

# The Danish Empire and Norway's Place Therein

**Morten Skumsrud Andersen**

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)  
and **Iver B. Neumann**

LSE and NUPI

## **Abstract**

This article argues that Norway's political status at the point when it was prised from Denmark by the Great Powers in 1814 was that of a semi-core in an empire. The basic premise of the paper is that Denmark and Norway both were polities, with a polity being a social unit that has a distinct identity, a capacity to mobilize persons and a degree of institutionalization and hierarchy. The article begins with a nutshell conceptual history of 'empire' and concludes that Denmark was an empire in a conceptual sense. By applying the analytical literature on empire to Denmark, this study demonstrates that Denmark was also an empire in an analytical sense. Having established what kind of polity Denmark was, it goes on to determine the status of the Norwegian polity within it. Empires consist of a core, as well as of a number of peripheries whose closeness to the core varies. Norway was drawn closer to the imperial centre throughout the eighteenth century. It is, in fact, hard to imagine a part of an empire being closer to an imperial core than Norway was to Copenhagen. The article concludes by suggesting the term *semi-core* to account for Norway's place within the Danish empire.

## **Keywords**

Denmark-Norway, The Double Kingdom, Empire, Conceptual History

This article<sup>1</sup> argues that Norway's political status at the point when it was pried from Denmark by the Great Powers in 1814 was that of a semi-core in an empire. The premise on which this article is based is that Denmark and Norway were both polities, with a polity being a social unit that has 'a distinct identity; a capacity to mobilize persons, that is for value satisfaction; and a degree of institutionalization and hierarchy (leaders and constituents)' (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996: 34). The first step in this analysis is to demonstrate that, although the term itself was not in use, the unfolding meanings of empire in early modern Europe applied to Denmark: It participated fully in the European global expansion in the first colonial period, and retained (and retains) an empire around its core area. Hence, Denmark was an empire in a conceptual sense. The second step is to apply the analytical literature on empire to Denmark and to demonstrate that, in an analytical sense as well, Denmark was indeed an empire. Having established what kind of polity Denmark was, the third step is to determine the status of the Norwegian polity within it. We draw once again on the analytical literature on empire, whose starting point is that empires consist of a core, as well as of a number of peripheries whose closeness to the core varies. Analytically, the question of Norway's place within the empire presents itself as a question of closeness to the core. It is immediately clear that Norway was much closer to the core than a formal colony like the Danish West Indies or an informal one like Greenland. It is also clear that Norway was drawn closer and closer to the imperial centre throughout the eighteenth century. Indeed, it is harder to imagine a part of an empire being closer to an imperial core than Norway was to Copenhagen. Drawing on previous work by Andersen, we therefore conclude by suggesting the term *semi-core* to account for Norway's place within the Danish empire.

## Conceptual Empire

The original meaning of the Latin term *imperare* was 'to command'. Byzantium was sometimes called, at times self-referentially, and at times by others, an empire (*basileia*) The empire maintained relations with sundry neighbours, including the Germanic peoples, the Visigoths

in Spain, the Franks and the Lombards, the Huns and the Avars, the Slavs and also the Arabs. At the time of Byzantium's golden age, Charlemagne attempted to construct an empire to succeed Rome, and as part of this undertaking he allowed himself to be crowned *imperator augustus* on Christmas Day of 800. This political unit was generally spoken of as an empire up until its dismantling in 1806; from 1254 as The Holy Roman Empire, and from 1512 as the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (*sacrum romanum imperium nationis germanicæ*). 'Empire' is to be understood in this context as a territory headed by an emperor with a God-given mandate, ruling increasingly through subordinate intermediaries, with which he has different formal and informal agreements about who is to rule what (Gierke 1951: 95-100). The emperor's standing is typically weaker the farther one travels from his throne.

