

### A Nordic Union? A review of the Gunnar-Wetterberg-proposal

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# **A Nordic Union ? –**

## **A review of the Gunnar-Wetterberg – proposal**

( draft version )

by

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Comments, correctures, ideas or statements on this paper as especially the topic are most welcome (in: scandinavian, english, german) marked as “Review” via mail at: [ThomaxScholz@web.de](mailto:ThomaxScholz@web.de)

## **1. Introduction**

On 27th of October 2009 the Swedish historian and social commentator Gunnar Wetterberg published an article as a commentatorial opinion in the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter claiming the Nordic countries of Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Iceland to establish a Nordic federal state.

The main reason for this suggestion of a Nordic Union is the expectation of a raised common international impact of the Nordic states. This concept is using the historical model of the Kalmar Union, which had unified the Scandinavian countries for centuries during the late middleages (1397-1523), adopted and modified to meet present challenges of a globalising and europeanizing world. This proposal, published in time to coincide with the annual Session of the Nordic Council in 2009, had been rejected directly by the Nordic Prime Ministers on the day of its publication. After quite intensive public discussions Wetterberg developed his proposal further by publishing a second article which focused on a more detailed and practical actionplan towards a realization of his idea.

Aim of this paper is a review of Gunnar Wetterbergs proposal of establishing a Nordic Union between the countries of the Nordic region. Based from this concept and its origin in the contemporary context of Regionalism, European Integration and Nordism a Narratives Policy Analysis will be provided. Intentions, backgrounds and the time of this draft idea are for this purpose to be set in relation to the topic of Nordic cooperation within and beyond the European Union. Major lines in the public debate on this issue as well as its impacts have to be summarized and as far as possible practical reasons and arguments for and against an institutionalized realization of such a Nordic federation state will be discussed.

## **2. An European Dimension**

In dealing with more general considerations at a Geosphere-level it is always relevant to understand the individual local set-up and structure which enable political dynamics and its processes, to understand its effects on the continental Noosphere-level. Regarding to the everlasting discussions about a definition of 'Europa' one have to consider that according to the historiographical concepts a wide range of definitional approaches existed. The ancient Greek mythology of the Phoenician princess Europa, who was abducted by Zeus in bull form and taken to the island of Crete, not to the mainland as aspected, where she gave birth to Minos, Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon, wasn't interpreted by Homer as a geographical designation. Later stood Europa for the mainland of Greece until around the year 500 BC its meaning had been extended to lands to the north, which could be interpreted as a first development of an integrational process into the term Europe. Beside to the Arabic Maghreb meaning "evening, west" ("ereb") we can follow the majority etymology that the name Europe has derived from the Greek words for broad ("eurys") and face ("opsis"). A broad face, which can reflect and characterize the continental idea in the latemedieval ages as well as today in a well balanced way.

The nowadays geographical term of an Eurasian continent points out how difficult it is to define frontiers and borders. Because of sociopolitical and cultural differences, there are various descriptions of Europe's boundary - in a few sources some territories are not included, while other sources include them. Numerous geographers consider Azerbaijan's and Armenia's southern border with Iran and Turkey's southern and eastern border with Syria, Iraq and Iran as the boundary between Asia and Europe because of political and cultural reasons. In the same way, despite being close to Asia and Africa, the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta are considered as a part of Europe.

This description is simplified. Subregions, such as the Iberian Peninsula and the Italian Peninsula and also Scandinavia contain their own complex features, as does mainland Central Europe itself - in opposite to a concept of Central Europe. Due to the fact that these regions never acted as a closed system, the interdependencies and exchanges also have been a prerequisite for the development within these regions. The impact of economical, cultural, political and technological aspects on these developments plays hereby a key role in discussions about the centrifugation,

localisation and especially the definition of the continent. The Mediterranean World stands here for instance at the same time beside, as well as in connexion, to the development in the Northwestern and in the Baltic region. Those, not always visible, exchanges between Mediterranean, Central- and Northern Europe in the past were crucial in fundamenting the idea of an 'Europa Nostra'. This retrospectively is important to understand the prospected continental identity of today's Europe for achieving a collective consciousness. Also the recent developments of the European Union enlargement and integration processes are based on those several definitions of the term Europe. The case Turkey stands here as a major example for the mixture of idea, historical facts and the current common knowledge about it.

In opposition to statistical approaches of dividing also Europe into Macro-geographical regions and subregions, like Northern Europe, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe beside to Western Asia, as done so for instance by the United Nations geoscheme, the term Europeanization refers here to the wellknown number of related phenomena and patterns of change. - Outside the social sciences it commonly refers to the growth of an European continental identity or polity, within the field of the social sciences it deals in the politics of Europe with the continually evolving politics within the continent. Undoubtedly it is in this case a topic which is far more detailed than at other continents due to a number of factors - including the long history of nation states on the continent - by the fact that the current politics of Europe can be traced back to historical events and lines of development. Likewise geography, economy and culture have contributed substantially to the contemporary political set-up of Europe.

In pointing out similarities through structural analyzes it is therefore necessary to consider also this retro-perspective, as those circumstances are able to foster the understanding of how development processes affect on societies. Understanding Europe not only as a political network it would therefore be favourable to combine the focus on the intra-regional circumstances and conditions with its inter-regional interdependencies. Regional developments within the continent, following the guiding topic of variety in entity, in this line of argument always widespread their impact on other territories, like the kind of cooperation driven by the Nordic countries for instance could generate as a model for the Mediterranean countries in the future.

### **3. The Nordic Case in brief**

Collaboration, exchange and fusions between the Nordic kingdoms have been realized through all the various historical periods in the political sphere. Internal Nordic social and political forces and ideals had been the assumption as the foreign political conditions affected these processes significant. Nobility alliances and dynastic policies had been a major driving force for this purpose in 'high politics'. Although the Nordic countries look back on more than 1000 years of history as distinct political entities, the international boundaries came late and emerged gradually.

The late Viking Ages and the Middleages had witnessed a process of territorial consolidation and unification which laid the foundations for the preliminary forms of the countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Nevertheless feudalism in Scandinavia never developed to that extent as it did in the rest of Europe. In response to the economic power politics driven by the Hanseatic League in Northern Europe in the high and late middleages the dynastical power politics of especially Denmark shaped a Nordic Union ('those three realms' – in the contemporary usage mostly known as the Union of Kalmar). This Kalmar Union unified from 1397-1523 the countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden under the auspices of the danish realm. This union was finally broken in the turmoils of a swedish struggle for independence - influenced, financed and exploited by the Hanseatic League. As the result of the dissolution of this union in 1523 the independent earlymodern nationstates of Denmark (conjoined with Norway) and Sweden (including Finlands nowadays area) struggled as equipollent competitors until a significant demarcation in 1658. Sweden remained as a result as a superpower in Europe until the end of the Great Northern War in 1721. Norway persisted during all this time in an union with Denmark until 1814. As an european consequence of the defeat of Napoleon's alliance Denmark was here obligated to cede Norway to Sweden, while Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands remained by Denmark. Finland had struggled in all this course of history between a swedish and russian dominance and occupancy, gaining finally its late independence in 1917 as a result of the revolution in Russia during the end of World War I. The union between Sweden and Norway lasted until its peaceful seperation in 1905, which in modern times marked the end of political Nordic Unions in history.

