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Forum: Scandinavian Internationalist Diplomacy

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Introduction

“In articles recently published it has been said that I am interested in mountaineering. That’s true,” Dag Hammarskjöld reflected in Edward R. Murrow’s radio program “This I Believe” in 1954, before continuing:

but I have never climbed any famous peaks. My experience is limited to Scandinavia where mountaineering calls more for endurance than for equilibristics [*sic!*], and where mountains are harmonious rather than dramatic, matter of fact (if you permit me such a term in this context) rather than eloquent. However, that much I know of this sport that the qualities it requires are just those which I feel we all need today: perseverance and patience, a firm grip on realities, careful but imaginative planning, a clear awareness of the dangers but also the fact that fate is what we make it and that the safest climber is he who never questions his ability to overcome all difficulties.¹

Hammarskjöld’s parable was both meant to convey the moral and diplomatic composure needed to become an efficient Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to link these necessary traits – which he clearly felt he possessed – to some almost eternal qualities of Scandinavia. After all, he had become the mountaineer he was, due to the very quality of this landscape (in fact, a very Swedish version). The internationalist leadership of Dag Hammarskjöld did not, according to himself, spring from the demands of the United Nations,

1 Statement to the press on arrival at International Airport, New York, April 9, 1953, UN Press Release, SG/287, April 9, 1953. In Foote, W. *The Servant of Peace. A Selection of the Speeches and Statements of Dag Hammarskjöld. Secretary-General of the United Nations, 1953–61* (London: The Bodley Head, 1962), 28.

the geopolitical situation of the post-war era, or the place of Sweden in global politics – it sprung from Scandinavia itself. The mixture of pragmatic tenaciousness and spiritual calling was simply how Scandinavians *were* in the world. It was mythology in the making: His Scandinavian internationalist leadership was no more the product of nature, than his ascendancy to the zenith of the UN – both greater and smaller powers were at play.

The Scandinavian countries are often seen as being among the most consistent promoters of internationalist solutions to global challenges and can boast some of the most renowned internationalist figures of the 20th Century.² Scandinavia, moreover, sees itself, and is often recognized, as a region representing and promoting a certain set of values (such as democracy, social equality and progressive ideals on rights) on the international stage.³ While there are some truths in these stereotypes,⁴ the role and reputation of Scandinavian internationalist diplomacy is much more varied, as it developed in a complex symbiosis between the rise of international organizations (IOs), professionalization of foreign services (as part of the construction of the modern state), and the expansion of the diplomatic field from the turn of the last century onwards.⁵ There is a large body of literature on how the various (non-state) internationalist strands developing from the late 1800s onwards were absorbed into the corporatist structures of the Scandinavian post-war welfare state.⁶ However, very little research exists, that studies Scandinavian internationalism as a transnational historical phenomenon that is intrinsically linked to the rise of IOs and is rooted in expanding *diplomatic* practices.⁷

2 We need only mention Fridtjof Nansen, P. Munch, Karl Evang, Alva Myrdal, Trygve Lie, and Dag Hammarskjöld.

3 For an early articulation: Shepard, J.S. *The Scandinavian States and the League of Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939). For the social sciences see Ingebritsen, C. "Norm Entrepreneurs. Scandinavia's Role in World Politics." *Cooperation and Conflict* 37 (2002), 11–23.

4 For a critical assessment of these stereotypes in the realm of human rights, see Vik, H., S. Jensen, L. Lindkvist, and J. Strang. "Histories of Human Rights in the Nordic Countries." *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 36 (3) (2018), 189–201.

5 Gram-Skjoldager, K. "Bringing the Diplomats Back In." *EUI Working Paper* (Florence: European University Institute, 2011).

