



## Diverging Like-Mindedness? Development Policy Among the Nordics

Anne Mette Kjær, Jan Pettersson, Elling Tjønneland, Marikki Karhu & Jari Lanki

To cite this article: Anne Mette Kjær, Jan Pettersson, Elling Tjønneland, Marikki Karhu & Jari Lanki (2022) Diverging Like-Mindedness? Development Policy Among the Nordics, Forum for Development Studies, 49:3, 319-344, DOI: [10.1080/08039410.2022.2120414](https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2022.2120414)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2022.2120414>



Published online: 05 Oct 2022.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 41



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



## Diverging Like-Mindedness? Development Policy Among the Nordics

Anne Mette Kjær<sup>a</sup>, Jan Pettersson<sup>b</sup>, Elling Tjønneland<sup>c</sup>, Marikki Karhu<sup>d</sup> and Jari Lanki<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of political science, Aarhus University, Århus, Denmark; <sup>b</sup>Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA), Stockholm, Sweden; <sup>c</sup>Chr. Michelsen Instituttet, CMI, Bergen, Norway; <sup>d</sup>Finnish Development Policy Committee, Helsinki, Finland; <sup>e</sup>Independent researcher

**Abstract** The ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ in development aid is well known and characterized by its generosity and focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development. However, the individual Nordic countries’ development policies differ significantly, as the contributions to this special issue have uncovered. For example, Sweden and Norway have continuously upheld the volume of aid at above 1 per cent of GNI, while Denmark in the new millennium has cut the aid budget by almost one third, and Finland has struggled to surpass 0.45 per cent. Sweden maintains a strong focus on poverty reduction, whereas Norway’s and Finland’s poverty focus has been diluted somewhat by several competing goals, and Denmark’s even more so. This article compares the volumes, instruments, and goals of the four Nordic countries’ development policies. We find that if there ever was such a thing as a Nordic model in development aid, this model has been significantly weakened in the 00s and 10s, when the four countries have grown apart. The main explanations behind these differences, we posit, are the particular domestic political coalitions behind aid policy, which affect the extent to which development policy is politicized.

**Keywords:** development policy; aid volume; aid instruments; policy paradigm; the Nordic model

### Introduction and puzzle: the erosion of the Nordic model of development aid?

Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, as a group called ‘The Nordics’, are known for their special Nordic development policy model, characterized by its aid generosity, its focus on poverty reduction, human rights, sustainable development, multilateralism, and alignment with recipient government policy (Elgstöm and Delputte, 2015; Puyvallée and Bjørkdahl, 2021; Selbervik and Nygaard, 2006).<sup>1</sup> This ‘Nordic

---

1 Two observations are worth noting. First, Finland’s belonging to this group has regularly been questioned due to its lower share of aid in Gross National Income (GNI). Icelandic development policy is not included in the analysis mainly due to its small size. Like Finland, Iceland has committed itself to an ODA level at 0.7 percent of its GNI but it has

exceptionalism' has at times given them the label 'the Global Good Samaritans' (Puyvallée and Bjørkdahl, 2021). These 'do-gooders' have been driven, so goes the narrative, by humanitarianism and global solidarity; features that were also key in the Nordics' foreign policies (Lancaster, 2007; Puyvallée and Bjørkdahl, 2021; Stokke, 2019). Such motives have been contrasted with motivations of larger countries who have been argued to be using development aid primarily for strategic purposes, i.e. pursuing national interest through foreign policy and diplomacy (Lancaster, 2007).

However, the narrative of a special Nordic Model arguably exaggerates the commonalities rather than the differences between the four Nordic countries. The extent to which a Nordic Model ever existed is in itself debatable (Engh, 2021), but it is certainly evident that in the new millennium, the four Nordics, although still like-minded in many ways, have many distinct priorities. The four individual contributions to this special issue analyse the development policy goals, priorities, and instruments of the Nordic countries. Indeed, there are many similarities, especially regarding policy instruments. However, the articles also draw attention to differences, especially regarding goals and volumes, as we will elaborate in the following. These differences indicate the need for a closer examination of how and why the four countries are so different when they traditionally have been sharing the same Nordic values and subscribing to the same Nordic Model.

While the four country articles in this issue deal with the evolution of national aid policies since the 1990s, the present article has two purposes: to examine and characterize the Nordic countries' development policies, and to tentatively explain these features by focusing on domestic politics explanations.<sup>2</sup> We explore what characterizes the four countries' development policies, their priorities, instruments, and volumes as well as what might explain their differences. Our research design is therefore a comparative case study of the four countries' development policies and their potential drivers.

In the following, we present existing literature on how to characterize and explain development policy; we then analyse the main features of the Nordic countries' development policies and subsequently, we address the main domestic politics explanations. Finally, we discuss implications and conclude.

### **The literature on development policy and its drivers**

Three features stand out after a review of the literature on development policy and its drivers. First, we lack an analytical tool to systematically explore and compare development aid across countries. Second, there is a good body of literature describing

---

never succeeded in meeting this goal. Finland has reached the target only once in 1991. In 2020, Iceland's ODA reached 62MUSD, equivalent to 0.29 per cent of GNI.

2 Although development policy is wider than merely aid and can be any policy that aims to promote economic and social development, especially reduction of poverty, we focus mainly on development policies as they relate to official development assistance (ODA).

international trends in development aid, but this literature is not particularly concerned with examining the varying extents to which different donor country governments follow international trends. Third, while domestic political drivers have been observed to be important in explaining differences between countries such as the US, France, Japan, and the Nordics (Dietrich, 2021; Lancaster, 2007; Stokke, 2019), the Nordic countries have usually been placed in the same category of Nordic exceptionalism (Lancaster, 2007; Stokke 2019). This brings us, fourthly, to look at the literature on domestic policy drivers.

### *Characterizing and comparing development policy*

Development policy is difficult to characterize and compare due to a complexity of overlapping thematic focus areas, levels, and instruments (Riddel, 2007). The thematic areas can be, among many others, e.g. development and poverty reduction, governance, climate, or security issues. The themes obviously reflect the many purposes of development aid, e.g. diplomatic, developmental, humanitarian, commerce, democracy promotion, and human rights (Lancaster, 2007, pp. 6–7, but also pp. 215–220). The purposes of aid vary and have different weights at the national level (Stokke, 2019, p. 343). To illustrate, Carol Lancaster (2007, pp. 108–109) observes how US development policies always reflected a mix of diplomatic (due to the superpower position in the cold war and beyond) and developmental (due to pressure from different domestic interest groups) motivations. In contrast, the Nordic countries were less characterized by diplomatic purposes than by common values of redistribution and solidarity. While there is a rich literature on the many purposes of aid, the literature on development policy instruments is limited. The large plurality of instruments partly reflects the many purposes, partly international trends, as promoted by the UN and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Instruments also operate at different levels, as aid is channeled through a variety of institutions: multi-lateral organizations, global funds, government institutions, and local and international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) (Riddel, 2007).

The complexity and multifaceted character of development aid may explain why there are relatively few international comparisons of entire national aid programs, or why most comparisons focus on the ‘percentage’ question, such as Olav Stokke’s (2019, p. 343) recent significant contribution. Its main question is ‘what can explain why some member countries of the DAC have met the international target of 0.7% of GNI in ODA while others have not?’ Dietrich (2021) studies why some donor governments channel bilateral aid through recipient governments, while others ‘bypass’ them by working through non-state actors.<sup>3</sup> Other contributions focus more on various instruments (Burnside and Dollar, 2000; Cassen, 1994; Riddel, 2007) to explain the *effects* of aid.

---

<sup>3</sup> The study consists of five case studies in which Sweden is treated as representative for all Nordic countries (see e.g. sections 3.1 and 4.3).

We need a tool that allows us to compare development policies, and we turn to the broader public policy literature for help. The contributions to this special issue all draw on Peter Hall's (1993, p. 279) notion of a policy paradigm, referring to 'systems of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing'. The strength of Peter Hall's conceptual framework is that he specifies how to analyse policy changes. It enables us to determine whether changes have been paradigmatic, which is perhaps why numerous scholars apply the framework to different policy paradigms, such as the Washington consensus or social policy in China (Babb, 2013; Ngok and Huang, 2014). Hall distinguishes between first-, second-, and third-order changes. A first-order change consists of relatively minor adjustments of existing policies (e.g. volumes or tariffs) and maintenance of the overall policy goals and policy instruments. A second-order change is more substantive, as new policy instruments are introduced, and old ones discarded. Hall's example is economic policy making in the UK in the 1970s and 80s, when a reduction in the use of fiscal policy was used as a stabilizing instrument. Finally, a third-order change represents a simultaneous shift in means as well as ends, which means that the policy goals change fundamentally.