Scandinavism as a cultural movement which also expressed common political goals, played in modern politics an important role as an ideological concept. It supported the idea of Scandinavia as an unified region or a single nation, based on the common linguistic, political and cultural heritage of the Scandinavian countries. The political Scandinavism on its peak in the middle of the 19th-century paralleled struggles for unification which in this time took place in Germany and Italy. In opposition to this two cases the ambitions of a Scandinavian state-building were not successful and were not longer pursued, since a Pan-Scandinavian alliance for Denmark against Prussia in the German war for unification had failed to be formed. The highly ideals of Scandinavism were never realized, but the mental impacts of this movement remained during the following decades. A more limited functional cooperation was gradually developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. In the international system of the post-World War I period the Nordic countries gained for instance a common seat in the nationleague in 1930. During World War II Scandinavism acted in the Nordic countries as a mental unifying component against the threat of a Nazi-German ideological concept of a Pan-Germanism in Europe. The German occupation of Denmark and Norway created a common background, while the collaboration of Finland had been mainly achieved due to its long past of Russian dominance.

In the aftermath of World War II and its following process of rearrangement and redistribution of power between East and West the Nordic countries had to position themselves in this new global sphere. A concept of a Nordic Defense Community (NDC) with the intention to remain outside the two-bloc superpowers politics sphere arised at this time in the years of 1948-49. A Nordic Union based on this prospective security alliance was a possible but not realistic option in this days. Nevertheless a set of Nordic foreign politics, later called as Nordic Balance, acted towards and between the two superpowers Soviet Union and United States during the decades of the Cold War. Sweden and Finland remained in this conflict neutral while Norway, Denmark and Iceland became a member of the NATO. The Nordic Council was in this regard in 1952 originally formed in order to balance the negative effects for Nordic co-operation of the different security loyalties emerging in the years after 1949. During this Cold War period Nordic policies and diplomatic initiatives contributed through its bridge-building effects to allay the conflict between East and West to some extent. A light modification and dilution of this confrontation had been reached through this politics, in whose course Finland moved closer to Scandinavia.



The later evolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern political Nordism, including all of the Nordic countries, has in addition an ideological base in the Nordic economic co-operation and integration as a kind of collaborative nationalism. The striving ambition to realize a common market through a diminution of barriers for the freedom of movement between the Nordic countries had been an integral part of this Nordic co-operation since its institutionalized foundation in the 1950ies. The Nordic Passport Union, established between 1952 and 1958, provided here quasi a kind of a frontrunner status for Europe's nowadays Schengen area, which the Nordic countries later commonly joined in 1996. Diplomatic efforts towards the establishment of a tollunion between the Nordic countries had been driven in the years from 1947 until 1959. This tollunion was not realized in the end, due to the 'European project' arising as a consequence of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The foundation of the EFTA in 1959/60 circumvented the ambitions for a Nordic solution, which led to an integration of the Nordic countries into its coverage. Nordek, a planned organisation for Nordic economic co-operation quite similar to the European Economic Community, stands in this respect as the best known example of an unsuccessful continuative form of Nordic co-operation. The proposal for this organisation, introduced by Denmark's Prime Minister in 1968, had also its roots in the years succeeding the World War II and was negotiated on realistic terms in 1969. In the end Finland didn't join due to its relation to the Soviet Union and Denmark entered the EEC which remained Sweden, Norway and Iceland unable to ratify the treaty which had been prepared. The original duties of the Nordic Council as an inter-parliamentarian cooperation forum had been extended through the inception of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971, which is responsible for inter-governmental cooperation. The structures of a Council which has not any formal power remained until today. Each government has to implement any common decisions through its country's legislative assembly.

The end of the Cold War by the fall of the iron curtain in 1989 and the resulting abolishment of dividing lines between the memberstates of the Nato and the former Warsaw Treaty affected exceptionally the countries within the broader scope of Northern Europe. The reestablishment of exchange and cooperation across this former barriers have substantially changed the set-up for whole Europe in the early 1990ies. The Nordic countries had to react on this challenge in an active manner. The foundation of the intergovernmental forum of the Council of the Baltic Sea States

in 1992 and a plenty of additional formal as well as informal organizations and networks - promoting, executing and supporting the collaboration and cooperation within Northern Europe and beyond - served to align the structures according to the regional needs in a multipolar world. Proposed efforts to associate the Baltic States on the basis of a fullmembership into the existing Nordic co-operation structures had been internally denied, which remained those countries, beside to the close Nordic linkages to all of the neighbouring countries in the Baltic Sea area, as exceptionally important partners. The Nordic countries had in this contemporary past been strongly encountered with the process of European Integration. For decades lasting sceptical positions were dominating until Finland and Sweden in 1995 finally followed Denmark into the EU. Those Nordic EU-member states acted in the time thereafter as an advocat for a rapidly inclusion of the Baltic States into the European Union.

The Nordic countries had in this context often been described as exceptional and quite similar to one another in comparison with other countries. The following values and institutional and political characteristics are here typically highlighted: democratic corporatism and a consensual political climate; ethnic, cultural, and religious homogeneity; strong popular movements and mass-based political parties in close collaboration with trade unions; export-dependent economies; egalitarianism by means of universal and genrous social insurance systems and public welfare systems, and proactive labour market and industrial policies. This so called Nordic or Scandinavian Model advocates for this purpose a government funded welfare state, an egalitarian taxsystem and strict jobregulation. Whether the comparisons are based on the countries political economies, civil societies or democratic systems, considerable similarities between the Scandinavian countries´ institutional qualities are highlighted. Those political and social structures of the Nordic nations, based on the background that it has been a dominant philosophy of democratization in Scandinavia to bring decisions as close as possible to the individual, have in the last decades in other parts of Europe often been considered as role models for government and public policy. On the basis of their common historical and cultural background and their quite similar identities, the Nordic countries have in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century undergone a continous process of exchange, cooperation and administrational collaboration which remains them today as the most integrated geographical part of the countries in Europe.

One of the main characteristic features of the Nordic co-operation developed during the Cold-War-era had been the circumstance of driving forces which came and derived from the civil societies of each of these countries. In opposition to the development of the relations between the EC-countries in this time, the Nordic co-operation had in this way not developed as a consequence of a process mainly driven by the higher national political spheres or the parliaments. Due to this circumstance the Nordic co-operation had not been developed exceptionally streamlined, which led some authors even to regard this historical evolution as a Zigzag-course. Nordic co-operation is today one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the three autonomous areas of Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland, which also widespread its impact on the international scene through close collaborations e.g. in the UN and the World Bank.

In spite of this background this co-operation has until today not led to a common direction on the countries' memberships in the European Union, the EMU and the NATO due to the fact that domestic politics are still dominating. Norway and Iceland are currently only members of the NATO, Finland is a full member of the EU and the EMU, Sweden is only a member of the EU, while Denmark participates in the NATO and the EU. In consequence of the processes of the European Integration the foundations of a distinction by the institutionalized Nordic co-operation have been questioned during all the years of this post-Cold-War-era: To what sense and to what extent should the Nordic co-operation continue as a special case, if the same results are to be achieved on the next level by an European Union? Tasks and policies of the European Union are in some fields still overlapping with those of the Nordic Council. The Nordic co-operation has since a reform of the Nordic Council in 1995 here been regarded as a bridge between EU-member and non-EU-member states, which had created the political background for the last years. The intensified co-operation on the European Union-level driven by the Nordic countries in the late 1990ies, as a result of the EU-accessions of Finland and Sweden, refrained in the first instance from a Nordic grouping at the European and also at the international scene. Following experiences of some lacks in influence in key political issues, for instance in the days of debates about a Core-Europe, these countries seem now to some extent striving onto a sub-regional renaissance of its Nordic co-operation.

Currently we are therefore witnessing a process where the substance and forms of the Nordic co-operation will and have to be adjusted to the changed and changing political and economic global conditions in the European Union and in the International System.

Within the frame of the European Union and its through the EEA and the EFTA conjoined countries deserves this process a closer attention in the view of a largescale political Union still under construction. At a wider geographical perspective within Northern Europe the Baltic Sea Region, definable for instance as the macro-region to be developed further at the European-Union-level, received also as an element of this federation shaping process between 2007 and 2009 its own political commitment by implementing a guiding line, named a Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region for its future development. (Re)Shaped into existence over twenty years by innumerable multilevel network initiatives, the Nordic countries have always been a driving force in facilitating the (non-Nordic) regional umbrella set-up of the Baltic Sea Region. As the Nordic co-operation within this frame is acting clearly as a crucial base, questions about the implications of the proposed establishment of a Nordic federation state within this region are distinctive relevant.

