1 Introduction

Comparing and conceptualising Nordic societal security

Sebastian Larsson and Mark Rhinard

Introduction

As in many regions of the world, Nordic conceptualisations of what ‘security’ means and how it should be practiced have transformed in recent decades. Traditional security strategies with a focus on geopolitics, concrete threat perceptions related to war, and territorial defence remain in place. But years of post-Cold War expansions of security thinking, conceptualisation, and practice have left an indelible and seemingly distinctive mark.

In the Nordic countries, as elsewhere in the Western world, security has come to be organised around a rather holistic conceptualisation of what constitutes a threat as well as the range of governmental responsibilities required to address them. In the Nordic region, we can observe a general shift in how discourses, practices, and technologies become related not to traditional defence or war-thinking, but to notions of ‘societal security’, ‘comprehensive security’, ‘resilience’, ‘risk’-, ‘crisis’-, or ‘emergency’ management, and ‘public safety and security’. These framings change what it means to provide security, presage a different kind of societal response, suggest different kinds of power hierarchies, and involve a wide range of actors from public to private and individual citizens. Nordic conceptions of security also wrest open a wider selection of threats to society, including terrorism and organised crime, infrastructure disruptions, IT breaches, disinformation campaigns, major accidents, environmental disasters, and even migration.

Similarly, the study of security has expanded considerably after the Cold War and into the 2000s, both in the field of International Relations and beyond. As much recent scholarship attests to (Burgess 2010), ‘new’ security studies feature a range of constructivist, reflexive, and interdisciplinary perspectives, and include empirical and theoretical studies of a range of issues. Extant and emerging agendas include processes of threat construction and securitisation, the expanding range of security-related discourses and practices, the interplay and mutual constitution of societal values and government action, security technologies and actor behaviours, and legitimate security governance – to name just a few. An increasing amount of critical security studies further explores the implications and effects of post-Cold

War security practices with regard to civil liberties, fundamental rights, and democratic life (C.A.S.E. Collective 2006; Shepherd 2013).

The Nordic region is a prime area where these trends converge. As shown in this book, Nordic governments have displayed an apparent willingness to adopt expanded security concepts at the same time that academics have roamed across the (thin) line dividing research and practice. A central theme running through this book is the intermingling of research and practice in the Nordic region, amongst actors subscribing to evolving sets of historically shaped ideas – all in a process of co-constitution. These dynamics are not new, of course (as the global evolution of notions such as ‘soft power’ or ‘resilience’ in policy circles confirms), nor are they unique to the Nordic region (Vouri and Stritzel 2016). But Nordic countries do offer an uncannily rich and revealing set of cases in which to study how and to what extent concepts travel over time, across borders, and between the research and public spheres.

This prompts the question: is there a Nordic way of thinking about and pursuing security, perhaps in line with the notion of ‘societal security’? For some outsiders, there appears to be vast similarities, rooted in seemingly common robust social welfare systems, supported by transnational conceptual learning, and manifested in Nordic cooperation and agreements like the Haga declarations (Dalgaard-Nielsen and Hamilton 2006; Hamilton 2005; Sandö and Bailes 2014; cf. NRF 2008). To be sure, there are clear connections. The welfare state, as we discuss below, underpins a particular perspective of society and portends a degree of shared values worth protecting. And the idea of ‘total defence’ giving way to ‘societal security’ – or some variant – echoes across multiple Nordic countries. Even the recent return to geopolitics in international security thinking can be found in Nordic governments’ calls to rethink societal security for a supposedly more militaristic threat environment. The chapters in this book clearly demonstrate family resemblances in how broad security concepts emerged, evolved, and transformed in the Nordics.

But this book points out that differences are as common as similarities, and methodologically speaking, understanding divergence provides important analytical purchase. Indeed, that motivation spurred the project behind this book. We take a critical perspective on the assumption of ‘Nordic convergence’, to investigate the extent to which differences rather than similarities characterise how a set of Nordic countries – Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland – speak of, frame, and act upon the security of their societies. The goal here is to add nuance to discussions of how Nordic countries address the question of security, and to consider the implications of similarities and differences. What makes this book broadly ‘critical’ is in its methods and approaches: it seeks to uncover evolving power constellations by examining who and what shape conceptual trends over time, while focusing on outcomes and implications in terms of the dominant discourses and practices of various Nordic ‘securities’.

We organise the book around the notion of ‘societal security’, a term proposed by some observers as a concept common to the Nordic region.¹ The concept of societal security has both academic and practical connotations, with the academic community divided between identity-based approaches associated with the Copenhagen School of security studies and those with a more ‘functionalist’ and objective view of security (Rhinard, this volume). It is the latter version of societal security that we take up in this book, not because we advocate for it, but rather because it is often promoted as a common ‘Nordic’ approach by practitioners (FNF 2014; Nordic Council 2005, 2019; Stoltenberg 2009) and some funding bodies (NordForsk 2013; Research Council of Norway 2008). As generally articulated, a societal security approach aims to protect the core values of a society from a wide range of intentional and unintentional threats. It envisions a host of public and private responses to such threats, and promotes steering models that span policy sectors and governance levels. The concept has been taken up by transboundary policy communities in the Nordic region and is sometimes accompanied by the idea of ‘Nordic values’ worth protecting. As such, it is an intensely political question and critical reflection on Nordic societies.

We investigate how widespread the notions of societal security are in the Nordic region, and moreover, whether such patterns reveal genuine conceptual kinship or just superficial window-dressing. We also want to understand the implications of Nordic convergence and divergence on this question, including for governance, democracy, and values. Using the concept of ‘societal security’ as a departure point allows us to explore divergences from this particular approach, and to relate concepts with conceptual affiliations, including comprehensive security, resilience, and risk management.

The authors in this volume are experts in their security-related fields and have spent several years jointly examining the discourses, practices, and implications of Nordic countries’ approaches to securing their citizens, under a common research framework.² The chapters take either a country-, thematic-, or comparative focus, examining in each case how security is conceptualised and practiced, and with what implications for Nordic societies. Our ontological approach is largely constructivist in orientation, concerned less with what security ‘is’ than with how certain approaches are ‘made possible’ as well as what they ‘do’. We are thus interpretivist in epistemological terms, allowing the empirical material to reveal patterns in unexpected ways.