Combined, first-, second-, and third-order changes are seen as a paradigm shift marked by 'radical changes in the overarching terms of policy discourse' (Babb, 2013, p. 279). Radical policy change may be a result of both ideology and social learning resulting from experience in applying different policy instruments. Such rhetorical processes are recognized by Hall (1993) and more elaborated in Wood (2015). The strength of Hall's framework is his specification of a paradigm shift, which successfully unpacks the big 'policy' box and offers parameters on which to compare policies. In this article, we therefore unpack development policy by distinguishing between aid volumes, instruments and channels, and development policy goals. This specification enables us to compare systematically countries' development policies by decomposing policies into sub-elements. Moreover, it allows us to identify different explanatory factors for different sub-elements.

### ***Highlighting international trends***

Before we address the literature on Nordic development policy, what does the literature say about international aid trends and how they affect the goals, instruments, and volumes of development policy?

First, with regard to goals and volumes, many contributions compare the cold war era with the period after 1989. During the cold war, development aid was generally more strategically driven (i.e. determined by national foreign-policy interests), especially for the larger donor countries. For example, aid could be given mainly to allies without regard to the nature of the recipient country's political system. For large states such as the US, military and strategic concerns had higher priority than

development and poverty reduction. However, this changed with the end of the cold war, which is said to have strengthened donors' focus on development and poverty reduction (Bermeo, 2017). Boschini and Olofsgård (2007) find the decrease of total ODA (in levels as well as shares) during the 1990s to be explained by the disappearance of strategic interests with the end of the cold war. Alesina and Dollar (2000) find, based on data ending in the mid-1990s, that the direction of foreign aid is dictated as much by political and strategic considerations as by the economic needs and policy performance of the recipients. However, they find important differences among donors, where the Nordic countries are in the group responding to the 'right' incentives. After the end of the cold war, there was an international turn to focus more on governance and institutions, including promoting democracy and human rights (Doornbos, 2001; Grindle, 2004; Kjær, 2004; World Bank, 1992). Through the UN an agreement was reached in 2000 to eradicate extreme poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (Riddell, 2008).

Many observers would argue that the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001 brought strategic considerations back in, in the sense that development aid was geared towards allies in the fight against international terrorism, and 'stabilization' became a major area for aid-funded interventions in conflict-ridden countries and regions. However, Bermeo (2017) argues that donors have not been returning to cold-war dynamics after 9/11. Instead, strategic significance such as military importance has given way for aid to poor and proximate states and to states with ties to the donor through trade and migration. Thus, according to Bermeo, the fate of the less developed countries is today much more tied to donor countries' domestic situation in terms of terror, climate, migration, etc. (Bermeo, 2017, p. 738; see also Heinrich et al., 2017).

Adapting to climate change and mitigating carbon emissions are other important goals that have been increasingly prioritized in international development since the report from the Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987) and in recent years even more so after the Paris climate accord in 2015. Arndt and Tarp (2017) show that the 'greening' of aid has been a trend for the last three decades, and that the major part is in the form of aid for climate adaptation. The international community's joint effort on sustainable development is formalized in the Agenda 2030 (UNGA, 2015) and the Paris agreement on climate change (UNFCCC, 2015), which further increased the focus on climate change in aid flows (see also Donner et al., 2016).

Regarding instruments, the end of the cold war also allowed for an international trend towards supporting institutions through country programs emphasizing partnerships, alignment with country development plans, and harmonization with other donors (Booth, 2011; Wood et al., 2011). These principles, among others, were codified in the Paris Declaration of 2005 (OECD, 2005). Reformed in several rounds over the years, the framework now consists of four principles with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation monitoring implementation.

***One Nordic model?***

A third feature that emerges from a review of the literature is that the Nordic countries, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, are often treated as representing one Nordic approach to development aid, as we indicated in the introduction. The four Nordic countries comprise around 2.5 per cent of the population in the OECD DAC countries but provide about 8.9 per cent of total ODA of the OECD DAC members (figures from 2020). The Nordic countries have followed international trends together with other like-minded members of OECD DAC. As small countries with limited influence in the international system, being generous with development aid has been a way for the Nordics to achieve more influence than their relatively small country size prescribes, in other words, to ‘punch above their weight’ internationally (Olesen, Pharo, and Paaskesen, 2013; Stokke, 2019).

Central to the description and emergence of the concept of the Nordic model was Nordic cooperation.<sup>4</sup> Engh and Pharo (2008) argue that rationales for the Nordics’ engagement in development cooperation stem from joint history of missionaries, security-, and foreign-policy concerns and dominant social, political, and cultural norms. They note that the UN secretary-general was a Nordic national for the organization’s first sixteen years. Bach et al. (2008) report several joint Nordic Council projects from the 1960s until the late 1980s, after which they ceased. The final jointly administrated project ended in 1989 as did the Council’s ‘Nordic consultative committee on aid issues’. The only joint action plan decided (adopted by the Council in 1988) was limited to a request to develop ‘flexible and pragmatic forms of cooperation that are also best suited for recipient countries’ (Bach et al., 2008, p. 335).

The fact that development cooperation is part of foreign policy and the establishment of increasingly experienced and well-funded national aid administrations diminished both the appetite and the need for joint administrative arrangements and joint projects. Bach et al. (2008) show how in particular Denmark and Sweden used the arguments that aid is not a ‘joint competence’ and that doubling administrative structures in order to form an informal structure of Nordic (often intense) cooperation based on discussion and coordination is inefficient. In addition, they argue that Denmark’s membership in the European Community – as formal rules-based cooperation – made a formal Nordic structure impossible. Of course, cooperation – formal and informal – between the Nordics does exist. An example is the Nordic Development Fund, established in 1989, although some regard its Nordic identity as weak, with weak links to Nordic bilateral programs and the other Nordic donor institutions (Spratt et al., 2019). So, with time, the Nordic cooperation ceased and, in a sense, allowed the four countries to go down their own paths; paths that must be explained mainly by national political factors, since international trends are rather similar for all Nordics.

---

4 However, Stokke (2019, pp. 357–360) argues that much of the (informal) cooperation, in particular between social-democratic political actors, is better described as a ‘competition’ to be the best performer within several policy areas, not least aid.



### ***Domestic drivers of development policy***

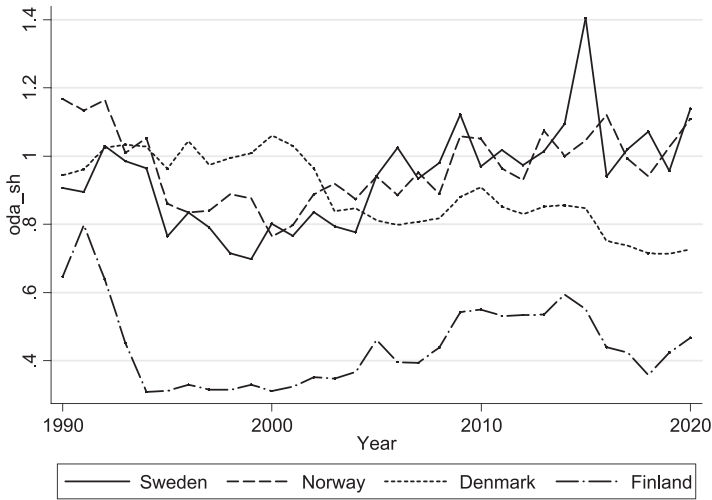
While the literature agrees that development policy is formed through a mix of international and domestic drivers, few scholars elaborate on the latter. One of the most prominent of these is Carol Lancaster (2007), whose point of departure is that development policy always had a variety of purposes, and that domestic factors play a large role in explaining them.