Denmark and Norway participated peripherally within this conceptual world. The Danish composite state was the result of standard dynastic intermarriage, resulting in the Kalmar Union between Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1397 (Dyrvik and Feldbæk 1992: 12). Eric of Pomerania was crowned King of Denmark and the Union. The Kalmar Union rested on two important documents. The 'Coronation Document' recognized Eric of Pomerania (Eric VII of Denmark/Eric III of Norway) and his right to rule the realm, in a more or less absolute way. The second document, the 'Union Document', aimed at creating a common ground for an agglomeration of various polities, but which at the same time involved the strongmen and their local councils and laws. The document stated that the Union should have a 'common king for all eternity'. The two documents reflect and try to merge two types of political power: an absolute King combined with the pragmatic and indirect rule of various peoples and territories (Bregnsbo and Jensen 2004: 93-94). The King was unquestionably at the top of the hierarchy, but to rule heterogeneous polities effectively and legitimately, it was necessary to rule each realm separately according to local customs, and indirectly through their respective councils. We might here see some of the forerunners of a later imperial polity, even if it is not institutionalised at this point. In 1442 we get a further indication of the state of the polity, when the Oldenburger Christoffer III of Bayern

took the title of 'arch-King' or 'archirex'.<sup>2</sup> This royal title is not known from anywhere else.<sup>3</sup> It indicates how he was the King of an extensive agglomerate, and not only king in three different countries, and that he, as the ruler of one of Europe's largest polities, found himself just below the level of the Habsburg Emperor (*Keiser*) himself (Bregnsbo and Jensen 2004: 237-238).<sup>4</sup>

Sweden broke out in 1523, and in 1536, King Christian III abolished the Norwegian *Riksråd* ('The Council of the Realm', the King's privy council) and the King ruled together with the Danish *Riksråd* until Frederic III introduced absolute monarchy in 1660.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, he performed the typically Northern European move of breaking with Rome and introducing Protestantism. In the legal lingo of the time, Christian was king in his own realm (*rex in regno suo*) and hence *imperator*.

During the sixteenth century, 'empire' acquired a new meaning and use as an appellation for asymmetrical political units where the leading part lay in Europe (Spain, Portugal), and the dependent parts were located overseas. This development is described by Pagden:

The European empires have two distinct, but interdependent histories. The first [...] is the history of the European discovery and colonization of America. It begins with Columbus's first voyage in 1492 and ends somewhat less precisely in the 1830s with the final defeat of the royalist armies in South America. The second is the history of the European occupation of Asia, of Africa and of the Pacific. It begins in the 1730s, but only takes hold in the 1780s as European hegemony in the Atlantic is coming to an end (Pagden 1995: 1-2).

During the 1700s, Denmark partook in all the events that marked polities as empires in this conceptual sense, including establishing colonies and ruling other territories. At the end of the eighteenth century, Christian VII was King of Denmark and Norway, including Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland. The West Indian Crown Colony consisted of St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix and Water Island.<sup>6</sup> There were seven slave fortresses along the coast of present-day

Ghana. In the Indian Ocean, there were the factories (settlements) of Trankebar (Tharangambadi on the Coromandel coast in today's Tamil Nadu), Frederiksnagore (today's Serampore) and Frederiksoerne (Nikobar Islands). Strategically placed in the north and south of the east side of the Indian coast and 150 kilometres off the north western tip of Sumatra, they nicely triangulated the Bay of Bengal. The Danish presence may be dated back to 1612, beating the English presence by eight years (Smith 1970). Conceptually and physically, Denmark was riding with other European empires regarding the acquisition of overseas colonies. Whereas the activity of certain other European polities 'took hold' (to use Pagden's term) at the end of the eighteenth century, however, the weakening of Denmark during and in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars seem to have been instrumental in stabilising Danish imperial activity rather than to see it increase through the nineteenth century.

