2007-07-10

Scandinavia After the Fall of the Kalmar Union: A Study in Scandinavian Relations, 1523-1536

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SCANDINAVIA AFTER THE FALL OF THE KALMAR UNION: A STUDY OF
SCANDINAVIAN RELATIONS, 1523-1536

By
Kenneth Steffensen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History
Brigham Young University
July 2007
of a thesis submitted by

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

SCANDINAVIA AFTER THE FALL OF THE KALMAR UNION: A STUDY OF
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As the Kalmar Union came to an end in 1523 the balance of control and power shifted in Scandinavia. Due to the tyranny of Christian II, Sweden rebelled and broke away under the leadership of Gustav Vasa while Norway remained in union with Denmark. Although Danes and Norwegians shared common traits and identifiers; including religion, language and cultural aspects, they had a stronger sense of identity to their own country rather to the union. Because of their political and economic influence in Norway prior to 1523, Danish nobles had increased Norwegian’s sense of being Norwegians rather then Danish.

Frederik I, who ruled from 1523 to 1533, did all in his power to increase his own and Denmark’s control of Norway in this period. In clear violation of his Norwegian Coronation Charter of 1524, Frederik placed prominent Danish nobles in central political and military positions in Norway. Frederik also by-passed the Norwegian National
Council in many matters that rightfully should have been handled by the council rather then the King. After Frederik I’s death in 1533 the Danish-Norwegian throne remained vacant until 1536. Within this interregnum a civil war broke out in Denmark, followed by the Count’s War, instigated by the Hanseatic town of Lübeck, which sought to place Christian II back on the throne. This war, which ended in 1536, brought an end to Lübeck’s Baltic dominion and placed Christian III, son of Frederik I, as king of Denmark-Norway. Once in power, Christian III obliterated the Norwegian Council, thus removing Norway’s political influence in the union permanently.

Although Sweden officially broke away, it maintained a diplomatic relations with Denmark-Norway. In fact, Gustav Vasa made efforts to strengthen their diplomatic during Frederik I’s reign. The outbreak of the Count’s War in 1534 rallied the former members of the Kalmar Union to cooperate militarily. Together they defeated Lübeck and secured a peaceful relationship between Sweden and Denmark-Norway which lasted until 1563.
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The balance of power and control shifted in Scandinavia as the Kalmar Union, which had joined Denmark, Norway and Sweden together under one king since 1397, crumbled in 1523. As the union fell apart, Sweden broke free and crowned a new king. Norway, however, remained united with Denmark under the Danish king. As the Kalmar Union ended, then, so did 126 years of a unified Scandinavia. Competition and aggression in the race for interests in Baltic trade also flavored the early sixteenth century. The Hanseatic town of Lübeck flexed its muscles during this period and instigated the Count’s War, which lasted from 1534 to 1536. The Protestant Reformation also emerged in this era as a major influence. Although historians and other scholars have discovered a great deal of information about Scandinavia in the early sixteenth century, there are gaps in certain areas of history. For instance, there is a lack of historical insight into the relationships between these three kingdoms after the fall of the Kalmar Union. This does not mean that historians have never written about this topic, but it is possible, through the source material available, to take a closer look at issues that prevailed within this period in history.

This thesis, then, will present a more detailed portrait of the sources than presently available. One central argument is that Denmark, through the actions of Frederik I, overpowered Norway by placing prominent Danes in politically and militarily significant positions. By doing so, Frederik pushed aside the Norwegian council, clearly violating the promises he had made in his Norwegian charter. The discussion of the role
of Frederik’s men will also provide better insight into how these men used their positions to further their own interests and how their actions alienated them from their Norwegian subjects, partly because they were Danish rather than Norwegian. Overall the discussion of Denmark and Norway will demonstrate that Frederik I’s efforts to undermine Norwegian rights succeeded and were completed by his son, Christian III, who eliminated Norway’s political influence. This thesis will, in as much detail as possible, show how Denmark managed to remove Norway’s political influence within a thirteen year period.

The relationship between Denmark and Sweden, bitter enemies in the 1520s, will also be discussed. Regarding this relationship, this thesis will argue that the leaders of these former enemies, Christian III and Gustav Vasa, developed a closer relationship during the 1530s, due much to their mutual and cordial cooperation and assistance in the days of the Count’s War. This cooperation, which did result in victory over Lübeck, more importantly established peace between the two countries, which lasted until new leadership emerged in the 1560s. By this time, Denmark and Norway had made the necessary changes to complete the Protestant Reformation.

Before entering into the main section of the thesis, it is necessary to take a look at what other historians have written and contributed concerning Scandinavia in the period in question.

**Historiography**

As the majority of this thesis will discuss the relationship between Denmark and Norway, this historiography will first present a discussion of works that have contributed to this study. Works that deal with the history of Sweden and Gustav Vasa will follow.
Caspar Paludan-Müller’s *Grevens Feide* constitutes the only major work dedicated solely to the Count’s War and surrounding events. *Grevens Feide* was originally published in Copenhagen in 1853 and 1854 and then reissued in 1971 and is only available in Danish. This two-volume, nine hundred page work, is impressive in its scope because of its in-depth coverage of the many facets of the Count’s War. This work is essential for anyone with an interest in researching the Count’s War; at least for those competent in older Danish. In volume one, Paludan-Müller portrayed the buildup before the war with a strong focus on Denmark and Lübeck.¹ He wrote about the Baltic struggle between Lübeck and the Netherlands, the death of Frederik I and the political unrest that followed. This volume also included a discussion of Gustav Vasa’s relationship to Lübeck prior to the Count’s War. Perhaps most important is his treatment of the relationship between Denmark and Sweden. He offered insight into the nature of the agreement of assistance in case of foreign threats made in 1524, and included details regarding the number of ships and soldiers involved, along with details on how military aid should be financed.²

The second volume of *Grevens Feide* contained an account of the last phase of the Count’s War, including the siege of Copenhagen, 1535-1536.³ This volume also discussed Norway during the reign of Frederik I and the Count’s War. He argued that the most significant influence of the events surrounding the Count’s War was that Norway

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² Ibid., 180-181.

lost influence and became more subjugated to Denmark. However, he never included any specific details of how Fredrik dealt with Norway and how he often bypassed the Norwegian council. Paludan-Müller discussed the role of Frederik I’s Danish men in Norway, including Vincent Lunge, Henrik Krummedige, and Esge Bille. He wrote that because Frederik I, who never personally traveled to Norway, had so many Danish men in Norway he ensured that the two kingdoms remained united after his death in 1533. He did include some coverage about the dealings of these Danes in Norway, including Vincent Lunge’s important political position and his many dealings with Olaf Engelbrektsson, Archbishop in Trondheim. He also mentioned the feud between Vincent Lunge and Henrik Krummedige. However, Paludan-Müller failed to provide a detailed account of their dealings in Norway and did not consider how their influence and behavior might have affected Norwegian attitudes towards the Danish presence.

The author dealt with the political situation in Denmark and Norway after Frederik’s Death in 1533 and how the Norwegian council never managed to travel to Copenhagen to join its Danish counterpart in electing a new king. In Norway, some members of the council, including Danish nobleman Vincent Lunge, declared Duke Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, son of Fredrik I, as king. The remainder of the council later joined in this decision, including Olaf Engelbrektsson. Paludan-Müller also wrote

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4 Ibid., 2-3.
5 Ibid., 2, 8.
6 Ibid., 31-33.
7 Ibid., 63-65, 75.
about the 1536 revolt in Trondheim under the leadership of Engelbrektsson.\textsuperscript{8} Despite its age, \textit{Grevens Feide} stands as an important work in regard to the Count’s War and surrounding issues in Scandinavia and the Baltic. Although Paludan-Müller dedicated some space to discussing the relationship between Denmark and Norway, his major focus was on the many players and elements of the Count’s War. Despite their age, these volumes have been valuable to this thesis.

In 1968-69, Erling Ladewig Petersen featured an article in the Danish \textit{Historisk Tidsskrift} about the relationship between Denmark and Norway between 1523 and 1533.\textsuperscript{9} Petersen offered a thorough background of the last days of Christian II’s reign before he actually got into his discussion about Danish nobleman Henrik Krummedige and Danish-Norwegian relations, between 1523 and 1533. In fact, Petersen spent the first half of his article dealing with other issues rather than with the actual topic of the article. He dedicated a vast amount of space to discussing dealings in Denmark and Sweden under Christian II. As a whole Petersen’s article was important because few others had addressed similar issues in the past, especially his treatment of Krummedige and his actions in Norway. His main argument was that the economic interests of Danish nobles like Krummedige, who owned a significant amount of land in Norway, contributed to the incorporation of Norway in 1536. Petersen wrote about how Krummedige and other Danes, like Vincent Lunge and Esge Bille, used their influence in Norway to further

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 258-263.

personal economic interests through business and trade.\textsuperscript{10} He also wrote about Krummedige’s feud with Vincent Lunge and his efforts to make Frederik I help restore his Norwegian estates.\textsuperscript{11} Although Petersen’s article offered many useful insights, it certainly contributed to this thesis by suggesting that Danish nobles in this period were more interested in their financial positions rather then political issues of the time.

In 1980, Danish historians Kai Hørby and Mikael Venge contributed their insights to a multivolume work on Danish history.\textsuperscript{12} Their volume covered the period from 1340 to 1648 and provided insight into the nature of the Scandinavia union from its beginnings. One significant contribution of Hørby and Venge were their detailed historiographies and discussion of available literature in various fields of historical study. For example, they dedicated a significant section to the discussion of historian’s treatments of Christian II and throughout the text they tied in what other historians had contributed on various topics, adding their own assessments. Their overall argument, in regards to Denmark and Norway, was that the central issue for Denmark under Frederik I and after his death in 1533 was to keep a firm control over Norway. Frederik managed to do this by placing Danes in charge of Norway’s fortresses, which violated his Norwegian charter.\textsuperscript{13} Although they discussed Frederik’s policies, they failed to offer any details surrounding his violation of the charter when he placed Danes in charge of the Norwegian fortresses.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 25-41.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 51-61.

\textsuperscript{12} Kai Hørby and Mikael Venge, \textit{Danmarks Historie}, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1980).

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 301-303.
Because of their brief and casual treatment of this topic there is definitely room to portray this more carefully.

In 1987, Sverre Bagge and Knut Mykland published a work about the history of Norway during the union with Denmark.\textsuperscript{14} This book looked at the historical setting around the time prior to the Kalmar Union and continues until Norway split with Denmark in 1814. Their main emphasis was to deal with internal developments within Norway in this period and to determine Norway’s place in the state system. They explained how Norway could not afford to have its own king in the 1390s and how a union king was a better alternative.\textsuperscript{15} As a part of the discussion of the Kalmar Union, these two authors portrayed the relatively weak position of the Norwegian nobility and how Norway’s lack of influence stemmed from this and also from the country’s lack of a strong economy.\textsuperscript{16}

Bagge and Mykland also focused on the Norwegian society of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, including the role of farming and fishing. An important part of their discussion was the Norwegian rebellions of the time, including the rebellion of Knut Alvsson in 1501-1502, where they made an important contribution. They also wrote about how Christian II levied heavy taxes on the Norwegians and how he helped to tighten the Danish grip on Norway.\textsuperscript{17} They had, however, a considerably shorter coverage


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 16-17, 33-36.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 72-76
of Frederik I’s reign and the Count’s War. This discussion revolved around Olaf Engelbrektsson’s influence in Norway and how he supported Christian II when he returned to Norway in 1531, and they covered the Count’s War in a few short paragraphs. Bagge and Mykland included no discussion of the influence of Danish nobles in Norway at the time. They did, however, deal with Christian III’s efforts to reduce Norway to a province in his charter of 1536. According to these authors, Christian III secured the downfall of Norway’s political influence through what they saw as something close to a coup. Overall, the work of Bagge and Mykland stands as an important work on the history of Norway in the days of the Danish union. Their work was impressive because of its broad insight into the many aspects that affected Norway and Denmark’s union from 1380 to 1814.

In 1989, Alex Wittendorf contributed a volume dedicated to the entire sixteenth century as a part of another multi-volume work on Denmark’s history. His overarching argument in this volume was that the two most important events of the sixteenth century were the emergence of the Reformation and Humanism which, in the long run, came to have enormous consequences in Danish society. Overall the author gave a vivid account of Danish society in the sixteenth century. He also discussed events surrounding the Count’s War. Wittendorf argued that the civil war that began in Denmark just prior to the

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18 Ibid., 78.

19 Ibid., 80.

20 Alex Wittendorf, *Danmarks Historie*, vol. 7 (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1989).

21 Ibid., 12-14.
Count’s War, started because Danish bishops refused to choose a king in 1533.\textsuperscript{22} In this volume, Wittendorf presented one of the most detailed accounts of the Count’s War found in a work of this kind. He covered the major players and events of the war and included a discussion of how Christian III completed Denmark’s process of religious reform. This is where he made his most significant assessments because few other works had covered this so carefully. His account focused solely on Denmark and Lübeck, and was devoid of any discussion regarding the relationship between Denmark and Norway during the sixteenth century. Despite this, Wittendorf’s volume represents an important contribution to the study of Denmark in the sixteenth century.

Historian Øystein Rian has written a considerable amount on Norway’s history of the sixteenth century. In 1995, he contributed to a multivolume work on the history of Norway.\textsuperscript{23} Rian’s main arguments are that Norway was too weak and disconnected to avoid the power and influence of the Danish monarchy.\textsuperscript{24} In his book, Rian confronted issues surrounding Danish behavior in Norway. For instance, he mentioned how Hans Mule, a Danish noble, pillaged and killed people in order to keep his position there. He also wrote about some of the activities of Vincent Lunge and Henrik Krummedige, especially the struggle over land holdings between these two Danes. Rian hints that Frederik I often made decisions that affected Norway without consulting the Norwegian

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 177.


\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 11.
council and tried to tighten control by sending Danish nobles to Norway.\textsuperscript{25} He failed, however, to discuss possible outcomes and effects of Danish behavior in Norway. Christian II’s attack on Norway, along with how Archbishop Engelbrektsson and also some farmers pledged their support to him, receives mention. Another issue that Rian focuses on is Olaf Engelbrektsson and the revolt in Trondheim in 1536 and Christian III’s response by sending soldiers to deal with this threat.\textsuperscript{26} He also writes about Christian’s Norwegian charter, which denounced the influence of Norway’s council. Rian’s coverage offers a relatively complete portrait of conditions in Norway under Frederik I and the days of the Count’s War. However, his treatment of Frederik’s policies regarding Norway lacks detail and never mentions the role of other Danes like Esge Bille and issues surrounding Norway’s fortresses.