6 For a historiographical overview of this process in the field of humanitarian internationalism, see Marklund, C. "Neutrality and Solidarity in Nordic Humanitarian Action." *HPC Working Paper*, January 2016; for examples from the field of public diplomacy see several contributions in *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Counties: Representing the Periphery*, eds. L. Clerc, N. Glover, and P. Jordan (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

7 There are transnational studies, such as Vik, H.H. "Small, Not Weak? Nordic Strategies to Influence the World Bank in the 1980s." In *Saints and Sinners: Official Development Aid*

This special issue brings these elements together to study the emergence of Scandinavian internationalist diplomacy, with an emphasis on the period from the 1920s to the 1970s. The aim is to carefully unpack all three concepts in the title: “Scandinavian,” “internationalist,” and “diplomacy.” The remainder of this brief introduction will sketch out how the three terms are conceptualized and speak to each other.

First, this special issue is not concerned in hair-splitting debates about the overlaps and differences of the political-historical constructs of Scandinavia, Nordics and *Norden*.⁸ It focuses primarily on Scandinavia – Norway, Sweden, and Denmark – because these countries were molded together and found a recognized place in the 20th century international system, with the emergence of international organizations and the new practices of internationalism and diplomacy that followed with it. A central concern, probed by all contributions to this issue, is to flip the *inside-out* narrative explicated by Hammarskjöld above, and understand Scandinavia as a diplomatically mediated, and deeply contingent, product of global institutional and ideological forces: the meanings of Scandinavia-in-the-world were renegotiated in times of major crisis and in the light of systemic shifts in the international order.⁹ This *outside-in* perspective, rather than searching for innate Scandinavian qualities in the international sphere, looks to trace the many ways Scandinavian actors and institutions drew color from transnational encounters. Like Eliasian *figurations*, we are equally interested in the dance’s structuring capabilities, as the virtuosity of singular dancers.

This resonates with our preoccupation with *internationalist* diplomacy. Whether the articles focus on singular actors, institutions or polities, the aim is to use the *outside-in* perspective to complicate, or perhaps even explode, what Scandinavian *internationalism* and *internationalist* meant in practice. Put simply, by participating and engaging with the outside, Scandinavia

and Its Dynamics in a Historical and Comparative Perspective, eds. T.B. Olesen, H. Pharo, and K. Paaskesen (Oslo: Akademika Pub, 2013), 333–63; Engh, S. “The ‘Nordic Model’ in International Development Aid. Explanation, Experience and Export.” In *The Making and Circulation of Nordic Models, Ideas and Images*, eds. H. Byrkjeflot, L. Mjøset, M. Mordhorst, and K. Petersen (London: Routledge, 2021). But few focus on diplomacy, such as Götz, N. “On the Origins of ‘Parliamentary Diplomacy’. Scandinavian ‘Bloc Politics’ and Delegation Policy in the League of Nations.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 40 (2005), 263–79.

8 Most of the essays that follow include their own definitions of these terms.

9 For a study of these dynamics in a later period than the one explored in this special issue, see the special issue “Nordic Nineties” in *Culture Unbound* 13 (1) (2021). For the introduction, see Hellenes, A., H.A. Ikonomidou, C. Marklund, and A. Nissen. “Nordic Nineties’: Norwegian and Swedish Self-understanding in the Face of Globalization.” *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 13 (1) (2021), 1–15.

and Scandinavians were internationalized in a multitude of (sometimes) conflicting ways.¹⁰ Here we take our cue from several scholars. Glenda Sluga has convincingly argued that nationalism and internationalism were reinforcing and co-dependent phenomena of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mark Mazower and Akira Iriye have, in very different ways, emphasized the power that lies in organizing the international sphere.¹¹ Several scholars have introduced the full range of internationalisms operating in the 19th and 20th centuries.¹² Jessica Reinisch, for one, has brought this plurality to the fore in order to unravel the myth that internationalism was inherently benign and monochrome.¹³ Benjamin Martin has in great detail demonstrated the