This fact notwithstanding, the impact of the next conceptual shift of 'empire' was also definitely, if belatedly, felt in Denmark, and also in Norway. In the second half of the eighteenth century philosophers like Diderot, Herder and Kant launched criticisms where the point was that empire entailed *foreign* rule, and that this was an evil (Sankar 2003). The concept of 'empire' was contrasted with 'cosmopolitanism' (Bowden 2009: 47-75). Fisch, Groh and Walther document how closely the concept of 'empire' was tied to the question of form of rule, in other words to a process within the nation state itself (Fisch, Groh and Walther 1982). This debate anticipates an important topic of the nineteenth century, namely how the new political concept of 'nation' was to be connected to various concepts of universalistic human communities. In the national debate in Germany the concept of 'imperialism' first picked up momentum in social democratic criticism. The social democrats use the concept – perfectly in accordance with earlier meanings – to criticise what they call the 'new war movement'. This use of the concept was a ringing historical success, which first spread to Russia, where it was, characteristically, stylised by Lenin, who saw imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism and something that found at its root the struggle between capitalist great powers about world markets that would inevitably lead to war, and then to the

rest of the world.

With social democracy's victory in Scandinavian politics, this understanding of empire and imperialism became doxic. It also became imperative to distance oneself from everything that could smack of empire, diachronically as well as synchronically. Here we have the root cause why structural amnesia has gripped Scandinavian debates about their colonial pasts and why this article finds itself in a revisionist tradition (see esp. Østergaard 1992, 2006; Hauge 2003; Mørch 2006).

To sum up this first part of the article, Denmark, and also Norway, has been part and parcel of the European conceptual history of empire since the inception. We now turn from the conceptual to the analytical, and ask whether Denmark in 1814 was also an empire in the analytical sense.

## **Analytical Empire**

In the analytical literature that takes a relational network approach to empires, the starting point is to identify mechanisms of Empire in order to identify imperial tendencies. An 'ideal type' or model of how the functionally differentiated units within an empire relate, provides guidance. The point is to use a model to investigate specific logics of rule in specific instances of political relations. The question to ask is: can one make sense of what is going on in a particular case in terms of the model? Nexon and Wright is the most recent expression of such thought (Nexon and Wright 2007).<sup>7</sup> They construct an ideal-typical model of an empire, looking like a hub-and-spoke structure, or a 'rimless wheel'. The core is in the middle, with the spokes reaching out to the peripheries, but without these being connected to each other. This can show, they argue, how the dilemmas and problems of running an empire are different from e.g. in a system of independent states, or in a hegemony. An empire makes use of intermediaries to exercise power. The intermediaries 'enjoy considerable autonomy within their own domains', so that they can contribute to the centre with 'compliance, tribute and military collaboration' (Tilly 1997: 3). These intermediaries are not similar in their character and in their role as middlemen. In empires there exist, typically, a unique relation between

the centre and each of the imperial provinces, such that the space for agency of each of these intermediaries is unique. The combination of such *indirect rule* (via middle men) and *heterogeneous contracting* (treating different provinces differently), are thus the basic elements of the ideal-type empire (Nexon and Wright 2007: 258-260).

If we imagine empires to operate in this way, some particular challenges of political rule emerge. The problems with *indirect rule* are, first, that it is not very efficient. Second, indirect rule diverts resources into the hands of the local elites acting as intermediaries. It also involves a danger of the local elites 'going native': they use their local power base to pursue their own interests and gain too much power relative to the centre. The intermediaries must have a degree of autonomy, but not so much as to gain inappropriate leverage over relations between the core and the periphery in question. This is often checked by rotating the offices of the intermediaries (Barkey 1996; Nexon and Wright 2007: 265).

The point of heterogeneous contracting is that provinces must be isolated from each other to prevent the possibility of coordinated resistance against the imperial power. As seen, the imperial power chain goes to the provinces through intermediaries (indirect rule), but no linkages exist between the various provinces. Heterogeneous contracting is therefore dependent on a strategy of *divide-and-rule* to prevent contact between provinces, and to maintain their differences. The problem with heterogeneous contracting is that the empire risks becoming *too* fragmented.