Lancaster suggests a categorization into four national political factors. First, she argues that *norms and ideas* are important in development policy decisions. Lancaster illustrates this with the fact that the idea of using the state as a redistribution mechanism is well ingrained because of the Scandinavian welfare state, and this has spilled over into development aid, which is characterized more by a willingness to spread solidarity to the global level. Second, Lancaster points to the importance of political institutions, particularly *the strength of the legislature*: A strong parliament that plays a large role in the decision-making process typically means a stronger focus on development than on diplomacy in development aid. Third, Lancaster emphasizes the role of *interest groups* such as businesses or development NGOs: Where there are many domestic CSOs interested in aid, development purposes are stronger. Finally, Lancaster mentions *the organization* of aid programs and policy making: Where organization is fragmented across multiple ministries, such as in Japan, development policy tends to be about commerce as much as development or diplomacy. Lancaster uses the four categories to explain differences in the development policies of countries such as the US, Japan, Denmark, and France. However, several of her categories are not useful in a comparison between the Nordic countries only, because these countries are similar in many respects, i.e. norms and ideas about redistribution, the relative strength of the parliament, and the existence of a lively community of development NCSOs.

We therefore turn our focus toward party politics and the way coalition governments are formed. The individual contributions to this issue indicated that party competition and coalition politics were important in order to understand the two explanatory factors of policy changes pointed to by Peter Hall (1993) and Mathew Wood (2015), namely the extent of politicization of development aid and movements in the locus of authority of development-policy decision making. Other literature has explained policy differences in e.g. migration issues or environmental policies (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). To illustrate, Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008) emphasize coalition politics when they explain why migration became such a salient issue in Denmark and not in Sweden. The social liberals (center party) governed with the social democrats in the 1990s, making it attractive for the mainstream right-wing parties to focus on the issue in order to win government power based on the support of radical right-wing parties (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). Translated to our purpose, if center parties that favor generous development aid are needed to form a coalition government, consensus around a generous aid will



**Figure 1: Aid as shares of Gross National Income, 1990–2020. Source: OECD DAC’s CRS system**



emerge, it will be depoliticized, and the locus of authority may lie more with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which tends to give them a greater say not just in implementation but in the choice of priorities, instruments, and channels. On the contrary, if far right wing parties are needed to form a government, development aid is likely to be more politicized in the sense that there will be proposals to e.g. cut aid, use it to reduce migration, or do away with aid altogether.

### Comparing the four Nordics

In this section, we describe current differences and similarities between the Nordic countries’ development policies. We first address, drawing on Hall (1993) components of policy paradigms, each country’s volumes of ODA, use of channels, and main disbursement patterns based on the four individual contributions to this issue as well as on data reported to OECD DAC and other sources. We compare the main goals of the four by drawing on the analyses of relevant policy documents conducted in the four individual articles in this special issue.

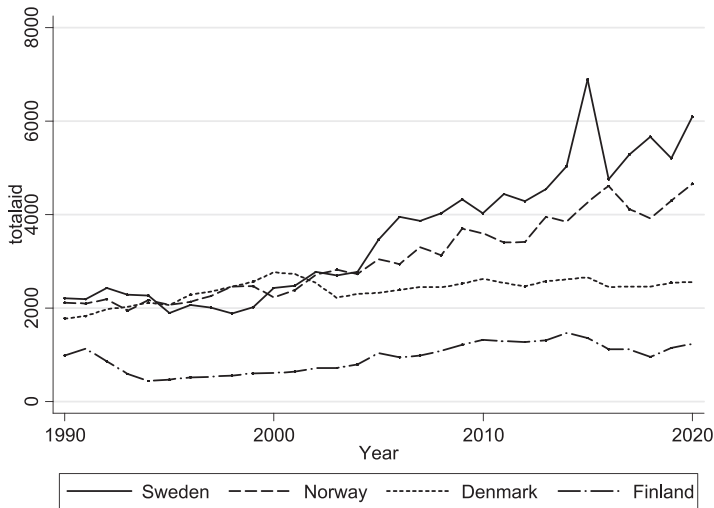
### Volumes

Figure 1 shows how the shares of aid of GNI were more similar in the 1990s than they are in 2022 (except in Finland).<sup>5</sup> Denmark, Norway and Sweden all entered the 1990s with aid levels around 1 per cent of GNI, whereas Finland has provided less than 0.7 per cent

<sup>5</sup> There are at least three technical explanations for yearly variations that are not linked to policy priorities: First, the Nordic countries and the DAC follow different reporting conventions. Second, budget allocations use forecasted GNI, whereas reporting to DAC relates ODA

of GNI in every year except in 1991. Danish aid shares were the highest or second highest of the four during most of the 1990s, but in the early 2000s, they gradually dropped to today's level of around 0.7 per cent. Norway and Sweden both decreased their aid shares from the early 1990s until 2000 and then gradually increased them to 1 per cent.

**Figure 2: Aid (ODA) constant MUSD, 1990–2020. Source: OECD DAC's CRS system**



Levels of ODA (constant 2019 million US dollar), as shown in [Figure 2](#), reveal that Denmark, Norway, and Sweden provided about the same absolute volume of aid until around mid-2000s. In 2000, Denmark was the largest Nordic donor in absolute terms. During the 2000s, however, Sweden and Norway left Finland, but also Denmark, behind. In other words, since the early 2000s, the three countries ‘grew apart’ in terms of absolute levels, a period in which Denmark gradually became a much smaller donor than its Scandinavian neighbors. Finland’s aid level increased somewhat during the 2000s and early 2010s but dropped drastically in 2016.

### ***On differences in channels***

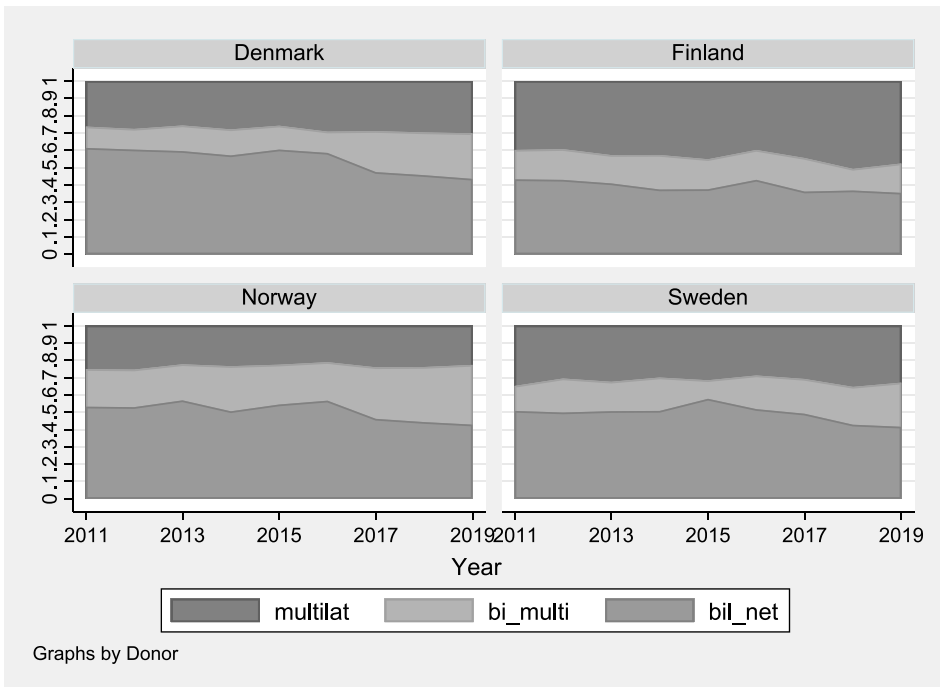
The Nordics are all known as ‘good multilateralists’, supporting the UN system and the multilateral order in general. As shown in [Figure 3](#), between 2011 and 2019, Denmark and Sweden provided about 30 per cent in the form of core multilateral support, Norway around 25 per cent. Finland stands out as a prime core donor among the four, allocating between 40 and 50 per cent as core support. In addition to core support, the Nordic countries earmark aid to multilateral organizations for specific countries, sectors, or

---

to final GNI. Third, in some cases, unpredicted increases in the cost for asylum seekers in donor countries.

themes, formally defined as bilateral aid and referred to as multi-bilateral assistance, or multi-bi. As [Figure 3](#) shows, all four countries yielded substantial multi-bi support over the period (never below 10 per cent of total aid, Sweden in 2015, and as much as 34 per cent, Norway in 2019). The use of multi-bi aid has increased markedly over the years except in Finland. Taking into account core as well as earmarked aid, the multilateral system is used for between 56 (Denmark) and 65 (Finland) per cent of the respective country's total aid (including aid through the EU).