Rian made another contribution to the study of Scandinavia’s history in 1997, this time along with Danish historian Esben Albrechtsen. Together they wrote a two-volume work on Denmark and Norway from 1380 to 1814. In fact, this work constitutes the only work ever produced on this era of history as a cooperation between Danish and Norwegian historians. The first volume penned by Esben Albrechtsen covers the period between 1380 and 1536.\textsuperscript{27} His main argument concerning Denmark-Norway in the 1520-30s was that the actions of Denmark made Norway’s position as an equal partner in the

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 15-19.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 31-33.

\textsuperscript{27} Esben Albrechtsen, \textit{Danmark-Norge 1380-1814}, vol. 1: \textit{fællesskabet bliver til: 1380-1536} (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997).
union practically illusionary. Albrectsen wrote that Frederik I’s Norwegian charter was unique because it stood separated from the Danish. The reason for this was that the Norwegian council waited to make a decision on the question of Frederik’s position as the next monarch, because its members wanted to make sure that Norway would remain in control of its fortresses in Bergen and Oslo. He argued that Norway’s independence at the time required that the Norwegian council should run the country along with the king and that members of the council should be Norwegian.

In order to secure his position as the new king of Denmark-Norway, Frederik sent Henrik Krummedige and Vincent Lunge to Norway and these two Danes succeeded in persuading the Norwegian council to support Frederik. Lunge, who quickly gained a prominent political position in Norway, turned against Krummedige and persuaded the council to banish him from the country. Albrectsen argued that Lunge made a political mistake when he chose to support the Swedish rebel called daljunkeren. In violation of his charter, Frederik sent additional Danes to Norway, including Mogens Gyldenstjerne and Esge Bille, and put them in charge of the fortresses. Albrectsen’s coverage of the Count’s War was brief, offering a short summary of events, which includes Engelbrekstsson’s revolt. Although Albrectsen dealt with many central issues of the time, he failed to offer a close look at Frederik’s dealings with Norway and leaves out many details regarding the relationship between Denmark and Norway at the time.

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28 Ibid., 305.
29 Ibid., 316.
30 Ibid., 309.
31 Ibid., 318-320.
Rian’s volume continued Albrechtsen’s discussion by beginning with the coming of Christian III and his charter of 1536, which dissolved the Norwegian council and made Norway a province of Denmark. Rian’s central argument was that the main reason behind the charter’s nature had to do with the fact that the Norwegian council had failed to live up to its commitments, Olaf Engelbrektsson being the main player in this.\(^{32}\) Rian argued that although Norway lost its place as a separate kingdom in the charter, Denmark kept it quiet from the Norwegians and in official documents dealing with other countries, Norway still appeared as a separate kingdom. Christian III claimed that he had the right to inherit Norway under his rule and because the Danes had named him king of Denmark he automatically also served as the king of Norway.\(^{33}\)

In 2004, Knud J.V. Jespersen, published his book titled *A history of Denmark*, which was an introductory guide to Danish history.\(^{34}\) The principle theme of his book was to unveil how Denmark slowly disintegrated and reduced from what it was in 1500 until its present state. Jespersen’s overall argument was that modern day Denmark was shaped by five hundred years of losing territories, internal upheavals, wars, new production methods and more modern way of thinking. As an introductionary text, this book offered useful insights into many elements in Denmark’s history, including the role of the Danish Monarchs and the development of absolutism under Frederik III in the


\(^{33}\) Ibid., 23.

Jespersen portrayed the Danish revolution of March 1848 and the development of the Danish welfare state. He also effectively presented the development of the Danish economy, comparing the conditions of the old versus the new. His treatments of events in interest for this thesis, however, were lacking. Although he offered a useful insight into the Kalmar Union and struggle for trade domination in the Baltic, he ignored to mention the Count’s War or anything about Scandinavian relations in the early sixteenth century.

Since this thesis will include a discussion on the relationship between Denmark and Sweden after the fall of the Kalmar Union, it is also necessary to consider some works that deal with this subject. In his book, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, published in 1968, Michael Roberts dealt with the history of Gustav Vasa and the Swedish kings that followed after him. The overall theme of Roberts’s work was the Swedish Reformation and the purpose to provide an introduction to this topic. Roberts’s main argument revolved around the Swedish Reformation, but he still offered a great deal about Gustav Vasa’s overall achievements, including how he transformed Sweden from a vanquished state to be a respectable European power. He pointed out that Vasa watched over his subjects tirelessly, discerning their strengths and weaknesses, and that the “trader and the husbandman, no less then the bishop and the bailiff, were made to feel at very instant that Sweden had now a king who was sovereign indeed.”

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35 Ibid., 40-44.


37 Ibid., 187.
made a significant contribution regarding Eric XIV, Johan III and Karl IX and how the Reformation progressed in Sweden until its completion in 1611. As the only English book dealing with these issues in such grace and detail, Roberts’s book was and remains an important contribution to this field of study.

In addition to this, Roberts described Gustav Vasa’s relationship with Lübeck, how the Hansa town helped him to power and how Vasa struggled to pay his financial obligations. With regard to the relationship between Vasa and Fredrik I, Roberts did not include much information but mentioned how the two countries worked together to defeat Christian II once he arrived in Norway in 1531. His treatment of Danish and Swedish relations during the Count’s War is rather short. He argued that Denmark and Sweden cooperated during this time because they had to defend themselves against Lübeck and that Vasa and Christian III had a “reasonably harmonious” relationship. He also wrote how Vasa, who had built an efficient navy, helped the Danes, along with the Prussians, to defeat Lübeck’s naval fleet in 1535. Since Roberts’s main focus was the Reformation, it is not surprising that he did not include a significant discussion of Vasa’s relationship with Denmark at the time. From Roberts’s publication in the 1960s we turn the attention to a more resent work by Michael Linton, who published a book on the history of Sweden in 1994. This work is very different from Roberts’s book because it is a broad survey of Sweden’s history from 1523 to modern times. As a sweeping survey of Swedish history

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38 Ibid., 95-96.

39 Ibid., 99-100.

40 Ibid., 100.

41 Michael Linton, Sveriges Historie (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 1994).
this book covers a great variety of issues. It appears to be a sort of handbook of Swedish history and each chapter stands alone, with no central theme binding it all together. The author apparently wrote this book to meet the needs for a fresh look at the history of Sweden through the ages, and focused strongly on modern history. In the first chapter, which covers the period in question for this thesis, Linton dedicated a fair amount of space discussing the Stockholm Bloodbath and Gustav Vasa’s rebellion against Christian II. He wrote that Vasa strengthened his position of power by being deceitful and that he was very suspicious and brutal, even towards old friends.\footnote{Ibid., 17.} Linton also portrays Vasa’s relationship to Lübeck before and after his coronation. He wrote about various internal rebellions that Vasa had to deal with, especially the uprising in 1532, where Gustav executed its instigators. In connection to the Count’s War and Sweden’s relationship with Sweden, Linton managed to cover it all in five sentences. He wrote that Vasa joined Denmark against Lübeck, which resulted in an improvement in the relationship between the two countries.\footnote{Ibid., 20.} Linton’s book, although it brushes over many details in the sixteenth century, made a useful contribution regarding the person of Gustav Vasa, somewhat in contrast to the assessments of Michale Roberts.

Like Linton, Lars-Olof Larssons’s book on the history of Sweden during the reign of Gustav Vasa provided a different perspective then Roberts.\footnote{Lars-Olof Larsson, \textit{Gustav Vasa: Landsfader eller Tyrann}? (Stockholm: Prisma, 2002).} Since Larsson’s focus was solely on the Vasa period, he could provide far more detail than Linton. Larsson’s purpose for writing this book was to offer a more critical view of Gustav Vasa in
comparison to what traditional historians had done. His overall argument was that although Vasa helped to build the Swedish nation, he was also a usurper.\textsuperscript{45} Larsson’s book portrayed in detail Vasa’s path to the Swedish throne and how he had to summon the aid of Lübeck in order to succeed in his endeavors. He suggested that Vasa attempted to create a union with Lübeck to assist his cause, but that the town turned this proposal down.\textsuperscript{46} Larsson argued that once Vasa had become king of Sweden in 1523, he practiced political principles similar to those found in Machiavelli’s \textit{The Prince}.\textsuperscript{47} One example that Larsson used was how Vasa brutally handled the rebellion of 1542. About Swedish and Danish relations, Larsson explained how the death of Frederik I made the political situation in Denmark rather complicated and that civil war and aggression from Lübeck followed. Larsson argued that since Gustav and Christian III were brothers-in-law, it became obvious that he helped Denmark militarily at the time.\textsuperscript{48} He failed to include any other information or detail about Sweden’s relationship with Denmark during the Count’s War. Larsson’s book, however, served as a new and fresh look at the history of Sweden in the days of Gustav Vasa.

The scholarly coverage of Scandinavian relations following the fall of the Kalmar Union could be more focused. The amount of primary documents available for this period allows a more detailed account of the topic. Although the arguments and conclusions of this thesis might be similar to those of other scholars of the field, it will add a richer and

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 362.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 201.
more in-depth look at how the Scandinavian kingdoms coexisted in the years following the end of the union. The majority of this thesis will deal with the relationship between Denmark and Norway under Frederik I and until the end of the Count’s War, when Christian III became the new king of the union. Issues between Denmark and Sweden will focus mainly on their cooperation and relationship surrounding the Count’s War. The process of the Reformation in Scandinavia will also be covered.

Sources

There are a vast amount of Scandinavian documents available from the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Thankfully, a great number of primary sources from the sixteenth century help to shed light on a variety of subjects of the time. One of the most significant collections of documents is found in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, the flagship of Norwegian sources. This collection originated at the National Archive in Oslo, Norway, and consists of twenty-two volumes, containing roughly about 19,000 documents and letters, spanning from 1197 to the late sixteenth century. Although the majority of the documents are Norwegian, this collection also contains a large number of documents from Denmark and Sweden. Thanks to a document project at the University of Oslo, these documents are available on-line. This collection has been essential to this thesis as it has provided sources that deal with issues regarding Danish involvement in Norway and Norwegian interaction with Danish nobles. Many of the letters used in this thesis were written by Fredrik I, various Danish nobles, the Norwegian council, and some by members of the Norwegian public. These letters have made it possible to create a clearer and more detailed picture of Frederik I’s dealings with Norway, including how he violated the Norwegian charter by placing Danes in possession of the fortresses.
Diplomatarium Norwegicum also provides insight into dealings that Danish nobles had in Norway along with some examples of Norwegian response. Letters by Norwegians such as Olaf Engelbrektsson shed light on issues in Norway and his attempts to dampen Danish influence.

Another important collection of sources are found in a work edited by Paludan-Müller.49 This two-volume work contains hundreds of letters from a great variety of key players in the Count’s War and surrounding events. Most useful to this thesis are the many letters by Gustav Vasa, Christian III, and the Danish council which help portray the nature of Danish and Swedish relations after the fall of the Kalmar Union, including their mutual assistance against Lübeck during the Count’s War. Through analysis of these and other sources, this thesis will present a detailed account of Scandinavia relations after the fall of the Kalmar Union. The aim has been to portray events as detailed as the sources allow, in order to gain a better understanding of how this region in Northern Europe dealt with significant change in the beginning phase of the Early Modern period. This area of study is also important because it gives examples of how kings and nobles asserted their power in order to maintain and even expand their level of influence. Another significant contribution of this period was how Sweden and Denmark continued to maintain diplomatic relationship after 1523 and strengthened their friendship through their cooperation during the Count’s War.

Chapter I: Cultural, Religious, and Lingual variation in Denmark-Norway and Danish noble influence in Norway before 1523.

Ever since Denmark and Norway first united under a common monarch in 1380, Denmark acted as the dominating partner in the relationship. This is perhaps unsurprising based on the fact that Norway only had about 200,000 inhabitants at the time and Denmark had about three times as many. Denmark also had a stronger economy than Norway. The geography of Scandinavia also dictated that any monarch in control of this region, with the center in Denmark, had to rely on others to help rule such a vast area. Scandinavian geography was considerably different in the 1520-30s than today. Danish-Norwegian boundaries extended significantly farther into present-day Sweden, and included areas such as Bohuslän, Jämtland, Härjedalen, Bornholm, and Skåne. Sweden, on the other hand, included most of today’s Finland.

Another important issue was the relatively low number of nobles in Norway by the sixteenth century. The Black Death, which arrived in Norway in 1349, ravaged the country, possibly killing as much as fifty percent of the population. This, along with subsequent outbreaks of plague in 1359-60, 1370, 1391, 1450s and 1500, severely reduced Norway’s nobility. Although the plague killed many people in Denmark and Sweden, the population rebounded faster there than in Norway because

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50 Rian, Norges Historie, vol. 5, 12.
of different settlement structures. The result was a more numerous and stronger nobility in Denmark and Sweden in comparison with Norway.

It appears that Norwegians made distinctions between themselves and the Danes in the sixteenth century and perhaps even earlier. Although there are many reasons for this, it is likely the Danish behavior in Norway might have assisted in widening the gap between them. This comes from the fact that the most prominent Danes in Norway between 1523 and 1536, Hans Mule, Vincent Lunge, Esge Bille, and Henrik Krummedige, who all used their positions to further their own interests, occasionally, angered Norwegians, who in turn viewed them as outsiders.

Scandinavia had had a long tradition of chieftains, overlords, and kings as local rulers. Although there must have been certain inauguration rituals, little is known about them prior to the twelfth century. The first Scandinavian coronation occurred around 1163. Denmark and Norway became united from the time leading up to the Kalmar Union in the late fourteenth century and remained unified until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814. The driving force behind the Kalmar Union, which also included Sweden until 1523, was Queen Margrethe, who became the ruler in 1387. She managed to place her relative, Erik of Pomerania, on the throne the following year. The Kalmar Union, however, was established at a meeting at Kalmar, Sweden, in 1397, and out of a total of


52 Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 86-90. This was the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson.

sixty-seven representatives from the three countries, only twelve were Norwegians.\textsuperscript{54} As a composite state, meaning that more than one country was under the sovereignty of one ruler, the Kalmar Union was not unique in early modern Europe. The Kalmar Union shared similar traits with the Spanish Habsburg monarchy and that of England and Ireland because the states in the union were separated from each other either by land or sea.\textsuperscript{55}

Several reasons explain why the Kalmar Union came to be. It has been suggested that it came about partly to deal with the increasing economic influence of the Hanseatic League and political domination of Germans.\textsuperscript{56} This issue served as a valid concern at the time and was heavily reinforced in the first half of the sixteenth century, due to aggressive behavior on behalf of Lübeck, the German center of the Hans. Under the leadership of Jürgen Wullenwever, Lübeck took advantage of the succession crisis that followed the death of Frederik I, and instigated the Count’s War in 1534, which had significant impact on the region after its end in 1536. Another possible reason for the Kalmar Union might have come from the need to end wars and conflicts within the Nordic kingdoms.\textsuperscript{57} A financial crisis in Scandinavia may also be a possible reason for the establishment of the union.\textsuperscript{58} The Kalmar Union managed to establish peace in

\textsuperscript{54} Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norge i Dansketiden}, 15.