Kalmar Denmark fits this analytical model hand in glove from its very inception. The King was ruling Duke in Schleswig and Holstein in present day Germany. Until 1773, he had also been ruling Count in the native land of the royal family, Oldenburg-Delmenhorst close to Bremen. The King had different contracts with each of these provinces, which facilitated divide-and-rule tactics to prevent the different provinces of the empire from relating. Different peoples inhabited separate spaces and could never coordinate in political action towards the Crown (Rian 2003: 16). With the shedding of Sweden, Denmark, Norway and the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were the three main parts. The acquisition of The Faroe Islands and Iceland is parallel to the situation

of settler colonies elsewhere, while the acquisition of Greenland foreshadows the already discussed overseas colonialism in Africa, America and Asia. Perhaps because Greenland is still under Danish sovereignty, the observation is rarely made that Greenland resembles the Latin American states in being run by Europeans who are presiding over an ethnically mixed population. Contrary to Latin American states, however, Greenland remains a settler colony. Again, considering the date of Greenland home rule, 1979, one notes the broad temporary parallel between post-imperial developments in other post-imperial European states like Great Britain – Zimbabwe’s unilateral declaration of independence hails from 1965 – and Portugal – the Portuguese empire collapsed only in 1975. The conceptual and analytical answer to our question of what kind of polity Denmark was in 1814 seems clear. Denmark was an empire. Given the status of Greenland and the Faroe Islands, there is a case to be made that Denmark remains an empire in an analytical sense, but that need not retain us here. We now have a footing on which to ask our main question: what was the place of Norway within the Danish empire in 1814?

### **Norway’s Place**

One answer may be dismissed out of hand. On the one hand, Norway was not a competing core. On the other hand, and contrary to lingering understandings of history on the Norwegian left, Norway was not a colony, either. This view may be traced back to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. As Ruth Hemstad (2014: 88 *et passim*) has demonstrated, sundry voices in the debate about Norway’s fate held that the country was already a colony of Denmark or, alternatively, that it was about to become a colony for Sweden. In 1816, the Protestant Minister Nicolai Wergeland published a philippic against Denmark, arguing that 400 years of Danish rule had suppressed and usurped Norway (Wergeland 1816). While not immediately successful, this figure of thought grew in political importance throughout the nineteenth century. By 1883, it had become engrained enough for Norwegian author Arne Garborg to be able to banish the civil servant stratum from the Norwegian nation with relative ease. He marked them as a separate nation with close ties



to the Danish one, and branded them as the enemy of the Norwegian nation: 'the enemy is within the country now' (quoted in Dalhaug 1995: 79). After the Norwegian independence in 1905, the idea that Denmark had usurped Norway and drained it of resources for four centuries became a stock in trade of history writing. The idea featured prominently in history books for schools as well as in history writing, and still lingers. In these texts we have a representation of Danish-Norwegian relations which is clearly imperial in nature, with Denmark being the imperial centre and Norway being the colony. Research into exactly when the concepts of 'colony', 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' began to be used; how, and by whom are still needed, but by the 1960s the representation was firmly in place that Norway had been Denmark's colony. Most Norwegians still maintain a national identity not as *perpetrators* of imperialism, which they were in historical and analytical terms, but as imperialism's victims. For example, in 1972, while campaigning against Norwegian membership of the EEC, Norwegian leftists set themselves apart from other Europeans and from European imperialism by arguing that Norway did not 'find itself in a conflicting relationship with developing countries through colonial or post-colonial investments'.<sup>8</sup> Again, in 1994, similar arguments were made (Neumann 2002).