As the EU Baltic Sea Strategy neither shaped new cooperation forms in this region nor constructed new institutions or organizations (on all levels - intergovernmental, regional, non-state, private sector, civil society, et.al.), the existing formal and informal structures within Northern Europe remained. As different possible approaches towards less, new or more major organizations or institutions within this BSR, proposed so occassionally since the fall of the iron curtain, could have caped the Nordic co-operation framework in a way, the result also determines the structural background for the Nordic vision proposed by Gunnar Wetterberg in a positive way, so that those crossing perspectives have to be taken into consideration.

#### **4. Conceptual Frameworks**

The approach of choosing the Kalmar Union as a paradigm can in the first hand be interpreted as a regress to the mental component of this Nordic Union, since it doesn't reflect the historical reality. Similar non-historical approaches have been used in the past as for instance perceiving the Hanseatic League as a role model for the Baltic Sea cooperation or even for the regional integration in the European Union. To draw on the historical example of Switzerland as a sample, as done so by Wetterberg, the starting point for a Nordic Union have to be the inception of a confederation between the Nordic countries, which successively would have to be developed towards a federation state.

For a start it would be therefor also an empirical question to define indicators for the contemporary and future potential for a statebuilding of the Nordic region. For this purpose it would be a task to define a typological model for identifying variables of Nordic cohesion as well as indicators for an increase or decline in the Nordic identity and the collective consciousness. In this context the proposal can to some extend be perceived as an option out in the light of emerging regions in an accelerating globalisationprocess. The declining importance of territorial or national boundaries stands in practice hereby linked to immaterial territories in the form of networks and cooperations. This analysis will leave out the informal structures, but is fully aware of the importance of a close co-operation between the formal and informal structures, which is strongly required for the benefit of all countries within the broader scope of Northern Europe. In interaction with the nation states and local institutions, the evolving structures of global governance and regional cooperation constitute a multi-level system of global politics, in which the interfaces between these levels are of growing importance.

Lines of distinction between exclosure and inclosure are thatswwhy not drawable that easily and clearly anymore. Region-building as a result of an internal political will or as a consequence of external political press had in the past in this way determined the possible 'inside-out' or 'outside-in' approaches as dominating in studies in this fields. The evolution of Regionalism has in the last years seen a typological shift. The concept of a Meso-region, a geographic region in between the national and the local size, had dominated in Europe in the 1990ies. The post-Millenium concept of a

Macro-region, as a geopolitical subdivision that encompasses several traditionally or politically defined regions, is on the contrary flexible to adapt its scope according to different specific thematics, to suit more the needs of globalization. The first practical laboratory for this concept is currently taking place at the Baltic Sea Region which will be followed by each one for the regions of the Danube, the Alps and probably the Mediterranean. Nevertheless traditional subdivisions in the style of a classification between Micro-regions and Sub-regions remain. - A microregion serves for formal and informal geographic divisions on the local level, while a subregion is basically a conceptual unit which derives from a larger region or continent and is usually based on location. The definitions of a subregion may hereby vary according to its respective point of view and function. A subregion Northern Europe is in this regard for instance defined by the United Nations geoscheme as containing the Nordic countries plus the Baltic States as well as the UK and Ireland. A strict geographical definition could in opposition also circumscribe the Scandinavian peninsula, while the set-up of the Nordic countries as a subregion is determined by a grouping of this states which are constituting a region within Northern Europe.

As Wetterberg was proposing a federation state in the international system one have to consider the term subsystem, not least due to its political and administrative concerns. Federalism as a territorial twin of democracy in this regard would mean to some degree a kind of elongation of the existing inter-parliamentary Nordic co-operation. As a theoretical concept a subsystem would here be definable for instance on its characteristic features of exclusiveness, intensity of interaction, formalization in the level of organization and its influence on the contextual major system. Due to the position of Denmark, Sweden and Finland this major system is constituted by the EU. Sub-systems have comparative advantages in a number of areas such as culture, education, transport, certain environmental policies and even aspects of defence, which also would be in line with the argumentation used by Wetterberg. Since the proposed federation intends to serve as a transformer for practical objectives one is therefor able to apply to the specification of a functional sub-system. One of the characteristics of such sub-systems is viz a feature which allows the inclusion of states which are not (formally) members of the major regional integration system - the European Union.

In the light of Region-building as a parallel necessity to State- and Nation-building the Baltic Sea Region had in this regard in the early 1990ies by some scholars been interpreted as a competing project to the Nordic region in terms of its potential for State- and Nation-building. Since the Baltic Sea Region neither was intended to do so, nor has it moved into this direction (yet), the states of the Nordic region as a Union would structurally remain a subregion within the concept of the Baltic Sea Region and perspectively form a political subsystem within the European Union.

The idea and option of a Nordic bloc within the European Union in this respect is not new at all. In the turmoils of the political rearrangements in Europe in 1990 Denmark's Minister of Foreign Affairs used the argument that such a bloc would have more voting power in the Council of Ministers than an united Germany would have, to encourage its Nordic counterparts for a membership in the European Community.

In opposition to this integrational approach the Nordic co-operation had in the past by EU-sceptics often been regarded as a favoured alternative model to the European Union. The best known sample of ideas for a Nordic Union for this purpose was presented by a movement of Swedish EU-opponents in 1992. Its leading author compared the situation of Canada in relation to the US with those of the Nordic countries in relation to the EG / EU in order to propose a Nordic federation state as an alternative to a membership in the European Union.

The proposal submitted by Gunnar Wetterberg is hence not new at all, since it in the end used the same conceptual construction leveraged into the current political situation. Wetterberg, who is recently director of the political and social studies section of the Swedish Confederation of Professionell Associations (SACO) - a trade union confederation representing 600.000 academics, is here to be set into relation: He can not be characterized as an EU-sceptic at all, but as an sympathizer for a sophisticated and limited supranationality. The integration of Central and Eastern Europe is in his opinion the major historical duty of the European Union.

## **5. Time and Background**

As international rules and arrangements to a great extent are still maintained in relation to balances of power, the major trends in theoretical debates on the position of small states - as represented so by the Nordic countries - in International Relations have to be summarized in brief: While some are highlighting examples of small states successfully influencing the international community, the majority defines those, especially in terms of security affairs, as suboptimal. In a globalist perspective the model of a nationstate will survive also for smaller states not least because it is an efficient mode of political organization, but nevertheless not that flexible to suit always the needs of times, which is an activator for supranational federalism within a pluralistic interorganizational arena.

This presumption may to some extent also endorse and legitimize an enhanced Nordic co-operation especially in fields of comparative disadvantages of scale. The process of an adjustment of the substance and forms of the Nordic co-operation according to the changing political and economic conditions in the EU and in the International System which we are currently witnessing is underway approximately since the year 2006. An additional internal element in the state of Nordic affairs had continuously arisen by the situation of the Arctic region as a focus of global political interest due to its huge potential of natural resources and its importance for maritime traffic, which challenged especially the countries of the Nordic region 'on Top of Europe'. The circumpolar nations of Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark and the United States had in the past upon ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea launched projects to establish claims that certain Arctic sectors should belong to their territories. An Arctic Ocean Conference at the political level in Greenland in 2007 was originated as a consequence of several jurisdictional disputes, which led to the announcement of the Ilulissat Declaration in May 2008, appointing as a chief goal a blockage of any new comprehensive international legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean. Nevertheless the competition of political powers in this region highly remained. Greenland and Faroe Islands are continuously on their way to an independence, which in the case of success would level them, as well as probably also Åland, to an autonomous member of the Nordic Council of Ministers.