\textsuperscript{56} Byron J. Nordstrom, \textit{Scandinavia since 1500} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 22.

\textsuperscript{57} Olesen, \textit{Middelalderens Danmark}, 42.

\textsuperscript{58} Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norge i Dansketiden}, 60.
Scandinavia for some time, but ended in 1523 after a successful Swedish attempt to break away. Sweden’s rebellion against the union arose primarily because of the tyrannic rule of Christian II. This illustrates another common trait of composite states; the struggle to survive.\textsuperscript{59} Despite Scandinavia’s similarities in religion, language and customs, which is believed to have made it easier for unions to survive, the Kalmar Union proved that such similarities sometimes failed to secure success. However, it is significant to point out that although Sweden withdrew from the union under the leadership of Gustav Vasa, it maintained a close diplomatic relationship with Denmark-Norway during the Count’s War which helped to establish peace within Scandinavia until 1563.

While in power, Margrete established an extensive centralized system of royal control within the union, and fulfilled her political aim to weaken the councils, which particularly affected the role and authority of the Norwegian Council.\textsuperscript{60} During the Kalmar Union the separate national councils consisted of the most prominent members of society, including the clergy. The number of council members in Norway fluctuated between twenty and forty individuals and in Denmark between thirty and forty.\textsuperscript{61} The Norwegian council, however, failed to play an important political role until 1437, only to completely lose its authority after Christian III ascended the throne in 1536.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies,” 51.

\textsuperscript{60} Ivar Lindbeck and Øyvind Stenersen, A History of Norway, trans. Jean Aase (Oslo: Grøndahl Dreyer, 1999), 41.

\textsuperscript{61} Albrectsen, Danmark-Norge, vol. 1, 123.

\textsuperscript{62} Lindbeck and Stenersen, A History of Norway, 47.
Norwegian versus Danish

Scandinavians had shared a common culture, religion, and language since the day of the Vikings. One reason for this was the fact that the Vikings were situated in the scarcely populated area farthest north in Europe. Since their territories were surrounded by water, they maintained a link by seaborne traffic, the ship serving as a significant factor in this. Because of this heritage of a shared culture and also due to later political unions, Denmark and Norway still shared similarities in many respects in the first half of the sixteenth century. Such similarities also included Sweden, but since it had very few direct dealings with Norway during the 1520-30s, the focus here will be on Denmark and Norway.

Although it is impossible to use the modern term ‘nationalism’ for this period, it has been suggested that people in Scandinavia did have a sense of ‘national identity’. Other Europeans also identified with their own countries during the sixteenth century. England and Castile are good examples of this as their distinctive identities were significantly sharpened due to religious upheavals, which resulted in

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63 Helle, ed., Cambridge History of Scandinavia, 121-122.

64 Rian, Danmark-Norge, vol. 2, 26. Nationalism came to play a significant role in Norway during the nineteenth century. In the 1850s, a Norwegian by the name of Ivar Aasen traveled to various locations in Norway, especially on the west coast, and created a ‘New Norwegian’ language based upon Norwegian dialects. The idea was to create a more ‘pure’ Norwegian language that was less Danish. This language is still in use today and because of it Norway has two official languages; Bokmål, which is closer to Danish, and Nynorsk, created by Aasen. Although these languages are similar, the grammar and wording can be significantly different. The Norwegian school system aims to teach all students to master both Bokmål and Nynorsk, and instruction is given on each language in separate classes. Another fruit of nationalism in Norway came from Asbjørnsen and Moe, two Norwegians who published Norwegian fairy tales, many of them based on the purely Norwegian character of Espen Askeladden. The music of Edvard Grieg, which belongs to the Late Romantic Period, is also viewed as having boosted Norwegian nationalism during the nineteenth-century. Many Norwegians today have a connection to his music because of its ‘Norwegianness’.
an aggressive sense of their place in God’s design.\textsuperscript{65} Religion was also an issue that affected Scandinavia at the time.

A religious divide existed between Denmark and Norway in the early sixteenth century, which helped to widen the gap between Danes and Norwegians. Even though Norway had had little exposure to Lutheranism by 1536, Denmark began the process of reform under Christian II, who invited reformers to come to Denmark and make recommendations for changes within the church.\textsuperscript{66} When Frederik I emerged as king of Denmark-Norway in 1523, he promised in his Coronation Charter that:

\begin{quote}
We shall never permit any heretic Lutheran disciples or others to preach or teach, in secret or in public, against the heavenly God, the faith of the holy church, or the Holy Father, the pope, and the Church of Rome. And wherever such are found in our kingdom…they should be punished by forfeiting life and property.\textsuperscript{67}
\end{quote}

Despite the fact that the charter clearly stated that Lutheran or any other teachings challenging the pope and the Catholic Church would be banned, even punishable by death, Frederik personally made several changes which actually severed the Danish Church from Rome. He allowed his son, Duke Christian, to marry a Lutheran princess and, in 1525, dissolved the Catholic Church in Schleswig-Holstein and introduced Lutheran services.\textsuperscript{68} In 1526, Frederik also let Christian establish the first Lutheran

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\textsuperscript{65} Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies,” 59.
\textsuperscript{68} Martin Schwarz Lausten, \textit{A Church History of Denmark} (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 92- 97.
\end{flushright}
school of theology in the Nordic countries.\textsuperscript{69} Frederik further decreed that the most significant officers in the Church no longer needed papal confirmation and the fee new bishops traditionally had paid, to the pope now went to the king instead.\textsuperscript{70}

In 1527 at the Diet of Odense, it was decided that Danes should enjoy “freedom of conscience. No one shall be at liberty to ask whether a man is Lutheran or Catholic…. The king extends his protection to the Lutherans, who hitherto have not enjoyed such full security and safe-conduct as the Catholics.”\textsuperscript{71} Frederik went on to directly violate the charter, by providing a letter of protection to Hans Tausen, the most significant Lutheran preacher in Denmark at the time.\textsuperscript{72}

Not all members of the Danish Council, many of them Catholic bishops, supported the Reformationists and the civil war which ensued after Frederik I’s death clearly showed forth divisions among the nobles. The lay population also got involved in the religious issue. This can be explained by the great number of commoners who greeted Count Christoffer with enthusiasm when he arrived in May 1534.\textsuperscript{73} The Count’s War provided Christian III with a way to make his claim to the throne, and in all reality, signified the last nail in the coffin for the Catholic Church in Denmark and also in

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{69} Lausten, \textit{Kirkens Historie i Danmark: Pavekirke, Kongekirke, Folkekirke} (Århus: Landsforeningen af Menighedsrådsmedlemmer, 1999), 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 97.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Ole Peter Grell, ed., \textit{The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalization of Reform} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} Lausten, \textit{A Church History of Denmark}, 107.
\end{itemize}
Norway. Christian was a very religious person who firmly believed in Luther’s gospel, and he has often been referred to as the ‘priest king’.\textsuperscript{74} When the Count’s War ended in 1536, he proceeded to make the official church in Denmark Lutheran. He arrested many of the bishops, dissolved monasteries, and confiscated Church lands.\textsuperscript{75} Some bishops, however, went over to Lutheranism and remained at their posts.\textsuperscript{76} The new Lutheran Church Ordinance was sent to Martin Luther in Wittenberg, who in turn informed Christian, in December 1536 that he approved of the changes made to the Danish Church.\textsuperscript{77} In 1537, Christian called in help from Wittenberg to complete the reform, and the new Danish Church became a pure State Church controlled by the monarchy.\textsuperscript{78}

By 1536-37, most Norwegians were still Catholics.\textsuperscript{79} Strong opposition to the Reformation existed among Norwegian ecclesiastical leaders. Engelbrektsson serves as an example of resistance towards Lutheran teachings in Norway. Bishop Hoskold of Stavanger asked Esge Bille to keep the “damned and infidel Lutheran” teachings out of the area.\textsuperscript{80} Christian III began making changes in the Norwegian church in 1537 and after

\textsuperscript{74} Lausten, \textit{Den Hellige Stad Wittenberg: Danmark og Lutherbyen Wittenberg i Reformationstiden} (Copenhagen: Forlaget Anis, 2002), 126.

\textsuperscript{75} Jespersen, \textit{A History of Denmark}, 88.


\textsuperscript{77} Lausten, \textit{Kirkens Historie i Danmark}, 37-39.

\textsuperscript{78} G. R. Elton, \textit{Reformation Europe 1517-1559}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 86.

\textsuperscript{79} Rian, \textit{Norges Historie}, vol. 5, 46.

several years both Denmark and Norway had fully embraced the Reformation, again united under the same religion.

Another significant identifier for Scandinavians was language which had been an element of common ground for centuries. Northern Germany and southern Scandinavia served as the cradle of Germanic, a language that was a distinct branch of Indo-European. Around AD 550-750, or the so-called ‘syncope period,’ Scandinavian language began to develop its own form of speech. 81 Although it is hard to determine a specific time when Danish and Norwegian (including Swedish) diverged, evidence suggests that regional differences in pronunciation and vocabulary existed already in the High Middle Ages. 82 In fact, it is believed that the linguistic unity of the North began to break up around year 800. It is possible that this change occurred due to vigorous Scandinavian contact with surrounding neighbors and the deviations which gradually separated east Scandinavia, which consisted of Denmark, southern Sweden and certain areas of Norway, from west Scandinavia which would have been most of Norway. 83

The relatively few literate individuals in the early sixteenth century, nobles and members of the clergy, shared Danish or Latin as the written language. There existed, despite the fact that the official written language in Norway was Danish, a major difference between spoken Danish and Norwegian. 84 Although Denmark had a

81 Helle, ed., The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, 95-100.
82 Birgit and Sawyer, Medieval Scandinavia, 36.
variety of Danish dialects, it failed to come close to the variation that existed (and still does) in Norway. Because of Norway’s geography, many settlements were rather isolated and had little contact with the surrounding world. Distinct dialects developed, perhaps especially so on the west coast, that had little resemblance to spoken Danish. Variation of dialects in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, does not mean that people lacked ability to understand or communicate effectively amongst their own countrymen and even within the three countries. Although language differences existed it is believed that the extent to which this mattered rested partly with the ear of the listener. It is estimated that during the French Revolution about three million people in France could not speak French, and issue that some revolutionaries believed created disunity, and wanted to create a uniform language. However, recent studies suggests that no major language barrier existed in France because of this and the revolutionaries had invented the ‘problem’ of disunity from lingual diversity.85

It has also been argued that the diversity of languages in pre-print Europe constituted the “warp and woof” of the lives of the speakers.86 This notion seems to fit nicely in the Scandinavian setting, perhaps even after the emergence of printing, and might help to explain how language, for at least a significant number of people, helped to distinguish Norwegians from their Danish neighbors. Distinct cultures also


emerged as a result of isolation and dialect diversity and people often identified with their local language and customs.\textsuperscript{87}

Customs and culture distinguished Norwegians from the Danes, and also the Swedes. The difference in geography helped to create this difference. Norway’s rugged terrain, with its large mountains and fjords, harsh climate and meager harvests stood in stark contrast to Denmark’s more temperate climate, idyllic setting and rich grain harvests.\textsuperscript{88} Just as Norwegians viewed themselves as a separate people, the same was most likely true for the Danes. It has been suggested that the rough climate made Norwegians somewhat more spirited and aggressive than the Danes.\textsuperscript{89} In a letter addressed to the Archbishop of Trondheim in 1525, a Danish nobleman stated that Norwegians “are rather poorly liked in Denmark”.\textsuperscript{90} This strengthens the notion that despite their political union, Norwegians and Danes did not necessarily share other common identifiers. In fact, Danes knew for sure that they were not Swedes, and vice versa, at the time when the Seven Years war broke out in 1564, when Danes and Swedes condemned each other and glorified


\textsuperscript{89}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{90}Vincent Lunge, “Letter to Olaf Engelbrektsson,” January 1525, in \textit{Diplomatarium Norwegicum}, vol. 7, 618: “….ere ganske ringet achtet i Dannemark.”
themselves. It has also been argued that in the long run, cultural systems preceded the growth of nationalism.

The Old Norwegian laws, which had bound Norwegians together since the eleventh century, also helped to create a sense of identity among Norwegians. The Norwegian council reminded Esge Bille, a Danish nobleman who took control of the fortress in Bergen in 1529, that by summoning citizens of Oslo to Bergen, he violated “Norway’s law and the old freedoms and privileges…and good old habits…of the land.” The Norwegian laws had been preserved and represented something that was tied to Norway’s history. Through the times of political domination from Denmark, this law strengthened the Norwegian consciousness and copies of the law, or at least fragments of it, existed all over the country.

Although Christian III significantly reduced Norway’s political influence in 1536, he still had to abide by the Norwegian law. In 1547, Christian III announced that he intended to be crowned by the citizens of Norway “according to Norway’s old customs…and assure law and order to every man according to Norway’s law.”

92 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 12.
95 Rian, Danmark-Norge, vol. 2, 27.
Christian’s advisors, including Esge Bille, had informed him previously that he had to treat the Norwegians respectfully and consider Norwegian social conditions.\footnote{Rian, “Why Did Norway Survive as a Kingdom?,” \textit{Scandinavian Journal of History}, vol. 21, 1 (1996): 57.} Christian, however, never made it to the ceremony of homage but sent his son, Frederik II, in his place. The fact that Christian had separated his crowning in Denmark with the one in Norway, helped inhabitants in Norway to realize, whether they lived in Trondheim or Stavanger, that they were not Danish.\footnote{Opsahl, “Norge […] thette rige som vort federne rige og land: Norsk Identitet,” 109.} Other elements also strengthened this notion. One important factor came through Danish exertion of power and influence in Norway, often displayed by Danish nobles positioned in high places, which occasionally angered Norway’s population.