**Figure 3: Distribution of multilateral, multi-bi and 'strictly' bilateral aid, 2011–2019.**  
Source: OECD DAC's CRS system

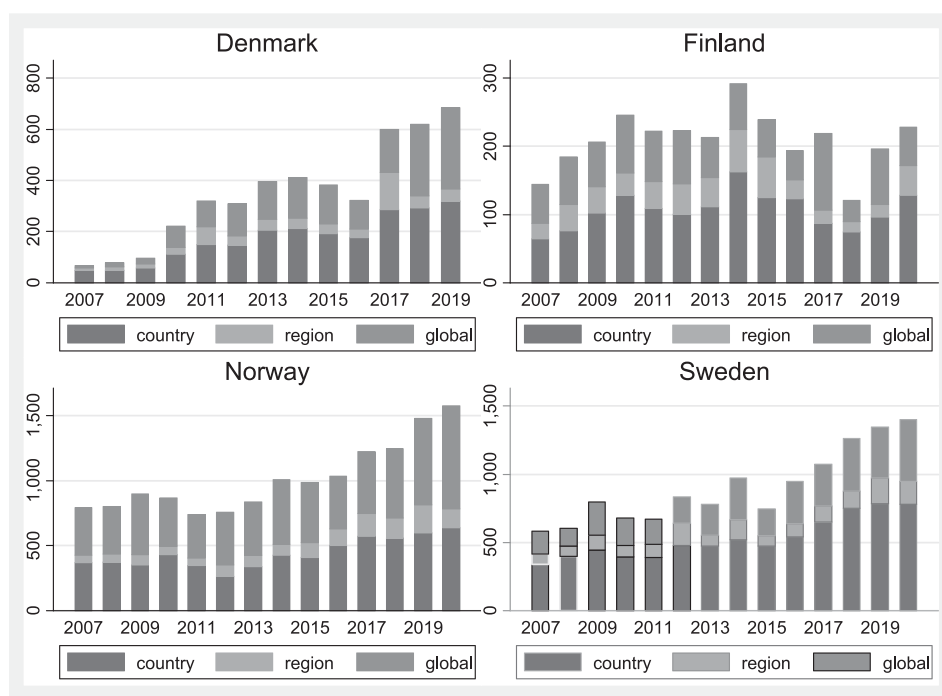


Historically, multi-bi assistance was limited and linked to specific country programs. Today, multi-bi aid is targeted at individual countries, regions, or global programs. [Figure 4](#) shows the distribution of the volume of multi-bi support since 2007. Norway stands out with its focus on multi-bi support of global programs, and Sweden with its large share targeted at individual countries.<sup>6</sup>

[Table 1](#) presents each country's ten largest multilateral recipients, along with their weights in the respective country's portfolio, based on average contributions for 2016–2019. The development share of the EU budget is excluded. Each Nordic

<sup>6</sup> Respective shares targeted at country, regional, and global programs are around 50-10-40 (Denmark), 50-20-30 (Finland), 40-10-50 (Norway), and 60-10-30 (Sweden).

**Figure 4: Distribution of earmarked multilateral aid, 2007–2020. Source: OECD DAC’s CRS system**

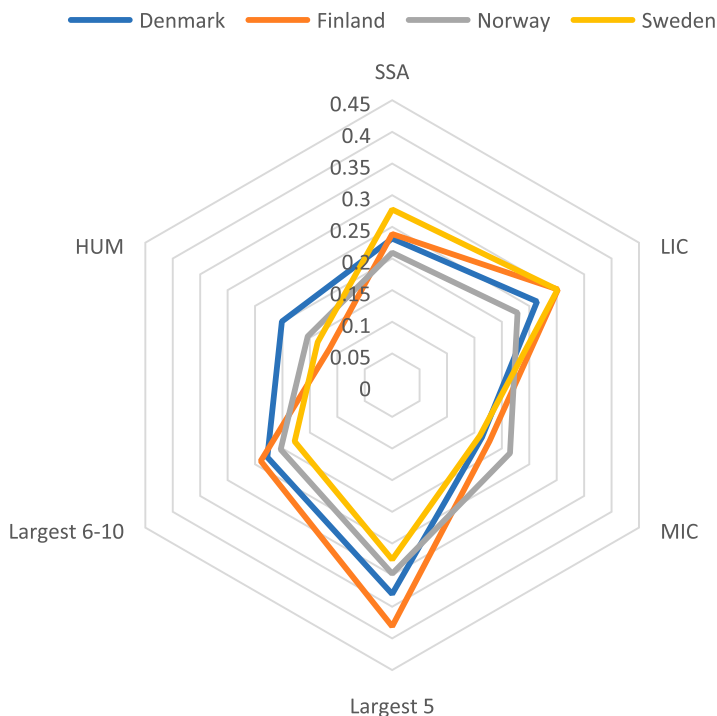


Denmark	(%)	Finland	(%)	Norway	(%)	Sweden	(%)
IDA	16	EDF	22	GAVI	15	IDA	21
EDF	16	IDA	18	IDA	11	GEF	16
Afr.DF	7	Afr.DF	9	Global Fund	8	EDF	8
UNFPA	7	UNFPA	6	Afr.DF	7	Global Fund	6
UNHCR	7	IFAD	6	UNDP	7	UNICEF	6
GEF	6	UNHCR	4	UNFPA	6	Afr.DF	6
WFP	6	GCF	4	CERF	5	WFP	6
UNDP	4	UNWOMEN	3	UNICEF	5	UNHCR	5
CERF	3	AIIB	3	GCF	5	UNFPA	5
Global Fund	3	IDB	3	UNHCR	4	CERF	4
Share of 10:	75		79		73		82
N recipients:	60		52		65		72

**Table 1: The ten largest multilateral recipients of core contributions, average 2016–2019.**

Note: Contributions through the EU budget (i.e. the development share of the EU budget) are excluded from the calculations. While these contributions were the largest multilateral core contributions for Denmark and Finland and second largest for Sweden, they are part of the EU membership and as such do not mirror a priority in the multilateral system. Source: OECD DAC’s CRS system.

**Figure 5: Geographic focus and shares of humanitarian aid (averages 2016–2020). Source: OECD DAC's CRS system**



country allocates 73–82 per cent of their total multilateral core contributions to their ten largest multilateral recipients. However, based on the number of organizations receiving contributions, Finland is most focused with 52 recipients, followed by Denmark (60) and Norway (65). Sweden's (72 recipients) multilateral aid is most spread out among the Nordics. For Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, the European Development Fund (EDF) is a large recipient. Norway is not a member of the EU and does not provide any core funding to the institution.

### *On differences in allocation patterns*

We compare the geographical focus and concentration of bilateral aid (including multi-bilateral) in terms of the share allocated, in turn, to Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), low- and middle-income countries (LIC and MIC), the five largest recipient countries, and the 6–10th-largest recipient countries. In addition, we compare humanitarian assistance as a share of total bilateral aid (HUM).<sup>7</sup> Results, using averages for 2016–2020, are presented in Figure 5.

<sup>7</sup> According to the OECD DAC CRS reporting directives, only bilateral aid reports humanitarian flow. Thus, core support to multilateral organizations within the humanitarian sector is not included. Core funding to some humanitarian UN agencies and funds are significant for some Nordic countries.

Denmark	(%)	Finland	(%)	Norway	(%)	Sweden	(%)
Afghanistan	7	Afghanistan	9	Syria	8	Afghanistan	7
Syria	7	Ethiopia	8	Afghanistan	6	Tanzania	6
Tanzania	6	Nepal	7	Palestine	5	Somalia	5
Kenya	5	Somalia	6	South Sudan	5	Mozambique	5
Somalia	5	Mozambique	6	Ethiopia	5	DRC	4
Ethiopia	5	Tanzania	6	Somalia	4	Ethiopia	4
Uganda	5	Myanmar	5	Lebanon	4	Syria	4
Burkina Faso	4	Kenya	5	Malawi	4	Palestine	3
Mali	4	Syria	5	Colombia	4	Uganda	3
Ghana	4	Viet Nam	3	Brazil	4	Zambia	3
N recipients	119		112		114		125

**Table 2: Ten largest bilateral recipients, 2016–2019.**

Source: OECD DAC's CRS system. Regional and unspecified aid flows are excluded from the denominator. The percentage shares are thus country allocation in relation to all country-allocated aid.

While the various dimensions yield similar shapes for the Nordics, some differences are noteworthy. Sweden is most focused on Sub Saharan Africa and Norway least. Sweden and Finland allocate around 30 per cent and Norway 23 per cent to low-income countries (LIC). The Norwegian share is correspondingly higher for aid to middle-income countries (MIC).