Considerable conceptual overlaps are thereby revealed in the Nordic region related to the notion of societal security. Each country studied here has adopted some variant of the notion, and indeed there is evidence from each country that the precise term ‘societal security’ has been taken up by at least some corner of officialdom. However, the degree of institutionalisation differs dramatically, from a strong take-up in Sweden and Norway to a marginal adoption in Finland (in deference to the preferred notion of ‘comprehensive security’) to almost no formal adoption in Denmark. Whatever the

concepts used, all have been shaped by socio-historical trajectories rooted to traditional defence postures. New security concepts are thus, as we will see, less revolutionary and more evolutionary. The key difference for each country lies in whether new holistic concepts linked to societal security replace, or co-exist with, traditional territorial defence notions such as total defence, particularly as political attention, more recently, turns towards a perceived ‘return of geopolitics’ in the global security environment (Mead 2014). Security concepts in the Nordic region, as shown convincingly by the chapters in this book, follow particular trajectories, each shaped *inter alia* by historical experience, pushed by field-spanning actors, reproduced or uprooted by institutional change, and reconfigured through narrative contestation. These various trajectories are unique to each country, of course, but all represent shifts in ways to conceptualise and act upon security, with consequences for politics, power, and cohesion in the Nordic region. The chapters in this book shed light on these questions, providing not only a ‘state of play’ regarding security thinking and practice but also tackling questions of how security has been produced, enacted, and performed in different Nordic countries.

To capture diversity, we outlined an analytical framework that would allow authors, starting with the notion of societal security, to explore creatively how this concept – defined as such, or not – played out in the respective countries and sectors. First, we asked authors to characterise the dominant conceptual approach taken to the safety and security of societies in their respective country or policy area. Second, the authors were asked to trace the emergence of that approach, examining the social and transformational dynamics behind them. Third, the authors consider the implications of those approaches either in practical terms, in how security is done, or in normative terms, including what such concepts mean for power structures, societal values, and what new insecurities might emerge as a result.

This chapter unfolds as follows. The first two sections focus on ostensible similarities, one concerning the welfare state foundation for modern Nordic societies, and the second on the emergence of a supposedly region-wide approach to safety and security: societal security. The subsequent section considers potential lines of divergence, while the concluding section explains the organisation of the book and outlines the contributions.

Nordic security and the welfare state

One can hardly discuss common Nordic conceptions of security without first investigating the link between Nordic welfare apparatuses and Nordic security approaches. There is indeed much talk of a ‘Nordic Model’ in welfare and democracy studies focusing on, for instance, the region’s historical approach to public institutions and labour (Engelstad and Hagelund 2016), economic policy (Blomquist and Moene 2015), work organisation (Gustavsen 2011), education (Blossing et al. 2014), or even culture (Duelund 2003) and state media

(Syvertsen et al. 2014). This broad range of scholarly attention undoubtedly points towards the existence of strong socio-political, cultural, and administrative similarities between the countries, but also suggests that these similarities have existed most tangibly in an area traditionally associated not with security and defence, but with the public provision of social welfare.

It would be safe to assume, however, that the region's historical welfare model has conditioned its security discourses and practices to a large extent. How has this welfare model interplayed with, organised, and structured a potential Nordic approach to security? Relatedly, what are the links between the region's modern reputation and international brand of 'progressive' politics (often constructed as 'Nordic values') and its current logic of framing and doing security? When associating traditional Nordic welfare commonalities with a potential shared security approach, at least three themes can be highlighted.

First, in some Nordic countries (most notably Sweden and Finland but also in Norway to some extent), the welfare system itself overlapped strongly with the logic of how to organise national defence during the Cold War. For example, the notion of 'total defence' – which existed varyingly in the region – was a political-bureaucratic ideal suggesting that virtually all aspects of societal planning and the peacetime provision of public services should be integrated into defence policy and aligned with the goals of war preparedness. Policies for public housing, healthcare, road construction, supply management, and so on all had a 'war dimension' and had to be designed not only for welfare purposes, but also with invasion scenarios in mind and with an eye towards how to best mobilise society and its citizens for defence purposes. As put by Lundin et al. (2010), in countries like Sweden, the logics of *welfare* and *warfare* became historically entangled and intertwined, and over time, seemingly inseparable. This has enabled a deeply rooted 'defence-culture' in certain Nordic countries, which, in turn, made it difficult for reformist bureaucrats and politicians to challenge and significantly alter total defence structures after the Cold War. In Sweden and Finland, for instance, the gradual transition from defence thinking to new and broadened security approaches was rather slow and fragmented (see also Larsson, and Hyvönen and Juntunen, respectively, this volume).

Second, and relatedly, similarities in security approaches may stem from shared traditions of comprehensive public administration structures. More specifically, the region's history of strong social democratic parties has put public sector actors in generally strong positions vis-à-vis private companies. Security and defence was usually a rather state-owned operation during the Cold War, and thus tended to follow a top-down practical logic: from the government and parliament via civil and military agencies to regional county boards and local municipalities and companies. Much due to the peculiar intertwining of welfare and defence indicated earlier, the trust among citizens towards authorities and security agencies has also been traditionally strong in the Nordic region.³ In effect, the general public-private

relationship in the Nordic security field has developed quite differently than in many other countries and regions. In the United States and United Kingdom, private firms like G4S, ADT, or DynCorp have a much larger role in the overall domestic operationalisation of security, and the outsourcing of policing and surveillance to private firms has become an almost standardised practice. In the Nordic countries, on the other hand, private security firms are typically smaller and have a more withdrawn role in security work. Rather than in competition with public agencies, private companies tend to be engaged by the government in so-called public-private partnerships (PPPs), and often in the areas of critical infrastructure and risk management (see also Berling and Petersen, and Liebetrau, respectively, this volume).