**Danish Behavior in Norway**

Although Denmark and Norway were officially united since before the Kalmar Union, some Norwegians challenged the power of the Denmark’s royalty and nobility. Norwegian nobleman Amund Sigurdsson, along with farmers and members of the lower nobility, led an unsuccessful rebellion against Danish rule in 1436 due to the pressure of taxes. Despite official peace in Norway following this rebellion, many people were still dissatisfied with the level of Danish control.\footnote{Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norg\ae i Dansketiden}, 183-184.} Another rebellion, under the leadership of Knut Alvsson broke out in 1501 and had connections to rebels in Sweden as well.\footnote{King John, “Letter to Henrik Krummedige,” September 1501, in \textit{Diplomatarium Norwegenum}, vol. 8, 456.}
John (Hans) expressed his great surprise to the Norwegian council that they had let Alvsson and his people “so enter into Norway, robbing… and killing our subjects…. We believe it be in the best interest that…your people… pursue… Knud’s servants and break down his farms that he and they should not have shelter there.”

After the plea from John, his loyal men in Norway brought the rebellion to its knees and had Alvsson killed in 1502. Little is known about Alvsson, and the background for this rebellion remains uncertain. It is believed, however, that Alvsson rebelled because of a feud with Danish nobleman Henrik Krummedige over issues of land in Norway. This effort to break free appears to have been the most serious attempt, at least from a Danish point of view.

During the reign of Christian II, who replaced his father, John, in 1513, sources reveal no major rebellions in Norway. Some farmers, however, complained about the heavy tax burdens he levied on Norwegians. Christian II faced significantly more challenges from Sweden in the 1520s, as the Kalmar Union crumbled. As Sweden broke free in 1523, Norway remained under the rule of Denmark.

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101 “...drage saa jnd i Norge roffer... och slaar i hiell wore vndersotta... Tha haffue wij nw keyst thet fore thet bestæ at.... ederss tolk (folk)... sloer efter... Knudz thiennære oc nederbrydæ hans gordæ at han oc the ey schullæ haffue tillflucht ther til." King John, “Letter to Henrik Krummedige,” October 1501, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 8, 459.


103 Bagge and Mykland, Norge i Dansketiden, 72.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid., 76. This tax was called the tithing tax (tiendepengeskatten) and consisted of ten percent of ones fortune. This tax represented a much higher level of taxation then Norwegians had been accustomed to until that time.
Prior to being placed in the position as Bishop of Oslo by Frederik I, Danish nobleman Hans Mule had control of Akershus Fortress in Oslo. During the reign of Christian II, he had also acted as a strong supporter of the king. After Christian II’s abdication in 1523, however, he became one of Frederik’s men in Norway.\textsuperscript{106} In a letter to Frederik I, Mule wrote that he had withdrawn his support of Christian II and supported the “honest and Christian revolt which Denmark’s national council and many of its inhabitants have waged against King Christian”\textsuperscript{107} What made him change his position in regards to Christian II remains uncertain. Evidence suggests, however, that he did it out of necessity in order to maintain control of Akershus Fortress. He promised Frederik that he would, on his honor, keep the fortress loyal to Frederik if he maintained possession of it.\textsuperscript{108} In Fact, Mule went to great lengths to possess the fortress and suppressed any opposition to his own position as head of Akershus. In 1523, he pillaged and burned the farm of one of his Norwegian rivals, Olaf Galle, who came from the last Norwegian family belonging to the higher nobility.\textsuperscript{109} Farmers in the area reported that:

Master Hans Mule sent his people up here to Hedmark and burned the farm of Olaf Galle…and beat his people to death and he has since sent his people again to Hedmark and burned…and violated both priests and farmers and have beaten farmers to death and have at the same time done more evil here.\textsuperscript{110}

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\textsuperscript{106} Rian, \textit{Danmark-Norge}, vol. 2, 14-15. \\
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{109} Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norge i Dansketiden}, 35. \\
\textsuperscript{110} “…sendet mesther Hans Mule siith folk hiid vp tiil Hedmarken ok looth brende her Olaff Galles gord…ok slaa hans folk i heel ok sidhen sendet han siith folk hiid annen tid ighen til Hedmarken ok looth brende…ok skende bode prester ok bøndher ok sloge ii bøndher i hiel oc haffue the same tiid acth att giort her mere ont.”
\end{flushright}
There are few examples of Danish nobles committing such acts in Norway during the first half of the sixteenth century, especially by individuals who would later serve in the position as Bishop of Oslo. Although this event serves as a rather extreme example of Danish influence, it shows that some Danes went to great lengths to protect the positions they had in Norwegian politics and affairs.

The farmers who reported this incident wrote in hopes of receiving help in their predicament. Their letter is devoid of any particular attitude towards Mule for his actions. Although the sources are silent on this matter, this fails to rule out that such atrocities would have caused resentment on the behalf of the local population. No evidence suggests that Mule ever had to account for his behavior. Did Frederik know about this when he decided to make him Bishop of Oslo and would it have had an impact on his decision? Unfortunately, sources fail to reveal the answer to these questions. The fact is that Mule maintained an influential position in Norway after these events. Little is known about Mule’s actions following his attack in Hedmark, as he drowned in a shipwreck in 1524, the same year Olaf Engelbrektsson had anointed him Bishop of Oslo.\(^\text{111}\)

Like Hans Mule, it appears that Esge Bille also used violent methods when necessary. Esge Bille, a Danish nobleman, came to Norway in 1528 and took charge of Bergenshus fortress in 1529. His father-in-law, Mogens Gyldenstjerne, controlled

\(^{111}\) Rian, *Norges Historie*, vol. 5, 18.
Akershus Fortress in Oslo. Apparently a man called Stig Bagge murdered a public officer named Benkt in Mandal, Norway on Bille’s orders. The Norwegian council offered the following statement:

[We] inquired of…Esge Bille, if he…would confess giving the order of this hostile act to Stig Bagge…towards officer Benkt in Mandal whom he beat to death. Then…Esge Bille…said that all that he had done in connection with the hostile act, including …officer Benkt in Mandal and all else, should be his own acts and not those of…Stig Bagge.  

Following the testimony of Bille, Stig Bagge was cleared of all charges in this matter. It is unknown if Bille faced any repercussions because of this, but it is unlikely. The Danish council, however, encouraged Bille to offer some kind of compensation to Bagge. No sources shed light on the background of this or any possible motive for Bille’s decision to murder the officer in question. No other case like this exists during to Bille’s time in Norway. Although the sources are silent on the matter, it is likely that such incidents helped alienate Danes from the Norwegians. This case also shows that prominent Danes occasionally used violence as a means to achieve their goals.

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113 Ibid.

114 Danish Council, “Letter to Esge Bille,” June 1533, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 16, 692. The council wrote: “Your servant, Stig Bagge, have long and faithfully served the kingdom as an honest man…we ask that you would leave with him some money…which you have with you on behalf of the crown so that he may receive some help.” “…ether tiennere Sty Baggi haffuer lengge oc trofflligen som en arligh karll tient riiget…Thij betthe wii ether gernae at i willæ wederlegge hannom igjen met pendinge…hwes i haffue hoss ether paa kronens wegnæ saa at han kan haffwe hielp wdaaff.”

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This case appears to be an exception for Esge Bille. Sources offer no indication that he made it a habit to have people murdered. However, there are examples of how people under his command reverted to violent means. In one instance the Norwegian council wrote and questioned Bille for violating Norwegian law in connection with a complaint filed by a citizen of Oslo:

Today, here at court in Oslo, came one of the city’s citizens, Mikkel Jute, before us with a complaint that your people had treated him roughly and taken his possessions…it appears strange to us that you would take upon you such…which you well know is against Norway’s law…and against the command you have from the king…to grant the average man law and order….It appears right to us to let Mikkel Jute have his money and possessions back which were taken from him….It is not right that anyone here in the kingdom should be attacked in such a manner.115

Little is known about the specifics of this incident, including anything else about Mikkel Jute or those who had offended him. The matter obviously rested with Bille and his people as being responsible. Did Mikkel Jute tell the truth or would he have had any reason to fabricate such a story? It is difficult to know for sure. If Jute told the truth, however, it is evidence of the fact that violence occurred under the leadership of certain Danish nobles in Norway at the time. Even though the sources failed to explain Mikkel Jute’s attitude or anyone else’s take on this issue, it is again likely that episodes like this would have created resentment towards Danish nobles in Norway. One way it could have mattered is if rumors of such incidents spread.

Both these instances involving Esge Bille also show that the Norwegian council

stepped in and tried to rectify the damages done, which in turn shows that the council actively got involved in internal matters. Whether the council’s involvement compelled Bille to respond is uncertain. Apart from these incidents, it seems that Bille spent most of his time in more peaceful pursuits.

Vincent Lunge heavily involved himself in Norwegian affairs. Lunge arrived in Norway in 1524 on Frederik I’s request. He was a highly educated nobleman and former principle of Copenhagen’s university. He made his way into Norwegian politics mainly because of his marriage to the daughter of one of Norway’s richest men, Niels Henriksson. In addition to having been in control of Bergenshus, Frederik I also granted Lunge possession of Årstad Church in Bergen, with its farm and mill, along with Nonneseter convent. This conven later functioned as Lunge’s estate under the name of Lungegård. Lunge actually involved himself in selling, on behalf of Frederik I, land and estates in Norway. Lunge also increased his land holdings in Norway. In 1525, Erik Johansson officially declared that he had sold “from me and my heirs [to]…Vincent Lunge, my dear friend and his heirs my farm Moland and its estates.” This purchase also included extensive fishing and hunting rights. Johansson’s heirs, however, expressed deep dissatisfaction with the

116 Albrectsen, Danmark-Norge, 317.


120 Ibid., 793.
Although he lost control of Bergenshus to Esge Bille in 1529, he still gained additional property, and along with the resources acquired through his marriage, most likely boosted his political position significantly.

As early as 1525, however, Lunge admitted to the Archbishop that there were many people in Norway with unfriendly attitudes towards him. Although he failed to specify who or why he had enemies in Norway, there are other sources that show how some Norwegians became upset because of his political involvement. Members of the general public in Jemtland, an area that fell under Lunge’s jurisdiction in Norway, uttered words of complaint in a letter to Frederik I in 1530. Their complaint had to do with Lunge’s decision to sell a public forest containing a lake used by those living in that area. It seems like it must have caused annoyance with the locals as they repeated the same complaint six years later. In this instance they wrote that Lunge’s action had caused “many poor men damage and deprivation and forbidden any man to fish.” Even though the sale of this public forest and its lake might seem trivial, it aggravated people there enough to write about it twice. Despite the lack of strong examples, these kinds of issues do, at least, show that certain Norwegians had issues with the actions of the Danish nobles of the time.


Another issue that involved Lunge had to do with Henrik Krummedige, who also arrived in Norway under the directions of Frederik I. Krummedige, a merchant and nobleman of Schleswig-Holstein descent, already had extensive experience in Norway, and loyally served king John in the early 1500s. His influence in Norway was certainly felt in those days when Knut Alvsson rebelled as a result of his involvement. Krummedige, a wealthy man, had in the early 1500s acquired a significant amount of land in Denmark, including some in Skåne. Before Frederik I sent him to Norway in the early 1520s, he already owned a large amount of land there.\(^{125}\)

It has been argued that Krummedige got involved in Norwegian politics because of his economic interests. He apparently spent a great deal of time trying to increase his wealth through his Norwegian estates, dealing heavily in live stock and other agricultural goods.\(^{126}\)

Shortly after Lunge and Krummedige arrived in Norway, Lunge instigated a plot against his Danish companion, probably because he desired more land and power for himself.\(^{127}\) Lunge managed to persuade the Norwegian council to deprive Krummedige of his Norwegian properties and to banish him from the country. The council used the excuse that Krummedige had misused his position and displayed “unfair [and] unrighteous” behavior in Norway.\(^{128}\) Because of this decision,

\(^{125}\) Petersen, “Krummedige og Norge,” 25-27.

\(^{126}\) Ibid., 34-36, 41.

\(^{127}\) Rian, *Norges Historie*, vol. 5, 18.

Krummedige spent the time between 1524-29 outside of Norway, trying desperately to regain what he had lost.\textsuperscript{129} The Danish Council asked that Norway’s council would reconsider and return Krummedige’s property because it had unrightfully been taken from him.\textsuperscript{130} Frederik also disapproved of this action by Lunge and Norway’s council, and demanded that it be corrected. He informed Archbishop Engelbrektsson that:

Henrik Krummedige…our man and council…have been hindered…and…the council have taken his property which he has been in possession of…and which are rightfully in his inheritance and ownership….Therefore we kindly ask that you would immediately … again return to Henrik Krummedige or his proxy the same property.\textsuperscript{131}

Frederik told Krummedige to be patient and wait until the matter could be resolved.\textsuperscript{132} In 1529, through pressure from Frederik, Krummedige returned to Norway and regained his lost property. He died the following year but his assets in Norway remained in his family, in part through his relative Esge Bille.

Lunge’s actions stand as an example of what might be considered a form of disloyalty. His campaign against another Danish nobleman in Norway was stopped by Frederik, but Lunge most likely never faced any real repercussions because of

\textsuperscript{129} Petersen, “Krummedige og Norge,” 41.

\textsuperscript{130} Danish Council, “Letter to Norway’s Council,” August 1525, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 7. 638.

\textsuperscript{131} “Henrick Krummedige... wor mand och raad haffuer wæret forhindret…och…riigens raad thaget hannom hans godts fran som hand haffde i ware i forlæning…och ther tiill hans rette arff och eyge….Thii bethe wij ether kierligenn atj strax wille andtuorde…Henrick Krummedige eller hans fuldmegtiige same hans godts ighen.” Frederik I, “Letter to Olaf Engelbrektsson,” December 1524, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 9, 498.

this. In 1526, however, when Lunge supported a runaway Swedish rebel called *daljunkeren*, he made a political error indeed.\(^{133}\) This did not please Gustav Vasa much, but he did forgive Lunge for his misjudgment. Lunge wrote to Vasa and thanked him for not holding his actions against him.\(^{134}\) It is likely, however, that this action cost Lunge his possession of Bergenshus. Still Lunge remained in a strong political position and if Frederik had seen Lunge’s actions as being truly disloyal, he most likely would not have awarded him additional land and property in Norway in 1528.\(^{135}\) Amassing property and land, then, definitely served as a driving force for some of the men that Frederik I sent to serve his needs in Norway.

How the general population in Norway reacted to the Danish eagerness to obtain land and wealth is uncertain. It is highly probable that most Norwegians had little or no knowledge of this as it most likely occurred within the circles of nobles and other privileged citizens. The general public became more involved in matters that directly affected them, like the case where Lunge deprived the inhabitants in Jemtland of using their forest and lake. The issue of fees and taxes also caused the public to protest. In one incident Norwegians complained about having to give tithes to the church and taxes to the nobility because they feared “that we cannot give our lord and king the tax which we have a duty to pay.”\(^{136}\)

\(^{133}\) Albrectsen, *Danmark-Norge*, vol. 1, 319.


