden and Norway had to look to Germany for security vis-a-vis Russia.

For most of the 19th century, namely, Russia had been seen as the most threatening landpower. In the mid-19th century, under the impact of panslavism (1967: Ch. 1), Russia's focus had increasingly moved to the southern European slavic areas around the Black sea. This area was also of economic importance as Russia's

³⁹ Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, p. viii, notes the abrupt change: in 1861 the Navy ordered more naval timber than ever before, but in 1862, iron had replaced wood!

corn exports followed the rivers to the Black sea, then being shipped out through the Turkish straits (1967: 9). But Russian expansion in this part of the world was halted in the Crimean War 1854-6 (1967, Ch. 4). This Russian setback was a condition for Bismarck's establishment of Prussian Germany as "an empire in the middle" (1967: 209). In the 1860s and 1870s, Bismarck strove to maintain a "Crimean war constellation" (1967: 211), since continuing tension between Russia and England would give him room to consolidate Prussian Germany. Russia tried again to reach Constantinople (Russian-Turkish war of 1877), but was cut off by the Royal Navy (1967: 219, Ch. 12).

Maseng claims that this new setback was followed by a change in Russian orientation, away from panslavism to a more specific Russian nationalism which legitimated expansion into Asia (a move spurred by Germany, 1972: Ch. 12). As predicted by Dostojevski (1967: 229f), in Asia "Russia's America" could emerge, based on that region's enormous resources and the guidance of Russian specialists in industry and trade. With the trans-siberian railway, Russia proceeded on its Asian mission in the 1890s, leaving the slaviv south-east European areas in the hands of a declining Habsburg empire interacting with the other great powers. Maseng draws the broad lines here as follows:

British diplomacy had gathered together virtually the whole West against dynamic Russia and its panslavism, thereby halting the Russian westwards thrust towards Europe (the Berlin congress [after the Russian-Turkish war, 1878]). But Russia also had an eastern front, in the Asian direction. Russia's activity here was of more direct significance for the British empire than Russia's earlier pressure in the Near Orient, against Donau and Balcan. — Just as France some time before its Great Revolution had beaten the British Empire in America — enabling the North American secession from England and the loss of "Britain's First Empire" — a hundred years later Russia now saw it as its goal to beat the British in Asia, thereby allowing India — "Britain's Second Empire" — to break loose from Britain's dominance. (1967: 276 f)

With the globalization of power politics, England was running the danger of overextension (noticeable with the Boer war) and had to readjust its global commitments. In the Napoleonic war, England's most feared alliance had been that between France and Russia, Now France was relatively weaker and Germany a new power marked by impressive economic dynamism. In the three last decades of the 19th century, there were long spells during which England stood alone facing various groupings of the continental great powers.⁴⁰ Should the largest participants in these groups — Russia, France and Germany — end up in the same group, forming a triple alliance, England's isolation would turn into a "nightmare" (1972: Ch. 12). To manipulate the balance of power properly, a British alliance with two of these three was probably required.

We can thus distinguish two major possible outcomes, depending on whether Russia allied with Germany or with England (1953: 27). The first — which we shall call *Germany encircled* — would be a British-led alliance with France and

⁴⁰ See the overview of international alignments 1815-1917 in Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, London 1999, Table 5.

Russia, one which would be stronger than Germany. The second — which we shall call a *New Continental Bloc* — would join Germany and Russia (cooperation in the Baltic was a main tool to secure such cooperation) and — the German Kaiser assumed — then also attract France. Such an alliance could gather enough strength to isolate England, which would imply a failure of England's balance of power manipulation leaving England without any ally on the mainland. England would not exactly be encircled, but its maritime power would be vulnerable to strikes from the mainland ports — and the Danish straits were here crucial.

We know in retrospect that the first option eventually was realised, and this was the constellation that led to World War 1 (1972: Ch. 10). But it was only realised through a string of critical junctures, historical situations where trends towards the other option were certainly important factors! Maseng's work contains highly detailed analyses of these junctures.

Maseng claims that in the period 1902-07, we can trace "one of the strangest scene-shiftings ever seen in world politics" (1972: Ch. 12). Through the last decades of the 19th century, British strategy had mainly confronted Russia and France. Following some attempts to establish an understanding with Germany (1972: Ch. 16), the focus now shifted to define Germany as the primary challenger, who was aiming to confront England in its home waters, the North sea (1972: Ch. 15). From 1902, the two powers entered into a major naval race (1972: Ch. 16). Germany's naval build-up was a consequence of the view that a populous industrial country needed a large navy to secure its overseas imports of foodstuffs from overseas. The colonies Germany had been able to get in Africa were economically insignificant, but at the turn of the century, its Near East activities were extensive, as witnessed by the Germany construction (starting 1899) of the Bagdad railway (1967: 233-5).

Besides striving to encircle Germany, England could also chose to go for preventive action, that is, to destroy the German fleet before it was fully built up (1972: Ch. 15). But at the same time, Russia had reached the shores of East Asia. England wanted to halt this expansion (which implied a potential clash with Russia), but also to direct Russia against the central powers (especially Germany), which (1972: Ch. 10) would imply that this landed giant again directed its energies towards the southern areas of Europe (and this implied that England had to make friends with Russia, 1972: Ch. 16). Maseng has several discussions of this strategic challenge (1972: Ch. 5, Ch. 8). In the earliest years of the 20th century, England made four decisive geopolitical moves:

First, in the Hay-Pauchefote Accord of 1901, Britain abandoned any military engagement in North America, a final acceptance of its loss of the "first empire". This was the start of the famous Anglo-American special relationship.

Second, in January 1902, an Anglo-Japanese alliance was established, leaving Britain less exposed in the Far East. The main point was to support Japanese military mobilisation against Russia (1972: Ch. 12). As a consequence of Russia's recent expansion, war broke out between Japan and Russia in February 1904. Russia lost some of her ships, and had to surrender Port Arthur to Japan, while Japan increased its influence in Korea. The Anglo-Japanese treaty of alliance was renewed after Japan's victory in this war.

Third, in 1904 a major break in the European alliance structure occurred: Following unsuccessful proposals to both Russia and Germany, England established

its *Entente Cordial* with France in 1904, following earlier more occasional cooperation (Crimean war). The bitter enemies of the Napoleonic age would be on the same side in both the 20th century world wars. From 1904, then, we can trace a grand struggle in which the Anglo-French entente competed with Germany to win Russia for its side. But the situation was complex and it was not until 1906/7 that France was securely linked to England's side.

Fourth, given the definition of Germany as primary challenger, British naval power was concentrated in the home waters. Under the new, energetic Navy commander, Sir John Fisher (1972: Ch. 6), the Royal Navy regrouped its fleet starting 1904. They prepared against German attack: the German navy faced three times its strength in battleships. Fisher indicated that the Brits could enter the Baltic without any concern for Danish neutrality (1972: Ch. 9).⁴¹

The sum of these four moves was that England scaled down engagements in Asia and in America, turning back to Europe, seeking allies on the Continent in order to isolate Germany. The main objection was to block a German/Russian or German/Russian/French alliance (1972: Ch. 12), establishing a balance of power favourable to Britain.