The Nordic co-operation in the post-Cold-War-era had achieved substantial ties to the Baltic States, which some analysts even led to regard these states as nearly Nordic ones. Discussions on ideas dealing with an implementation of this partnership according to the needs of time culminated in suggestions of a leverage of this Nordic-Baltic base as a joint platform in world politics. In the globalising context a proposal in this regard had been made topical by Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2007, who recommended an ambition for a common Nordic-Baltic seat in the G 20. This idea had been supported inter alia by Sweden's Minister of Foreign Affairs who had called for a leverage of a Nordic-Baltic base in the global context, by Finland's Prime Minister as well as by several different stakeholders in Baltic Sea affairs. To draw on all the years of Nordic-Baltic cooperation and partnership for realizing a need for a strong political platform for devising efficient and legitimate international solutions, had in succession for instance also favoured so by the Secretary General of the Nordic Council and the Chairman of the Baltic Development Forum in a commentorial opinion article released in early October 2009. This suggestion which would be in line with the proposal for a Nordic-Baltic representation at the G 20 would mean a solution at the global level which is in between the two (non-comparable) concepts of the Baltic Sea Region and the submitted proposal for a Nordic Union. The Financial Crisis, which ravaged between autumn 2008 and winter 2010, generated a fundamental hardship for the Nordic economies which formed a crucial element in this line of development. Especially the strong engagement of Nordic banks and companies in the Baltic states hampered here in mid-term future possibilities. As one result of this global economic crisis the wider circle of the G 20 countries gained a raised importance in the global political system, superseding the former dominating grouping system by the countries of the G 8.

A bearing background for those ideas in leveraging 'Northern Europe' into the global context was to a certain degree the circumstance of preparations for a joint Nordic initiative for collaboration on globalisation issues within the Nordic co-operation framework at this time. This globalisation initiative had been prepared since 2007 and officially been carried out in autumn 2008 followed by a Nordic Globalisation Forum in Iceland in winter 2009. The idea behind this cooperation forum which involves politicians, the business community, the sectors of R&D and academia, civil society as well as administrations had been the perception, that in fields where the Nordic countries could achieve better results by common approaches than on their own, the

implementation of practical intended initiatives in the light of an increasing global competition would be useful. The Nordic region wants hereby to profile itself as a forward-looking region in the global context through the implementation of practical projects aimed to increase the potential for innovation and competitive capability for a mutual Nordic benefit in the future. These initiatives cover cross-sector-levels and resulted in the short period of time in progress already into a new dynamic of the Nordic co-operation, which recently even had been interpreted to legitimate the Nordic cooperation as a whole. The member states of the Nordic Council joined for this purpose forces by implementing large scale projects and platforms as e.g. Toppforskningsinitiativet, Nordic Climate Solutions, Nordic Energy Solutions and KreaNord. Furthermore the Nordic countries will profile and promote as a common region at the global level through e.g. a joint presentation at the World Exhibition EXPO 2010 in Shanghai.

Nonetheless, 60 years after one of the historical chances to construct a Nordic Union through an implementation of a Nordic Defense Community (NDC) in the years of 1948-49, it had now been once more primarily issues of Security and Foreign Affairs which have shaped the basement and prerequisites for discussions about a prospective Nordic unionism. The Stoltenbergreport on an enhanced Nordic co-operation in Foreign-, Security- and Military Affairs - clear in being definitely a supplement to the Nordic EU-memberships – which had been released in february 2009 is here the major background. Thorvald Stoltenberg, in his time as Norways Minister of Foreign Affairs an advocat for a norwegian membership in the EC, compiled that report consisting of 13 major propositions within a frame of the mainpillars: peacebuilding, air suveillance, maritime monitoring and arctic issues, societal security, foreign services, military cooperation, declaration of solidarity. Without the security-identity formational background of the start of an implementation of the proposals submitted by this Stoltenbergreport in autumn 2009, the submission of the Wetterberg-proposal neither can't be interpreted, nor would its author had been seriously in the position to release this concept into the political sphere. So it is undoubtedly not Kalmar which is approaching in Wetterbergs suggestion. The Nordic co-operation in Foreign Affairs is today the most substantial one in the period of the last two decades and is more concret and manifold than anytime before – not least due to this fact of the start of the implementation of the Stoltenbergreport.

Solidarity and collaboration between the Nordic countries have never been more vital than today. The ambition to realize a common market through a diminution of barriers for the freedom of movement between the Nordic countries had in this regard been an integral part of the Nordic co-operation since its foundation. In the contemporary context the Nordic Council had for this purpose initiated a forum on this issue. Its task is to identify and address obstacles which hereby shall also act as an example for best-practice-solutions for the rest of Europe. This committee had been arranged as a constantly intended process, which takes a special focus on the detection of legislative barriers, with the overall ambition to position and also to brand the Nordic area as a powerful region within the continent. A further agreement on this issue had been reached by the Nordic Prime Ministers at a Globalisationmeeting in Riksgränsen in april 2008.

The impacts of the Financial Crisis, which ravaged from autumn 2008 until winter 2010, menaced in its global dissemination especially Europe. As one result Iceland applied in summer 2009 for an accession to the European Union. The process of negotiation and consultation on accession was expected to last at least until 2011. The European Union had at this time, during the second half of 2009, been headed of a EU-Presidency by Sweden. The agenda for Swedens presidency, strongly influenced by the impacts of the financial / economic crisis, was mainly prioritised on topics in the fields of economic and monetary affairs, employment and social affairs, international trade, regional development, climate change, legal affairs and constitutional affairs. The EU was in the days of publishment of the Wetterberg-proposals in expectance of imminent institutional adjustments for the future by the Lisbon-Treaty to some extend in a fragile situation, caused by a delay in the ratificationprocess of this treaty. Icelands application to the EU was warmly welcomed by its Nordic partners in the EU, which perspectively will extend the regional scope and thereby the importance of Nordic co-operation in EU-affairs. The parliamentary group of the Centrists in the Nordic Council introduced the question of the role of the Nordic Council within this existing Nordic co-operation in EU-affairs as a topic into whose agenda in the end of september 2009, since this institution didn't defined clearly its role in EU-politics yet. This approach had been based on a report carried out by the Nordic Council on this issue, which had revealed fields of insufficient collaboration in the policy planning and implementation processes of EU-legislation, which as a result caused new barriers for the freedom of movement and

exchange between the Nordic countries – what actually was intended to abolish by the initiatives launched by the forum for freedom of movement of the Nordic Council. The absence of an established - institutionalized liaison between the Nordic parliaments in EU-affairs inspired this parliamentary group to propose a further development of collaboration in EU-related policy fields. The Center-group suggested therefor an evaluation of the Nordic Council's role in EU-affairs combined with a proposition for a closer collaboration between the Nordic parliaments. This approach had been followed up firmly at the national levels. At Wetterbergs background declamed a leading Centre Party electorate (Riksdag and Nordic Council) this topic in the swedish parliament at its Norden-debate on 21 of october in preparation to the annual Session of the Nordic Council, to be hold one week later in Stockholm. He advocated a need for a new dimension for the Nordic Council, in order to achieve an enhanced co-operation in the field of EU-legislation between the Nordic countries. The electorate argued for this purpose for a new mandate for the Nordic Council, which is currently still based on the agreement about the Nordic co-operation of 1962 from Helsinki, to clearly define the role of this organisation in relation to the EU and furthermore to update the cooperational procedures between the Nordic countries.