\(^{135}\) This refers to the fact that Frederik gave Lunge Årstad Church and farm along with Nonneseter convent in 1528.

\(^{136}\) “…tha ere vj ickj skatt fføre, ath giiffwe vor herre, och koninghen, ssom vy plictugh ere.”
here failed to reflect only on the Danish nobles but encompassed the Norwegian ones as well. The people, however, obviously had concerns about their ability to meet all the monetary requirements set by the Danish crown.

Perhaps the most extreme example of negative Norwegian attitudes towards Danish involvement in Norway came out of Archbishop Engelbrektsson’s 1536 revolt in Trondheim, where two Danes, including Vincent Lunge, lost their lives. Many inhabitants in Trondheim joined Engelbrektsson in his revolt. In written documents these people wrote that they were against the decision the council had made to elect Christian III as king without the consent of the people and that they feared that Christian would forcefully levy a heavy tax on the Norwegian people.\(^{137}\) Included in their statement is how Vincent Lunge suffered death as a punishment for his involvement and “treachery”.\(^{138}\) This clearly shows that Norwegians opposed the involvement of Danes in Norwegian affairs. Vincent Lunge paid the ultimate price for his involvement showing that Norwegians could and occasionally did act on their resentment towards Danish influence. In relation to other cases, however, the revolt in Trondheim stands as a rather unusual event of the period.\(^{139}\)

With exception of the revolt in Trondheim, conditions in Norway were relatively peaceful during the days of Frederik I, Christian III, and the Count’s War.

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\(^{139}\) Ibid., 208.

The Norwegian revolt closest to this period was Knut Alvsson’s in 1501-1502.
Even though average Norwegians might have distinguished themselves from the Danish, and occasionally raised their voices against actions of Danish nobles, they managed to avoid major confrontations.
Chapter II: Norwegian Decline under Frederik I and Christian III

Following Christian I’s ascension to the throne of Denmark-Norway in 1450, the Danish and Norwegian national councils, the political tools of Norway and Denmark’s aristocracy, drew up a procedural agreement for dealing with the issue of succession to the throne of the two countries. The council decided that when the ruling monarch died

Shall the council in the kingdom where the king dies…invite the other council, so that councils on both sides quickly assemble…and if the king has a legitimate son or many, then shall both councils elect for a king whom they believe to be best qualified…in cases of electing a king both kingdoms shall have free reins, free power, and free will without any hindrance or contradiction…and they are not to part until they are in agreement concerning a lord and king over both kingdoms.  

This statement illustrates how the national councils of Denmark and Norway attempted to work together during the days of the Kalmar Union. In the same agreement the councils also concluded that the two kingdoms should “hereafter remain under one lord and king forever more.” The issue of succession played an important part in the relationship between Denmark and Norway. The role and influence of the national councils also served as a key ingredient in this relationship. The councils emerged in Scandinavia in the thirteenth century and served many functions, including making laws, imposing taxes,


141 “Skulle her efter bliffue under en herre oc koning til ewigh tidh.” Danish and Norwegian councils, “Agreement Concerning Election of King,” August 1450, in Bagge and Mykland, Norge i Dansketiden, 66.
enforcing justice, and perhaps most importantly, electing kings.¹⁴² Councils were also
used in other areas in Europe at the time, like in Spain, where a council of native
councilors provided a forum for locals to voice opinions and grievances.¹⁴³ At the time of
the Kalmar Union, the councils initially intended to make the two kingdoms equal in their
relationships so that no kingdom should fall under the yoke of the other.¹⁴⁴ In reality,
however, the more powerful of the two, Denmark, gradually asserted itself as the
dominating faction in the union. For instance, Christian I often treated issues involving
Norway without consulting or considering Norwegian interests.¹⁴⁵ Christian II, who
reigned from 1513 to 1523, made energetic efforts to minimize the influence of the
privileged groups of Norwegian society, and managed to suppress the influence of the
council by deliberately avoiding replacing members as old ones died.¹⁴⁶ Danish
domination became more pronounced under the rule of Frederik I and Christian III.

The period between 1523 and 1536 constitutes an important time for the Nordic
countries, as the Kalmar Union had failed and Scandinavia faced the challenges of
foreign aggression. Denmark-Norway struggled with a Danish succession crisis and also
with the question of religious reform under the influence of the Lutheran Reformation. In
order to comprehend the relationship between Denmark and Norway during this time it is

¹⁴² Birgit and Sawyer, Medieval Scandinavia, 96-96.
¹⁴⁴ Albrechtsen, Danmark-Norge, vol. 1, 212. According to the charter of Christian I, Norway was
to be an independent kingdom run by the Norwegians and according to their laws. The ruling monarch in
Denmark should visit Norway every third year to deal with administrative issues (p. 238).
¹⁴⁵ Bagge and Mykland, Norge i Dansketiden, 71.
necessary to examine the Danish royal policies and involvement in Norwegian affairs, starting with Frederik I, the Danish-Norwegian king who preceded his nephew, Christian II, in 1523. After Frederik I’s death in 1533, a three-year interregnum followed, which lasted until the end of the Count’s War in 1536, when Christian III became king of Denmark-Norway. Initially, the Danish-Norwegian union resembled a form of union known as *aeque principaliter*, where the constituent kingdom was treated as a distinct entity, preserving its own privileges and laws, the king obliged to maintain their status and identity, allowing a rather high level of local self-government. Such form of union was also found in Spain in the sixteenth century, where the Spanish Habsburgs successfully managed to hold their large monarchy together through this system. In fact, composite monarchies based on *aeque principaliter* could only last if the original rules of the union were followed.\(^{147}\) As we will see, Fredrik I, by ignoring the promises in his coronation charter, began the process of doing away with qualifiers for an *aeque principaliter* union by reducing the influence of Norway and its council by placing prominent Danes in high positions in Norway. After the succession crisis and the war that followed, Christian III completed the process of removing the last remnants of Norway’s influence in the union.

**Norwegian Decline under Frederik I**

Frederik I (reigned 1523-1533) came to the Danish-Norwegian throne in the wake of the tyranny of Christian II. The key to Frederik’s success came from the support and aid of Lübeck which, in return, maintained its trading privileges in Denmark and an

\(^{147}\) Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies,” 52-53, 64.
exemption from Sound dues.\textsuperscript{148} Because Lübeck had helped Frederik to the throne, they also received other benefits. In an agreement between Frederik and Lübeck, the latter was given control of the Island of Bornholm.\textsuperscript{149} Evidence also shows that Frederik paid an annual fee to Lübeck.\textsuperscript{150} During his ten-year reign, Frederik barely left his home in Schleswig-Holstein, most likely never learned to speak Danish, and never set foot on Norwegian soil.\textsuperscript{151} Frederik’s time on the throne was plagued by internal struggles within Denmark. One major concern for the new monarch was the constant threat of a possible return of the ousted Christian II. Christian had gone into exile in the Netherlands where he was welcome due to his marriage to Elisabeth, sister of Charles V.\textsuperscript{152} Another important factor which Frederik dealt with had to do with the Danish union with Norway and the need to maintain control of the Norwegians.\textsuperscript{153} In this period, including during the Count’s War and its aftermath, Norway became overrun by Danish noblemen who asserted their influence in the kingdom. Danish royal and councilor influence resulted in

\textsuperscript{148} Albrectsen, \textit{Danmark-Norge}, vol. 1, 314 -315.


\textsuperscript{150} Laursen, ed., \textit{Traités Du Danemark}, 24-25.

\textsuperscript{151} Albrectsen, \textit{Danmark-Norge}, vol. 1, 305. Danish historian Arild Huitfeldt wrote that Frederik: “had his nest at the Gottorp castle, and like an old hen only left it if he had to.”


an uneven balance of power which favored Denmark and reduced the Norwegian
council’s ability and opportunity to address Norwegian issues.

In order to win the favor of Norway’s council, Frederik wrote several letters to
Norwegian clergy seeking support for his cause. On 20 July 1523, Bishop Magnus of
Hamar, Norway, wrote the bishop of Roskilde that he had received, in a rather mysterious
way, a letter from Frederik, who encouraged the bishop to accept him as King of Norway.
Magnus informed his Danish colleague that the letter reached him through a farm boy
and a local priest, and admitted that the council could not meet together in order to offer
Frederik a final response. He also added an important piece of information when he
wrote:

In His Grace’s letter, which arrived here, Duke Frederik writes that he is the rightful
heir to the kingdom of Norway, in which you and more good lords should know that
our Norwegian team, and all kings’… privileges here in Norway contradicts…his own
father, king Christian…who had no rights until he became crowned in the
kingdom….Norway is and has been…a kingdom free to elect a king as well as
Denmark and Sweden, which His Grace most likely knows.\textsuperscript{154}

This passage offers a unique sense of how some Norwegians felt a need to protect their
right to have a voice in the question of a possible successor to the throne. It appears
Frederik took it for granted that the Norwegians would ultimately approve of his position
as next king.

\textsuperscript{154} “Hertug Frederick scriwer wtj hanss naades breff som hiid kom att ware rætt arffwing til
Norges rige huilket i och flere gode herre skulle with att wor norske lag, och alle konningers…priuilegier
her wtj Norge modh sigher…hanss egen herre fadherss konning Chrisiernss…ther ingen rætt haffwe till
then tidh han bleff her kryntt wrj rigett…att Norge er och haffwer warett…eth fritt kaarett konnings rige
saa well som Danmark och Swæringe som hanss naade well fongher att wide.” Bishop Magnus, “Letter to
Bishop Lage Urne of Roskilde,” July 1523, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 12 (Oslo: Riksarkivet,
In another letter, addressed to people like Archbishop Olaf Engelbrektsson of Trondheim and Bishop Hoskold Hoskuldsson in Stavanger, Frederik admonished them to join him and
crown us as your lord and king and teach your subjects what damage, spiritually and temporarily, would come when the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway are separated from the union which binds them together.155

In the same letter he promised these churchmen that if they gave him support he would let them keep their positions in the future.156 Overall these letters indicate that the Norwegian council possessed some level of influence at this time since Frederik actually had to appeal to its members to promote his candidacy. It appears that the agreement of 1450, namely that one country should not dominate the other, still had some resonance before Frederik managed to claim the Danish-Norwegian throne.

In addition to sending letters of appeal, Frederik also dealt with the issue of Norway by sending two trusted member of the Danish national council, Henrik Krummedige and Vincent Lunge, to represent the Danish royalty and to ensure that the Norwegians would support him as the new king of the union. Krummedige reported back to Frederik in September 1523 that he had convinced the inhabitants in Marstrand, Norway, to be loyal to Frederik as long as the old Norwegian laws would be upheld.157

The farmers of Hedmark, Norway, likewise pledged their support:


156 Ibid.

We, common farmers…who build and live in Hedmark greet you Henrik Krummedige…must you know…Henrik that the good…bishop Moen of Hammer(Hamar) read and made known to us the letter from the mighty…duke and lord Frederik, how the good and worthy lords of Denmark’s national council and common Danish inhabitants have agreed to take his grace as lord and king of Denmark…we will submit ourselves under Duke Frederik as the inhabitants of Denmark’s kingdom want His Grace as lord and King…we then give the answer that we would much like to be subjected to His Grace and approve him at the same time as our Lord and King.\textsuperscript{158}

These farmers reveal that ordinary inhabitants in Norway, at least to some degree, involved themselves in questions of succession. Another issue revealed in this letter is that these Norwegians appear to have looked to the Danes and followed their example.

This letter also shows that Frederik believed in a strategy that involved obtaining the favor of the average population and not just members of the national council. A letter from Vincent Lunge, Frederik’s other messenger in Norway, strengthens this notion. Lunge reported to Frederik that he had accomplished his mission, and traveled from Lindesnes to Vardø, preaching the content of letters from Frederik to the people.\textsuperscript{159} According to Lunge’s report, all Norwegians in his path had given promises of obedience to Frederik as the new king.\textsuperscript{160} For all intents and purposes it seemed that Frederik’s

\textsuperscript{158} “Vii menige bonder…som bygge ok boo paa Hedemarken helse edher her Henrik Krummedyke…muge i wethe… Henrik ath the gode…biskop Moens aff Hammer.…lothe læse ok forkenne for oss then mectuge…forstes ok herres breff hertogh Ffredricks huarlund ath the godhe verdige herrer Danmarkx rikis raad ok menige Danmarks inbyggere haffue hans nade handgengit ok samtycht ffor herre ok konning offuer Danmark…vii vilde giffue oss vndher hertog Ffrederick Tha effther thi ath Danmarks riges inbyggere ville haffue hans nade ffor herre ok konning Ta goffue vii swar fra oss att vii vilde ok saa gerne att vare vnder hans nade ok samtycke tha same tiid hans nade ffor vor herre ok konning.” Farmers of Hedmark, “Letter to Henrik Krummedige,” October 1523, in \textit{Diplomatarium Norwegicum}, vol. 12, 280-281.

\textsuperscript{159} Lindesnes is located at the very southern tip of Norway, while Vardø is at the very northern part. Keeping in mind the nature of Norwegian geography, this constitutes a long journey, especially in the sixteenth century. However, a trip along the rugged coast of Norway would have permitted Lunge to come into contact with populated areas to spread his message. It is more likely, however, that Lunge left this to others while he stayed in southern Norway.

\textsuperscript{160} Vincent Lunge, “Letter to Frederik I,” May 1524, in \textit{Diplomatarium Norwegicum}, vol. 12, 330-333. Lunge wrote: “I have now completed my command in such a way that I have let your grace’s letters be read and preached in all the land…which lay north of Lindesnes until Wordehus, for the common public
strategies paid off. The Norwegian council, however, initially postponed its decision to accept Frederik as King of Norway in order to secure control of the fortresses and to ensure that Norway would still have a voice in proclaiming the monarchs. The Norwegian council declared Frederik King of Norway in August 1524, when the entire council met together for the first time in ten years.\textsuperscript{161} The next step for Frederik was to pen a Norwegian charter.