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- 10 Gram-Skjoldager, K., H.A. Ikonomou, and T. Kahlert. "Scandinavians and the League of Nations Secretariat, 1919–1946." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 44 (4) (2019), 454–83; Mørkved Hellenes, A. "Pilgrims and Missionaries of Social Peace: Geneva and Pontigny as Sites of Scandinavian Internationalism in Late Interwar Europe." *Nordic Journal of Educational Research* 7 (2) (2020), 5–29.
- 11 Iriye, A. *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Mazower, M. *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012); Sluga, G. *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
- 12 Iriye, A. *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Davies, T.R. *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism: The Campaign for Disarmament between the Two World Wars* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007); Schot, J., and V. Legendijk. "Technocratic Internationalism in the Interwar Years: Building Europe on Motorways and Electricity Networks." *Journal of Modern European History*, 6 (2) (2008), 196–217; Laqua, D., ed. *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements Between the World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Clavin, P. *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Kaiser, W., and J. Schot. *Writing the Rules for Europe: Experts, Cartels, and International Organizations (Making Europe)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Pedersen, S. *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jerónimo, M.B., and J.P. Monteiro, eds. *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Rosenboim, O. *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Imlay, T. *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914 to 1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Kott, S., and K. Patel. "Fascist Internationalism: Nazi Social Policy as an Imperial Project – An Introduction." In *Nazism across Borders: The Social Policies of the Third Reich and Their Global Appeal*, eds. S. Kott and K. Patel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–25; Thakur, V. *India's First Diplomat: V.S. Srinivasa Sastri and the Making of Liberal Internationalism* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021); Wagner, F. *Colonial Internationalism and the Governmentality of Empire, 1893–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Di Donato, M., and M. Fulla, eds. *Leftist Internationalisms. A Transnational Political History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).
- 13 Reinisch's four-year-long collaborative research project "The Reluctant Internationalists" (2013–17/18).

importance of cultural internationalism in the fascist and national-socialist regimes' visions for Europe.¹⁴ Recent international (intellectual) history further develops, and sometime challenges, the literature on internationalisms¹⁵ by centering their definitional powers and alternative attempts at world-making, furthering the long-standing interest within International Relations Theory and historical IR for the making and breaking of orders.¹⁶

Connected to this interest in the broad specter of internationalisms, has been a recent interest in the complex, multidirectional and oft-frustrated agency of more or less marginal internationalist actors. Studying internationalism “from below,” Reinisch and Brydan write, means grasping the “ubiquity and heterogeneity of internationalist endeavours” and paying “close attention to

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- 14 Martin, B. *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- 15 Cf. Ceadel, M. *Thinking about Peace and War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Herren, M. *Hintertüren zur Macht. Internationalismus und modernisierungsorientierte Aussenpolitik in Belgien, der Schweiz und den USA 1865–1914* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000); Geyer, M.H., and J. Paulmann, eds. *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Holbraad, C. *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Jahn, B. “Liberal Internationalism: Historical Trajectory and Current Prospects.” *International Affairs* 94 (1) (2018), 43–71; Bell, D. “Liberal Internationalism.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 29, 2016; Owens, P., and K. Rietzler, eds. *Women's International Thought: A New History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).
- 16 For IR and historical accounts of orders: Bull, H., and A. Watson, eds. *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Clark, I. *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Schroeder, P.W. *The Transformation of European Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Knutsen, T.L. *The Rise and Fall of World Orders* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Ikenberry, G.J. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Morefield, J. *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Mazower, M. *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012); Slobodian, Q. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2018); Fiti Sinclair, G. *To Reform the World: International Organizations and the Making of Modern States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Getachew, A. *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Lascuertes, K.M. *Orders of Exclusion: Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Ghervas, S. *Conquering Peace from the Enlightenment to the European Union* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2021); Sluga, G. *The Invention of International Order: Remaking Europe After Napoleon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Cohrs, P.O. *The New Atlantic Order. The Transformation of International Politics, 1860–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