The dominating political backgrounds in relation to the submission of the Wetterberg-proposal can thus be highlighted as follows :

- the Stoltenbergreport
- the proposed Nordic-Baltic representation at the G 20
- the Nordic globalisation initiative
- an enhanced Nordic co-operation on the freedom of movement
- a proposed enhanced Nordic co-operation in EU-affairs
- the Financial Crisis
- European cohesion overall
- the EU Baltic Sea Strategy
- the political situation in the Arctic region
- the ambitions of Greenland and Faroe Islands for independency
- the institutional situation of the European Union

These lines of development constituted the Policy Window ( window of opportunity ) for the submission of the Wetterberg-proposal.

## **6.The Debate**

Placed as a commententoral opinion in the leading swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter, Gunnar Wetterbergs article was in parallel published in a shortened version by newspapers in Finland, Denmark and Norway. Released on 27<sup>th</sup> of october this transnational policy proposal was intended to coincide with the start of the Nordic Council's Session, which took place in Stockholm from the 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>, in order to initiate a debate at the highest political level. This annual topmeeting, the Session of the Nordic Assembly, as the highest decision making body of the Nordic parliamentary co-operation gathered in addition to its parliamentary members all the Nordic Prime Ministers, several member of governments, leaders of the mayor national parliamentary oppositions as well as a number of additional parliamentarians from all of the Nordic countries. Furthermore a number of guests from the Baltic countries, Russia and other parts of the world were invited to attend. As usually a number of other informal meetings took place in conjunction with the formal meeting of the Session. The relation between the Nordic countries and the European Union, an enhanced Nordic co-operation in Foreign and Security Affairs with respect to the following up of the Stoltenbergreport, the forthcoming of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, the further removal of inner-Nordic borderbarriers as well as issues of globalisation in the Nordic co-operation had been the mayor topics on its agenda.

The EUs European Council took place in parallel at this week from 30<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>th</sup> of october - headed by a swedish presidency – which in addition was able to draw an europeanwide attention on this proposal. This Summit of the Council of the European Union dealt with crucial issues of EU institutional matters, the economic situation as well as macro-regional strategies as mayor topics of its agenda. The future of the European Union was at this time in the expectance of imminent institutional adjustments by the Lisbon-Treaty to some extend still in a fragile situation, due to a delay in the ratificationprocess of this treaty.

The Nordic Prime Ministers rejected the Wetterberg-proposal on the day of its publishment. They commonly stated that according to their view the existing forms of partnership is sufficiently close, robust and capable to cope with the global challenges of the future - including climate change, environment, energy - and distanced themselves from this concept.

One of the objectives of the Wetterberg-proposal is based on the perception that a Union would especially increase the Nordic influence in the European Union. The point of view of the Nordic governments had in this regard been clear in having already influenced the EUs agenda in the past substantially, not only in traditional Nordic issues as climate and energy. Especially the Baltic Sea Strategy had in this regard often been highlighted as an example for succesful Nordic input and influence on EU policies.

Wetterbergs article caused quite a stir in the Nordic medias and received widespread attention in public discussions during the following days. While some journalists admonished to estimate Wetterbergs proposal as a nostalgic idea of an antiquated historian, by the perception that Nordic closeness has never been stronger and the requirements for such a Union has never been better than yet, the major tendency in the medias centered on the judgement of an unrealistic concept. Nevertheless it was recommended to use this controversic proposal as an inspiration for realizing further common Nordic ambitions within the existing co-operation forms.

Public discussions about the proposal had its peak in the days of its publishment, last week of october 2009. Approximately 60.000 people participated for instance in an online opinionpoll launched by the swedish newspaper Aftonbladet, indicating a ranking in the sequence of Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland as favoured countries for a common political Union, while several thousands of comments and commententoral opinions had been individually posted to the plenty of articles and webforathreads which dealt with the subject all over the Nordic countries and beyond. Sentiments adressed thereby nearly the whole range of topics associated with the relations to their respective neighbouring nations, as history, economy, politics and culture. Public opinionpolls in each of the five countries on this question would have an utmost importance for monitoring a further debate as well as for a possible future development of this topic. As very preliminary indicators, e.g. provided by non-validate figures of newspaper polls and the thousands of comments submitted, have shown seems an overwhelming majority for a political Union in the Nordic populations at the moment not to be expectable. Advanced distinctioned surveys could in this regard probably set a research question on the often stated `werness´ of the Nordic collective consciousness.

While the Wetterberg-proposal in high(est)-politics had been officially rejected by the Prime Ministers of the Nordic governments right away, the debate continued during the following days on all levels among politicians, citizens, representatives of organized interests as well as in the medias in civil society. Denmark's Minister for Nordic co-operation called here, argued on the plenty of Nordic similarities, for a closer cooperation on the Nordic level than within the European Union, by using this proposal as a provoking inspiration for an enhanced Nordic co-operation in the future. Finland's Minister for Nordic co-operation positioned even affirmative to a federation by proposing the use of finlandswedish, according to him the language to be understood best in all of the countries concerned, as the main official language of an Union. Sweden's Deputy-Prime Minister recommended to use this idea as an inspiration for deepened cooperation within the existing frames of collaboration. The Secretary General of the Nordic Council stated that a precondition for the proposed federation state would have to be a full-membership of all Nordic countries in the EU, in the NATO as well as in the EMU.

Gunnar Wetterberg himself received numerous reactions and comments as feedback on his article, which led him to develop an advanced edition of his proposal. He submitted a preliminary actionplan towards the realization of a Nordic Union as part of a second article which was in continuation published in the newspaper Dagens Nyheter in december 2009. Those two articles are composing the Wetterberg-proposal, which will be evaluated and analysed in the following chapters.

The second article, which had been made public on the Nordic Council's website for weeks, caused an additional impetus for the proposal. Nordic/Nordism societies and other stakeholders in the Nordic region took up on the debate on this idea in recourse to their related ambitions. In order to move the Nordic countries towards some form of a joint federation state, Wetterberg wanted to see the Nordic governments drafting a pilot study on a prospective federation-state-building within the next 10-15 years. He therefore hoped that the members of the inter-parliamentary Nordic Council would submit proposals for a preliminary feasibility study on this issue until the following Nordic Council Session in Iceland in november 2010.

## **7. Discussion**

The proposals intention to develop an agenda-building process on Nordism is to relate to the person of Gunnar Wetterberg in society and politics, which is an eminent factor for its successful release. In case that this concept for a federation contains agenda-setting power it will not be due to its innovative approach of subsidiarity, hence the basic of this idea is dated from the early 1990ies.

Wetterberg emphasized, it would neither be realistic nor desirable to directly begin shaping a centralized / unitary state as an objective, by proposing the inception of a federation for a start. - As states are not erected, but developed – by processes of e.g. an increased cooperation and collaboration – the natural start here would have to be an administration steered process of integration. In this regard Wetterbergs approach, supplemented by his actionplan as part of his second article, has to be conceived. In addition one should consider a more specified definition, as a centralized / unitary state (enhetsstat) per definitionem in/within the Kalmar Union has never been existed, but was consolidating in the early modern period, which Gunnar Wetterberg as a historian carried out research on. The starting point for a federation is the inception of a confederation between the Nordic countries, which successively would have to be developed towards the intended federation-state. Wetterberg highlighted the similarity of the strong role of local administrations in the Nordic states, which in the frame of a federation-state would gain even more importance. – This argument can probably serve as one of the most weightiest reasons for a raised Nordic integration in the frame of a possible Union.

A provisional confederation unified by the ceremonial representation of a common sovereign as proposed – rotating between the countries or don't – won't affect the constitutional setups of the republics of Finland and Iceland, while a further development towards a federation-state would require adjustments in each of the countries concerned. As a long-term ambition Wetterberg proposed the implementation of a federation-system consisting of two chambres: One shall be constituted as a proportional representation by a crossborder electoral lists; while the second shall officiate as a senat which represents the countries on the basis of a mandatory allocation not in line with the country size, which would somewhat correspond to the present representation in the Nordic Council.