Finally, in most Nordic countries, post-Cold War security responses and responsibilities have devolved in terms of governance patterns. While central governments retain a strong degree of control, responsibilities have diffused downward and outward throughout societies, particularly since the 2000s. To take municipal government as an example, security thinking has become embedded into the everyday practices of governing local communities, organising local bureaucracies and infrastructures, and managing local vulnerabilities, risks, and threats. This has been formulated varyingly by Nordic governments as the ‘responsibility’-, ‘similarity’-, and ‘proximity’-principles for local security work, which, again, clearly resembles how welfare and defence models were organised historically. In countries like Norway, moreover, ‘security’ has come to be increasingly paralleled with the provision of social welfare itself, not least in the case of countering ‘radicalism’ and so-called ‘violent extremism’. In stark contrast to the more hands-on policing and surveillance approaches in the United States and United Kingdom that draw on exceptional logics and a politics of fear, security work in Nordic contexts tends to often be based on a politics of socialisation and integration. The historical qualities of the Nordic welfare state have, in some instances, transmuted security work into a form of ‘caretaking’, indeed, into a practice drawing peculiarly on both social capital and coercive measures (see also Jore and Burgess, respectively, this volume).

Whether or not there is a distinct ‘Nordic approach’ to societal security, it is certainly the case that such practices will have been strongly influenced by the region’s common social welfare traditions. Although far from an exhaustive account, the three historical traits mentioned here – war preparedness, welfare-state centralisation, and diffused security governance patterns – are at least some key indicators that post-Cold War security in the Nordic has been inevitably conditioned by the region’s social, political, and economic structures.

The emergence of ‘societal security’

It is typical – and deceptively simple – to link the concept of societal security to the Nordic region. Examining the origin of the concept allows us to get

a grasp of why outsiders, in particular, associate the terminology with the Nordic nations. The notion of doing security in the name of society, with its multiple meanings, can be traced to even before the end of the Cold War, when numerous conceptualisations of security emerged to challenge traditional territorial or state-centric versions of national security, each carrying its own ideational baggage and reflecting its own set of material interests.

When the notion of ‘societal security’ initially emerged, it came to embody two relatively independent versions: the first version was coined in the early 1990s by Ole Waever and Barry Buzan, and what would become known as the Copenhagen School of security studies. Departing from a constructivist tradition, it directed attention towards ‘the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats’ (Waever 1993, 23). A second version was introduced in Nordic functionalist security studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and is largely associated with the work of Bengt Sundelius (2005b, 2005c, 2006), Jan Hovden (2004), Alyson Bailes (Archer et al. 2014), US scholar Dan Hamilton (2005; Dalgaard-Nielsen and Hamilton 2006), and, albeit in a more critical fashion, Peter Burgess (2014).

This second version, which gained popularity in policy circles and via ‘pracademics’ – scholars moving between the academic-practitioner worlds (Larsson 2019) – stripped societal security of its identity-oriented original definition and emphasised security as the transnational protection of interdependent infrastructures. Indeed, ‘life-giving functions’ took analytical priority over time. This was apparent in writings by Hovden (2004) in Norway, in which attention was placed on conceptualising security in terms of ‘the survival and recovery of vital societal functions’, and in those by Sundelius in Sweden, which initially termed the concept ‘functional security’ (Sundelius 2005a, 2005b see also Larsson, this volume). The focus turned away from cultural referent objects and more on the kinds of functions that must be preserved (Hamilton et al. 2005). In essence, societal security referred to the ability of a society to function under duress, the embeddedness of societies in a transnational context, the interdependence of societal infrastructures, and the holistic or ‘all-hazards’ security mindset that was growing popular at the time. This version was promoted, and eventually started to spread, amongst Swedish and Norwegian scholars, practitioners, and policy development groups as it became introduced in new government propositions and agencies, and applied like an umbrella term for framing various security research programmes (see also Larsson, and Morsut, respectively, this volume).

There are certainly overlaps between the two variants of societal security, but their development took place mainly in parallel rather than intertwined or – as might have been predicted – with one version subsuming the other (see Rhinard, this volume). Each uses a different ontological and epistemological stance on the study of security. For this reason, the latter functionalist version of societal security had considerable crossover appeal:

associated with objectivist ontologies of viewing the security landscape, it moved swiftly from academia into practice. Some saw societal security as the emerging Nordic – perhaps even European – counterpart to ‘homeland security’ that was being simultaneously established in the United States (Sundelius et al. 2006). It structured at least a generation of policymakers in Europe engaged in the analysis, pursuit, and funding of security.

In many ways, the concept lies at the heart of the struggle concerning how Nordic security was to be practiced, understood, and framed in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods. This can be illustrated by the various ways in which this terminology spread in the region, first, in different local and inter-bureaucratic contexts, and second, in different supranational and inter-ministerial contexts. As Larsson (this volume) shows, the early 2000s revealed evidence of cooperation and convergence between Nordic policy advisors and officials in the area of non-military security, not least in terms of the evolution of official discourse and agency structures. Particularly in Sweden and Norway, the design of agencies, institutions, and security policies came to mirror each other. Their respective ‘vulnerability investigations’ around 1999–2001 ran in tandem, and as the two advisory groups met and exchanged concrete ideas, their final reports subsequently came to employ very similar terminologies and organisational principles for crisis management and security work. Norwegian officials, moreover, almost immediately began using the label of societal security to make sense of these reforms in subsequent government bills and agency directives (e.g. Ministry of Justice Norway 2002, 2004; see also Morsut, this volume), whereas in Sweden it was taken up as well, albeit alongside other widened security concepts.