As we tried to show by drawing on conceptual history, it is not hard to understand how Norwegian nationalism came to form around an idea of historical unjustness from Denmark's side. Norway had to leave the Danish empire in 1814 against the will of an almost unanimous politically active stratum, to be presented by the great power victors in the Napoleonic Wars to Sweden, as compensation for the loss of the areas taken from that state by Russia. This happened at the time when the phenomenon of nationalism was beginning to spread around Europe. Like Icelandic and Faroese nationalisms later, Norwegian nationalism had the student milieu at Copenhagen University as its major fount, and like those two, Norwegian nationalism was an inverted copy of Danish nationalism, with *ressentiment* of Denmark playing a key role.

The problem with the idea of Norway as colony is that it does not fit certain inconvenient historical data. Before Norway was taken away

from the Danish empire in 1814, Norwegians played a major role in its seafaring activities generally, and in its colonial activities specifically. Colonial personnel in the colonies at Tranquebar and the Danish West Indies as well as in Greenland included Norwegians. The missionary wing of Danish colonialism in Greenland was spearheaded by Hans Egede, 'Greenland's Apostle', who was a Norwegian, born and raised in Harstad. Norwegians benefited economically from imperialism. Furthermore, Norwegians continued to be implicated in slavery-related activities after 1814. As late as in the 1920s, Norway launched a campaign to re-gain Greenland as a colony (Norway even took the case to the International Court in the Hague, where it was settled in Denmark's favour in 1933). In European terms, Norway was roughly to Denmark and Danish imperial policies what Catalunya was to Castilla, Scotland to England, the Ukraine to Russians, or the Occidentales to the French and Frisians to the Dutch for that matter.<sup>9</sup> From a post-colonial viewpoint, Norway cannot wash its hands of its imperial European past by appealing to an alleged subaltern position within the Danish empire before 1814. This would be to perform historical wounds that Norway is not entitled to perform, since Norway was not amongst the heavily wounded (Neumann 2014). Analytically, Norway's role was somewhere between core and colony.

In the extant literature, there is one, and only one, contender for such a role, the semi-periphery. Semi-peripheries are typically conveyor belts between core and peripheries proper, however, and that does not fit the Norwegian case, either. We need a new category to account for parts of empires that are politically, socially and culturally very close to core, and yet distinct to it. In previous work, one of us has suggested the category of semi-core to cover these cases (Andersen 2014).

The idea of semi-core springs out of a key characteristic of heterogeneous contracting (where the respective set-ups between core and peripheries differ), which is that some contracts are tighter than other. Put differently, some peripheries are closer to, more socially central to, the core than others. One way of differentiating a province, is to tie it closer to the centre than the rest. This phenomenon – usually based on a combination of common historical affinities, identities, language, and geographical proximity – spawns the semi-core. Semi-

cores are provinces that are different from the rest in terms of the close relationships it maintains with the core. Semi-cores are closely integrated with, but yet different from imperial cores. This makes for some particular dynamics and relations.

The semi-core is not equal to the core and is governed differently, but it is still equal enough as not to require much effort to be included into the imperial configuration. It could be seen as a form of 'embeddedness' (Burt 1983). This means that even if the formal, relational hierarchy between the actors and the transactions within it follows the same model as in other peripheries (e.g. indirect rule, contracting), the nature of the contract is still influenced by the social relations between those same actors. The core and semi-core share important substantial attributes, such as identity, histories, geographies, and language, facilitating its inclusion. In addition, what is particular about semi-cores is that they share some of the functional properties of the core. For example, semi-cores and cores share the same elite, and semi-cores may at times play the same role as the core (for example, initiating or participating in colonial ventures), but they cannot play any role they want. There are obvious restrictions, as the semi-core is still one of many imperial provinces, and indirect rule serves to reinforce the imperial hierarchy.