how people have been ‘doing internationalism.’¹⁷ A further advance in the historiography of interwar internationalism came with Ilaria Scaglia’s study of *The Emotions of Internationalism*, where she explores how internationalists based in Geneva in the interwar years “constructed a transnational ‘emotional community’ made of people and institutions that valued international contacts and established a set of specific and acceptable ‘emotional styles’ in which to conduct them.”¹⁸ Such approaches are useful vehicles to challenge, transcend, and connect the neat categorizations that can dominate studies of internationalisms on a larger scale. Several of the articles in this volume thus offer a focus, from the perspective of individuals, on resistance, ambivalence, competing interests, and miscommunication, reminding us that “doing” internationalism was anything but smooth sailing. The constant need to overcome technical, ideological, and geographical hurdles demanded both a certain kind of agency and favorable structural conditions.¹⁹

This interest in structured agency and multivocal internationalisms resonates with our understanding of diplomacy. In the inaugural editorial to this journal, Scott-Smith and Weisbrode held that, alongside “representation” of a polity (vis-à-vis another), the classic trilogy of diplomatic activity is “information-gathering, communication, and negotiation.”²⁰ These practices are used to “mediate estrangement” between polities, to paraphrase James Der Derian, which is a quintessential diplomatic practice.²¹ One of the most important ways of achieving this is to successfully prepare sites (of negotiation) for others – to create spaces of positive diplomatic encounter.²² Diplomacy, political scientist, and social anthropologist Iver B. Neumann points out, “is about easing communication by turning yourself into an optimally functioning medium between other actors.”²³ With this brief exercise of definition,

17 Reinisch, J., and D. Brydan, eds. *Internationalists in European History. Rethinking the Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 7. See also: Reinisch, J. “Introduction: Agents of Internationalism.” *Contemporary European History*, 25 (2) (2016), 195–205.

18 Ilaria S. *The Emotions of Internationalism. Feeling International Cooperation in the Alps in the Interwar Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 3.

19 For similar reflection with an emphasis on the League of Nations, see Ikonomou, H.A. “Introduction: New Approaches to the League of Nations.” *Culture and History: Student Research Papers* 7 (1) (2023), 4–14.

20 Scott-Smith, G., and K. Weisbrode. “Editorial,” *Diplomatica* 1 (1) (2019), 1–4.

21 Der Derian, J. “Mediating Estrangement: A Theory for Diplomacy.” *Review of International Studies* 13 (2) (1987), 91–110.

22 Neumann, I.B. *Diplomatic Sites – A Critical Enquiry* (London: Hurst, 2013).

23 Neumann, I.B. *At Home with the Diplomats – Inside a European Foreign Ministry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 121.

we emphasize – as with the *outside-in* perspective of Scandinavia and the structured internationalist doings – that the diplomatic agency and spaces of diplomatic encounters are mutually constitutive elements of a whole. This – and our broad understanding of who qualifies as diplomatic actors, what constitutes diplomatic practice, and where we can find diplomatic sites – undergirds the following articles.

In sum, the articles that follow therefore explore Scandinavian internationalisms and internationalists shaped by a variety of diplomatic sites, concerns, and crises – with a particular emphasis on the period from the early interwar years to the late 1970s.

We start, however, with a much broader conceptual exploration of small states as “intermediary bodies” in the international system. Revisiting Paul W. Schroeder’s term, Michael Jonas applies it to two temporally and geographically widely different case studies: the Danish unitary monarchy within the German Confederation and Finland as an intermediary body preceding, during and after the Cold War. Apart from exploring a concept that translates nicely across centuries in thinking about the systemic qualities of small polities, it prods the reader to think about the qualities Scandinavian countries as *relational* – endowed with systemic traits as much because of its place and size, as by the existence of an international system as such.