Foreign- and Security Affairs, as a result of the implementation of the Stoltenbergreport currently in progress, would form the substructure for a confederation. Especially Denmark and Norway had because of historical reasons cooperated closely in Foreign Affairs in the past. Wetterbergs recommendation for joint Nordic embassies in this regard have to be evaluated as quite poor, since this idea was already an integral part of the proposals provided by the Stoltenbergreport earlier in february 2009 and an agreement into this direction had been reached by the Nordic Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2005. Externally a Nordic federation would especially with regard to the current political situation of the Arctic region generate an enhanced impact for the bordering Nordic countries on this issue in global politics. Internally a Nordic Union would also open an opportunity for the integration of Greenland and the Faroe Islands on their way to independency.

According to Gunnar Wetterberg the priority areas for a federal administration shall be composed by the elemental responsibilities of public administration in the fields of Foreign- and Security Affairs, fiscal policy, migration and some additional mayor fields of legislation. - Domestic issues have in the past sometimes hampered a common Nordic voice in international affairs. Such ostensible national interests may not be reduced to stereotypes, as also Wetterbergs proposal aims mainly on policy fields which account for an enhanced intra-nordic integration in cross-border issues. A way towards a federation would in recent intra-Nordic politics acquire an enhanced turn from a policy diffusion to a more harmonized policy transfer. As the present Nordic co-operation aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe and seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community, the structures of the Nordic co-operation would have to be used as a carrying frame, which is in line with the practical solutions proposed by Wetterberg, as will be shown below. In this line of argument the existing co-operation infrastructures would have to be extended gradually to serve for the administration of a Nordic federation. A main question for the legitimization of this federational system is to clarify on which fields a Nordic Union would generate a distinctive benefit for its memberstates and beyond, since a variety of practical and mental obstacles, internal as well as external, are to be handled.

Wetterberg argues that the future prospects for an unified Norden are nowadays shining bright, due to the fact that the overall GDP of a Nordic federation would level this region to the tenth-largest economy in the world – before Brasilia and Russia. Since the overall size of an economy competing in a globalized world is important but not meaningful in terms of its future prospects, Wetterbergs argumentation would in this regard have to be altered onto the focus of the potential for adjustments, innovation and market orientation in the light of global competitiveness. The Nordic countries keep in this respect until today a favourable position - based to a large extend on technology - which illustrates the importance of research. However, Wetterberg underlined correctly the Nordic countries dependence on small markets in relation to few key branches. Economic assumptions of how the financial crisis would have been hit e.g. Sweden as a non-member of the EU can stand as a warning signature, which confirms Wetterbergs financial-crisis-argument to some extend. The case of Iceland as a result of the financial crisis revealed in this Nordic context currently a showcase for a prospected Union. The success or non-commitment of additional joint-Nordic aid had here by some even been interpreted as a kind of lackmustest for the cohesion of the Nordic co-operation in the future. A Nordic supervisoryboard for the financial markets which shall prepare a joint legislation and a common marketauthority for the bank- and insurance branch, as proposed so by Wetterberg, would mean an extension of the existing collaborationagreements (MoU) between its respective Nordic national authorities and central banks. The line of business of the Nordic Investment Bank, owned by the Nordic and the Baltic countries, can in case of a Nordic Union be expected to become splitted, as a single Baltic counterpart to the NIB would not be feasible at the moment. Further propositions in recent Nordic collaboration, such as for instance the call for an Invest in Norden Agency, on the bottom of the joint promotion in international markets carried out by the Nordic globalisation initiative, might have received a positive encouragement through the debate on the Wetterberg-proposal.

The Nordic currencies are a part in the puzzle, avoided to consider by Gunnar Wetterberg, which must not be neglected. Suggestions of a common Nordic currency are feeded by the historical background of the existence of a Nordic monetary semi-union from 1875 until its final and official end after the great economic depression in 1930, which remained the brainchild of a Nordic Crown

somewhat as a ghost during the course of the last century. Wetterberg, who in the 1990ies had warned for the risks of an European Valuta Union beside stressing its considerable advantages, can be characterized as a careful and deliberate proponent to the common european valuta EUR in the EMU. On this top-issue he compiled a report for SACO in 2003, which exposed the potential for economic growth in the case of Swedens fullmembership in the EMU. - In present an opting out of the Scandinavian countries from the Euro-zone in the future, technical possible even for Finland, would mean at least a step sideways, since the prospected economy by a Union of 25 million inhabitants with a GDP of round about 800 billion EUR would on a basis of five individual currencies be far from competitive. It seems to be clearly expectable today, in case that one of the Nordic crowns falls, the others will follow – which means: in parallel and as a joint coordinative action.

Wetterbergs suggestion of implementing a `Nordic filter´-(secretariat) in order to influence mayor domestic politics towards the common objective federation-building seems in the first instance to be appropriate in order to develop common policies in the fields which by the author had been considered as crucial for a prospective federation. Quite similar `centralistic´ approaches did exist in the past in several communistic countries of the Warsaw Treaty. A quota-system would in this line of argument be a subsequent stage of development for this administration. However, to filter propositions according to the requirements of a federation can to some extend imply risks of hampering or even counteracting national needs. Joint practical initiatives for harmonized policies and legislation on specific fields, as done so for instance by the Nordic co-operation on the fields of the freedom of movement or the globalisation, would in this regard act as a more natural evolved process which has the full backing of its respective national base. A sample is the by Wetterberg proposed commission for an enhanced intra-Nordic communication on practical issues as e.g. transport in the region. Furtheron his proposal for a labourmarketauthority, which is expected to develop solutions towards an enhanced free movement of the labourforce between the Nordic countries, would act as such. Common collective labor agreements, in this way a projection of the existing cooperations between the Nordic Labour Unions but technical difficult to handle, would entail a step towards a Nordic social cohesion which has the potential to unfold Nation-building power.

Those ideas concerning the intra-Nordic communication and labourmobility would mean the continuation of a process which is underway at latest since a Nordic globalisation-meeting of the Heads of state in april 2008. As one of its resulting practical achievements the Nordic Council intended ( and concluded ) for instance for its Session in Stockholm in october 2009, that the Nordic governments shall enable for all its inhabitants, who are abroad for a limited duration within the Nordic region, the use of their national identification number.

Nordism has in the past often been used as a means to an end. The relevance of the objective is here for example in form of the proposed `Nordic filter´ somewhat between pragmatism and ideological centralism. The rootage in the civil societies had in the past always been the core of a Nordic community. The actuality with collaboration initiatives to a greater extend delegated to highpolitics, entail in this regard to some degree the risk of loosing these vitality. To appoint Copenhagen as the capital of this Union would mentally leverage the Öresund-region as the Nordic center but would cause only inferior implications, since the objective is a decentralized federation-state. Nevertheless, one have to be aware of oldstyle arguments and stereotypes, as e.g. a swedish paternalism in the Nordic region, in the style of not accepting swedish fivehundredcrownsbanknotes in Skåne.

The common Nordic identity presents a plenty of opportunities to enhance the region´s mental cohesion. A harmonisation of the law systems proposed by Wetterberg, which he selv described as a sum of workload for generations, could beside to the establishment of administrativ requirements for a federation clearly obtain nation-building elements for the Nordic societies. Wetterbergs suggestion of a common literature book of the Nordic classics, intended to strenghten this common identity, could here to some extend also be perceived as influenced by the EU Baltic Sea Strategy´s Horizontal Action “Building a regional identity”.