Semi-cores, then, are a) separate entities but with b) tight connexions with the core, sharing elites, intermarriages, similarities in education, and cultural elements such as common identities, language and histories of interrelations (either peaceful or antagonistic). This leads to c) the lack of pivoting or triangulation as imperial strategies within the semi-core. The common culture and lack of pivoting, or divide-and-rule strategies, in turn leads to d) more autonomy for the province, less routinely use of authoritarian approaches from the core, and a greater concern for the welfare and opinion of the population in the semi-core. As a feedback-loop, this again enhances both the common culture and strengthens the view that pivoting and triangulation is off the table. Because of this autonomy and inclusion, a semi-core has a greater centrality (i.e. it has more connections with other units) in the overall imperial system than what is normal, or even desirable, but not as high as the core. This means that a semi-core has routine relations

with other provinces, or even other empires – in some cases also functioning as the core in initiating, participating in, or maintaining colonial ventures.

For an English-speaking readership, one obvious contender for the status of semi-core would be Scotland (Andersen 2014). Our contender here is Norway.

Danish state law established that Norway and Denmark were two separate realms. Norway is a 'rike' of its own, which in turn implied that Danish and Norwegian law (*Danske Lov, Norske Lov*) were two separate systems, even in what concerns military organisation. In legal theory, the separation is thus clear enough. This also meant that it was easier to construct a 'Norwegian people', leading up to 1814. There was little inherent danger in having two parallel identities at the same time, and the core even promoted such divisions and helped construct national cultures. It is important to distinguish between Denmark and Copenhagen. The common capital was privileged in all respects. Both Norway and Danish provinces were totally dependent on the capital. Still, many Norwegian cities received privileges making them better off than many Danish provinces. Norwegians were not significantly worse off than many Danes living in the provinces (Glenthøj 2012: 72). Even if Norway's relations with Copenhagen were consistently imperial within the larger configuration of the policy, such imperial dynamics within Norway are approaching those of a semi-core from the 1700s. As the Swedish threat grew, a tighter control and professionalisation from the 1700s led to less diversity in how Norway was ruled.<sup>10</sup> In the process, the separation between what was Danish and what was Norwegian was steadily weakened towards 1814.

After a range of wars with Sweden between 1657 and 1660 the empire was a thoroughly militarized place in the early 18th century, which required further centralisation. The accompanying rationalisation of the regime and its cultural expressions furthered the identification with it, particularly amongst the steadily growing class of civil servants. Still, as Glenthøj points out, their allegiance to the polity was combined with distinct Norwegian and Danish identities (Glenthøj 2012: 60-61). As Denmark had lost some of its territory in the wars, the territorial size of Norway and Denmark had become

more similar. With this surged the idea that Denmark and Norway were in reality 'twin-kingdoms', and that Norway should be put on a more equal footing with Denmark. It lies close at hand to interpret this in terms of nations or nationalities, but that was not a conceptual apparatus available to the historical actors in this epoch. Furthermore, it is clear that Denmark was still the superior part of the empire, and Copenhagen was the core: '[The Danish and Norwegian bourgeoisie was closely connected through culture, institutions, and family, which made the separation between a Danish and Norwegian nationality a blurry one...]' – and such commonalities were used actively in the construction of a common Danish-Norwegian identity as opposed to the German Other (Glenthøj 2012: 385-387).

Norwegian 'national' form of patriotism was not premised on separatism or independence, but on the particularities of Norway *as* a part of the empire, and as such consistent with the imperial logic of managing diversity rather than assimilation. This kind of patriotism was not incompatible with a plurality of nationalities (German, Norwegian, Danish), and an awareness of the different national characteristics, traditions, and histories, was actually part of the virtue of the imperial citizen (Storsveen 1997: 22-23). Awareness of one's cultural particularities and of one's particular history was not seen as a problem, as long as it was seen as an integral part of the empire (Storsveen 1997: 22-23).