This "sensational change in England's system of foreign policy" (1972: Ch. 10) implied that the tensions between the great powers were brought back to Norden's doorsteps. The events that led to a modification of the Nordic three state system belong to this conjuncture: the landwards expansion of Russia in Asia, Germany as a strong new power in the middle, and a refocusing of British power towards Northern Europe. Although Russian foreign policies had for a long time been concerned with the Baltic and Øresund (increasingly important given the unification of Germany), the activities in the Near East (Turkish straits) and recently Far East (Tsushima strait) had been more important in the 19th century. When the focus of the great powers was directed back to Nordic waters, they also entered into a struggle for the loyalty of the small Nordic countries. Germany hoped to tempt them into a broad alliance with Russia, while England now realised that the Sound and the Belts were as important as in the days of naval stores, and that supporting points on the North sea coast would also be crucial.

Furthermore, other Nordic raw materials gained importance. Industrial capitalism had reached its phase of heavy engineering, based on iron, steel, electricity and chemicals. Sweden's iron ore deposits were crucial inputs to German steel industry, whether it produced for peace or for war, and supply lines would be particularly crucial if Germany was encircled in a war. Supplies were shipped via the Baltic, but the huge ore fields in the inlands of Northern Sweden could now be exploited, thanks to the Kiruna-Narvik railway (Ofotbanen), completed in 1902, which was in operation even when the Baltic froze in the winter. This ore was then shipped along the Norwegian coast to German North Sea ports.

Germany's upgraded naval capacities was a major new feature of the situation. If Russia confronted Germany, Germany could strike towards Russia in the Gulf of Finland, but if Russia and Germany cooperated, they could strike out from the Danish straits and hit England in the North Sea (1953: 46, see 1953: 248f for an extensive discussion). In 1903, Germany and Russia wanted to join a grand asso-

⁴¹ Pertti Luntinen, *The Baltic Question, 1903-1908*, Helsinki 1975, s. 13-15, Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, London 1976, Ch. 8.

ciation of the Nordic states to protect the Baltic, referring to Denmark's vulnerability to British strikes such as that of Nelson in 1807 (1953: 39). A few years later there were discussions on a "Zollverein" that would constitute a "modernized continental blockade" (1953: 47).

This open situation (1902-07) was transformed — a process Maseng traces in detail in his third volume (1972) — into a relatively fixed alignment in 1907: the Triple Entente of England, France and Russia. But there was much back and forth before that. At times a German-Russian alignment was close at hand. The German Kaiser hoped that such an alignment would tempt even France to break with England and to join a broad continental bloc.

The first major change in the Nordic state system was dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden in 1905. There is no space here to recapitulate the internal developments that led to strong demands for Norwegian independence. As already noted, Maseng takes them as given (1972: Ch. 10). We enter into this story at the time of the intense negotiations on the future of the union in 1904-5, especially the "June-crisis" of 1905. Sweden pointed to the Russian threat, especially the policy of russification in Finland, but there was no consensus on the risks. Negotiations were terminated. Sweden required Norway to remain loyal to the union (*lydrikepunktene*). Both the main Norwegian political parties now supported the claim for full independence.

The Union King had hoped for assistance from some great power, not armed assistance, but at least help in talking the nationalistic Norwegians away from secession. As late as in the spring of 1905, England's attitude to Norway's wish for secession was negative (1972: Ch. 10). The King also hoped that the great powers would agree not take action if Sweden chose to use arms to keep Norway in the union. But in the end, there was no Swedish military intervention. According to Maseng, the recent shifts in the relation between the great powers explain why none of them were interested in supporting the Union King.

We shall here follow Maseng's account of how events that followed from England's revised strategies impinged on Nordic developments. British diplomacy succeeded in staging a cunning game, which demonstrated its "political mastery" (1972: Ch. 5): at the same time, they weakened Russia and brought her into the Anglo-French entente. Russia suffered setbacks in its war with Japan, and they needed a greater naval presence in that area. British regulations following the Crimean and Turkish wars prevented the Russian Black Sea fleet from passing through the Turkish straits. In 1903, England had judged these regulations less important and were willing to allow passage of Russia's Baltic Sea fleet, but as the Russo-Japanese war unfolded in 1904, England also honoured its alliance with Japan and indicated that they would not allow that fleet to leave the Mediterranean (1972: Ch. 1, Ch. 16). Thus, Russia had to send its Baltic fleet to East Asia (1953: 41). England could not block this fleet at Øresund, that would have meant war with Russia (1972: Ch. 8-9). Furthermore, they did not prevent the German's from supplying coal to the Russian Baltic fleet on its way to the East (1953: 42), supplies that were seen as a symbol of solidarity between Russia and Germany (1972: Ch. 8).

While it was part of the new British line to arm Japan against Russia (they expected the Baltic fleet to loose after the long journey, 1972: Ch. 8), at the same

time, both France and England made use of their positions as the main European centers of financing to attract Russia:

Financial matters now, as always, played a major role. First, England supported Japan financially in order to halt Russia's expansion in Asia. Then France used financial measures to prevent Russia from allying with Germany and to pull Russia into the Anglo-French entente. (1953:42f)

In 1904-05 there were strong tensions between England and Germany. The German navy was alarmed by the redeployment of the Royal Navy. This crisis "stimulated the *Admiralstab* to intensify preparations for its operations plan against Britain, which since 1899 had involved a defensive strategy in the North Sea together with the overrunning of Denmark and even southern Sweden by the German army in order to make the Baltic a *mare clausam*." ⁴² Preparations had been made in mid-November 1904 to execute this plan, the problem was that the plan would block Russia's access to sea (1953: 42). Thus, it was soon decided against the plan in order to maintain good terms with Russia. Also, the Germans were hoping for Russian loyalty.

This brings us to the mid-1905 events: the Russian Baltic fleet reached the Far East after a difficult journey, but was totally destroyed by the Japanese in the battle of the Tsushima strait in late May/early June 1905 [1972: Ch. 12]. Just months later, England confirmed its alliance with Japan, while Japan gained Korea, the local Russian railway systems, territories on mainland China and half the Sakhalin Island. At home, in Russia's central areas, grave domestic turmoil picked up in a situation where 3/4 of the Army, and all the railway troops were in Manchuria. Russia's Asian adventure had failed.