Although not necessarily referred to explicitly as ‘societal security’, the core concepts and strategies presented in the Swedish and Norwegian final reports and subsequent government bills all carried such traits, and also began to spread to the other Nordic countries. For example, in addition to the lengthy Swedish report ‘Security in a new era’ (SOU 2001) and the Norwegian ‘A vulnerable society’ (NOU 2000), the Finnish Ministry of Defence authored a similar national security strategy in 2003 for ‘protecting the critical functions of society’ (Ministry of Defence Finland 2003; see also 2006), and the Danish agency Beredskapsstyrelsen (2004) completed the ‘Danish Vulnerability Investigation’ the following year. In these texts, as well as related official writings, it became clear that Nordic policy investigators and advisors took some inspiration from each other. Certain terms and practical orientations continued to resonate throughout all of them, and they were all aligned at least to some extent with the functionalist definition of societal security that was being simultaneously developed (e.g. Sundelius 2005a). Within only a handful of years, the Nordic countries (except Iceland) made a general – seemingly orchestrated – move towards an updated and holistic-sounding security approach (from war preparedness to increased focus on peacetime crises and infrastructural protection), reformed governance and organisational standards for crisis management (e.g. the already mentioned ‘responsibility’-, ‘similarity’-, and ‘proximity’-principles), addressing

a much larger spectrum of threats (from military invasion to environmental hazards and human-induced disasters and terrorist attacks), and security actors (not only military, public sector, and governments but also civil, private sector, and citizens).

During the same years, national political representatives in the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers also started discussing and collaborating in the area of security for the first time. A Nordic Council member proposal in 2005, for instance, called for increased regional cooperation around societal security, acknowledging that while '[s]ecurity policy has traditionally been positioned beyond the spectrum of the Nordic Council', it was now time to implement societal security as a dedicated work area in the Council since 'new threats' now supposedly faced the democratic state and rule of law in the Nordic region. This way, the member proposal reasoned, the Council could more effectively push Nordic governments to 're-evaluate the workload' between 'internal and external security' as well as increase cooperation with 'non-public actors' (Nordic Council 2005). Explicitly addressing the notion of a 'Nordic societal security', this member proposal was followed up again in 2010 but now by representatives coming specifically from Iceland (Nordic Council 2010). Notably, Iceland's security and defence approach had been largely underdeveloped – if at all existent – during large parts of the 20th century. Militarily, the Icelandic government had been deeply dependent on NATO and United States, for instance. However, with the emergence of new approaches related to crisis management and societal security, Icelandic decisionmakers saw ways to more substantially engage in a modern form of security work (see also Bailes and Gylfason 2008).

The so-called 'Stoltenberg report' (2009) continued to build on what seemed to emerge as a 'Nordic security model'. Presented at an 'extraordinary meeting of Nordic foreign ministers' in Oslo in February 2009, this report consisted of 13 major proposals for strengthened security cooperation. Although the report consisted predominantly of high-policy proposals, three chapters concerned societal security specifically, and it concluded by introducing an informal Nordic declaration of solidarity in the event of a major disaster or attack in the region. In April the same year, the inter-ministerial 'Haga Process' was initiated as a top-down effort to further orchestrate Nordic crisis management and societal security policies. This initiative led to two political declarations in which the five Nordic countries' ministers of defence, justice, and interior, respectively, claimed to see

a great advantage in developing the existing Nordic cooperation in the area of societal security and preparedness. Shared values and a cultural and geographical proximity make up an important foundation for this cooperation. It is our conviction that a deepened and more focused collaboration benefits the entire Nordic, as well as our capability to act in different international contexts.

(Haga Declaration I 2009; see also Sandö and Bailes 2014)

Here, ‘Nordic societal security’ was used, on the one hand, as a way to frame a specifically ‘Nordic’ way of life, and on the other hand, as an instrument for gaining leverage or becoming more influential abroad. The follow-up declaration, ‘Haga II’, further promoted and enacted a shared Nordic approach to security work, suggesting that the Nordic countries face increasingly shared threats due to their ‘similar societal structures’, ‘interconnected infrastructures’, and ‘openness’ (Haga Declaration II 2013). Work has since continued in the Nordic Council, and in October 2019, an updated ‘Nordic Council strategy on societal security’ was formally adopted. Although containing no radically new ideas, the strategy proposes to give leaders ‘a clear mandate’ when it comes to ‘Nordic cooperation on foreign affairs and security policy, including Nordic cooperation on societal security and emergency planning’ (Nordic Council 2019).

There are several ways to explain why post-Cold War security approaches transformed – at least visibly – in similar ways in the Nordic countries, ways that do not suggest that it was down to some natural coalescence due to ‘similar structures’. Rather, this relative convergence was a socio-political and high-level, and to some extent conscious, attempt of trying to impose a particular way of framing ‘Nordic security’. For example, there are long traditions of informal dialogue between ministers and civil servants in the various Nordic cabinet offices, and of actively harmonising Nordic legislation to the furthest extent possible in certain areas, so that when laws, agencies, work terminologies, and organisational principles are to be designed in one country, legislators are more or less obliged to account for and draw on what is already in place in the others. Policy exchange of this kind traditionally occurs outside of the Nordic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, or other supranational spaces; indeed, the Nordic Council – far from possessing the legal imperative of the EU – tends to work more like an influential pressure group on national parliaments.

In fact, inter-ministerial and other bureaucratic forms of cooperation around security, in the Nordic Council and elsewhere, had historically been regarded ‘taboo’ since the 1950s. Due to the five countries’ different positions in security cooperation arrangements, mainly NATO membership for some, issues pertaining to security policy, the organisation of defence, or the role of the armed forces, had effectively been kept off the agenda in these regional settings. Some prominent Nordic security scholars during the Cold War even saw the heterogeneity among the countries as a positive factor, itself contributing to a sense of geopolitical ‘stability’ in the region. Arne Olav Brundtland, for instance, famously referred to the situation as the ‘Nordic balance’ (Brundtland 1966; see also 1981), thereby paradoxically suggesting a sense of harmony and commonness in difference itself. However, as geopolitical issues were toned down in the region after the Cold War, and when policies relating to civil and military defence came to be gradually replaced by ‘softer’ and less controversial policies like Nordic crisis management in the early 2000s, cooperation grew in the security area as well, as

semi-systematic policy dialogues concerning 'best practice' intensified and spread also to the ministries of defence and justice.