Finland has the largest share of bilateral aid to the top-five and the top 6–10 recipient countries. As in the case with multilateral aid, Finland is thus the Nordic country with the most country-focused aid, and Sweden has the least concentrated aid.

Finally, Denmark, with an average of 20 per cent of bilateral aid, allocates the largest share among the Nordics in the form of humanitarian support, followed by Norway (15 per cent) Sweden (14 per cent) and Finland (11 per cent).

Returning to the country focus of aid, Table 2 shows the ten largest recipient countries during the period 2016–2019.

The list of top recipients reveals many similarities between the Nordic countries, in particular the major allocations to countries affected by conflict and war in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan – all on OECD's list of the 13 most extreme fragile countries.

All Nordics provide between 60 and 70 per cent of their ODA to fragile countries, of which 21–26 percentage points are allocated to the 13 countries defined as extremely fragile.<sup>8</sup> Both these figures are somewhat higher than the OECD DAC average, so all Nordics can be claimed to prioritize fragile contexts relative to the donor community at large. However, while Finland, Norway, and Sweden have maintained a mix of fragile and more stable countries on their top-ten lists, Denmark is the only Nordic country that has phased out development cooperation with most stable but

<sup>8</sup> <http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/donor/0/>, accessed 19 June 2022.

poor countries, a development that is becoming evident when we look at the Nordics presence in specific countries over time and also after 2019 (not indicated in the Table which portrays an average). For instance, Norway, Sweden and Finland maintain a solid presence in Southern and Eastern Africa; Norway has phased out of Zambia but remains engaged in Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, while Denmark has withdrawn from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, and is at time of writing phasing out of Tanzania.

### ***Large differences in the ODA share of migration costs at home***

Costs for asylum seekers in donor countries for the first 12 months can be reported to the OECD DAC as ODA, although reporting practices vary within OECD DAC (see Knoll and Sherriff, 2017). All the Nordic countries have funded some or all of these costs since the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

Except for the last few years, Sweden has covered by far the largest amount of in-donor costs among the Nordics (see Table 3) in relation to the number of asylum seekers. Since 2010, Sweden has received between 63 and 73 per cent of the total number of asylum seekers to the four countries (see Table 3). The share of Sweden's reported ODA for in-donor costs has varied from 42 to 78 per cent of the four countries' total reported in-donor costs. Asylum policies are decided outside

	2010	2012	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020
Share asylum seekers								
Denmark	10%	10%	13%	8%	14%	8%	11%	
Finland	6%	5%	3%	13%	13%	13%	14%	15%
Norway	20%	15%	10%	13%	8%	9%	8%	7%
Sweden	64%	70%	73%	66%	65%	69%	67%	78%
Share reported costs for asylum seekers in donor country								
Denmark	15%	14%	13%	10%	17%	8%	7%	.
Finland	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Norway	35%	22%	16%	14%	40%	14%	14%	24%
Sweden	50%	64%	70%	76%	42%	77%	78%	73%
Ratio costs/asylum seekers								
Denmark	1,44	1,43	1,01	1,18	1,19	1,00	0,65	
Finland	0,10	0,06	0,03	0,01	0,06	0,06	0,06	0,18
Norway	1,76	1,42	1,59	1,11	5,10	1,46	1,71	3,60
Sweden	0,78	0,92	0,96	1,15	0,65	1,12	1,17	0,94

**Table 3: Shares asylum seekers, shares of ODA-reported costs, and the ratio between the two.**

Note: Total number of asylum seekers to each country per year as share of country group total (upper panel). Total ODA-reported within-donor costs for asylum seekers as share of country group total (middle panel). Source: Eurostat, data set 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – annual aggregated data (rounded)', MIGR\_ASYAPPCTZA. OECD DAC data set 'DAC 1', series Aidtype 1820, refugee costs.



the aid-policy sector as its main concerns are not related to foreign aid. Thus, the possibility to report these costs as ODA is probably the single starkest example of influence on aid policy and practise from another policy area.

The lower panel of [Table 3](#) reports the ratio between refugees received and shares of ODA to reception of refugees reported. A ratio larger than 1 means that the reported costing share is larger than the share of asylum seekers. A much more detailed analysis is needed to argue that countries with a ratio above 1 ‘overcompensate’ in relation to its Nordic peers. However, there are no signs in the table that Sweden’s reported costs are unnaturally large in relation to the number of asylum seekers.

### *Climate aid*

Climate issues have become major priorities for all Nordic countries, which all allocate large portions of their aid budgets to combat climate change: Norway about 16 per cent (2020); Denmark aims for 30 per cent and Sweden for 25 per cent in 2022. They do differ in the balance between adaptation and mitigation, as Norway allocates the bulk of its earmarked funding (74 per cent) to mitigation purposes, and Sweden and Denmark (60 per cent) to adaption. Finland’s climate finance has varied quite widely over the last 10 years (42–147 million euro annually 2010–2020), but the trend is rising. Climate change mitigation has accounted for the greater part of climate finance in 2013–2020. In 2020, mitigation accounted for 58 per cent (64 per cent in 2019), and adaptation for 42 per cent (36 per cent in 2019). When it comes to climate aid in the bilateral portfolio, Norway and Finland tend to prioritize mitigation over adaptation, whereas Sweden prioritizes adaptation interventions.

All Nordic countries allocate core funding to the UN Green Climate Fund. A main difference beyond adaptation/mitigation is thematic priorities. Norway’s main disbursements (about 50 per cent) are related to deforestation and the REDD+ initiative and the rest to energy and climate adaptation in agriculture (Norad, 2021). Norway is the only Nordic country prioritizing REDD+.

### *On differences in main development policy goals*

The individual country articles in this volume have all presented the goal structure for the countries’ development policies, including evolution over time. As stated in the introduction, what stands out is how Sweden has maintained its emphasis on poverty reduction as the most important priority. Norway and Finland also maintain a strong focus on poverty reduction but have included many other goals such as climate mitigation. Norway’s poverty focus has become somewhat diluted, but the large aid budget enables Norway to maintain the focus on poverty reduction and have other engagements in e.g. middle-income countries too. The Danish government’s poverty focus in 2022 is mainly linked to irregular migration and fragility, and in the last few years, Denmark has phased out country-program support to traditional partner countries and closed many of its embassies there.

As we have seen in the analysis above, these differences in main development policy goals can only to an extent be seen in the data each country reports to the OECD DAC. Some differences are notable in the numbers, however. To illustrate, Sweden is known for its focus on democracy and human rights, and indeed, almost 25 per cent of its bilateral portfolio is sector coded as ‘government and civil society’ compared to around 15 per cent in Denmark and 12 per cent in Finland and Norway. Likewise, Sweden exceeds its Nordic neighbors in shares of bilateral aid with either a gender or an Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights priority (but note that much of Norway’s and Denmark’s aid here is provided as multilateral aid). Another example illustrated in [Figure 5](#) above is Denmark’s increased focus on humanitarian assistance, which now exceeds the other Nordic countries. As we showed, the different goals also affect the choice of recipient countries. The analyses above indicate that it is important to look beyond OECD DAC reported numbers to spot the differences, so we compared the recommendations of the most recent OECD DAC peer reviews. The findings reflect well the differences observed regarding focus and volumes. We can only highlight the most important differences here. For Finland, the main recommendation from the peer review is to ‘approve a roadmap with annual targets to achieve its commitment to provide 0.7% of GNI as ODA’ (OECD DAC, 2017). For Sweden, a main focus is the large number of recipient countries, the need for concentration of aid and of strengthening staff capacity (OECD DAC, 2019a). For Norway, a main recommendation is a better link between multilateral support and its country strategies. The peer review also recommends that Norway seek better alignment between core funding and earmarked funding in its support for multilateral institutions (OECD DAC, 2019b).

Finally, the recommendations for Denmark were, in comparison, unusually strong in their formulation, for example, Denmark was encouraged to ‘safeguard the integrity of its ODA’, to ‘clarify the extent to which Denmark’s development co-operation and humanitarian assistance is expected to contribute to reducing poverty and addressing inequalities’, and to ‘take action to address potential incoherence between its development cooperation objectives and its domestic policies related to refugees, asylum and irregular migration’ (OECD DAC, 2021).