England tried to attract Russia in Europe, but still let its Asian ally humiliate her! Russia's naval power was now partly destroyed, partly locked into the Black Sea. Russia was more dependent on Germany. Both Russian public opinion and the Tsar held that it was primarily England, not Japan, that had halted Russian expansion in the Far East (1972: Ch. 14). A German-Russian alliance had been quite close in late 1903/early 1904, again in the fall of 1905 (1972: Ch. 15). In the summer of 1905, a new continental bloc was again dangerously close. Maseng discusses the Russo-German Björkö-agreement of late June 1905 (1972: Ch. 9) and new problems in Morocco (France's main gain from the Entente) that weakened the Anglo-French understanding (1972: Ch. 11). A convergence between Russia, Germany and France was a distinct possibility. In the end, however, the continental bloc option failed, mainly because German foreign policies were ridden by internal frictions (between the Kaiser and his Foreign Office) that barred Germany from fully exploiting the favourable situation. In particular, Maseng judges the Moroccan policies of the German Foreign Office as a major mistake (1972: Ch. 12, 13). He concludes:

The competition over Russia was finally won by Britain. Rather than forming a Germanic-British bloc against a slavico-roman one (which had seemed a likely

⁴² Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*, London 1980, p. 273.

development at the turn of the century), England joined the slavico-roman bloc against the central powers. (1953:44)

As for Asia, British diplomats held that the second Anglo-Japanese treaty would deter Russia from rearming in order to beat Japan again. Russia would then direct its attention back to Europe (1972: Ch. 12). Maseng here (1972: Ch. 12) gives a detailed discussion of Russia's slide away from Germany and towards England. He implies that Russia was de facto with Britain and France as early as the fall of 1905, although the alliance was not formal until 1906.⁴³

The Russian setback at Tsushima undermined the strategy of the Swedish Union King, who could no longer expect that England would care about the danger that Russia might invade Scandinavia. Russia was now weakened. England was back to the same position as in 1814: the preferred solution was an independent Norway. There was convergence between the Norwegian secessionists and the seapower. The Norwegian leaders knew about England's stance. They had less information about Berlin. The German Kaiser wanted the Swedes to use their power, but it seems he did not push the matter.

England's success brought the "Germany encircled"-option closer. In the efforts to forge Germany and Russia had succeeded, Maseng claims, Norwegian secession would have been less likely. Together, these countries would have preferred a united Norden, blocking the seapower from foothold. But the Swedish groups trying to save the union were in any case not happy about support from such an alliance, they detested Russia.

Maseng (1953: 50f) also discusses another counterfactual development that would have made a dissolution of the Norwegian/Swedish-union less likely: Russia would have tried to become the great Baltic power against England and Germany. In that case, England and Germany might have allied, and they would have preferred Norway and Sweden to remain together in order to form the strongest possible barrier against Russia. The earlier "system of foreign policies" (before 1902/03) would have been likely to produce such an outcome.

Both these possibilities would have given better chances for the Union King, and they would have implied less encirclement of Germany. But none of these alliances occurred. Since Germany was now England's main concern, they positively wanted to support Norwegian independence.

Although they had largely achieved the masterpiece of first humiliating Russia and then making friends with her, the British were still worried about Germany. They were perhaps even worried that Russia might change its mind and ally with Germany anyway. Germany was still building its fleet, and might on its own gain sufficient naval capabilities to hit the seapower through the Danish straits. The Germans could start from their naval bases on the Elbe delta and in Kiel (1972: Ch. 6-8). For this reason, continued control of the Sound was important (1972: Ch. 14). England was still superior, and Germany knew of the threats against its fleet. Under Fischer, the Royal Navy trained for the scenario of entering the Baltic via the "Nordic gate", drawing the German army towards the Baltic coast, thus preventing it from getting to the Channel coast through France (1972: Ch. 15).

⁴³ Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, Table 5.

Furthermore, support points on Norway's southern tip became geopolitically important for Britain. It would be much easier to secure such points of support if there was a fully independent Norwegian state:

One would have to assume that Gothenburg and other harbours on the Swedish west coast would be obstinately defended, and the same would be the case for ports on the Norwegian south and east coast, as long as they were covered by the common defence force of the union. It would be easier to strike a deal with a Norway that had been split out of the union. The negotiations on our treaty of integrity made out that England was not willing to guarantee Norway's neutrality, only its integrity. (1953: 48, 1972: Ch. 15).

Finally, Øresund, the Norwegian coast and the Baltic were now also important for seapower offensives that could exhaust Germany by blocking its external supplies:

Nordic raw materials, and the geographical location of Norway (which made blockade by the seapower of the huge landpower difficult), gained prime importance in the foreign policies of the great powers. In order to block dangerous developments, Britain was again forced to conduct a policy of disruption towards the Nordic area. Within this framework, Norway's 1905-experience can be seen. (1953: 64)⁴⁴

Germany's weak spot was raw materials (1953:47), given the danger of encirclement and the country's lack of resource-rich colonies. Both France and England received supplies by sea. But even England was afraid of being locked out from Nordic raw materials: a united Sweden/Norway could have put stronger restrictions on the access to raw materials such as fish, agrarian products (from Denmark), forest products, paper and pulp, Swedish iron ore, and certain metals and alloys. Furthermore, with the world's third largest merchant fleet and many skilled seamen, Norway could provide important shipping services for England and her allies.

England's diplomats knew of Oscar II's friendly attitude to Germany. Sweden wavered between neutrality and a German link. If the Scandinavian peninsula remained dominated by Sweden, they held, the area would be a potential Germany ally. They also believed Germany could attract Denmark. Against the Russians, a Norwegian/Swedish union had been fine, but now England would prefer Bernadotte's Norden split (1953:48), since that would be unfavourable for Germany. On its own, it was assumed, Norway would lean towards England, and England now wanted better control of the Western areas of the Scandinavian peninsula.

This was the context of the Karlstad-negotiations in late June 1905. At these negotiations, England played a withdrawn, but conscious role behind the curtains. Its diplomacy managed to split Norway and Sweden, maintaining a close alliance with Norway, but managing to keep Sweden close too. Thus, Sweden was pulled away from Germany, and England increased its chances of an alliance with Russia. Had the Karlstad-negotiations broken down, Sweden and Germany could have struck an alliance and moved to block the Sound.

⁴⁴ But this is not emphasized in Maseng's later account (1972: Ch. 14).

Norway gained full independence from Sweden on September 27, 1905. Republican pressures were warded off (1972: Ch. 14), and on November 18, the Danish prince Carl of Denmark was crowned as Haakon VII, King of Norway. He was married to a British princess, representing yet another tie to England. Independent Norway immediately entered into negotiations with the great powers, aiming to get its integrity (*unkrenkelighet*) and neutrality sanctioned by international agreements. We shall not discuss this further here, although Maseng provides a lengthy analysis (1972: Ch. 14), particularly emphasizing England's unwillingness to grant Norwegian and Nordic neutrality, given the imminent danger (1906/7) of an Anglo-German naval clash in the North Sea.

Tension between Germany and England — the two vital seapowers in the North sea — was the “new danger for Norden”, the danger that triggered the dissolution of the union. Ironically, this tension should really have been seen as a factor making “a common Nordic foreign policy” — and there was in fact a wave of Scandinavianism in 1905 (1972: Ch. 14) — even more important than it had been during the time when Russia was the main challenge.

The change that had just taken place, made possible the dissolution of the union, a dissolution already favoured by strong internal forces. But it also posed the demanding claim that the dissolution was undertaken in such a way that future cooperation between them was facilitated. (1953: 53)

Our account of the processes that led to 1905 includes elements that also help explain the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914: Germany's encirclement by the Triple Entente, the relocation of geopolitical tension to Europe and the difficult relations between Russia and Habsburg in the Balkans (1972: Ch. 13).