A central component of the cultural fellowship which the Nordic co-operation to a considerable extend have grown out, is the factor language. According to Wetterberg it is one of the major problems to be solved in the case of a federation, since it constitutes a key prerequisite for closer Nordic linkages. As the aspects of administrativ concerns and cultural diversity are to be taken into consideration, the dimension is twofold. The practical solutions used in the civil services of the European Union can here only to some extend stand as a sample. The Nordic language convention, which for each Nordic national ensures the usage of ones

mothertongue and assistance with translations in all contacts with foreign Nordic authorities and administrations as far as possible, is in operation since more than twenty years. - The prospected outcome of the Wetterberg-proposal goes far beyond its capability. A suggestion in this regard, submitted by Finlands Minister for Nordic co-operation during the public debate on Wetterbergs article, to use finlandswedish as the main language of a prospective Union, would imply a proper technical solution. Wetterbergs intention of harmonized legal systems is a dimension which on the one hand requires efficiency, while on the other hand a policy towards an official Nordic language would mean the creation of a single Scandinavian language – which had been discussed for centuries before as a possible evolution. The current situation in Finland of loosing permanently ground for Swedish as the second official language has in this respect to be considered. Efforts driven by Nordic co-operation initiatives in the past, to avoid the usage of English in intra-Nordic contacts as long as possible, have in this regard primiraly been focused on the younger generations. The fact of changing societies caused by migration and diversification, entails in this respect a marginal-problem as well as an argument for an one-langue-approach, as it is not that easy for new-Nordic inhabitants to learn a (relativ) language as an additional third- or even fourth tongue.

These accelerating processes in the Nordic societies comprise in the long run also an adjustment of Nordism/Scandinavism and will in the future further reveal its consequences for the role of the Nordic countries in international relations, especially in correlation to the states of the Islamic World. Due to this background of changing and diversifying societies, it will also become much more relevant to determine which characteristical features shall constitute a future common Nordic identity, by defining the aspects of the individual national pasts to be included.

## **8. Interim Conclusions**

### **Nordic Region – Baltic Sea Region – Northern Europe**

Discussions on ideas dealing with a Nordic-Baltic base or platform in world politics, as argued by Norway and Sweden's Ministers of Foreign Affairs and supported so e.g. by Finland's Prime Minister and several different stakeholders in Baltic Sea Affairs, remain highly relevant. The Nordic-Baltic co-operation has on the wings of its economic development achieved close linkages and ties between these countries in the past. That the recent impact of the financial crisis on the Baltic and Nordic markets, in conjunction with its interrelations and interdependency, currently would affect a single-Nordic approach in a positive way is to be supposed as quite speculative so far. Nevertheless the definition of and the distinction between Baltic and Nordic seems in these days to some extent still not to be that clear. The ambitions of a Nordic-Baltic region in the global context in gaining a seat in the G 20, beside to its respective memberships in the EU, would in a regional context also determine the Baltic Sea ambitions of the remaining larger countries of Poland, Germany and to a special degree those of Russia. Furthermore this suggestion would mean a hindrance for the formation of a Nordic Union, as long as the Baltic states won't compassed to transform their existing inter-parliamentary cooperation framework driven by the Baltic Assembly in the same manner into a federation as proposed so by Wetterberg for the Nordic countries.

The accessible scope of the Nordic co-operation to its neighbours within and beyond the European Union seems currently to be situated in a diversifying process. The Nordic co-operation today, not least because of the persisting structures in Northern Europe, would be more open as a platform for cooperation in this wider area. For a Nordic Union on the fundament of the Nordic co-operation it would be an initial task and at the same time also an obstacle to define the future relationship and division of labour between Nordic and Baltic Sea co-operation and its respective cooperation schemes. At a state-level this federation on the basement of this institutional co-operation framework would also have to define, realign and adapt its role as a region within a Macro-region, taking into account the nature of its each other overlapping scopes as well as risks of mental dividing lines arising in the Baltic Sea Region.

## EU – Integration and Regionalism

Wetterberg emphasized as a major argument for the submission of his proposal that according to his view a cohesive Europe is still several generations from becoming realized, by drawing on the heterogeneity of the continent. In terms of equivalent living conditions within the European Union will these statement definitely keep its meaning in the future, while the societal cohesion is under construction. In terms of political cohesion is the state of art of this federation today far from being that obsolete. The impacts of the globalisation will in this regard increased act as catalyst for a further coalescence of the continent – within and beyond the European Union. The EU-integration process after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty is despite the impacts of the Financial Crisis on track. The installation of the EEAS will here in addition serve to profile this Union in a constitutional way in the future - external as well as internal. A common EU-tax with its mental implication on a federation-building-process is expectable within a duration which will be closer than Wetterbergs suggestion for a common Nordic federal-taxsystem would be implementable.

A major line in the debate about this proposal has been the perception that the European Union has already overhauled the Nordic co-operation and thereby outpaced the potential for a Nordic Union. From an european perspective a transformation of the Nordic co-operation into a subgroup-federationstate could at a first glance be perceived as a kind of 'Old Regionalism'. A Nordic Union on its non-tabula rasa / clean slate rule basis would have to be adopted and leveraged into the european community policies of the EU, respectively the EEA and EFTA. Undoubtedly will the co-operation on EU-affairs asume greater importance for the countries of the Nordic region in the future. A further and enhanced coordination and collaboration on this issue, currently already in progress, would in this way constitute a practical and legitimizing catalyst for the formation of a prospective Nordic Union. One of the crucial tasks, irrespective from the success or failure of the proposal, is the avoidance of duplications between this two levels in a way which results into synergies between Nordic co-operation and the EU-level.

As one result of the expectable political midterm development - Iceland and Norway as conventional members of the European Union - a Nordic Union would demand at least a modification in the multilevel governance architecture of the EU's Northern Dimension Policy. As only Russia would herein remain, one would be urged to alter or adapt this cooperation framework on the basis of a new EU-Russia partnership agreement, taking into account that the subsidiarity principle of the Northern Dimension is clearly distinctive from a vision of an Europe of regional blocs. In the same line of argument it would be necessary to adjust the future EU Arctic Policy. A Nordic Union would here have to act for practical tasks on behalf of the European Union.

Although Nordism has been a manifestation of euroscepticism in the past, which now seems to be reactivated by this proposal, Wetterberg must not be perceived as an eurosceptic. The integration process of an EU 27+ has pushed the European Union towards a necessary differentiation. The dominating constructivist perspective on regionbuilding perceives this process on the strong elements of selfdefined communities of interests. The grouping of the Nordic countries are in this way constituting a subregion in terms of social construction and consolidation since decades – at a nationstatelevel. In the aftermath of the financial crisis and its renaissance of the state could a realization of this proposal to some extent probably entail a modification on future regional maps within Europe, instead of boundaries losing their relevance. The impact of a feasible Nordic Union on other parts containing a subregional character (from a constructivist regionalist perspective e.g. Iberia, Visegrad ; Slovakia and Czechia) seems to be obvious. In this line of argument a Nordic Union could to some extent affect some new local set-ups. Regarding our initial argument of impacts between interdependent regions it could hereby probably act as a frontrunner in the evolution of additional sub-regions or sub-unions on the continent. In order to maintain the further overall integrity and legitimacy of the EU-integration process it might in the future be necessary to let such regional sub-systems manage certain sensitive issues within the overall framework of the European Integration. Gunnar Wetterberg emphasized this issue as a major argument, on which the EU could benefit from a Nordic Union. Sub-systems, like for instance a Nordic one, in this line of argument could in this way acquire greater importance in the future as transformers for enhancing efficiency, integrity and legitimacy of the large-scale European Union.



A crucial detail in correlation to the submission of Wetterbergs proposal is the recent situation of Norway outside the European Union. The trend in the lasting debate of euroscepticism in Norway hasn't changed substantially so far, but the serious expectations of a prospective membership, currently also influenced by the case of Iceland, are winning continuously ground. The aim and possibility to push Norways integration into the EU would at the circumstance of a prospective Nordic bloc within the EU receive a positive attitude. The option of an increased fragmentation / segmentation within the European Union could in this regard serve to remove EU-scepticism in Norway as well as in the other Nordic countries - also in Greenland and the Faeroe Islands – and beyond. The hypothetical question of how realistic prospects for a later realization of ideas like Wetterbergs in shaping a Nordic Union - within the European Union at the circumstance of a norwegian EU-membership - would look like, seems to be obvious.