Another aspect which contributed to, and to an extent co-legitimated, these regional coordination initiatives was the role of functionalist or applied research in the area of security and crisis management. For instance, policy-oriented academic conferences and workshops were held in the Nordic countries during which practitioners, civil servants, policy advisors, and researchers convened to discuss themes like 'shared security models' (KBM, CRN, and ETH 2004; Research Council of Norway 2008). Sundelius, in particular, continued to push for societal security to become the central umbrella term for such a model, e.g. by publishing articles on themes such as 'societal security in the globally embedded Nordic' (Sundelius 2007), and moreover, by taking the lead to establish a specific societal security research programme within the region's main research funding body, NordForsk (2013).

In short, there is some evidence of convergence suggesting a turn to a 'Nordic model of societal security' after the Cold War, both in national and regional contexts. However, as becomes obvious even in this brief overview, this convergence has been most visible at the supranational or inter-ministerial level, among high-level actors such as the Nordic Council, Council of Ministers, and top bureaucrats and commissioners, rather than among national parliamentary or agency settings.

One could argue that certain Nordic national representatives, ministers, and senior advisors had a specific vision in the late 1990s and early 2000s not to promote a Nordic model, to create at least the *appearance* of convergence, and of harmonisation around policies and practices related not to defence, but to 'societal security'. Indeed, they may have had an implicit or even explicit idea to impose a sense of 'community', to conduct a kind of identity-building exercise, despite the fact that post-Cold War approaches towards security in the Nordic were heterogeneous, still in emergence, and at best, loosely related. In any case, what became constructed in the 2000s was, if not a concrete 'model', then at least a more or less coherent and powerful narrative and 'imaginary', or political vision, of what Nordic security should entail.

Patterns of divergence

Nordic societies thus share some systemic features which, when considered historically and alongside the rise of a societal security discourse as outlined earlier, suggest some degree of Nordic similarity. But how well does this narrative translate into activities 'on the ground', in the respective national contexts? What happens to the notion of Nordic societal security when we study how it has been operationalised and put to work in practice?

This question animates the contributions that follow in this volume. They ask, each with their own focus, how security discourses and practices evolved in the Nordic countries after the Cold War and into the 2000s, and

to what end. Indeed, even a cursory look into Nordic countries' historical security arrangements, priorities, and strategies suggests possible lines of divergence since the start of the so-called 'new security era' in the 1990s (SOU 2001).

We can see even from a brief reading of the region's security discourses and practices that the notion of societal security, for example, was interpreted rather differently in the five countries. In some countries, such as Sweden and Norway, the actual term 'societal security' was constructed and reconstructed, used to inform policy debates and frame policy questions. For government agencies like DSB in Norway, 'societal security' became a terminological backbone (DSB 2019), whereas in the Swedish agencies KBM and MSB, it appeared in various guidelines and reports but always alongside or in relation to other terms such as 'crisis management', 'emergency preparedness', or 'civil protection' (e.g. MSB 2011, 2013). In Finland, the general mindset behind societal security emerged in the early 2000s but was quickly translated in a series of national security strategies into related – but different – concepts such as 'comprehensive security', and later 'resilience', which arguably had a broader impact on actual security practice on the ground. In Denmark, the concept never took deep root, even though some kin-like concepts and practices eventually emerged in agencies like Beredskapsstyrelsen and the Danish Ministry of Defence (2019).

As the chapters herein demonstrate in detail, societal security worked as a narrative and imaginary, a political vision promoted by entrepreneurial administrators and some influential scholars. Some political bodies like the Nordic Council used societal security as an organising concept in lieu of seemingly outdated Cold War concepts. Parliaments, political committees, and defence commissions took up the concept, especially in Sweden and Norway. Societal security was also adopted by different, and at times only loosely related, Nordic research institutes and networks, and then institutionalised to a certain degree by research funders such as the EU and Nordforsk. However, whereas governments, ministers, and individual bureaucrats and advisors may have had a vision or an agenda, the situation became entirely different when these attractive terminologies and supposed pan-Nordic concepts were passed on by politicians towards administrators, operators, and security professionals to be implemented in practice. It is here, as we will see, that each Nordic country took diverging paths towards how societal security became acted upon.

This divide between political wills and agendas and the actual operationalisation of security has to do, at least in part, with the ways in which the Nordic countries have designed their public administration systems. Although largely similar, some key differences exist here. Certain countries like Sweden and Finland have a constitutional system which provides agencies with a comparatively strong and autonomous role. Rather than directly obeying whoever may be currently in charge of the ministries under which they are organised, agencies receive annual 'directives'

determined by the government as a whole, which they then themselves interpret and put into practice. Norway and most other Nordic and European states, in contrast, exercise more of a ‘ministerial rule’ in the agency field, meaning that individual ministers – like company executives – may directly and in much more detail intervene in and alter the current priorities and routines of their agencies (Lundin and Stenlås 2010, 16). This distinction may explain, for instance, why ‘societal security’ migrated, seemingly unhindered, from ministry white papers into the DSB agency in Norway, and why the same terminology did not move with the same ease or determination into the everyday practice of security agencies in Finland or Sweden.

Some of this divergence, stems not only from political-administrative divides but also from long-standing historical trajectories linked to defence planning and war readiness. Certainly, recent historical experiences of military invasion and the effects of war vary greatly in the region. Even after the world wars, Nordic security and foreign policy stances have been formulated very differently within the region, and accordingly, domestic defence became structured and practiced differently during and after the Cold War. As already noted, countries like Sweden and Finland invested heavily in war preparedness during the mid to late 1900s – including both civil defence and arms production – and as demonstrated in the chapters below, designed ‘total’ or ‘spiritual’ comprehensive defence models, respectively. Norway, too, organised its domestic defence apparatus rather comprehensively, whereas Denmark did so to a slightly lesser extent. These two latter countries, however, were early to commit to transatlantic military alliances like NATO, whereas Finland and Sweden still today remain outside of the alliance. The question of EU membership also divides the Nordic region, as Norway and Iceland are involved in parts of EU cooperation but are not formal member states, whereas Denmark, Finland, and Sweden have all joined the Union – including its many avenues for security cooperation. This fundamental heterogeneity and historical diversity in foreign and security policies in the region pose serious challenges when the question of how to secure Nordic societies is to be addressed.