As a consequence of World War I, the last piece of a new Nordic state system fell into place. Mobilisation for Finnish independence had gained pace since the 1904/5-period, interacting with the general domestic turmoil in Russia. After the Bolchevik revolution of 1917, the newly formed Finnish parliament declared Finnish independence, and the new nation was immediately trapped in a civil war along class-lines.⁴⁵

Although Maseng has scattered discussions of Finnish developments (we shall soon return to some of them), I do not find anywhere in his five books an analysis of how Finnish secession from Russia was influenced by great power involvement. Since this essay is limited to a presentation of Maseng's views, we shall not discuss this topic further here.

By 1918, then, the Nordic area consisted of five independent states, since in this count, we include Iceland, which Maseng never included in his analysis.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For some comparative notes on Finland in this respect, see Lars Mjøset, *The Irish Economy in a Comparative Institutional Perspective*, Dublin 1992, p. 228-9, p. 234-7.

⁴⁶ As the fifth one, we include Iceland, which Maseng nowhere discusses: on Iceland's independence, there are a few notes in Mjøset, ed., *Norden dagen derpå*, p. 34-5 and 42. Iceland gained limited home rule in 1874, limited parliamentarism in 1904 and full sovereignty in 1918, except foreign policies (still a Danish prerogative). During World War 2, Iceland declared herself neutral, but was occupied by British troops in

The Nordic neutral five state system

In the period between 1918 and World War 2, the five Nordic states all pursued a security policy of neutrality. This reflected their experience in World War 1: Norden remained a neutral zone.

According to Maseng, Nordic neutrality was largely due to very specific favourable circumstances. In his third volume (1972: Ch. 17), he extensively analyses the security dilemmas involved in the Danish turn to an active policy of neutrality in the years preceding the war (1972: Ch. 15, 17). The harsh reality was that Germany's naval bases were so close to Storebelt that in a tense situation, the Germans could very rapidly close the relevant passages (by mines, etc.) unless the Danes themselves did so (1972: Ch. 15).

In continuity with the Anglo-German naval tension of 1904-9, Fischer and Churchill in 1914 favoured a navy-oriented strategy of striking through the Sound and the Belts. This would force the Nordic area into the war. Also the Germans knew that this was their most vulnerable point. The British would then hit Germany by landing British and Russian troops on the Baltic coast, as close to Berlin as possible (1972: Ch. 6). But another, more army-oriented fraction favoured support for France on the German western front. This was of course also favoured by the French. Fischer lost out and became an ardent critic of the British attempt to "become a great Continental power — forgetting the Heaven-sent gift of an incomparable Navy" (quoted in 1972: Ch. 6).

When the war broke out, Denmark established a mine barrier in Storebelt in 1914. This was in line with an active policy of neutrality, and the Germans preferred that the Danes did it. It did not deter England, however. In 1915, Maseng claims, they still planned to hit against the northern front, as in the Fisher/Churchill-scenario. How far this planning had proceeded became known after the war (1972: Ch. 15). But then England suffered unexpected losses in the other strait, the Dardanelles. Thus, the British thrust through the Sound and Belts were never carried out (1972: Ch. 8).

Maseng also mentions two other reasons why Norden was lucky enough to remain outside the war: Russia was part of the Triple Entente and preferred to advance in the south, in the Baltic, northern areas, they preferred status quo (1972: Ch. 15). Finally, in the war, the Germans chose to be less aggressive as a seapower than what could have been expected. England's extensive blockade policy was thus not really challenged.

Swedish liberals suggested a common Nordic defence of neutrality in the years preceding World War 1 (1953: 107-109). This was most likely the first proposal of defence cooperation, in the brief period when there was actually just a four power system. But Norway preferred to consolidate its independence.

As neutral countries during the war, Norden enjoyed a wartime boom, exporting large amounts and struggling with bottlenecks in the production of a number of crucial inputs. Sweden was better able than Norway to resist Britain's conditions.

1940, replaced by U.S. troops 1941. A bilateral agreement with the U.S. on the use of Keflavik was signed in 1951, and like Denmark and Norway, Iceland was a member of Nato since 1949.

Sweden had industrialized later than Norway. In connection with its large iron ore deposits, Sweden developed an advanced metal and machine tools industry. To a greater extent than Norway, Sweden was a landpower, so maritime interest had a much weaker influence than in Norway. Although a small state, Norway commanded the third largest merchant fleet in the world, and was thus drawn towards the large seapower. Norway agreed to let some of her ships be used by the entente (1953: 133 ff). This bolstered the westwards loyalties of the ship-owners. Through sectoral agreements, England exerted extensive controls over Norwegian business, imposing significant constraints on Norway's trade with Germany.

Sweden exploited its position as a transit country to Russia, England's ally. She thereby managed to secure imports of important inputs to her industry, counteracting bottlenecks. England was not able to prevent Sweden from maintaining many economic ties to Germany (1953: 113f, 117). This has been an important background to Sweden's consistent policy of neutrality in the 20th century.

Maseng also sketches a counterfactual alternative to the Swedish-Norwegian split in this respect:

A similar policy of compensation in all three countries, with continuous cooperation and mutual support, would have brought results and a very different Nordic wartime attitude than what the world actually got to see. Among the Nordic peoples, it would have led to a mentality that could have ensured cooperation between them in the interwar period. The attitude of the business sectors would have been different. The tendency not to consider the neighbouring countries in any respect, the inclination to consider the business of ones own country as an addition or annex to the economies of the great powers which so easily emerged when each of the countries had organized their economic matters with a strong emphasis on sales to and purchases from the world market — would have been displaced by a partly novel viewpoint. Norden would have become a reality once more. (1953: 140)

The policy of armed neutrality required tight cooperation between small neighbouring states. Thus, the vision of Nordic economic unification became a central element for the adherents of such a security policy. The Nordic negotiations on trade and economic coordination aimed to establish the economic preconditions for political unification. But these negotiations broke down in 1921-22. Maseng claims that this was not due to mutual fear of dominance within the Nordic state system, but rather a consequence of great power influence (1964: 57).

Maseng also claims that the League of Nations, dominated by the great powers, convinced Norwegian nationalist groups that there was no danger of more war, so the latter concluded that there was no need for extensive cooperation with Sweden. It was not long since the union had been dissolved. Finally, the social democratic labour movement was skeptical of more resources and manpower to the military forces, which they saw mainly as the government's tool in internal class struggles. The social democratic movement was indifferent to the policy of armed neutrality.

As for Finland, the USSR pursued a relatively moderate strategy towards the new Finnish state. But when the European situation deteriorated in the late 1930s, the USSR demanded from Finland a statement of neutrality. The main security

concern was Russia's wish to prevent military actions through the Gulf of Finland. The USSR even wanted a supporting point on Finnish territory (the Hogland island), arguing that the defense of Leningrad depended in this.