### ***Growing apart?***

Summing up, the four Nordics were more similar as aid donors in 1990 than they are in 2022, and they cooperated more in the early days than today. The aid volumes were fairly similar in 1990, but today – following cuts in Denmark and Finland – Sweden and Norway are far ahead. Norwegian aid is twice as large as Denmark’s. There are also emerging differences in how the four countries allocate and disperse their funds. Sweden has a stronger focus on country programs than the others and allocates more funds for democracy and human-rights purposes. Denmark has a stronger focus on migration and has abandoned poverty reduction as the only overarching

objective. Norway has a stronger focus on global initiatives (health, climate, and peace building linked to its role in mediation processes) and allocates a bigger share of its aid to middle-income countries.

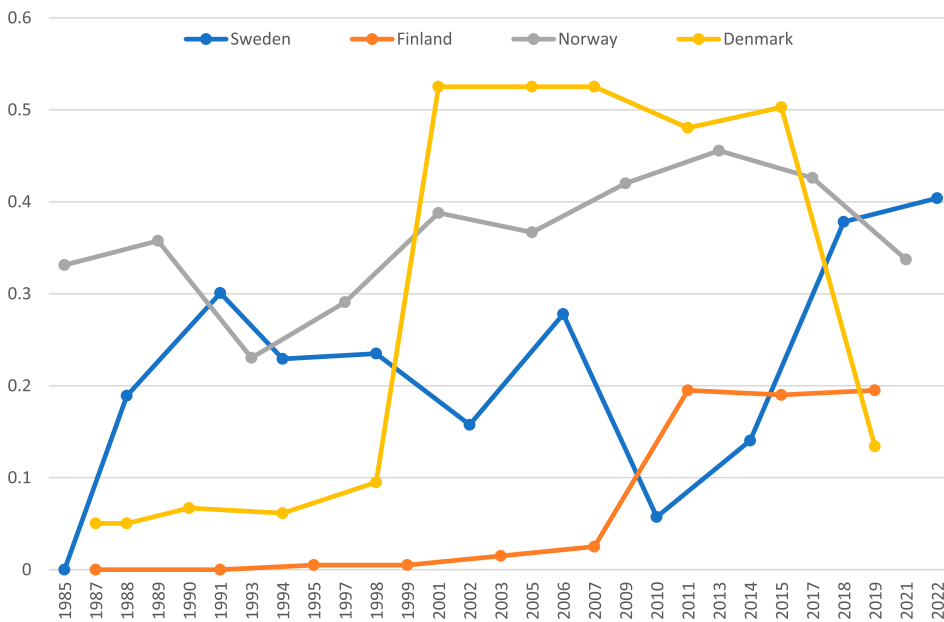
Do these differences amount to different ‘policy paradigms’, understood as ‘systems of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing’ (Hall, 1993, p. 279)? We have seen that many instruments and allocation patterns are quite similar in the four countries, e.g. the tendency to give more earmarked donations to multilateral organizations, the so-called multi-bi aid. However, the differences as we have analysed them are also quite striking and are, to an extent, expressions of different ‘systems of ideas about policy goals and how to attain them’. To give an example, a statement such as ‘Danish development cooperation needs to address the challenges *Denmark* faces’ (i.e. migration) (MFA, 2022) and is very different from a statement such as ‘The goal of Swedish development assistance is to create opportunities for *better living conditions for people living in poverty* and under oppression’ (Committee for Foreign Affairs, 2014). Finland differs in a consistently lower aid share but otherwise seems to have a similar underlying system of ideas as Sweden in terms of poverty eradication and sustainable development. Finland has also always emphasized strongly partner countries’ responsibility for their own development, ‘will to develop’ and market-based, ‘right’ economic policies. Norway differs in its focus on global public goods but not in the ideational foundations of foreign aid. Drawing the line between qualitatively different systems of ideas is a challenge and a worthwhile endeavor for future research. The contributions to this volume show that so far, only Denmark’s development policy has undergone a paradigm shift in the new millennium.

### **Possible explanations of differences**

What are possible drivers of the four Nordics’ growing apart? As noted in the introduction, policy drivers are many and complex, and important international as well as domestic factors are at play. As the four Nordics have been subject to many of the same international influences, we turn to domestic politics. Our literature suggested the value of looking into party politics, the degree of politicization of development aid, and to explore where the ‘locus of authority’ is (to use Peter Hall’s (1993) terms).

### ***Party politics and parliament majorities***

As noted in the second section, the literature points to the strength of the legislature as important. The stronger their legislature, the more generous countries seem to be with aid, as Lancaster (2007) has noted. The Nordics all have strong legislatures, so that in itself does not explain differences. However, the way parties compete and over which issues is important. Parliaments approve the annual aid budgets, although their scrutiny of details in development aid has been rather limited. The debate about the aid volume in the Danish 2011 and 2015 elections and the decision to cut the aid

**Figure 6: Share of seats in parliament in favor of cutting aid, 1985–2021**

volume from 1 to minimum 0.7 per cent illustrates the role of coalition politics in parliament. Does this suggest that development aid becomes more politicized?

Figure 6 plots the share of parliamentary seats representing parties that favor decreasing aid or abandoning the 1 per cent target in the four countries. The shares do not consider whether a particular party is in government and thus reflect ‘pure ideational positions’ rather than observed negotiated outcomes. A number of interesting observations can be made. The low support in the Finnish parliament for reductions in aid suggests (when combined with apparent low interest in aid in general) a low degree of politicization. The two Norwegian parties calling for a reduction of the aid volume (the Conservative Party and the Progress Party) now make up about a third of the parliamentary votes. The series for Sweden during the 2010s is more volatile and explained by the Moderate Party’s position in favor of the 1 per cent target in 2010 and 2014, as is the increase in 2018. Based on the seats in parliament, from a pure ideational perspective, aid volumes may be expected to be more politicized in Norway and Sweden, which is also in line with the two countries’ attachment to the 1 per cent target. Maybe most interesting is how the 1998 elections in Denmark led to a subsequent parliamentary majority for reductions of aid. The center-right parties’ inability to form a government after the 1998 elections led to a change in leadership for the Danish Liberal Party. The new chairman was the first to promote aid cuts to favor Danish health care. This led to the abandonment of the 1 per cent target and with the 2001 elections, the Liberal Party won governing power and began a period with a political majority for aid cuts. Today the aid budget is at 0.7 per cent, and

there is very little support for further reductions in the Danish parliament, and even the right-wing Danish People's Party began to agree with a 0.7 per cent share (up until recently when they started to call for cuts to 0,3, but by then the party was becoming less significant in Danish politics and was losing its support base).

But why do political parties turn their attention to and change their minds on the aid volume? This has a lot to do with government formation. After the Danish elections in 2001, the Danish Liberal Party and the Conservatives were able to form a government without support from the small center parties, which were strongly in favor of development aid. Instead, they were supported by the far-right Danish People's Party, which advocated aid cuts and restricted immigration (see Kjær, [this issue](#)). In Sweden, even when the Moderates have been in favor of aid cuts, they have never prioritized the issue over other policy areas (see Pettersson, [this issue](#)). Similarly in Norway, the Christian Democrats have played a crucial role in maintaining the broad consensus on the 1 per cent share (see Tjønneland, [this issue](#)). Aid policy has in fact been important in wooing the Christian Democrats when forming governments. Finally, in Finland, the large government coalitions and the lack of powerful pro-aid stances by the major political parties and the absence of cross-party pro-aid coalitions make it unlikely that the status quo would change through politicization in favor of the 0.7 target. Furthermore, the rise since 2011 of the Finns party, which is openly aid-sceptical, further challenges any attempts to promote the 0.7 target (see Karhu and Lanki, [this issue](#)).

Along the same lines, it is interesting that the Danish social democrats' change of mind on the issue is in contrast to their Nordic peers. In all four countries, the social democrats have traditionally been very pro-development aid and strong proponents of the 1 per cent share and the poverty reduction agenda. During the 2010s, however, the Danish social democrats realized that they could possibly form a government with support from the left-wing parties *without* losing votes to the Danish Peoples Party by forming an S-minority government. This government could navigate by legislating green and welfare policies with their support parties on the left, and immigration and to some extent development policy with support from the right-wing parties. This explains the move to the 0.7 per cent and the strong present link between migration and development policy. In the other three Nordics, this has not happened yet, but as Pettersson ([this issue](#)) and Tjønneland ([this issue](#)) have noticed, there are signs that it might. In Sweden, there are no indications that the social democrats will abandon their adherence to the 1 per cent target or the (multidimensional) poverty focus of foreign aid. However, a positional movement towards increased focus on global public goods provision may occur as a means for the social democrats to secure future public support for aid (implying a somewhat watered-down poverty focus). The Swedish parliament now also includes two large parties that favor aid cuts, and the center-liberal parties that used to act as aid guardians are considerably weakened, so coalition formation for a future center-right government that preserves current aid levels would require from the smaller parties a significant prioritization of aid over other policy areas. The September 2022 elections strengthened the

parliamentary positions of the parties favouring aid cuts, which may have significant implications for Swedish development policy. In the Norwegian case, the influence of the right-wing Progress Party – both inside and outside government coalitions – contributed to shaping migration policies, but the influence of other coalition parties in Conservative Party-led coalition governments largely protected development aid policies and the budget, enabled by the continuously rising Norwegian GNI. This continuity is also true for Sweden, where social democratic-led governments and center-right coalitions alike have preserved ambitious levels of aid.