Divergent approaches to the notion of Nordic societal security also boil down to what some might say are more ‘trivial’ issues of translation. Whereas the English language contains both the terms ‘security’ and ‘safety’, the Scandinavian languages are forced to capture both these meanings in one word (*säkerhet/sikkerhet/sikkerhed*). This adds confusion when certain terms like societal security (admittedly already vague and open-ended) are to be translated to local languages and situated within bureaucratic discourse. There are several examples of how this may lead to inconsistencies in translation. For instance, as shown in Morsut’s contribution to this volume, the term *samfunnssikkerhet* is used more or less consistently in Norwegian, but when translated to English, it suddenly takes on a range of meanings depending on context such as societal security, societal safety, public security, or

civil protection. In Sweden and its central civil security agency, MSB, *samhällsskydd* is more or less arbitrarily translated to ‘civil contingencies’. In Denmark, *samfundets beredskab* somehow becomes ‘collective emergency preparedness’ according to the Ministry of Defence (2019). These inconsistencies in the translation and application of ‘societal security’ in various linguistic and national settings must be kept in mind when reading through the contributions in this book; however, they must not necessarily be seen as analytical flaws, since they can just as well be understood as an interesting finding itself. It is also justified to depart terminologically from ‘societal security’ in this volume (rather than ‘safety’, ‘emergency preparedness’, ‘civil protection’) since the topics examined predominantly concern the security of society in relation to intentionally harmful acts (human agents) protection against e.g. accidents or environmental disasters.

With some patterns of divergence now accounted for, we open up the volume for further empirical and critical analysis of the notion of Nordic societal security. As we have already seen, and will continue to explore in the coming chapters, societal security became interpreted, translated, and put to work rather differently and to different extents throughout the region. Still, the ways in which post-Cold War security transformed in various ways in these countries were all strongly related – both ideationally and discursively, as well as sociologically and in practice. Which ideas, concepts, and security logics emerged? Under which conditions, and with what implications? If discourses and practices were not framed in terms of ‘societal security’, then how? In the next section, and to conclude this introductory chapter, we will detail precisely what we asked our contributors to investigate, and then provide a brief description of what they found.

Organisation of the book

To better understand similarities and differences in Nordic security discourses, their origins, and related practices, we outlined an analytical framework for authors to explore how such discourses – whether defined precisely as ‘societal security’ or not – play out in the respective countries and sectors. Three questions comprised the framework.

First, we asked authors to study the ways security is ‘done’ in their respective area or country. This open-ended, empirical question encouraged analyses incorporating multiple ways of studying and constituting security: via discourses, practices, actors (public and private, civil and military), technologies (such as warning systems, algorithmic calculators), or, more traditionally, policies.

Second, we asked authors to consider the earlier dynamics in a historical perspective. We encouraged the study of how current security discourses and practices came to being. The social and transformative dynamics behind modern security approaches demands some degree of temporal perspective and understanding of the historical conditions for the current state of the field.

Third, we encouraged authors to explore the broader implications of how security is 'done' in different Nordic countries and issue areas. The study of how certain security approaches came into being is critical, but so is the analysis of what it means for essential theoretical concerns such as legitimacy, effectiveness, and societal cohesion – as well as more practical questions such as the generation of insecurities, the expansion of new networks, and the evolution of new policy paradigms. This question pushes beyond traditional studies of the construction of security, which do not always explicitly confront the 'so what' question.

The chapters offer revealing answers to these questions and detail how the region's discourses and practices diverged – or not – from the general notion of societal security. We find differences in discourses and practices, at both sectoral and national levels, and varying political processes through which they emerge. We uncover the key actors and groups moving across different domains – from public to private, and academic to practice – to shape outcomes. And we contemplate the implications of those concepts, including what actors are legitimised, which insecurities are generated, and what visions of society are prioritised.

The book is organised into three main sections. The first section contains this introduction as well as an overview piece on 'societal security' by Mark Rhinard, which explores the theoretical origins of the term and traces how parallel academic versions emerged in the Nordic region and beyond. The second section contains four chapters focused on four Nordic countries. Sweden is covered by Sebastian Larsson, who traces the sociogenesis of societal security in the context of post-Cold War 'total defence' reforms in Sweden. Norway is the subject of the chapter by Claudia Morsut, who accounts for the Norwegian equivalent of societal security – namely *sammfunnssikkerhet* – to show how and where it emerged, and how it influenced security policy conceptualisations. Finland adapted a similar notion but termed it 'comprehensive security'. As Minna Branders and Vesa Valtonen convincingly show, however, comprehensive security is conceptually part-and-parcel of the long Finnish history of preparing for and experiencing war. Denmark, finally, is the focus of Tobias Liebetrau's chapter. While Denmark's authorities never fully embraced the 'societal security' concept, ontologically similar conceptualisations of the Danish security environment bear some resemblance. Liebetrau shows how undertones of 'uncertainty' permeate Danish security planning and management, subtly changing traditional, objectivist visions of threat perceptions and security policies in Denmark.

The subsequent part of the book includes chapters on particular issues and comparative perspectives. Trine Villumsen Berling and Karen Lund Petersen, for instance, compare how the goal of 'resilience' has come to characterise expanded security conceptions in different Nordic countries, while showing that different – and contradictory – understandings of that term confound any expectations for strategic policymaking. Rather, resilience approaches lead to a predominance of reactive, ad hoc, and potentially undemocratic security

policymaking. Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen and Tapio Juntunen examine the deep-seated foundations of contemporary security concepts like ‘resilience’ in Finland. Using a genealogical analysis, the authors analyse historical policies like Finnish ‘spiritual defence’ and how these have conditioned recent struggles to enhance comprehensive security by importing resilience logics. They suggest there is less conceptual change here than might appear, and note the power hierarchies implicitly preserved in the process. Sissel Haugdal Jore documents shifts in Norwegian counter-terrorism policy towards a focus on radicalisation. Such shifts have been facilitated by reconceptualising the causes and consequences of radicalisation as located at the individual level and within local communities. This approach, the author demonstrates, normalises terrorism policy, shifts it to local governance levels, links solutions closely with the apparent benefits of the Norwegian welfare state, and enables practices once seen as violations of civil liberties. Finally, Jonatan Stiglund writes on how expanded security concepts within Swedish security policymaking opened space for parallel, and at times contradictory, security logics. One such logic was based on a traditional threat-based approach, while the other prioritised the logic of risk. Each discourse can be clearly documented, and each has very different implications for who provides security in Sweden and which resources should be mobilised towards which ends. Importantly, Stiglund also notes the return to territorial security, militarisation, and threat-based security policies in recent years – a shift we may observe not only in Sweden but also throughout the Nordic region and Europe.