The Finnish government was in 1938/9 not able to satisfy the Russians. According to Maseng, Mannerheim and others held that Finland should accommodate the Russians. Mannerheim wanted to trade these concessions with USSR acceptance of a joint Swedish and Finnish defence of the Åland islands, which would have been a first step towards Nordic common defence. But the government feared that any concessions to the Russians would imply political defeat in the next election. They did not believe that the break in the negotiations November 1939 would lead Russia to declare war (1953: 259f). Maseng claims that Finland should have taken the burden of letting the USSR get its support point, even if this was problematic for domestic politics.

Before we see how the Winter War and the German occupation of Norway and Denmark were interlinked, and thus spelled the end of the neutral Nordic five state system, we shall briefly sketch Maseng's analysis of the broader context at the beginning of World War 2.

Unlike the run-up to World War 1, England did not manage to prevent a Russo/German alliance. The Hitler/Stalin-non-aggression pact was signed in August 1939. Given this cooperation with the USSR, Germany was better placed in the first years of World War 2 than during World War 1, since the Eastern neighbour was not part of encirclement. Germany had somehow better access to supplies of food and raw materials. The western powers certainly had reasons to worry (1972: Ch. 17), as long as this constellation prevailed they would not be able to pressure Germany from the east. But Germany was weak in terms of access to world oceans: Hitler had believed Germany could expand in the Donau and Balcan areas in cooperation with England: he thus had stuck to his 1935 agreement with Britain, according to which the German fleet should be no larger than 1/3 of the British fleet. Neither did the Nazi regime build enough submarines (1953: 225).

When the war started, and Poland capitulated, the Germans could focus on the Western front only. Securing its industrial muscle, the Ruhr, was seen as crucial. Since Germany's supply situation would very soon deteriorate, they decided to take action quickly. Benelux became the focal point, an area which, in Maseng's analysis, was important both in offensive (point of departure for submarines and bombers) and defensive terms (avoid allied bombing of Ruhr).

British strategies relied on their World War 1-experience. In comparison with the age of Napoleon, the broad masses of the populations were now dependent on industrial products and a blockade which hit directly at the raw materials supplies could hamper the productive capacity of the opponent's economy, undermine the legitimacy of its wartime leadership and create bottlenecks in their production of military equipment. What the earlier mercantilist blockade had tried to affect, the financial capacity of states, could no longer be disturbed, because this sector was now fully organized by the interventionist state (1953: 110-114, 245f).

England now drew the consequences of their experience in the first world war. The strategic raw materials had now become the factor which determined the two warring great powers' relationship to the Scandinavian peninsula. The fact

that Germany had reoriented, and now had only a weak navy, was to the detriment of the Nordic countries. In World War 1, Germany's navy was so strong, that it would have been content with only certain Norwegian coastal areas, and in fact even without such. In World War 2, Germany had to occupy the whole of Norway to protect its North-Scandinavian raw materials base.⁴⁷

And if Norway was to be occupied, Germany also needed to occupy Denmark on the way.

In Maseng's view, the German thrust to the North was not an offensive one. As a seapower, Britain had been able to push Germany towards seeking a purely continental basis for its raw materials supplies. Germany lacked a large enough commercial fleet and lacked international currency. Germany relied on supplies from the continental mainland and held that the Scandinavian peninsula to be part of their mainland block. The basic German interest was a neutral Norden, which would simply open lines of raw materials supply to their war economy. Germany tried eagerly to get Norway to pursue armed neutrality in 1939/40.

In fact the governments of the Scandinavian countries had embarked on a policy of hoarding resources, in order to become less dependent on external supplies.

They were thus on the right way. Had they been tough enough towards profit motives of the business community and towards the consumers with their wish for an affluent life style despite the war, they could have gone all the way. The pity is that they did not. The Germans could before and during the war count on the prevailing inclination in the Scandinavian countries to maintain economic ties both with Germany as well as with England. It was quite natural that the German plans presupposed this, and the British knew that they did. The Scandinavian raw materials riches had become the neural point of the situation.

The other side had offensive purposes. The Anglo-French alliance that had declared war on Germany in August 1939 planned an attack in the North. Occupation of the area around Ofotbanen would deprive Germany of its raw materials supplies from Norway and Sweden. The two countries were now in a position similar to Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition, British air forces could hit German airplanes from airports in Southern Norway. It was assumed that the Norwegians would not resist, they had loyalty to the British. The Western allies had only offensive motives, no independent preventive motive (which they had in 1807). They did not believe that Germany would gain any military advantage by occupying Norway. But they needed an excuse to strike against the Nordic countries. This need related to a distinct feature of British diplomacy:

the unease it felt if there was a danger of provoking the general opinion, its restless concern to arrange all matters in such a way that England would stand as a champion for all that is right and good in this world, and especially as the

⁴⁷ In the following, I rely on "Optegnelser angående mitt arbeide med utenrikske anliggende som vedrører forhistorien til 9. april 1940", a 46 page ms. dated January-February 1946, signed Einar Maseng; Riksarkivet RA-P-0964, Hyllennr. 3B 036 5/4. This and the next quote (with no page-references) are from this source.

protector of the weak, as a state that small nations could trustfully admire. British diplomacy was very careful to develop their skills in this respect. This was all the more necessary since England's strategy was such that it would often crash with the interests of the small countries. The fact that England so often was able to win them and utilize them for their own purposes anyway, was to a large extent due to its economic power, and its command over the supplies to the small countries, but still maybe most of all its ability, its skill in exploiting all chances, of finding ways out of all situations, in short: its political intelligence. — Had not England, upon its hard armour-plating worn a mantle looking so mild and friendly, England would never have achieved any of its political results. (1953: 215 f)

With the German-Russian pact of August 1939, Hitler proved willing to let the USSR take some kind of action against Finland. This led to the Winter War. The USSR attack on Finland on September 30th, 1939, left Norden in a highly critical situation. Here was the excuse that the British — and even more the French — needed to involve the Scandinavian peninsula in the war. Maseng holds that if that war had been avoided, the allied actions towards Norway and Sweden would not have been possible (1953: 252).

Maseng was personally involved in these events. As the Norwegian envoy to Moscow, he had first hand information on the situation. In February 1940, he submitted a memo and travelled to Oslo to convince the government that they had to stick firmly to the policy of armed neutrality: they should deter the British by sending Norwegian soldiers to Narvik and by defence pact with Sweden.⁴⁸ The western allies were short of soldiers so it would not be impossible for Norway to pursue a policy of active neutrality, as Denmark had done in 1914 (Maseng explores this comparison in 1972: Ch. 17). But the responses he got indicated a kind of fatalism: Norway would be pulled into the war anyway, like in 1807. In retrospect this response can be interpreted as one of the early steps towards Norway's break with the policy of armed neutrality, that is: the Norwegian turn towards explicit and formal alliance with the seapowers: the Atlantic alliance. Sweden, in contrast, stuck consistently to armed neutrality.