The charter Frederik made for Norway in 1524 had the unique character of being separate from the Danish.\textsuperscript{162} In essence this charter established guidelines for the balance of power between the king and the Norwegian council. In this charter, Frederik referred to himself as the “rightful heir to Norway from this day.”\textsuperscript{163} He also established that trade ports in Norway, Bergen serving as the most significant one, should indeed maintain trading privileges they had enjoyed previously, and that the king should never “distribute to any foreign man any of the kingdom’s castles…and if this needs to be done for the kingdom’s sake then it will be done after the consent of Norway’s council.”\textsuperscript{164} Frederik had, in fact, about a year previously, already established himself as the rightful heir to

\begin{footnotesize}
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161\ Albrectsen, \textit{Danmark-Norge}, vol. 1, 316-317. \\
162\ Ibid., 309. The usual procedure followed by John and Christian II was to have a common charter for both kingdoms. \\
164\ : “…bort bebreffue nogen udtlensk mand nogen riigens slot…uden at…riigett saadant anfalldt finge that nødt oc behoff gjøres tha willie wij thet göre effther Norges riiges raadts samtycke.” Ibid.
\end{tabular}
\end{footnotesize}
Norway and promised to maintain the old freedoms which Norway had enjoyed, including the right to trade with “Denmark and also Lübeck, Hamburg…and other places where your business might take you, unhindered by us and all others on our behalf.”\textsuperscript{165} The charter also stated that the king should “never add any property tax on the common man or trade ports without the advice or consent of the council.”\textsuperscript{166} In his charter, Frederik also granted the Norwegian council the right to freely elect archbishops, bishops and other church officials.\textsuperscript{167}

Although these few items represent only a small portion of the charter, it clearly indicates that the king would run Norway along with the council, or at least that the king needed to get the council’s approval before making certain economic and political decisions relating to the Norwegian kingdom. In theory, then, the Norwegian council was to have had a fair amount of control over domestic issues along with the power to control the country’s few strategic castles. Despite the fact that the charter limited the king’s power and called for the active involvement of the Norwegian council, the king ignored these rules as time passed.

Frederik’s Norwegian charter stated the Norwegian castles or fortresses should remain in the hands of Norwegians. In November 1524, however, just after the charter came into existence, Frederik gave Vincent Lunge control of Bergenshus fortress in


\textsuperscript{166} “…aldriig paa legge nogen landskatt paa almuen eller købstederne uden rigens raads raadt oc samtycke.” Frederik I, “Kong Frederik den Förstes Norske Haandfæstning af 1524,” in Samlinger til det Norske Folks, 8.

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 5.
Bergen.\textsuperscript{168} The decision to give this fortress to Lunge appears to have been in process for some time and apparently had the support of Norwegian clergymen on the west coast.

The bishops of Stavanger and Bergen wrote:

\begin{quote}
We know of no one else who can better protect the common people from wrong and violence than the honorable…man and knight Vincent Lunge, who received the daughter of another honorable…man and knight Niels Henriksson, since he will make a good and faithful Norwegian man.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

These bishops obviously believed that Lunge had the qualities needed to manage the fortress at Bergen and to provide the necessary protection for the people there. Although Lunge was a Dane his marriage into a Norwegian family legally made him a Norwegian. Technically, then, Lunge became a clear example of a Danish nobleman who firmly established himself within Norway in this period. Within a short time Lunge became a leader of Norwegian politics.\textsuperscript{170} In 1529, however, Lunge had to pass his possession of Bergenshus on to another Dane by the name of Esge Bille (Bilde), who also came to have some influence on Norwegian politics.\textsuperscript{171} In addition, Frederik sent Mogens Gyldenstjerne to Norway who in turn took over the administration of Akershus Fortress.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[170] Albrectsen, Danmark-Norge, vol. 1, 317.
\item[171] Ibid., 319. After Lunge had lost possession of Bergenhus, he wrote a letter to Frederik reminding him of the fact that he had been promised to keep Bergenhus for ten years against an annual fee. See Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 12, 570-571.
\end{footnotes}
in Oslo.\textsuperscript{172} Frederik placed another Dane, Claus Bille, in charge of Båhus Fortress, and he remained there until 1555.\textsuperscript{173} Due to the nature of the sources available, the discussion will focus on the fortresses in Bergen and Oslo.

Having Danish men in charge of the Norwegian fortresses offered Frederik an effective means of maintaining control of Norway, with the proviso that they remained loyal to him. These men spent much of their time taking care of royal business and trying to keep important people loyal to the king. They ensured that Norwegians paid their taxes and that Norway gave the promised support to the king. Frederik wrote in a letter that Vincent Lunge had “given account for how he has obtained the help promised by…Norway’s national council…and how he, on our behalf, has obtained…land taxes.”\textsuperscript{174} In one instance, Mogens Gyldenstjerne reported Norwegian unwillingness to pay certain fees.\textsuperscript{175} When Esge Bille came to Bergen he demanded that the bailiffs of Helgeland, northern Norway, pay him their fees for the previous year.\textsuperscript{176} Frederik also commanded his key players in Norway to negotiate internal feuds and struggles. Before

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\textsuperscript{172} Mogens Gyldenstjerne, “Letter to Frederik I,” June 1529, in Diplomatrium Norwegicum, vol. 12, 521.

\textsuperscript{173} Rian, Danmark-Norge, vol. 2, 19-20. Båhus fortresss served as an important point of border protection against Sweden. In 1658, however, Frederik III had to give it up to Sweden.

\textsuperscript{174} “…haffuer ladet giortt oss gode rede och regennskab for huess hand haffuer ladet wpboret aff then landhielp, ssom…Norges riges raad oss samtyckt haffure…oc huess hand haffuer paa wore wegne wpboret…landskatt.” Frederik I, “Letter to Vincent Lunge,” December 1525, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 5, 760-761. In the same letter, Frederik indicated that Lunge had had some sort of census or tax record made covering certain areas in Norway: “…register oc mandtall paa tesse…leen aff Bergen Sunden fiord Hardanger Nordfôrdt Ryflecke…Sønders hardeland Nøre hordeland Westerlenn oc Lofôden Hylleland Numedall…Sund more…oc Findemarckett.”


\end{flushright}
he left for Norway, Esge Bille received instructions to serve as mediator in a struggle over property involving the widow of Niels Henriksson. People like Esge Bille also ensured the support of local clergy. In May 1529, he wrote to Bishop Hoskold of Stavanger and pleaded with him that he stand by Bille in word and action. Along with this letter, possibly to ensure cooperation, he sent the bishop a barrel of mead.

Because of his Danish men in Norway, Frederik could more easily maintain control of activities there. It also increased his ability to ensure protection against foreign threats, especially a possible invasion by Christian II. After Esge Bille took control of Bergenshus he reported to Frederik regarding shipments of armaments, gun powder and other supplies needed at the fortress. At one time, Frederik also sent soldiers of some type, to strengthen Bergenshus. Both Esge Bille and Mogens Gyldenstjerne, who controlled Akershus Fortress in Oslo, received instructions from Frederik in 1530 that they should remain in their respective fortresses due to a possible attack from Christian II. Frederik, however, made sure that these fortresses also brought something in return besides desired control and protection in Norway. Each noble who controlled a fortress had to pay an annual fee to the king. While Esge Bille controlled Bergenshus, he also sent

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179 Ibid., 544.


timber and fish to Denmark. This practice would most likely have remained the same, regardless of who controlled the fortresses, but Frederik could remain more at ease knowing that he had loyal Danes placed at strategic positions in Norway. Because of this, Danes managed to tighten the noose, as they had gained control of vital positions of power within Norway.

Frederik I and the Danish council eagerly supported the efforts of Danes in Norwegian politics. Members of clergy, especially the bishops, had a profound influence in political matters. A question of importance had to do with the Bishopric of Oslo. In a feud between Bishop Anders Mus and Danish nobleman Hans Mule, Frederik stepped in and, not surprisingly, decided that the Danish Hans Mule should serve as Bishop instead. In a letter to Archbishop Olaf Engelbrektsson in Trondheim, Frederik wrote that he, along with the Danish council, had reached an agreement between the two and strongly encouraged the archbishop to personally confirm and anoint Hans Mule Bishop of Oslo, or ask another worthy bishop to do it for him, in order to avoid any more cost by delays. Frederik’s admonition paid off and Mule became Bishop of Oslo, despite the

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183 Prior to his confirmation as Bishop of Oslo, Hans Mule had served as the director of Akershus Fortress in Oslo, a position he received after he, in October 1523, denounced Christian II and swore loyalty to Frederik as king of Denmark-Norway. See Diplomatrium Norwegicum, vol. 2, 791.
184 Frederik I, “Letter to Archbishop Olaf Engelbrektsson,” June 1524, in Diplomatrium Norwegicum, vol. 1, 775. In Frederik’s own words: “You must know that we and Denmark’s national council have negotiated between… the worthy father bishop Anders Mus and… Hans Mule… Hans Mule must and shall keep the bishopric… then we ask you kindly that you would confirm and anoint Hans Mule as bishop, or command and give authority to other worthy fathers and bishops in Norway’s kingdom to anoint him so that he could come to the bishopric without more cost or expense.” : “Mwe i vide att vij oc… Danmarcks riigis raadt haffue nw forhandlitt emellom… verdige father bishop Anders Mwess oc… Hans Mwle… Hans Mwle maa oc skall behollle same bishops domm… Thij bethe vij ether kierligen attij ville giffue… Hans Mwle confirmationen paa same bishops domm oc vae hannem till bishop eller
fact that people knew that he had never lived according to the teachings of the Church.\textsuperscript{185} The example of Bishop Mule shows how Frederik and Denmark’s council interfered in Norwegian affairs and strategically placed Danes in influential positions within Norway. This particular event contradicted Frederik’s Norwegian charter which made it clear that the Norwegian council should have the privilege of electing its own clergymen. Clearly Denmark made decisions on issues that rightfully should have remained in the hands of the Norwegian council.

Another issue, which Frederik ultimately took into his own hands, had to do with the German presence in Bergen. This city, located on the Norwegian west coast, had had a long tradition of trading fish, butter and hides with England.\textsuperscript{186} It is believed that the Hanseatic League began trading in Bergen around the year 1250, when King Haakon IV of Norway made a treaty with Lübeck, the center of Hanseatic trade.\textsuperscript{187} A thriving commerce between the Hansa and Bergen stimulated Norway’s economic growth but the main profit fell into the hands of the Germans, who in turn also gained significant control in Bergen.\textsuperscript{188} The Germans in Bergen apparently often used violence to get what they wanted or to keep others, especially merchants from the Netherlands, from trading there. In some cases Germans tortured and murdered in Bergen without facing any


\textsuperscript{186} John Allyne Gade, \textit{The Hanseatic Control of Norwegian Commerce During the Late Middle Ages} (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1951), 1-2.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 67.
consequences. Germans also took advantage of the situation after Christian II went into exile in 1523, and heavily terrorized competitors, in particular the Scots.  

Frederik, then, concerned himself with the position of Lübeck and German merchants in Bergen. Initially, after receiving word regarding German attacks on the Scottish, he wrote to Norway’s council and asked them to look into the matter. The Danish council, apparently acting independently of the king, also wrote to Norway and asked that the council would take care of the Scottish who had been attacked, and make some restitution to them. The king actually never asked the Norwegians to deal with the issue but decided to negotiate the matter himself. He wrote to Esge Bille:

Dear Esge…since last time we wrote you about the dealings between the German merchants and the Scottish at the pier in Bergen, that it should be decided with a sum of money…we kindly let you know that Lübeck has negotiated with us so that we have taken the same case upon us to negotiate it to a final end…we then ask you that you immediately would negotiate on our behalf with the same Scots so that they will settle with eight hundred or one thousand marks of Lübeck.

As before, Frederik put this case into the hands of one of his trusted Danes in Norway instead of using the council. It is unknown whether the Norwegian council ever acted upon the admonition sent by the Danish council on this matter, which could explain why Frederik chose to use other means. It is also likely that Frederik felt pressured by Lübeck

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189 Bagge and Mykland, *Norge i Dansketiden*, 53-54.


192 “Kere Esgy wider at siidenn wij siste gang schreffue ether till om thennd handell emellom thennd Tydske kiøpmnd och Skotterne paa Bryggenn ther vdj Bergenn atj schulde fordrage och vdkomme paa een swm penninge…Thaa giffue wij ether kerligenn till kiende at… the Lubeske haffue siiden ladit handle met oss saa at wij haffue thaget same sag paa oss ath wille lade handle thend till een endelig endhe…Thij bethe wij ether och wille atj stax…forhandlige wille paa wore weignne handle met same Skotter saa at the lade thennom nøige mit viiije eller ith thusinde mark Lubeske.” Frederik I, Letter to Esge Bille,” May 1531, in *Diplomatrium Norwegicum*, vol. 11, 632-633.
to settle the matter, as Lübeck and its burghers had placed him on the Danish-Norwegian throne. This example, however, shows that Frederik often took care of Norwegian issues outside of proper channels, using Danes with influential positions within Norway.

The presence of Danish nobles in Norway, although useful to Frederik, caused contention and strife in the 1520s. Sources indicate that the German merchants in Bergen actually acted upon instructions from Vincent Lunge.\textsuperscript{193} The fact that Frederik installed several Danes in Norwegian positions, contrary to the charter of 1524, also caused rifts among members of the Norwegian council. One important issue of contention related to property rights given Danes like Krummedige, Lunge, Bille, and others.\textsuperscript{194} In fact, Lunge and Bille destroyed old cultural institutions, like the Church of the Apostles in Bergen, in order to use the bricks, in Lunge’s case to expand his Norwegian estate, and Bille to strengthen Bergenshus.\textsuperscript{195} In order to deal with internal problems in Norway, Frederik sent his son, Duke Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, along with four Danish council members, instead of going himself. He instructed the Norwegian inhabitants to assist and

\textsuperscript{193} The Danish Council, “Letter to the Norwegian Council,” July 1524, in Diplomatrium Norwegicum, vol. 6, 729-730. The councilors wrote: “We have learned that the same German merchants which have done this…have done it after the mandate and command of…Vincent Lunge which we cannot easily believe, that he should give such treatment to the poor miserable men or other of our noble lord’s subjects of Norway’s kingdom.”: “Wii haffue forfaret at huess same Tyske køpmennd ther wdi giort haffue…at thee haffue thet giort effter…Vinvencij Lwnghe mandat och befalling huihcht wiic icke letteligenn kwnnæ throo, at hand schulle giffue sköllning offuer thee fattiige elendiige mennd eller andre wor naadige herres wdersotte Norriiges riiges indbyggere.” Although Lunge committed other political mistakes it is possible that this act contributed to the fact that he lost possession of Bergenshus to Esge Bille in 1529. See Esben Albrectsen, Danmark-Norge, 319-320.

\textsuperscript{194} Albrectsen, Danmark-Norge, vol.1, 320.

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
obey Christian as they would the King himself.196 Prior to Christian’s journey, Frederik instructed him to deal with domestic conflicts in Norway and to deal with possible supporters of Christian II.197

Duke Christian arrived in Norway supported by a large number of soldiers and asserted his authority, seizing valuables belonging to the church. He also interfered in land transactions. Vincent Lunge had sold Hárstad farm to a local farmer for one hundred units of Danish currency, but Christian deprived this man of the farm he had bought and only gave him half the money he had paid to obtain it.198 In some ways his actions reflected things to come after the end of the Count’s War in 1536.199 His Norwegian visit indicated that the relationship between Denmark and Norway had become rather one-sided, meaning that the royal power of Denmark seemed determined to control and dominate, while Norway gradually lost influence. Duke Christian ultimately failed to fully achieve his mission. He never succeeded in rooting out support for Christian II in Norway, a fact which became apparent when the former monarch landed a fleet there in 1531.