The last section of the book contains two closing chapters. The first is the proper conclusion by the present authors, summarising the main findings of the book, identifying common themes, and presenting avenues for future research. The second chapter of the section is by J. Peter Burgess. In this epilogue to the book, he draws on the events surrounding the 2011 terrorist attack in Norway, and provides a theoretically insightful meditation on the question of – or, rather, the *absence* of – ‘society’ in societal security.

Together these chapters provide one of the most in-depth, reflective, and comprehensive looks at Nordic security policymaking today. Our conceptual, historical approach is paired with a practical perspective on how today’s security concepts shape policymaking, practices, power relations, and the prospects for cooperation both within, between and amongst Nordic nations. We hope this book will benefit not only critically oriented approaches to conceptualising security but also practical efforts to make security more just, fair, and democratic.

Notes

- 1 We note that The Netherlands has also adopted the notion of ‘societal security’ in official discourse, albeit to an unknown extent and institutionalisation; see for example Opstelten (2014).
- 2 The common framework stems from joint participation in the ‘NordSTEVA’ Centre of Excellence for Security Technologies and Societal Values, funded by

Nordforsk. Participants in NordSTEVA include University of Tampere (FI), University of Lund (SE), Stockholm University (SE), University of Stavanger (NO), Peace Research Institute Oslo (NO), and Copenhagen University (DK).

- 3 A recent Nordic Council strategy document maintains that this is still the case: 'The Nordic region continues to be among the regions in the world with the highest level of trust in public authorities. This trust is part of the "Nordic gold" that we must protect' (Nordic Council 2019, 4).

References

- Archer, Clive, Alyson J. K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel, eds. 2014. *Small States and International Security*. London: Routledge.
- Bailes, Alyson J. K., and Þröstur Freyr Gylfason. 2008. 'Societal Security and Iceland'. *Stjórnmal Og Stjórnsýsla* 4 (1). <http://search.proquest.com/openview/720e0e2f57e763ba33e97363aee7066/1?pq-origsite=gscholar>.
- Beredskapsstyrelsen. 2004. 'National Sårbarhedsudredning'. Beredskapsstyrelsen Denmark. brs.dk/viden/publikationer/Documents/Sårbarhedsudredning_2004.pdf.
- Blomquist, Søren, and Karl Moene. 2015. 'The Nordic Model'. *The Journal of Public Economics* 127: 1.
- Blossing, Ulf, Gunn Imsen, and Leif Moos, eds. 2014. *The Nordic Education Model: 'A School for All' Encounters Neo-Liberal Policy*. Policy Implications of Research in Education. Dordrecht: Springer. www.springer.com/gp/book/9789400771246.
- Brundtland, Arne Olav. 1966. 'Nordisk Balanse Før Og Nå'. *Internasjonal Politikk*, 25 (5): 491–541.
- . 1981. *The Nordic Balance and Its Possible Relevance for Europe*. Oslo: Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt.
- Burgess, J. Peter, ed. 2010. *The Routledge Handbook of New Security Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Burgess, J. Peter. 2014. 'The Future of Security Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities'. *European Science Foundation*. http://archives.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/future_security_research.pdf
- C.A.S.E. Collective. 2006. 'Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto'. *Security Dialogue* 37 (4): 443–487. <http://sdi.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0967010606073085>.
- Dalgaard-Nielsen, Anja, and Daniel S. Hamilton. 2006. *Transatlantic Homeland Security: Protecting Society in the Age of Catastrophic Terrorism*. London: Routledge.
- DSB. 2019. 'Om DSB'. Direktoratet for Samfunnsikkerhet Og Beredskap. 2019. www.dsb.no/menyartikler/om-dsb/.
- Duelund, Peter. 2003. *The Nordic Cultural Model*. Copenhagen: Nordic Cultural Institute.
- Engelstad, Fredrik, and Anniken Hagelund. 2016. *Cooperation and Conflict the Nordic Way: Work, Welfare, and Institutional Change in Scandinavia*. Warsaw; Berlin: De Gruyter Open. doi:10.1515/9783110436891.
- FNF. 2014. *Stärk det nordiska samarbetet om samhällssäkerhet*. Föreningarna Nordens Förbund.
- Gustavsen, Bjørn. 2011. 'The Nordic Model of Work Organization'. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy* 2 (4): 463–480. doi:10.1007/s13132-011-0064-5.
- Haga Declaration I. 2009. 'Nordiskt ministermöte rörande samhällsskydd och beredskap'. [www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/Deklaration%20Haga-deklarationen%20slutlig%20\(4\).pdf](http://www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Documents/Deklaration%20Haga-deklarationen%20slutlig%20(4).pdf).