The reference object for such patriotism was the ambivalent concept of one's 'fatherland' (*fædrelandet*; or *Vaterland* in German). Exactly because of an imperial feature, two notions of a 'fatherland' existed:

Forholdet bør tolkes ud fra de to rigers forskellige stilling i staten, hvor Danmark (dvs. København) udgjorde centrum, mens Norge udgjorde en del af periferien [...] Det nødvendiggjorde et dobbelt fædrelandsbegreb for det norske borgerskab, hvor der blev skelnet mellem et statsborgerligt fædreland og et "naturligt" fædreland. (Glenthøj 2012: 390-391)

(The relationship should be interpreted based on the different positions of the two realms within the state, where Denmark

(i.e. Copenhagen) was the centre, whilst Norway was part of the periphery [...] This necessitated a double concept of the fatherland for the Norwegian bourgeoisie, where one distinguished between a fatherland based on citizenship and a “natural” fatherland).

Still, even if Norway had an identity different from that of Denmark, in the late 1700s, the Danish and Norwegian identities had become so similar that the attention was directed towards the increasing German influence. In other words, the politics of difference was diverted from the internal separation of Norwegians and Danes, towards the distinction between internal and external to the empire. The growing middle class in Copenhagen felt increasingly severed by the elite, particularly after a virtual *coup d'état* by the German royal physician J.F. Struensee, and the response was a push for making society more ‘Danish’ from the 1770s.

A law from 1776<sup>11</sup> is the best expression of this, stating that only those born within the realm of the Danish King could assume public positions. As the law stated, ‘Landets Børn skal nyde Landets Brød, og Fordeelene i Staten falde i dens Borgeres Lod’ (the Country’s bread is for the Country’s children to enjoy) (Bregnsbo and Jensen 2004: 165). Before 1776 the country of birth of a civil servant in the King’s service was (at least juridically) irrelevant. The related, emotional debates concerning Danish versus German identity, indicates how the politics of difference increasingly came to apply to the relationship between the empire and the ‘outside’ (Germany), than between a Norwegian and Danish identity. The notion of the ‘fatherland’, including Norway, Denmark and the German counties, became stronger. Danish-born and Norwegian-born citizens alike called themselves and each other ‘Danish’ (Glenthøj 2012: 85).

Within the imperial patriotism, a Danish/Norwegian culture held a privileged position, and Norway was not seen in isolation. Whilst Norwegian characteristics were the endurance of the people and a harshly romantic nature and climate, the imperial patriotism included the same references, but to the Northern character in general. The celebration of the North as a distinct cultural entity came from the

state-builders of the *empire*, and not from Norwegian state builders (Neumann 2001: 56). The differences were downplayed, and the cultural and linguistic borders separating the two were blurry, to say the least. Some even suggested a new name for Denmark – Dannora, or Dannorig, and there were rumours, true or false, about possibly also substituting ‘northern Denmark’ for Norway (Glenthøj 2012: 89). Norway and Denmark increasingly came to rest on a common ideational fundament.

In the late 1700s, therefore, the balance increasingly favoured a common identity and loyalty between Denmark and Norway, rather than any opportunities for pivoting or divide-and-rule strategies within Norway. These developments had an impact on the King’s civil servants. A solid and stable social group of about 400 families made up an upper class connected to the centre through its administrative practices. Intermediaries in Norway were therefore a direct, integral part of the central imperial administration. The civil servants were part of a structure that through their education (in Copenhagen) and hierarchy connected their work and their cultural horizon directly to the King’s chancery (Neumann 2002). The civil servants in Norway administered and enforced the rules from Copenhagen, and were a distinct class (*øvrigheten*, ‘the authorities’) separated from the common Norwegian population (*almuen*, ‘the common people’). The civil servants were named by the king, but had access to a network of patrons and clients, families and friends, that helped them along and secured the success of their projects (Rian 2003: 6). Recruitment at the lower echelons of the hierarchy was often decided internally in these patron-client networks.