Troop deployments to the North, as Maseng proposed, would signal that Norway (preferably together with Sweden) would defend its territory against any great power. Only this would secure trust from Russia. In his memo of February 12, 1940 Maseng emphasized that Germany was well aware of the allied efforts, and for the small Nordic countries, the danger was that Germany might be tempted to preempt these efforts. Already in December 1939, the Germans had been well aware that an allied expedition to Narvik could block its supplies of iron ore,⁴⁹ and move the war to the Baltic, thereby undermining its planned westwards strike.

⁴⁸ Maseng summarizes his advice in "Optegnelser angående mitt arbeide med utenrikske anliggende som vedrører forhistorien til 9. april 1940.

⁴⁹ Cf. Michael Tamelander & Niklas Zetterling, *9. april — Nazitysklands invasjon av Norge*, Oslo 2001 (Swedish original 2000), p. 22: In 1938, German need for iron was about 21 million tonnes, its own supplies were 3.6, supplies from Sweden were 6 and half of this was shipped out via Narvik. In short, Swedish supplies were somewhat more than a fourth of total German needs, and about a third of its imports.

Both they and the Russians saw that the real goal of the planned Western invasion was to occupy the ore fields in Northern Sweden and the railway connection to Narvik. When the Russians made peace with Finland in March 1940, a main concern was that they feared an allied attack on the Northern areas, sensing an anti-Soviet sentiment in all the Nordic countries. The peace of Moscow was still very hard on Finland (1953: 252).

The Western allies now had to find a new excuse for their northern expedition. In fact, a lot of internal British as well as Franco-British tensions played themselves out, but a final decision was to place mines in Norwegian waters, thereby forcing German freight ships into international territory where they could be attacked. The Western allies thus planned to violate Norwegian sovereignty.⁵⁰

Since the Germans were in a hurry, Hitler had wished to go directly towards the Channel. But in late February, he decided on action in the North before the westwards thrust. The German leaders held that it was unlikely that Norway be able to hold on to its neutrality. Maseng also notes that the British were so sure that their naval capabilities were more than strong enough to halt a preventive German attack, that — an exception to the general rule — they made no secret about their offensive plans (1953: 263).

To the surprise of almost everybody, Hitler's preemptive attack on Denmark and Norway on April 9th, 1940 was successful (1953: 236-8). British seapower was not in a position to block it, and the latter allied attempt to take Narvik failed. Nordic neutrality would have been even better for the Germans, but these actions at least partly blocked the historical strategy of the seapower. Hitler succeeded on the inner lines, combining panzer formations and fighter planes. Germany prevented the Western allies from using Norden as a base for operations via the Baltic sea. Germany faced no military threat from the north, and was able to retain its raw materials supplies. After preempting allied "indirect" actions in Norden, Nazi Germany also won on the Western front, as well as in the Mediterranean, countering the "harassing offensives" of the Western allies in Greece, Yugoslavia and Crete in 1940/41. But the historical strategy of the seapower worked in another respect: the defensive actions were costly in terms of resources and manpower.

Following Hitler's victories later in 1940, distrust accumulated between Russia and Germany: rivalries on Donau and in the Balcans reappeared. Finland was again squeezed between the great powers, and struck the Finnish-German transit treaty in September 1940. This treaty allowed the Germans to transport supplies via the Baltic sea and through Finland to the North of Norway. In October 1940, the Swedes suggested an association between Sweden and Finland, but Russia rejected such a proposal twice (1953: 253). In November 1940, Hitler told the USSR leaders that he would not accept Russian control over Finland. But this was not known in Finland before May 1941, as Germany and the USSR stood against each others. (1952: 253: Maseng compares to the situation in 1812.)

If the Winter War had been avoided — which it could have been — Finland would also have maintained its peace during the war between Russia and Germany. There can be no doubt that the Finnish leaders — men such as Paasikivi, Ryti and Mannerheim — had a sincere wish that Finland should not

⁵⁰ Tamelander & Zetterling, 9. april — *Nazitysklands invasjon av Norge*, p. 36-41.

become involved in it. But it was beyond their powers. The Finns felt threatened by Russia. Germany's prestige by June 1941 was overwhelming. In the first [Winter] war, the Finns had fought a desperate fight on their own. Now Germany was eager for a brother in arms. When the war with Germany was a fact, the Russians expected to see the Finns on Germany's side and began with an attack on Finland. (1953: 254)

Maseng emphasizes that this was a separate war of defence against the USSR. Finland avoided participation in German offensive attacks into USSR territory. The Norwegians encountered the same problem, and to a larger extent they fought with the Western allies (1953: 254).

With the Germans split from the USSR, Germany was again more encircled: the operations of the Western powers led to wide-spread fronts, which produced overstrain for the landpower. The seapower succeeded in provoking the Germans to take preemptive action in the following sense: the occupation of Norway and Denmark tied huge German forces up in the northern periphery throughout the war (1952: 94). As noted, in this respect the historical strategy of the seapower was still in action. Furthermore, the Norwegians responded by putting all its merchant shipping capabilities at the service of the Allied.

A parallel case was allied pressure on Greece and Turkey: Turkey denied British aid offers, but Greece and Yugoslavia were pushed and strongly influenced by the British. Small expeditions were landed in Greece, and Nazi occupation followed both in Greece and Yugoslavia. The allied lost legitimacy in Western opinion, but these "eccentric operations" were effective in binding the resources of the enemy.

Although the Nazi military leaders realised that they could themselves follow the indirect approach, hitting against the vulnerable peripheries of the seapower, they were unable to strike (e.g. in North Africa) with the range and firmness typical of the British actions. The Nazi regime had already over-strained itself. In the decisive battles that ended World War II, Maseng notes, Britain's economy of force was visible, since the British only had 6 percent of the participating divisions. British losses in World War 2 was only a fourth of their losses in World War 1 (1952: 96).

Maseng holds that the peace between the USSR and Finland in 1944 shows that the USSR would not pursue a policy of expansion everywhere. He sees continuities between tsarist and communist Russia: For 200 years, Russia tried to gain control over the Turkish straits, but never in that period had they tried to move into Norden. Of the five wars Russia participated in between 1840 and 1940: four were related to the East (especially the Black sea entrance), the fifth was in South-Asia (war with Japan) (1953: 255). The point seems to be that the moves against Finland during World War II were atypical. This point would be important as soon as the USSR became the main adversary of the West in the Cold War.

When Maseng describes the German occupation of Norway as defensive, he implies that the offensive actions of the Western allies, as well as Norway's unwillingness to hold firmly on to the policy of armed neutrality were responsible for the situation. Maseng's leading idea was loyalty to the Norwegian policy of armed neutrality, not support for the German move. In particular, he holds that the Germans made a big mistake in supporting Quisling. Maybe he holds that the Germans could have related to Norwegian authorities in a way similar to what they did

in Denmark, but I do not find that he discusses this at any point. He does, however, claim that it was the impact of the seapower and not the German occupation that was responsible for Norway's drift towards explicit ties with the Western seapower side.