In Finland, the current Social Democratic Party (SDP)-led coalition government has introduced increased aid disbursement from 0.42 in 2019 to 0.47 in 2020. But despite a joint commitment enshrined in a government program of 2019 ‘to prepare a roadmap and timetable for attaining the 0.7 goal’, the attempts to do so have failed (Karhu and Lanki, [this issue](#)).

In other words, this analysis suggests that the structure of party competition, rather than the strength of parliament, could explain much of the differences between the four Nordics.

### ***The locus of authority and the organization of aid agencies***

Our literature review suggested the locus of authority (or policy arena) would matter for development policy decisions and priorities. In the four Nordics, the ultimate locus of authority are the parliaments. They maintain the aid volume and objectives, but the extent to which a country’s concerns of national interest also depends on the organization of the aid agency (Lancaster, 2007; Stokke, 2019). One would expect that this, coupled with limited parliamentary scrutiny of the details of development aid, gives foreign ministries a strong influence in selection of priorities and instruments. The domestic governance and management of development aid is therefore an important variable. OECD DAC in its major 2009 study reviewed the practices of the DAC donors and identified four main models: (1) a strong Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) responsible for both policy and implementation (full integration); (2) a directorate or unit within MFA responsible for both policy and implementation (partial integration); (3) MFA has responsibility for policy but a separate executing agency is responsible for implementation; and (4) a separate ministry responsible for policy and implementation (OECD, 2009).

The four Nordic countries differ in how the implementation is organized and how closely this is integrated with MFA. There are also important shifts in the period. This is summarized in [Table 4](#).

All countries have development aid ministers responsible for all or part of the aid budget (except Norway 2013–2015 and Denmark 2001–04 and 2015–16, when the foreign minister was responsible for the aid budget). Sweden has the strongest implementing agency (Sida). Some operational capacities are left with MFA (e.g. core funding to multilateral institutions), but overall, this has contributed to a strong Swedish commitment to long-term programs, country focus and result management. In the Norwegian case,

1: Full integration with MFA	2: Partial integration with MFA (dedicated unit/directorate within MFA)	3: MFA has policy responsibility but with separate implementing agency	4: Separate ministry for development aid responsible for policy and implementation
Denmark	Finland	Sweden Norway (pre-2004 and post 2020, partial 2004–2019)	

**Table 4: Institutional arrangement for managing development aid in the Nordic countries.**

Source: Authors' own compilation.

much of Norad's operational responsibility was shifted to MFA in 2004, and the MFA's operational work was deeply integrated in a range of MFA departments. This – as Tjønneland's article points out – contributed to Norway's strong focus on global interventions and choice of instruments (especially related to health, peace/mediation, and climate change) and the reduced focus on country programs. Many operational responsibilities were shifted back to Norad with the reorganization decided in 2019. However, MFA still has implementing responsibilities for half of the aid budget (and even much more following the shifts in spending related to Ukraine).

Denmark's aid programs are fully integrated in MFA with a separate technical department servicing the MFA departments in their aid management. It also has an advisory board bringing outside stakeholders and experts together in advising MFA and the minister of development on a range of issues, including decisions on all new large aid-funded programs.

A body of literature that analyses lessons and implications of how aid is governed and managed suggests that it is important to maintain a division between policy and operational management/implementation (Cardwell and Ghazalian, 2018; Guljarani, 2020; Lancaster, 2007). This does not necessarily have to be a separate executing agency, but experience seems to suggest that if integrated with MFA, it should be a separate unit or directorate. If it is too deeply integrated in a ministry, it tends to reduce scores on commitment to development as short-term domestic or foreign policy objectives take precedence over long-term development commitments. Our cases seem to confirm this, as development policy the de facto locus of authority in Denmark appears to have become more centralized during recent years than in the other three Nordics, thus allowing for a development policy more determined by other political concerns. This finding would be worthwhile exploring further in future research on development policy.

## Conclusion

'The Nordics' have been known for subscribing to a special development policy model characterized by aid generosity, focus on poverty reduction, human rights, sustainable



development, multilateralism, and alignment with recipient government policy. Even Finland, which has not managed to reach the 0.7 per cent share since 1991, has (at least until recently) maintained the ambition to reach this share in order to become more firmly placed within the Nordic group. In this comparison of the Nordics' development policies, instruments, and goals, we found that despite many similarities, the Nordics have grown apart, and there is no such thing as one unique Nordic model. In 1990, the four were much more similar in terms of volumes and priorities, but Norway and Sweden are now far bigger donors than Denmark and Finland, and especially Sweden is preserving the Nordic values of poverty reduction and sustainable development. On instruments and allocation channels, the Nordics are still rather similar, but we found that it is possible to speak of different development policy paradigms. Denmark's development aid has been cut by 30 per cent and focuses more on reducing migration inflows, and Norway focuses more on global public goods. These findings are in line with what Bertil Odén (2011) found in his comparisons of the Nordic countries' Africa strategies. Odén concluded that the traditional 'Nordic aid model' had eroded in the years immediately prior to 2011. He noted that the current development cooperation policies of the different Nordic countries in Africa and elsewhere seemed to be heading in different directions. In this respect, Nordic countries no longer formed the core of a like-minded group.

A full explanation of these differences is beyond the scope of this article. However, we do point to the importance of coalition politics, which drives the extent to which development policy is politicized, and whether it is affected by national interests. In Denmark, coalition formation processes 'tipped' into a wholesale change – a policy paradigm shift – whereas coalition formation in the other countries so far has worked to preserve the existing paradigm. It is quite interesting how small a shift in majority is needed. When political coalitions and alignments shift, this seems to have an immediate effect on development policy, although the effect on actual implementation will take longer. This speaks for a 'powering' understanding of foreign aid policy formation along the lines of Wood (2015) who (as mentioned in section 2) drew our attention to the importance of politicization rather than development policy resulting from a process of social learning within the ministry, as Hall (1993) would have it. What does result from social learning is perhaps to a larger extent the choice of policy instruments, where, for instance, the move toward more earmarked funding to multilateral organizations (the so-called multi-bi) seems to be a general trend and based on learning within aid agencies and exchanges about best practice with other aid agencies.

Are the trends we see, most strongly in Denmark, but to some extent in all the Nordics, an expression of a more general shift in development policy away from traditional development aid? This could perhaps be the case. New global challenges coupled with increased links to domestic interests may further erode poverty reduction as a main priority, as can be seen in other countries too, most significantly in the UK (Worley, 2020). This finding calls for a broader discussion of the kind of development aid that is considered appropriate for the twenty-first century.

### Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank the Finnish Development Policy Committee and Cultural Centre Hanaholmen for hosting the authors when we had a joint workshop in September 2021. We also thank the editors of Forum for Development studies and finally, Mia Woer for excellent research assistance.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

### Notes on contributors

**Anne Mette Kjær** (<https://pure.au.dk/portal/en/mkjaer@ps.au.dk>) is a Professor of Political Science at Aarhus University with a focus on the Politics of Development. AMK has published on themes of development and foreign aid, on policy reforms in agriculture, land and property rights, education and learning, and public sector reforms. Her latest publications include ‘Nomination violence in Uganda’s National Resistance Movement’ in *African Affairs* (2021); and ‘When ‘Pockets of effectiveness’ matter politically: Extractive industry regulation and taxation in Uganda and Tanzania’. *The Extractive Industries and Society*. Kjær co-authored the volume, ‘The Politics of African Industrial Policy’, Cambridge University Press, 2015. She is currently leading the research programme Political Settlements and Revenue Bargaining in Africa ([www.ps.au.dk/psrb](http://www.ps.au.dk/psrb)).