   In November 1531, Christian II sailed up Oslo fjord with a fleet of fourteen ships and thousands of foot soldiers. It is possible he chose Norway as a place of attack

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199 Albrectsen, Danmark-Norge, vol. 1, 320.
because it lacked a serious military defense.\textsuperscript{200} Perhaps he knew that many Norwegians, in spite of national differences, would rally to his cause and give him needed support. The most influential cleric in Norway, Olaf Engelbrektsson, provided vital support for Christian II’s cause. He also served as a counterweight, in constantly challenging Danish influence. Engelbrektsson received the title of Archbishop of Trondheim in May 1523, and the Norwegian council appointed him without Danish interference.\textsuperscript{201} He replaced Archbishop Erik Valkendorf who had died earlier that same year and also served as the head of the Norwegian council.\textsuperscript{202}

Earlier, on his way back from Rome after a visit with the pope, Engelbrektsson had taken a detour and stopped in the Netherlands to visit the deposed Christian II. During this visit, Engelbrektsson swore his allegiance to the exiled king but changed his mind after returning to Norway, and promised allegiance to Frederik.\textsuperscript{203} Engelbrektsson, however, shifted loyalties again when he learned of Christian II’s arrival. He explained that he supported Christian II because Frederik had failed to keep his promises to Norway.\textsuperscript{204} Despite this explanation, we might never know the real reasons behind his shifting loyalties. It seems, however, he chose to follow whatever appeared the most convenient path before him. He obviously must have deemed it necessary to support

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 326.

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 317.

\textsuperscript{202} Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norge i Dansketiden}, 78.

\textsuperscript{203} Paludan-Müller, \textit{Grevens Feide}, vol. 2, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{204} Olaf Engelbrektsson, “Letter to the Bishop of Bergen and Esge Bille,” March 1532, in \textit{Diplomatarium Norwegicum}, vol. 12, 607.
Frederik once he had established himself as the new monarch. It is also plausible, then, that he supported Christian II out of convenience or necessity when he arrived in Norway. In December 1531, Christian II expressed his friendship to the archbishopric in Trondheim:

We Christian, make it known by our open letter that we, by our…kindness and grace have promised…Olaf archbishop of Trondheim…continual friendship from us…and Olaf archbishop shall never be questioned or denied…or suffer unkindly in any way due to the action and union…Olaf…had against us and our friends with our enemy duke Frederik…during our absence….We will hold the holy church here in our kingdom of Norway…to the good old righteous and Christian freedoms and privileges….At the same time we promise and pronounce that Olaf…in Trondheim must and should enjoy using, for evermore, the rectory called Stenvikholm.\(^{205}\)

Christian II appears to have valued the loyalty of Olaf Engelbrektsson. As the most powerful member of the Norwegian clergy, it must have been significant for Christian to regain the loyalty of this man. It also appears that Christian II, once he arrived in Norway, saw himself as rightful ruler, granting privileges to the Church and its Archbishop.

Sources also suggest that Christian II managed to find support in the general Norwegian population. On 26 November 1531, Christian II informed Esge Bille of his arrival and wrote: “Know that we, by the grace and mercy of the almighty God, have come to our land and kingdom Norway again, and the bishops of Norway’s council…knights, merchants and the common people here in the south have come over to

\(^{205}\) “Vij Cristiern gøre alle witterlict met tette vort obne breff at wij nw aff wor…gunst oc nade haffue loffuit…Olaff erchebiscop till Trwendung…stadict vennskab for oss…Och aldri skall betenckes eller forekastes forne her Oluff erchebiscop…vgunst j noger made huess handling oc forbund …her Oluff erchebiscop…met…hertug Frederick…oc hans anhengere wore fiende…indganget oc giort haffue wdj wor frawærelsse…were wij oc holde then hellige kircke her i wort rige Norge…the gamle gode retferdige och christlige friheder, privileger…Samedes loffue wij oc tilsige forne her Oluff erchebiscop…i Trundhem at mwæ oc skulle nyde bruge oc beholde till ewige tid, then donkirkens gaard kallendes Stenwicholm.” Christian II, “Letter to the archbishopric in Trondheim,” December 1531, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol.12, 600-601.
us.”

He must have convinced people to join his cause rather quickly since he could send such a report the same month he arrived in Norway, if he indeed told Bille the truth. And evidence does suggest that farmers and other people joined Christian II during his first month in Norway. We might never know for sure why some Norwegians joined Christian’s crusade so easily. Perhaps many Norwegians had issues with the way Denmark controlled Norwegian affairs at the time, and welcomed a change. The fact remains, however, that as king of Denmark-Norway, Christian II had levied heavy taxes on the Norwegian population, which caused outbursts of protest, especially from the farmers.

Logically, then, if people in Norway had few serious issues with Frederik’s rule, they would not, unless compelled, quickly join Christian. If they joined him willingly, although few written records shed a thorough light on the issue, this might indicate that certain numbers of Norway’s population disfavored the existing domination from Denmark.

News that Norwegians, including Olaf Engelbrektsson, had joined with Christian II, reached Denmark through people like Esge Bille, who in February 1532 wrote to Johan Rantzau, Danish military commander, and his own brother, Bishop Ove Bille of Århus, Denmark, informing them that the Norwegian Archbishop had betrayed his

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208 Bagge and Mykland, Norge i Dansketiden, 76.
allegiance to Frederik. The Archbishop himself admitted to the Bishop of Bergen and Esge Bille that he indeed had traveled to Oslo and sworn allegiance to Christian II. He explained he had done this because Frederik had failed to live up to his promises towards Norway and the Norwegian Church. Engelbrektsson helped Christian militarily, which included supplying manpower and also sharing intelligence. Despite this support and the fact that Christian had brought a significant number of soldiers on his quest, he failed to conquer Norway’s main fortress Akershus. If Christian had succeeded in this endeavor the outcome of his attack on Norway might have been quite different, considering that Akershus constituted the most important fortress in Norway. In fact, Frederik thanked Mogens Gyldenstjerne at Akershus for his successful defense of the fort and for his faithful service to the king. Frederik, along with assistance from Gustav Vasa, sent a fleet to Norway to defeat Christian’s forces. His intentions were clear: “We intend, with our war ships, to send our foot soldiers and people of war into Norway so that we may put down King Christian’s war and foot soldiers.” Simultaneously Frederik appealed to Gyldenstjerne that he would persuade Christian II’s soldiers to leave Norway, to avoid


213 “Wii nu agthe mett wor orlogs skibe att indschicke wore lanndskneckte ock kriigsfolck vdi Norge.” Ibid., 611.
shedding the blood of other Christians, and also to avoid “a rumor that we were so bloodthirsty and sought to shed the blood of so many pitiful people.”

Frederik also reported to Gyldenstjerne that he had captured five of Christian’s warships and sent needed supplies and reinforcements to Oslo’s fortress. Christian’s crusade ended in May 1532, when he agreed to go to Copenhagen after receiving a promise of free travel to negotiate with his uncle. Frederik, however, failed to live up to his promise, and arrested Christian, who spent the rest of his life imprisoned in Copenhagen. After Christian’s imprisonment, Olaf Engelbrektsson again swore his allegiance to Frederik through Vincent Lunge and another Dane by the name of Nils Lykke in September 1532. Frederik died in April 1533, about a year after he managed to end the threat from his nephew.

Christian II’s invasion would most likely have provided the greatest opportunity for Frederik’s men in Norway to betray their loyalty to him. However, evidence shows that the Danes Frederik had sent to maintain order and control in Norway stood by him. Gyldenstjerne defended Akershus Fortress in Oslo while others refused to support Christian’s efforts. Esge Bille and Vincent Lunge reported to the Bishop of Stavanger

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214 “…ett rygthe paa wij were szaa blodgirig och stannde effther saa mange arme meniskes blods vtgydelse.” Ibid. Frederik I urged that Christian’s soldiers leave Norway and go to Germany instead.

215 Ibid., 610-611.

216 Albrechtsen, Danmark-Norge, vol. 1, 327.

that they had both rejected appeals from Christian to support him.\textsuperscript{218} At perhaps the most crucial moment, then, Frederik’s Danish supporters in Norway helped him defeat Christian II.

**Succession Crisis and the Count’s War**

Frederik I’s death caused a ripple effect in Scandinavia. The question as to who should replace him ultimately led to a civil war in Denmark which escalated with the invasion by the Hanseatic town of Lübeck in 1534. The Danish and Norwegian councils had the responsibility to announce Frederik’s successor, Duke Christian of Schleswig-Holstein serving as the most likely candidate. Shortly after Frederik’s death, the Danish council wrote to Engelbrektsson and informed him of events and invited its Norwegian counterpart to negotiate and decide on… a day of lords here in the kingdom…and thereafter let us know by writing on what time and place you and the other good men…can best make it there. We, Denmark’s council, will do our best to submit to your good will and attend same meeting and then, with you and more from Norway’s council, by the aid of God, gather together and consider…the welfare of these two kingdoms.\textsuperscript{219}

This call for Norwegian members of the council to meet in Denmark suggests that the Danes remembered the agreement made in 1450, namely that any decision regarding succession required the presence of both councils. As events transpired, no election day occurred in 1533. Instead the Danish council decided to postpone the election of


Frederik’s successor until the following year.\textsuperscript{220} The real reason behind the postponement is not known for sure. One reason might have been that the Danish council wanted to wait until Norway’s council could make it to Denmark, so that a decision could be made together, thus maintaining the status of the councils and its members.\textsuperscript{221} Another idea revolves around the fact that the most important question for the Danish council had to do with religion, namely the issue of whether Denmark-Norway should have a Catholic or Protestant king, since Duke Christian followed the teachings of Martin Luther.\textsuperscript{222} The fact that the Danes asked Engelbrektsson and the other councilors to find a time best suited for them to meet indicates that the Danish council valued its relationship with the Norwegians or at least respected their position in this regard.

The Danes issued another invitation to attend a meeting in Copenhagen during the summer of 1534. Engelbrektsson responded to the Danish council that he himself, for uncertain reasons, could not make it to Denmark but had given other members the authority to go in his behalf.\textsuperscript{223} The outbreak of the Count’s War, however, prevented this from taking place, and the war eventually paved the way for Duke Christian to replace his father. He took the lead in fighting back Lübeck’s mercenary Count Christoffer of Oldenburg, through his military commander Johan Rantzau. Although Norway never actively got involved in the Count’s War, Duke Christian kept diplomatic ties with those


\textsuperscript{221} Albrechtsen, \textit{Danmark-Norge}, 329.

\textsuperscript{222} Hørby and Venge, \textit{Danmarks Historie}, vol. 2, 303.

in power to assist him on his way to the throne. In February 1535 he addressed Norway’s
council with a warning and a plea:

[Lübeck’s] true act and purpose is, as it always has been, to be able to capture these
three kingdoms under their power….We therefore ask and admonish you to seriously
take to heart and consider the eternal welfare and prosperity of your own and these
kingdoms and to stand firm…by us…and Denmark’s council….When the almighty
allows that we come to you, we will hold you by Norway’s…privileges, freedoms, and
good old Christian habits…so that these two well-known old Christian kingdoms must
thereafter remain together, as they have been for a long time, and that they must by no
means be separated.224

Duke Christian revealed that he apparently desired to maintain the relationship that
Denmark and Norway had had for so many years. Future events, however, showed that
his actual intentions were more complex. Although Christian had not yet become king,
his role as the leader of the opposition to Lübeck and Count Christoffer put him in a
strong position to negotiate for support from Norway’s council. He obviously saw
himself as the natural successor, offering to maintain and preserve Norwegian rights and
privileges.

Christian received a response from Engelbrektsson that the Norwegian council
would gather together in Trondheim to discuss and ultimately make a decision regarding
his standing as the next king.225 This letter failed to give Christian a direct answer to his

224 “Theris [Lubeck] rethhe agktt och hierthelig meninge er, Som och altiidt weeritt haaffue, att the
kunde fangett thesse try riigernæ vnnder theris magth….Therfore bedhe vij ether gerne och kierligenn
begere, attj aluorligenn ville Dragett tiil hierthe och besindne etthers eigett och tesse Riigers gafffn och
evige bestandt och bliffue fasthe…hos oss…og Danmarcks Riigis raadt….Naar gudt aldmegtugiste thet saa
ville føge, att vij komme ther indt till edher, Wille vij that holde ether alle viid Norgis…privilegier,
Friddheder og gamble christelige Sedwanner….Saa att theses same two høigtberømede gamle christen
Konning Riiger maathe heer effter bliffue tilsammen, som the langh tiid weeritt haaffue, och ey vdj nogle
mmade at adskillies.” Duke Christian, “Letter to the Norwegian Council,” February 1535, in Paludan-

225 In November 1534, Olaf Engelbrektsson received a letter from Count Christopher of
Oldenborg, where the Count, who knew of the Archbishop’s sympathies with Christian II, requested that he
plea, but promised one in the future. Norwegian councilors negotiated among themselves in order to find an appropriate time to decide the issue. The Bishop of Oslo suggested to Engelbrektsson that the meeting be held that summer in Trondheim. Such a meeting never took place. The Bishop of Oslo and other members of the council later informed the Archbishop that they could not come to Trondheim at the appointed time. Instead of making a decision together as a whole, then, members of the council in southern Norway had taken the matter into their own hands and announced their decision in May 1535:

Norway’s council here south in the kingdom, in the name of the Holy Trinity give, with this open letter...Christian with God’s grace as chosen king of Denmark...and a mighty lord and reigning king of Norway’s kingdom...and we will be the subjects of His Grace’s royal majesty...who should be our Norway’s rightful chosen...king.