What brought Norway to join its military forces with the very state which for its own strategy in the war had planned aggression against our country, was the influence and power that England exerted over Norwegian interests and Norwegian ways of thinking. (1953: 259 , cf. Chs. IV, V, VI)

But certainly, exerting this influence, both British and Norwegian political elites also could build on the hatred stirred by what Maseng calls a German "mistake".

In any case, we see here how Maseng's firm application of his geopolitical scheme brings him into a full confrontation with standard Norwegian interpretations — and particularly those prevailing when his books were published in the 1950s and 1960s — of these events. To Maseng, the Atlantic turn started with the betrayal of the principles of armed neutrality in early 1940. The conventional view has been that both the German attack and the alternative planned allied invasion were inevitable, neutrality in the war was impossible. Thus the main blame for the popular turn to Atlantic ties was the evil ways of the Nazis during their five years occupation of Norway. However, Maseng could still challenge the Cold War consensus, as we note below: he argued that like Germany, the USSR — both were landpowers — had no offensive aims in the Nordic area. Only the seapowers have an interest of involving small countries like the Nordic ones in a global war.

World War 2 led to a change in the Nordic five state system: the members of the system no longer agreed on a policy of armed neutrality! Finland was pulled towards the USSR, Sweden had its experience with armed neutrality confirmed, and Norway, followed by Denmark and Iceland, was already quite firmly tied to the West.

The Nordic Cold War state system

When the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949, the Nordic Cold War state system fell into place: Denmark, Norway and Iceland became Nato-members, Finland's signed its Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR (1948), while Sweden retained its armed neutrality.

Rather than regarding the Cold War as a clash between two different social and ideological systems, Maseng considers the U.S. as the heir to Britain as the dominant seapower, defining the USSR as its primary landed challenger. The seapower would counter the landpower by means of alliances with friendly states on both the main, resource-rich coastal areas of the East-Asian landmass — from Svalbard to the islands north of Japan. The result was Nato and the U.S.' Pacific alliance with Japan.

In continuity with Britain's situation, the challenge was "to get military foothold in the coastal areas of the landpower — bases or departure points for possible

operations" (1952: 97). Countering Russia, Britain had extended its reach from the Baltic via the Black Sea to the Japan sea. The U.S. now related to the whole Eurasian landmass, not so much through seapower, but through its superior airforce. In the early 1950s, Maseng notes, the U.S. had established bases in 29 countries around the Eurasian heartland. The Cold War, then, followed from a "natural principle followed by all states" (1952: 28): the USSR strengthened its positions, defensively in some areas, offensively in others.

In 1952, Maseng commented on the plans to include (Western) Germany in the Atlantic alliance. He pointed out that this was in line with the historical tendency whereby the reigning hegemon would ally with the defeated great power after a grand conflict (1952: 8). But he still predicted that the inclusion of Germany would undermine the Atlantic alliance, since Germany would strive to recover as an independent nation, to reunite and to continue its efforts of being the "third power".

We now know that this was not the case. Germany recovered its international status as a member of the Atlantic pact from 1955, and as a founding member of the EU since 1957. Only at the end of the Cold war, in 1991, Germany reunited. What Maseng did not predict was the U.S.-supported process of European integration. Even though the U.S. played the role as the seapower, the U.S. turned out to be a seapower that favoured integration of the *key* continental areas, often trying to emphasize that such integration should be the return for U.S. aid. The U.S. did this in direct opposition to the more traditional balance of power thinking of the earlier hegemon Britain.⁵¹

U.S.-supported integration covered the Western half of the continent: the west/east-cleavage separated core continental Europe from the remaining most populous part of the Eurasian landmass. The U.S. established a much more permanent alliance structure than what was seen during British hegemony. Nato was a broad security alliance with a U.S.-led command structure, and the U.S. also supported the EU. The USSR was now the primary landpower, while earlier participants in the European great power contests (England, Germany, France) were all allied with the U.S. (despite French reluctance). For the U.S. as the seapower there was no question of alliance with the USSR, while earlier, the seapower had always competed with its primary challenger to *ally* with Russia. The closest we get is the Kissinger/Nixon-alliance with China, much in line with classical European balance of power strategies.

In the permanent U.S. alliance structure, Nato was the military part. In this respect one element of continuity with British hegemony comes out clearly: also the U.S. was very eager to pursue cheap hegemony. A main reason why the U.S. supported EU-integration, was that this would make it easier for the continental Western European countries to put up the manpower for armies that together could match the Red Army. All had armies based on peacetime conscription, while the

⁵¹ Cf. the analysis in Mjøset, "Les significations historiques de l'eupéanisation", p. 102-110, and the typology of visions of European integration in Mjøset, "Vesteuropisk og nordisk integrasjon i etterkrigstiden", p. 136-141.

U.S. and England had professional armies, and strove to dominate in the business of nuclear missiles (although France did not trust this.⁵²

Maseng had argued that in the two world wars Denmark, Norway and Sweden had no offensive meaning to the landpower. What then about the Cold War? Would not the USSR be interested in the Nordic area? With reference to Denmark, Norway and Sweden, he answers no, since the Soviets had the Kola area on their own territory. If the USSR would approach the Western powers, Maseng notes — quite contrary to the whole corps of Cold War strategists — it would seek frontiers from Norden (1953: 246). In the Cold War period, Russia was — even more than earlier — drawn towards offensive action only in the Persian Bay, Suez and the North of Africa (1953: 257). Maseng held that Cold War public opinion (and research) in Scandinavia analysed the USSR in the light of its policy on the southern fronts. But in the north, there was no impact of panslavism. The lesson of history, he claimed, was that only in periods of Russian alliance with Western powers it opted for control of north-Atlantic areas, in order to safeguard supplies from the West.

But the seapower had an offensive motive in the Cold War: the U.S. needed advanced (*framskutte*) bases in Norden, from which they could strike into the USSR. Maseng holds that if the Nordic countries were able to resist Western pressure for such bases, they would stand a good chance of avoiding involvement in a new great power war (1953: 247). The seapower could use Norden offensively against the landpower, while the latter had preferred a neutral Norden.

The position in Norden presently is a continuation of the position as of the winter before April 9th 1940. The 'historical' strategy of the seapower pulls them towards actions against the flanking areas of the landpower. Under the pressure of the inclination of its opponent, the landpower search for ways to protect itself. The nervous vigilance of the Russians in the Baltic, at sea and in the air, and their intelligence-activities in the neighbouring countries is a function of the advancement of the Western military system to the Baltic entrance or east of it. (1952: 159 f)

Maseng feared that Denmark's and Norway's first formal alliance in modern history would make it all the more difficult to avoid involvement in a coming Third World War:

The novel feature of the Atlantic pact was the pushing ahead of USA's military system on the northern flank. The old Danish and Norwegian kingdoms, the "twin kingdoms" have been pulled into the system of Western bases. — It makes sense that there was great satisfaction in the West that one had now been able to win the support of two border areas which since the days of the Crimean war mainly had been holding on to the policy of neutrality. (1952: 84)

However, Maseng's analysis of Finland shows that this country forms an exception: The Finnish/Russian treaty of friendship (1953:260 f) states that Finland