Most of the civil servants and their immediate subordinates were initially Danish or German-born, recruited in Copenhagen, but over time, more Norwegian-born men came to serve as civil servants. By end of the 1700s, the majority of the civil servants were Norwegian-born and approaching 1814, the only position reserved for Danes or Germans, was that of *Stadtholder* (or *vice-Stadtholder*) (Dyrvik and Feldbæk 1992: 20). As the echelon of Norwegian patrons grew, civil servants for the empire could increasingly be recruited from Norway. Danes and Norwegians identified as equals in the civil service, and

attention was increasingly directed at Germany and the German influence. The upper class in Norway emerged directly from the imperial centre. Instead of Copenhagen applying a divide-and-rule policy to the Norwegian intermediaries, in a classical imperial fashion, the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the state was organic. The two collectives – the state and the bourgeoisie – were constituted by the same families, and often the same people, as opposed to e.g. in France, where the bourgeoisie emerged in direct opposition to the state (Neumann 2002).

## Conclusion

Students of Scandinavian political history have applied a number of terms to the polity that has centred on Copenhagen through the centuries, with Realm, Double Realm, State and Conglomerate State being examples. In 2004, Bregnsbo and Jensen suggested a new one: Empire (Bregnsbo and Jensen 2004). Extant literature has overwhelmingly analysed the polity on an ad hoc basis. The first part of this article tried to place the issue within the conceptual and analytical discussion concerning classification of polities by applying the category of empire to the case. We concluded that, both in terms of conceptual history and in terms of analytical categories, in 1814, Denmark was an empire, and had been one for centuries.

We went on to apply the same analytical literature to Norway, in order to determine the status of that polity in 1814. We concluded that Norway was definitely neither a colony, or even a semi-colony, nor a core. Drawing on Andersen's suggested category of the semi-core, we argued that, given the cultural and administrative closeness of Norwegian middlemen and also the populace to the core in Copenhagen, Norway is best understood as a semi-core.

## Endnotes

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translations from the Scandinavian languages are our own.

<sup>2</sup> In official documents, also Cnut the Great (c.985-1035) refers to himself as *Keiser*, named by the King of Kings, Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Although the ruler being a 'king of kings' is a rather common titular logic in empires: *šar šarrāni* in Akkadian, *shāhānshāh* in Persian, *malik al-amlāk* in Arabic.

<sup>4</sup> This is emblematic of a dynastic-agglomerative mode of state-formation, where the King is often imported from areas outside of Denmark, and there is little continuity in the royal family. Such processes are often ignored in the literature on European state formation. If addressed, the case in question is almost exclusively that of the Habsburg monarchy, which is then treated as a 'reversal of momentum' towards the universal pattern of the sovereign state. See Gustafsson 1994 and Nexon 2009: 68.

<sup>5</sup> Absolutism was underpinned by a written constitution for the first time in Europe in the *Kongeloven* ('The King's Law') of 1665 whose § 2 ordered that the monarch 'shall from this day forth be revered and considered the most perfect and supreme person on the Earth by all his subjects, standing above all human laws and having no judge above his person, neither in spiritual nor temporal matters, except God alone'. See Ekman 1957: 102-107.

<sup>6</sup> Sold from Denmark to the US in 1916/17, currently the US Virgin Islands. See Gøbel 2002.

<sup>7</sup> See also Motyl 1999 and Tilly 1997.

<sup>8</sup> See Stortinget Committee on Foreign and Constitutional Affairs 1971-1972: 523.

<sup>9</sup> Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, furthermore, individual Norwegians were partaking in running plantations and assisting other kinds of economic activity associated with colonialism, see Kjerland and Rio 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Part of the explanation can also be the more general European development, whereby 'enlightened monarchs' centralised and homogenised their populations, particularly with the French revolution and the Napoleonic empire.

<sup>11</sup> 'Forordning om infødsret for embedsmænd', Jan. 15, 1776. This law was possibly inspired by similar developments in England, see Glenthøj 2012.

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