**Jan Pettersson** is the Manager Director of the Expert Group for Aid Studies, EBA ([www.eba.se](http://www.eba.se)). He holds a Phd in Economics from Stockholm University and has been a research fellow at Uppsala University and Stockholm University.

**Elling Tjønneland** is a political scientist and senior researcher at the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Norway. He has published several studies of development assistance and has led numerous reviews and evaluations of aid programmes and projects. He is currently directing a major research project comparing Chinese and Western development aid to Africa.

**Dr. Marikki Karhu** is currently the Secretary General of the Finnish Development Policy Committee. She serves also as an expert member of Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development. Karhu’s work draws as well on her experience as a researcher and educator at the Department of Political and Economic Studies (University of Helsinki), where she gained her Ph.D. in Development Studies (2013). Before her appointment to the Finnish Development Policy Committee, she worked as a researcher in the European Union research programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA).

**Jari Lanki** is a PhD student at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki. He has also taught for several years courses in Development Studies at the Helsinki Open University, including on development policy and aid. Lanki was one of the co-editors for the first Finnish-language textbook on Development Studies.

### References

Alesina, Alberto and David Dollar, 2000, ‘Who gives foreign aid to whom and why?’, *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 5, pp. 33–63.

- Arndt, Channing and Finn Tarp, 2017, 'Aid, environment and climate change', *Review of Development Economics*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 285–303.
- Babb, Sarah, 2013, 'The Washington consensus as transnational policy paradigm: Its origins, trajectory and likely successor', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 268–297. doi:10.1080/09692290.2011.64043.
- Bach, Christian Friis, Thorsten Borring Olesen, Sune Kaur-Pedersen and Jan Pedersen, 2008, *Idealer og realiteter. Dansk udviklingspolitik historie 1945–2005*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Bermeo, Sarah Blodgett, 2017, 'Aid allocation and targeted development in an increasingly connected world', *International Organization*, Vol. 71, pp. 735–766.
- Booth, David, 2011, 'Aid effectiveness: Bringing country ownership (and politics) back in', *ODI Working Paper 336*, London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Boschini, Anne and Anders Olofsgård, 2007, 'Foreign aid: An instrument for fighting communism?', *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 43, pp. 622–648.
- Burnside, Craig and David Dollar, 2000, 'Aid, policies, and growth', *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4, pp. 847–868.
- Cardwell, Ryall and Pascal L. Ghazalian, 2018, 'The effects of aid agency independence on bilateral aid allocation decisions', *World Development*, Vol. 106, pp. 136–148.
- Cassen, Robert, 1994, *Does Aid Work?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Committee for Foreign Affairs, 2014, Report UU2.
- Dietrich, Simone, 2021, *States, Markets, and Foreign Aid*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Donner, Simon D., Milind Kandlikar and Sophie Webber, 2016, 'Measuring and tracking the flow of climate change adaptation aid to the developing world', *Environmental Research Letters*, Vol. 11. doi:10.1088/1748-9326/11/5/054006.
- Doornbos, Martin, 2001, "'Good governance": The rise and decline of a policy metaphor?', *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 6, pp. 93–108.
- Elgstöm, Ole and Sarah Delputte, 2015, 'An end to Nordic exceptionalism? Europeanisation and Nordic development policies', *European Politics and Society*, doi:10.1080/23745118.2015.1075765.
- Eng, Sunniva, 2021, 'The Nordic model in international development aid', in Haldor Byrkeflot, Lars Mjøset, Mads Mordhorst and Klaus Petersen, eds, *The Making and Circulation of Nordic Models, Ideas and Images*, London: Routledge.
- Eng, Sunniva and Helge Pharo, 2008, 'Nordic cooperation in providing development aid', in Norbert Goetz and Hedi Hallgren, eds, *Regional Cooperation and International Organizations. The Nordic Model in Transnational Alignment*, London: Routledge.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer and Jesper Krogstrup, 2008, 'Immigration as a political issue in Denmark and Sweden', *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 47, pp. 610–634.
- Grindle, Merilee S., 2004, 'Good enough governance: Poverty reduction and reform in developing countries', *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 525–548.
- Guljarani, Nilima, 2020, *Post-merger Development Governance in the UK. A Preliminary Cross-national Investigation of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Donors*, London: ODI July. (Emerging analysis and ideas).
- Hall, Peter, 1993, 'Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: The case of economic policymaking in Britain', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 275–296.
- Heinrich, Tobias, Carla Marinez Machain and Jared Oestman, 2017, 'Does counterterrorism militarize foreign aid? Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 527–541.

- Karhu, Marikki and Jari Lanki, [this issue](#).
- Kayser, Mark E. and Jochen Rehmert, 2021, 'Coalition prospects and policy change: An application to the Environment', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 219–246.
- Kjær, Anne Mette, 2004, *Governance*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Kjær, Anne Mette, [this issue](#).
- Knoll, A and A Sherriff, 2017, *Making Waves, EBA-report 2017:01*, Sweden: Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA).
- Lancaster, Carol, 2007, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- MFA, 2022, 'Redegørelse for Udviklingen i udviklingssamarbejdet' 2022, April. Copenhagen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Ngok, King-Lun and Genghua Huang, 2014, 'Policy paradigm shift and the changing role of the state: The development of social policy in China since 2003', *Social Policy & Society*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 251–261.
- Norad, 2021, *Bistandens bidrag til å redusere klimagassutslipp: Løsninger for mennesker, klima og natur*, Oslo (Bistand mot 2030).
- Odén, Bertil, 2011, *The Africa Policies of the Nordic Countries and the Erosion of the Nordic aid Model. A Comparative Study*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. (Discussion Paper 55).
- OECD, 2005, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/9789264098084-en.
- OECD, 2009, *Managing Aid: Practices of DAC Member Countries*, Paris: OECD. ([www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/managingaidpracticesofdacmembercountries.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/managingaidpracticesofdacmembercountries.htm)).
- OECD, 2017, *Finland. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 2018, *Revised DAC Recommendation on Untying ODA*, DCD/DAC(2018)33/FINAL).
- OECD, 2019a, *Sweden. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 2019b, *Norway. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 2021, *Denmark. Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Peer Review*, Paris: OECD.
- Olesen, Thorsten Borring, Helge Ø. Pharo and Kristian Paaskesen, eds. 2013, *Saints and Sinners. Official Development Aid and its Dynamics in a Historical and Comparative Perspective*, Oslo: Akademika Publishing.
- Pettersson, Jan, [this issue](#).
- Puyvallée, Antoine de Bengy and Kristian Bjørkdahl, 2021, Introduction. On the resilience of the Scandinavian brand, in Antoine de Bengy Puyvallée and Kristian Bjørkdahl, eds, *Dogooders at the End of Aid? Scandinavian Humanitarianism in the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge Core: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–13.
- Riddell, Roger C, 2007, *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Selbervik, Hilde and Knut Nygaard, 2006, 'Nordic exceptionalism in development assistance? Aid policies and the major donors: The Nordic countries', *CMI report No 8*, Bergen: Christen Michelsen Institute.
- Spratt, Stephen, Eilis Lawlor, Kris Prasada Rao and Mira Berger, 2019, 'Joint Nordic Organization Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund', Stockholm. Ekspertgruppen for Bistandanalys.
- Stokke, Olav, 2019, 'The drivers of development aid: What can they tell us about the future?' in Olav Stokke, ed, *International Development Assistance*. EADI Global development book series. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-06219-4\_10.

Tjønneland, Elling, [this issue](#).

UNFCCC, 2015, The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, COP21, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris, 12 December 2015.

UNGA, 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, General Assembly resolution 70/1, adopted 25 September 2015.

WCED, 1987, Our Common Future. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), October 29 1987, Oxford University Press.

Wood, Matthew, 2015, 'Puzzling and powering in policy paradigm shifts: Politicization, depoliticization and social learning', *Critical Policy Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 12, pp. 2–21.

Wood, Bernard, Julia Betts, Florence Etta, Julian Gayfer, Dorte Kabell, Naomi Ngwira, Francisco Sagasti and Mallika Samaranayake, 2011, *The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration, Final Report*, Copenhagen: DIIS.

World Bank Document, 1992, *Governance and Development*, Washington, DC: World Bank.

Worley, William, 2020, 'Poverty Reduction missing from new UK Aid Strategy', 26 November. Poverty reduction missing from new UK aid strategy | Devex.