⁵² Cf. the analysis in Mjøset & van Holde, "Killing for the State, Dying for the Nation", p. 78.

and the USSR jointly are to decide whether the situation merits USSR assistance. This is stronger than Norway's commitment to Atlantic cooperation, according to which Norway itself decides (1953: 261). Maseng relates this to differences in the geopolitical context:

Finland has offensive importance relative to Sweden and Northern Norway. But if the whole Scandinavian peninsula could be maintained as protected outside the war of the great powers, Finland would in the present world situation only have importance as a protective belt. (1953: 262)

Thus, the fenno-scandinavian scull-cap (*kalotten*) should become a neutral "buffer area" with a common defence (1953: 262-3). Sweden suggested a common neutral Nordic defence union in 1948-9. This reflected the Nordic experience in earlier wars. Cooperation in defence would also have allowed the five Nordic states to engage in serious discussions of economic integration. The study of such efforts in the postwar period shows well enough how the different security links — Denmark/Norway/Iceland westwards, neutral Sweden and Finland eastwards — was one of the factors that made coordination difficult.⁵³ The Cold War — as Maseng emphasized — became a disguise for keeping the small split. Ironically, however, the leading western Cold War power would gladly have seen Norden united, but only if all the units of the Nordic state system sided with the West, a requirement which Sweden and Finland could not at all satisfy.

A Nordic state system after the Cold War?

Maseng was concerned to keep Norden outside a third global war. Fortunately, Maseng's fears were not borne out. The Cold War did not escalate into hot war. The end of the Cold War implied a major change in international relations, unconnected to global war.

Maseng expected the Atlantic alliance to dissolve in the 1950s or 1960s. It is only now that we can spot such a trend. With the consolidation of the EU and greater Atlantic tension (as over the Iraq war in the spring of 2003), the world situation has become somewhat more similar to the pre-1945 world that Maseng was familiar with. But again, to analyse in the spirit of Maseng, we must consider not just similarities but differences!

A crucial question is whether it is at all relevant to see the U.S. as another seapower. The best analyses of U.S. hegemony emphasizes its unique historical roots.⁵⁴ Furthermore, as Maseng also noted, the U.S. took over Western leadership in a period where the advantages of the seapower had in important respects been reduced (1952: 21f). But one recent change is interesting in this respect: the revolution in military affairs, which happened after the end of the Cold War, as an effect of the new microelectronics techno-economic paradigm, seems to have given U.S.

⁵³ Cf. the analysis in Mjøset, "Vesteuropeisk og nordisk integrasjon i etterkrigstiden".

⁵⁴ Cf. recently, Perry Anderson, "Force and consent", *New Left Review*, New Series, 17, September/October 2002.

back some of the properties which characterized Britain at its peak as a naval power. The hegemon's superiority no longer primarily rests with rapid naval manoeuvres at the peripheries, but it certainly relies on superior military capacity by the airforce and on smart missiles, detection technologies, etc. Operations in the Balkans, in Afghanistan and in Iraq shows that.

But these operations point us to an even more basic change in comparison with the situation that Maseng analysed: what the hegemon today counters is not a major landpower striving for dominance of the Eurasian landmass. This landmass today consists of the EU, Russia and China, as well as very unruly areas in the Middle East and Central Asia. If there are peripheral operations, they are not conducted in order to block an aspiring ruler on that landmass. The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan was probably the last movement that could be seen in such a light. Russia's periphery has crumbled into a number of independent states, and the U.S. is well aware of its chances of recruiting these as clients. The arguments about dangers to world stability that were involved in the Anglo-American war against Iraq in 2003, are now believed by fewer and fewer, and no weapons of mass destruction have so far been traced after the fall of Saddam.

Rather, we find present post-Cold War conflicts in areas where the European great powers played complicated strategic games before World War 1. Great power actions have related to "rogue states", dictatorships that had developed regional aspirations (often with the aid of the hegemon), having then proved themselves as unmanageable. As for Iraq, the main link is to the specific geopolitics of the Middle East state system, a state system that includes the very unique ethno-political-religious dimension of a sionist state.

In Maseng's perspective one would certainly emphasize the role of these areas as raw materials producers. The geopolitics of oil are clearly very important, and can be analysed in line with Maseng's earlier analyses of the strategic and political role of raw materials. But the difference remains that present conflicts are linked to regionalized state systems, with no clear links to an overall strategy of ruling the Eurasian continent.

Maseng's analysis, as here reconstructed, focused on Norden as a regional state system. Since the Napoleonic wars, the seapowers intervened in Nordic matters basically because they were eager to contain or ally with the huge neighbouring landpowers. In this perspective, the Cold War was the last period in which the fear of Russian expansion was a crucial factor in world politics. If present conflicts are not related to such great power concerns, we find a closer analogy further back in history, before the Russian expansion started: The great powers intervened in the Nordic two state system in 1659 to prevent Sweden from absorbing Denmark/Norway, securing that such a unit — which potentially controlled the most important strategic raw materials at the time — would not rise to challenge their dominance as seapowers. In a similar way, the U.S. has through two Gulf Wars led a Western alliance that has tried to interfere with states that are suspected of striving for regional dominance — in an area containing some of the largest reserves of a strategic raw material (oil) important in our age. Of course, there are also differences: The Western countries are democracies of some sort, facing varieties of dictatorships. In the 17th century, all the important actors were more or less absolutist states.

The Cold War conflict has faded, but the conditions for Nordic unity have changed. The major factor now is European integration, a process which Maseng never analysed (when that process started, he was eagerly writing his huge historical volumes, covering the period between the Kalmar union and World War 1). Denmark joined the EU even before the end of the Cold War, while the non-aligned Nordic countries, Sweden and Finland, joined after. Norway, the country most eager to ally westwards, has proven most resistant — together with Iceland — to europeanization. Thus, to a lesser degree than earlier the Nordic countries today form a distinct regional state system. If they are to develop more elements of unity in the future — those elements will inevitably have to develop inside the EU.

We have followed Einar Maseng's Nordic odyssey through five hundred years. We have seen how the outcomes at critical junctures influenced the conditions for later developments: when the Kalmar union failed, the state formation processes so typical of mercantilism and absolutism would happen within two Nordic states at war with each other. Unification could at that time only happen "from above", via conquest. When this Nordic two-state system was split into three smaller states in 1809/1814, the processes of nationalist mobilisation would occur within different "national" contexts. At that time, there was also unification pressures from the popular side, often spurred by intellectual elites who appreciated the Nordic community of language and culture. But none of the unification efforts were any success: by 1918, there were five states, and by 1945/9, these five states had quite different security preferences.

20th century processes of state intervention, crisis management and welfare state consolidation followed within the national borders of these five states. While there were historical moments at which unification was perhaps close, one Nordic state never saw the light of day. Today, Maseng's main question is less and less frequently asked. Today, national borders are being weakened, but not by "pan-nationalist" forces such as scandinavianism, but by forces arising from trends that transcend such distinctions — the forces we — as social scientists — strive to understand as "europeanization", "globalization", and the like.