- Haga Declaration II. 2013. 'Haga II-deklarationen'. www.dsb.no/Global/Internasjonal/Dokumenter/Haga%20II-erklæringen%204%20juni%202013.pdf.
- Hamilton, Daniel S. 2005. 'Societal Security and Homeland Security'. In *Protecting the Homeland: European Approaches to Societal Security – Implications for the United States*, edited by Daniel S. Hamilton, Bengt Sundelius, and Jesper Grönvall. Washington, DC: The Transatlantic Center of Johns Hopkins University.
- Hovden, Jan. 2004. 'Public Policy and Administration in a Vulnerable Society: Regulatory Reforms Initiated by a Norwegian Commission'. *Journal of Risk Research* 7 (6): 629–641. doi:10.1080/1366987042000192228.
- KBM, CRN, and ETH. 2004. *CRN-Workshop Report: Societal Security and Crisis Management in the 21st Century*. Swedish Emergency Management Agency.
- Larsson, Sebastian. 2019. *In the Name of Society: The Branding of Swedish Civil Security Technologies and Their Exclusionary Effects*. London: King's College London.
- Lundin, Per, and Niklas Stenlås. 2010. 'Technology, State Initiative and National Myths in Cold War Sweden: An Introduction'. In *Science for Welfare and Warfare: Technology and State Initiative in Cold War Sweden*. Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications.
- Lundin, Per, Niklas Stenlås, and Johan Gribbe, eds. 2010. *Science for Welfare and Warfare: Technology and State Initiative in Cold War Sweden*. Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications.
- Mead, R. W. 2014. 'The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers'. *Foreign Affairs* 93 (3): 65–78.
- Ministry of Defence Denmark. 2019. 'Collective Emergency Preparedness'. <https://fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/Collectiveemergencypreparedness.aspx>.
- Ministry of Defence Finland. 2003. 'Strategi för tryggandet av samhällets livsviktiga funktioner'. Ministry of Defence Finland.
- . 2006. 'Strategi för tryggandet av samhällets vitala funktioner'. Ministry of Defence Finland.
- Ministry of Justice Norway. 2002. 'St.meld. nr. 17 Samfunnssikkerhet: Veien til et mindre sårbart samfunn'. St.meld. 17. Ministry of Justice Norway.
- . 2004. 'Samfunnssikkerhet og sivilt-militært samarbeid'. St.meld. 39. Ministry of Justice Norway. www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stmeld-nr-39-2003-2004-/id198241/.
- MSB. 2011. 'A Functioning Society in a Changing World: The MSB's Report on a Unified National Strategy for the Protection of Vital Societal Functions'. Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.
- . 2013. 'Strategic Challenges for Societal Security: Analysis of Five Future Scenarios'. Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. www.msb.se/RibData/Filer/pdf/27189.pdf.
- NordForsk. 2013. 'Societal Security in the Nordic Countries'. NordForsk. www.nordforsk.org/en/publications/publications_container/policy-paper-1-2013-societal-security-in-the-nordic-countries.
- Nordic Council. 2005. 'Medlemsförslag om ökat nordiskt samarbete om samhällssäkerhet'. Nordic Council. www.norden.org/sv/nordiska-raadet/aerenden/a-1364-presidiet.
- . 2010. 'Medlemsförslag om ett förstärkt nordiskt samarbete angående samhällssäkerhet'. Nordic Council. www.norden.org/sv/nordiska-raadet/aerenden/a-1503-presidiet.

- . 2019. *Nordic Council Strategy on Societal Security: Adopted at the Session of the Nordic Council*, Stockholm, 30 October.
- NOU. 2000. 'NOU 2000: 24 Et sårbart samfunn: Utfordringer for sikkerhets-og beredskapsarbeidet i samfunnet'. NOU 2000: 24. Government of Norway.
- NRF. 2008. 'Nordisk Blikk På Samfunnssikkerhet: Rapport Fra Konferanse 1–2 September 2008'. Samrisk. www.forskningsradet.no/siteassets/publikasjoner/1231248295920.pdf.
- Opstelten, Ivo. 2014. 'Opening Address: International Conference on National Safety & Security'. International Conference on National Safety & Security (ICNSS).
- Research Council of Norway. 2008. 'Is There a Nordic Model for Societal Security and Safety?' Research Council of Norway.
- Sandö, Carolina, and Alyson J. K. Bailes. 2014. 'Nordic Cooperation on Civil Security: The "Haga" Process 2009–2014'. FOI-R--3944--SE. FOI.
- Shepherd, Laura J. 2013. *Critical Approaches to Security: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*. London: Routledge.
- SOU. 2001. 'SOU 2001:41 Säkerhet i en ny tid'. SOU 2001:41. Government of Sweden.
- Stoltenberg, Thorvald. 2009. 'Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy'. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway. www.mfa.is/media/Frettatilkynning/Nordic_report.pdf.
- Sundelius, Bengt. 2005a. 'A Brief on Embedded Societal Security'. *Information & Security* 17 (Homeland/Societal Vulnerability and Security): 23–40. http://kms2.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/EINIRAS/14160/ipublicationdocument_single_document/d62b6b83-a9c6-4ddc-8845-3e8c55f0c083/en/I/%26S_FULL_vol17.pdf.
- . 2005b. 'Disruptions: Functional Security for the EU'. In *Disasters, Diseases, Disruptions: A New D-Drive for the European Union*, edited by Antonio Missiroli, 67–84. Paris: Institute for Security Studies, European Union.
- . 2005c. 'From National Total Defense to Embedded Societal Security'. In *Protecting the Homeland: European Approaches to Societal Security – Implications for the United States*, edited by Dan Hamilton, Bengt Sundelius, and Jesper Grönvall, 1–16. Washington, DC: The Centre for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University.
- . 2006. 'A Brief on Embedded Societal Security'. *Information and Security* 17: 23–37.
- . 2007. 'Samhällssäkerhet i det globalt invädda Norden'. *Nordisk Tidsskrift*.
- Sundelius, Bengt, Jesper Grönvall, and Daniel S. Hamilton, eds. 2006. *Protecting the Homeland: European Approaches to Societal Security-Implications for the United States*. Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University.
- Syvtersen, Trine, Gunn Enli, Ole J. Mjøs, and Hallvard Moe. 2014. *The Media Welfare State: Nordic Media in the Digital Era*. The New Media World. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/36850/>.
- Vouri, Juha, and Holger Stritzel. 2016. 'Security'. In *Concepts in World Politics*, edited by Felix Berenskoetter, 35–48. London: Sage.
- Waever, Ole. 1993. 'Societal Security: The Concept'. In *Identity, Migration, and the New Security Order in Europe*, edited by Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, and Pierre Lemaitre, 17–40. London: Pinter.