Haakon A. Ikonomou, Karin van Leeuwen, and Morten Rasmussen consider the role of the Scandinavian states in the establishment of the Permanent Court of International Justice between 1917 and 1920. Particularly, the article emphasizes that the structuring qualities and sequencing of the diplomatic arenas in which Scandinavian lawyers, diplomats, and politicians took part mattered greatly. While new multilateral diplomatic arenas, with the creation of the League of Nations, created space for small state coordination and influence, this was – as seen with the case of Norwegian politician, diplomat and international lawyer Francis Hagerup – more a matter of alignment than impact. These were multilateral arenas that shaped small state perceptions of the diplomatically possible, rather than sites of transformative agency.

Carl Marklund and Andreas Mørkved Hellenes maps out the kaleidoscopic career of Swedish businessman and socialist Olof Aschberg. They analyze how Aschberg in his citizen diplomacy called upon his considerable financial and social capital in support of an array of internationalist initiatives, working out of shifting major sites of 20th century international life like Paris and New York, converting private wealth into transnational platforms and publications to bring the world closer together. In so doing, Aschberg engaged in a particular sort of diplomatic entrepreneurship that make him stand out from other, better-known figures of Scandinavian internationalism.

Frederik Ørskov adds an important Nordic dimension to the historical understanding of Fascist internationalism and its emergence. His article traces continuities and tensions in the context of three Nazi-German institutions of cultural relations where Nordic writers figured prominently from the early 1930s and well into the war years. In these three interlinked sites, he argues, a specific branch of Nordic-German cultural diplomacy was formed whose enduring power of attraction must be understood in its continuity with the pre-1933 period, across the dramatic ideological shifts of the era.

Pavol Jakubec examines a different set of Scandinavian actors abroad in his study of the print media efforts of the Norwegian exile government in London. Situating the Norwegians alongside other exile governments in the multilateral Allied capital, he addresses the key role of communication in diplomacy, where representing legitimate states-under-occupation to Allied audiences became a matter of great import. In his examination of the print activities Jakubec identifies a shift in Norwegian internationalism from interwar liberalism towards a more realist understanding that contributed to craft Norway's international identity after the end of the Second World War.

Two of the contributions deal with Nordic joint efforts to engage with some of the "new" concerns structuring multilateral diplomacy from the 1970s and onwards, namely human rights and environmental concerns. Melina Buns' study of the negotiations of the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution shows how the existing institutions of Nordic cooperation provided a framework for multi-layered collaboration that efficiently structured the emerging Nordic environmental diplomacy in the international arena. Buns proposes to see this kind of Nordic environmental diplomacy as a "green internationalism," an international environmentalism that paired national self-interest with a shared sense of Nordic solidarity and institutional cooperation" that proved successful in shaping the new international agenda.

The mix of interests and ideals in Scandinavian multilateral diplomacy is also observed by Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard in his examination of the contributions of Scandinavian diplomats and policymakers to the UN debates on human rights and economic inequality triggered by the call for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). Although there were internal divergences among Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, the countries took on a position that combined support to NIEO with backing the basic needs strategy driven by the World Bank and the United States. Søndergaard argues that the Scandinavian position, seeing these two as complementary rather than opposing agendas, reflected a long-standing Scandinavian internationalism shaped by international solidarity and a broad conception of human rights, where economic, social and cultural rights were placed on an equal footing

with civil and political rights: the realization of the latter were perceived as being dependent on the former.

Taken together and seen as a whole, the special issue thus represents an important step towards a more nuanced understanding of not only *what* constituted Scandinavian internationalism during the 20th century, but also *how* it was shaped by external forces in the form of ideological shifts, diplomatic sites and spaces of multilateral negotiations and woven into the fabric of the international.

Haakon A. Ikonomou | ORCID: 0000-0002-9341-7897
Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
ikonomou@hum.ku.dk

Carl Marklund | ORCID: 0000-0002-0832-3993
Södertörn University, Huddinge, Sweden
carl.marklund@sh.se

Andreas Mørkved Hellenes | ORCID: 0000-0002-2492-692X
Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden
mrkved@chalmers.se

Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard
Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark
raso@diis.dk