If such a purposed Nordic sub-system would intend to aquire a (high) profile within the EU-system, it would therefore have to consider acting systematically as an integrative sub-system – also for Denmark, due to the circumstance that one of the factors which until today hampered intensifying or deepening of additional Nordic co-operation is undoubtedly the political and economic dynamic of the EU.

### A Historical Chance ?

Since new models of regionbuilding as consequences of the globalisation are being discussed in this days worldwide, as for instance a new set-up for East-Asia, the possibility of a Nordic Union as a globalisation strategy for the Nordic region in the geosphere theoretical remains - in the words of Wetterberg at least as a realistic utopia. The analysis provided here leaves to some extend an impression that the current situation to a certain degree is to be perceived - and has been interpreted so by Wetterberg – as a historical last chance for a Nordic Union.

A second one will probably arise in the future as a result of the further development of the Union for the Mediterranean. The preparations for a long-term prospective membership for these countries in the European Union will be developed within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly in the next decades. The process of segmentation within the EU will hereby receive an additional boost. The preconditions and initial positions for the Nordic countries in the case of this scenario will clearly shift from its today's of a selfacting, innovative frontrunner which in the first instance still can consider its own ambitions of a Nordic region, to those of a reacting and following protagonist which would have to adapt itself to emerging and realigning structural and political conditions.

Gunnar Wetterberg himself is an expert on the fact that the idea of a relaunched Nordic Union is as old as the dissolution of the Kalmar Union in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century itself. Advocated and argued by politics on several different ideological concepts during the course of history it is until today also this paradigm which to some degree keeps the common Nordic consciousness alive. In the same line of argument the Gunnar-Wetterberg-proposal is to be interpreted.

- To meet economic oppression by the Hanseatic League have been the political background for the inception of the Kalmar Union in the late middleages. For decades lasting Nordic intra-state-battles in the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, aimed to liberate from a danish oppression, have been the historical background which provoked its end. -

There have been quite a lot of historical chances to reestablish a Nordic Union during the course of the last centuries. What is elemental for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the prerequisite that major decisions are to be the result of an articulated public will, transmitted in democratical processes during the course of the next decade(s).

Gunnar Wetterbergs intention to raise a public debate on this issue had in this regard apparently some agenda-influencing power. He reacted to the political discourse of strengthening Nordic co-operation efforts already in progress and raised the debate to a constitutional level by submitting this concept. The controversial of this idea seems here to be somewhat the aim of this proposal.

## **A. appendix - The Wetterberg-proposal**

### ***core-proposals and argumentation of Gunnar Wetterberg***

#### **first article 2009-10-27**

<http://www.dn.se/opinion/debatt/de-fem-nordiska-landerna-bor-ga-ihop-i-en-ny-union-1.982761>

#### **main arguments :**

- The financial crisis has once again revealed the demand of further international transparency and cooperation. Undoubtless it is favourable to be well placed at this international level. At this background a confederation of the Nordic countries could have a deeper impact, than every of this small states could have on its own. ( 1 )
- All the nordic countries could receive an economical boost if their economies would be accomplished by their neighbours. The recent situation is in opposite characterized by a dependence of a single or few branches or markets. As long as every country stands for his own, new problems in the aftermath of the current crisis are possible in the future. ( 2 )
- The variety within a union would provide more career options for younger professionells. ( 3 )
- An unified Norden could provide a strengthened support to the european development and could in this way assure nordic interests in a more powerful way at this level. Being in the position to negotiate as an ambassador of one of the five strongest economies in the European Union would bring additional weight to the nordic voices in european politics. Such a background could also draw the attention of more nordic politicians to this field of interests, aiming the realistic ambition to fill more key posts in the European Commission and the European Parliament than it is the case today. ( 4 )
- The 25 million inhabitants of the area are providing a substantial base for the maintenance of nordic culture. ( 5 )

## How to realize ?

- Since it is neither realistic nor desirable to launch directly a centralized state, the elemental start is to construct a confederation between those five countries on a fullmembership basis.
  
- As a first step this Nordic Union has to be negotiated between the governments on the prospective basis of a holistic declaration or at least a mutual agreement.
  
- A long-term ambition could be the implementation of a federation-system consisting of two chambres – the first with a proportional representation and a crossborder electoral lists and the second as a senat which represents the countries on the basis of a mandatory allocation which is not in line with the country size.
  
- A Nordic (Con)federation should be headed by a common sovereign. Queen Margrethe II. is the best choice – her name may also act in a symbolic way. She should become the second-rank sovereign of the union in every country. In case that those proposal is to sophisticated for one or some of the countries, this position could also be filled on a rotating principle subsequent by all memberstates.
  
- For the construction of a union the prospective memberstates should reach an agreement which delegates some major policy fields to the authority of the federation, while the rest of the administrative competences shall remain at the responsibility of the individual governments.
  
- A federation should take care for the elemental responsibilities of public administration as Foreign- and Security Affairs, Fiscal Policy, major fields of legislation, migration (the variety of a union could in this regard be able to fight xenophobia) – but also such which account for an intra-nordic integration as labourmarketpolicies, research and secondary education for instance.
  
- In terms of values and their respective welfaresystems the Nordic countries are closer to each other than other countries in Europe. That's why a Nordic unification could reach a much more cohesional result than the european integration process will be able to. It will in this way probably also support the european project as an example of successful integration.

- At the same time a lot of specialized political diversifications could remain in the competences of the countries. A union could ensure the strengthening of common values, in a way that schools and social politics are moving closer towards each other, without the need of a central steering approach.

- Another characteristic which the Nordic states have in common is the existence of strong local administrations, which even have to be strengthened additionally within the frame of a big confederation.

- The language is one of the major prerequisites for this Union, but also a problem to be solved. One solution could be to educate all pupils from the beginning with a second nordic language beside to their mothertongue. Normally it would be enough to publish all official documents in two languages – which have to be finish and one of the scandinavian languages, even if islandic can be tricky to translate in the beginning.

- Some generations of lawyers should be entrusted to harmonize the legislation of this countries.

overall conclusion:

- The mutual respect and the advantages of an unification have grown in comparism to some decades before.

- An unified Norden could be one of the most forward looking policies for political decisionmakers, much more fruitful than highambitioned official statements about an enhanced Nordic co-operation. A confederation would be a huge and major institutional change, which is able to achieve a lot of economic, social and cultural benefits in the future. – The political complement and frame for the Öresundbridge.

## **second article 2009-12-13**

<http://www.dn.se/opinion/debatt/historisk-mojlighet-att-skapa-en-ny-nordisk-union-1.1013086>

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### **a further developed proposal – ‘the first Union-package’**

- a ‘Nordic filter’ for all mayor political decisions in the those countries, which entails an assessment on how these provisions contribute to this federation; a joint secretariat have to be set up for this purpose which collaborates with the national authorities on legislative proposals on fields which are intended to become harmonized by the Nordic countries
- a commission which is in charge for an enhanced intra-Nordic communication between the five countries, by accomplishing a railwaytriangle Oslo-Copenhagen-Stockholm and improve the airwayconnections to Iceland and Finland
- a labourmarketauthority which developes solutions towards an enhanced free movement of labourforce between the Nordic countries through all the range of joint initiatives - from coordinated internship-programmes until portable socialinsurencies and crossborder collective agreements
- a financialmarkets supervisoryboard which prepares a joint Nordic legislation and a bank- and insurance marketauthority
- a joint research council which allocates 0,2 % of the overall Nordic GDP as contribution to R&D
- a Nordic literature book which edites the five countries old and new classics in original in the three scandinavian languages, translated into finish and icelandic
- five joint embassies in countries where the Nordic countries definitely should be represented

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