Without the consent of their leader, these members of the council openly hailed Christian III as the next king of Denmark and Norway. Perhaps this reflected the fact that Engelbrektsson had failed to exert tight control over the council as a whole, and questioned his influence. Some of the Norwegian counselors seem to have felt a pressing

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229 “Noriges riigis raadt her Syndhennfelldz i Riiget verenidis vdj the hellige treffolldfighetts naffn giffuit, och mett thette vortt obne beseylde breff...Christiernn, med gwdt zuadk vedwalld kong till Danmarch...och...enn velldig herre och regerende kongh offuer Norigis riighe...Och ville vii vere hanss naadis kongelige maiestatt vndherdanige...somm oss bort att were vor retthe Norigis vedwallthe...konge.” Norway’s Council, “Open letter proclaiming Christian III as king of Norway,” May 1535, in Paludan-Müller, Aktstykker, vol. 2, 85.
need to speed up the process of electing a king, by not waiting for the meeting in Trondheim. The content of this same letter suggests that the suffering in Denmark caused by the Count’s War made these men anxious to elect a man strong enough to end the conflict. They did, however, demand that Christian III respect Norway’s established rights and privileges.\textsuperscript{230} A few months later, Engelbrektsson informed the Bishop in Oslo that he agreed, and joined with their decision.\textsuperscript{231}

Engelbrektsson’s support of Christian III, however, failed to last long. As the head of the Norwegian Church, his foremost interest would have been to protect Catholicism in Norway. Since Christian’s religious tendencies leaned heavily towards Lutheranism it comes as no surprise that Engelbrektsson struggled with the idea of having a Lutheran king over Denmark-Norway. At meetings in December through January 1535-36, Engelbrektsson met with several members of the council, including important Danes like Vincent Lunge and Esge Bille, to discuss the position of Christian III. Despite the fact that he had in September 1535 announced that he supported the new king, the Archbishop changed position, and allegedly had some of the councilors murdered.\textsuperscript{232} Word of these events reached Christian III in February 1536:

I have now received certain knowledge from Trondheim that the Archbishop has had Vincent [Lunge] killed and captured, Bishop Hans Reff, Esge Bille and Claus Bille and had killed Niels Lykke on Christmas eve, it is said that the Archbishop had him

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 84-85.
\textsuperscript{232} Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norge i Dansketiden}, 78.
suffocated by smoke. And he has several…men to the south to persuade the public to remove Your Grace’s support.233

The death of two Danes in powerful positions in Norway underscores the considerable Norwegian resistance to Danish influence. Engelbrektsson’s acts constitute the most radical revolt or demonstration of an influential personality against Denmark in this period. Although it is uncertain whether Niels Lykke was actually “smoked” to death on the Archbishop’s order, as this source claims, the fact that these two men died at the hands of Norwegians shows that anti-Danish sentiments existed in Trondheim.

Engelbrektsson did not act alone, and had the help of local inhabitants in Trondheim who joined his revolt.234 Esge Bille and the others suffered no injury and were released shortly after.235 The author of this passage fails to indicate where he obtained this information, and so its content might be somewhat exaggerated. However, it remains true that Lunge and Lykke lost their lives.236 Vincent Lunge’s brother, Ove Lunge, wrote a letter to Esge


234 Inhabitants of Trondheim, “Letter to the Inhabitants of Bergen” January 1536, in Paludan-Müller, Akstykker, vol. 2, 206-208. The locals who joined Engelbrektsson in his revolt expressed how they saw the Archbishop as their great protector: “His Grace…gave us favorable and good answers, that His Grace will always be the Lord who wants the best for the poor inhabitants og Norway’s kingdom.”: “…gaff hanss Nade…oss gunstelignn oc gode swar, ath hanss Nade wille alttiid ware thenn herre, som ville wiithe fattuge Norriiges Riiges allmuess oc indbyggers beste.”


Bille in Bergen and asked him to provide aid and comfort to the grieving widow and children of Vincent, and requested that those responsible for the murder be punished.\footnote{Ove Lunge, “Letter to Esge Bille,” June 1536, in Diplomatarium Norwegicum, vol. 11. 740.}

It has been suggested that one of the reasons for Engelbrektsson’s behavior was the fact that another candidate for Denmark-Norway’s throne had arrived on the scene, the powerful Count-Palatine Frederik, whose wife, Dorothea, Daughter of Christian II and niece of Charles V, had his eyes on Denmark. In fact, as the daughter of Christian II and his wife Queen Isabella, sister of Charles V, Dorothea should have been the heir to the Danish throne after her father. When this news reached the Norwegian Archbishop, it immediately captured his interest in light of the Count Palatine’s connection to Charles V, Europe’s greatest defender of Catholicism.\footnote{Bagge and Mykland, Norge i Dansketiden, 78.} The Count Palatine actually appealed to the Habsburg court in Brussels for possible assistance in order to secure ‘Habsburg’ interests in Denmark.\footnote{Mary of Hungary, “Letter to Charles V,” May 1535, in Belgian State Archives Papiere d’Etat, 52.} Because Charles V had his hands full with a war against France, the Danish question was a lower priority for him.\footnote{Charles V, “Letter to Mary of Hungary,” March 1536, in Belgian State Archives Papiere d’Etat, 49.} Charles V, however, did order a fleet to bring aid to Copenhagen. This fleet was to set sail in the summer of 1536 and to consist of thirty large ships and twelve smaller ships or ‘boyars’ including two Flemish sloops at each end.\footnote{Account for the fleet to Denmark, May 1536, in Belgian State Archives Chambre de Compte, 26104.} Despite the preparation to aid Lübeck and place Count Palatine on the Danish throne, however, the war in Denmark was lost by the time the fleet was ready.
to sail. It is unlikely Engelbrektsson knew of these preparations because in an open letter dated 6 April 1536, he recognized Christian III as king and begged for his forgiveness.\footnote{Olaf Engelbrektsson, “The Archbishops Pledge to Christian III,” April 1536, in Caspar Paludan-Müller, Aktstykker, vol. 2, 257-259.}

Despite his desperate attempts to save Catholicism in Norway, the Archbishop failed to secure its future. He could not prevent Christian III, a Lutheran, from becoming the next king of Denmark-Norway. Christian managed to secure his election as king, mostly due to his efforts in the Count’s War. Count Christopher and Lübeck’s men experienced early success in the Danish crusade. Copenhagen and the heavily fortified Copenhagen castle fell to their control in June 1534, and they managed to persuade disgruntled Danes to join them. The resistance from Christian III along with efforts of his military commander Johan Rantzau and Swedish assistance, soon stunted the attempts to overrun Denmark.\footnote{Hørby, Danmarks Historie, vol. 2, 308-309.} In his successful attempt to defeat the Count and Lübeck’s mercenaries, Christian managed to gather enough support to secure his position as future king of Denmark-Norway. Through a series of battles in various locations in Denmark, the most famous being the battle of Øksnebjerg on the island of Fyn, Christian surrounded the Count and his loyal followers in Copenhagen.\footnote{Ibid., 309. It is believed that many of the soldiers that Count Christoffer brought with him to Denmark had been part of Christian II’s attack on Norway in 1531.} The siege of Copenhagen lasted long enough to deplete supplies necessary for survival within the city of Copenhagen and on 29 July 1536, Count Christoffer and his men surrendered to Duke
Christian. The inhabitants of Copenhagen received Christian as their rightful monarch, and he became from that time King Christian III.\textsuperscript{245} 

Once established as King, Christian sent 1500 soldiers to Norway to deal with Engelbrektsson and his supporters.\textsuperscript{246} Esge Bille, who commanded the King’s troops in Norway, caused a great deal of damage. In a letter to Bille, Engelbrektsson wrote that the Danish troops had “pillaged all our churches…in Sundmøre and in Romsdal and have burned rectories…and have heavily taxed the poor…along with many other unchristian acts, which are too numerous to record.”\textsuperscript{247} It is hard to know for sure how much damage Norway suffered under the rampage of Christian’s soldiers. The population in the coastal regions was particularly vulnerable to attack, while the Archbishop had the advantage of distance and resources.\textsuperscript{248} However, the use of force clearly indicates that the new king had a harsher policy in mind for Norway. The Bishops of Hamar and Stavanger were both arrested by Christian’s men because they had failed to support him as king. The Bishop of Oslo, who had supported Christian, on the other hand, retained his position, and in time made a convenient conversion to Lutheranism.\textsuperscript{249} Christian’s men only faced military opposition at Stensvikholm Fortress in Trondheim, but the population-at-large

\textsuperscript{245} Paludan-Müller, \textit{Grevens Feide}, vol. 2, 349-362.

\textsuperscript{246} Rian, \textit{Norges Historie}, vol. 5, 33.


\textsuperscript{248} Rian, “Why Did Norway Survive,” 50.

\textsuperscript{249} Bagge and Mykland, \textit{Norge i Dansketiden}, 80.
failed to put up any resistance.\textsuperscript{250} The presence of Christian’s forces also intimidated Engelbrektsson enough for him to announce his departure from his native country.\textsuperscript{251} In early April 1537, he set sail for the Netherlands where he remained until his death the following year.\textsuperscript{252}

The struggle of Engelbrektsson offers insight into a relationship between Denmark and Norway that was unstable at best. As head of the Norwegian Council, he fought a lonely battle against powerful Danes within Norway. Although it might be impossible to know if he fought equally hard for Norwegian independence, as for preserving the Catholic faith, he represented a voice against Danish dominance at the time. His actions, especially in regard to the deaths of Lunge and Lykke, seem rather brutal and rash, but most likely demonstrate his desperation. The position of the Norwegian Council and its ability to act appears to have diminished extensively after Frederik I came to the throne. Frederick’s determination to control Norwegian affairs by placing his own men in strategic positions throughout Norway, violating his promises in the process, deteriorated a relationship that had been more equal in the past. It seems the Danish Council, however, was willing to include Norway in proclaiming a new king in 1533-34. The Count’s War intervened and paved the way for Christian III, who most likely would have ignored Norway’s Council, despite the fact that he contacted it and asked for its support.

\textsuperscript{250} Rian, “Why Did Norway Survive,” 51.


\textsuperscript{252} Bagge and Mykland, Norge i Dansketiden, 80.
Christian’s evolving attitude towards Norway became clear in his Danish Coronation Charter of October 1536:

Because Norway is now reduced in both power and wealth, and the inhabitants of Norway’s kingdom alone cannot support a ruler or king…and a majority of Norway’s council, especially Archbishop Olaf…have failed to fulfill their obligations towards Denmark…then it shall, from this time onward, be and remain under the crown of Denmark like to the other lands of Jutland, Fyn or Skåne, and shall hereafter neither be nor be called a separate kingdom, but rather be a part of Denmark and under Denmark’s crown for evermore.253

Given a dearth of sources, little is known about negotiations during the days when the charter was written.254 It is also difficult to know exactly what the King and the Danish Council actually meant by the paragraph cited although it seems that Norway was to be a province of Denmark.255 The charter indicates that Norway, according to Denmark, could not financially support itself and thus needed to be under Danish rule. Christian had evidently become disgruntled by Norwegian members of council who had failed to live up to their promises. In his new position of power, Christian III abolished the Norwegian Council, eradicating an established institution of Norway’s political life and influence.256 This signaled a profound change in the relationship between the two countries.

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255 Rian, Norges Historie, vol. 5, 34.

256 Ibid.
This relationship had deteriorated ever since Frederik I came to the throne. He had kept Norway’s aristocracy in check by placing his own men in vital positions throughout the country. He also alienated the Council by making decisions about Norwegian issues without involving Council members, clear violations of his previous promises. The result of the Count’s War dictated that Norway lose the little influence it had managed to retain whereas Danes continued to hold important positions in the country. The union between Denmark and Norway after 1536, and until 1814, excluded Norwegians from participation in government to such a degree that the concept of union during that time actually meant government from afar and foreign domination. Although Sweden had felt the brutal effects of ‘foreign’ domination under Christian II, it still maintained close ties to Denmark, forged by their mutual assistance during the Count’s War, which ultimately resulted in Scandinavian peace until 1563.

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Chapter III: Swedish-Danish Relations Prior to and During the Count’s War

During the summer of 1533, a rumor circulated in Danish noble circles of impending Swedish hostility towards Denmark. That same summer, Gustav Vasa, King of Sweden, sent a letter to the Danish National Council, stating:

We let you know…since you, good men, have some feelings of discontent towards us, that we would desire to be aggressive towards Denmark’s kingdom, that we never have (God knowing) thought or intended to do so….Therefore we kindly ask that you do not believe or put any trust to such treachery….We have, with the help of God, always stayed true to the union between these kingdoms.  

In this passage, Gustav Vasa confirmed his friendly intentions towards Denmark and alluded to a union between the two countries. Although there might have been many reasons why he wanted to disclaim any rumors of hostility, it indicates that Vasa desired to maintain a peaceful relationship with his Scandinavian neighbor. It is interesting that these two countries, which only ten years earlier had been engaged in a bitter struggle due to Sweden’s fight for independence under Gustav’s leadership, had formed a closer relationship by this time.

Denmark-Sweden and the Kalmar Union

As regards Denmark and Sweden, the Kalmar Union did not exist without friction. These two countries struggled over issues of domination in places like Gotland,


259 Although Gustav is not specific in this letter, the union mentioned most likely alludes to the agreement between Sweden and Denmark to assist each other against a possible threat from Christian II. By the time the letter was written, Christian II was already a prisoner in Denmark.
an island off the east coast of Sweden, throughout the fifteenth century.\(^{260}\) When Christian II came to the Danish throne in 1513, struggles escalated and turned into a civil war, fought between Danish pro-union and Swedish anti-union forces.\(^{261}\) Gustav Vasa fell captive to Danish troops under Christian II in 1518, but managed to return to Sweden in May 1520.\(^{262}\) The Swedish-Danish conflict climax\(\)ed in November 1520, when Christian II executed, despite promises of friendship, over eighty men of the Swedish nobility and clergy in the infamous “Stockholm Bloodbath”. Through this action, Christian intended to wipe out any opposition to his rule in Sweden.\(^{263}\)

Following the Stockholm Bloodbath, Gustav Vasa, who lost close relatives to Christian’s carnage, including his father Erik Johansson, traveled throughout Sweden to gather support for his cause against Denmark and Christian II. Gustav belonged to a family with old roots in Uppland, Sweden, an area close to Stockholm. His family belonged to the Swedish nobility and his father owned a significant amount of land.\(^{264}\) From Gustav’s own writings, it is clear that he never forgot the wrong that Christian II had done to him, his family, and the Union.\(^{265}\) However, Gustav experienced great success in his endeavors and managed to rally support in various parts of the country. His success has partly been accredited to his strong personality and his unique skills in public

\(^{260}\) Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, 47.


\(^{262}\) Linton, *Sveriges Historie*, 18.


speaking.\textsuperscript{266} Despite this, he still needed help to achieve victory over the Danes. He received aid from the Hanseatic town of Lübeck, which sent a fleet to help in his endeavors.\textsuperscript{267} With Lübeck’s assistance, Gustav successfully drove the Danes out of Sweden by the summer of 1523, with exception of the areas of Skåne and Bornholm, and on 6 June, he was acclaimed King of Sweden. Christian II, on the other hand, was forced to abdicate and fled to the Netherlands. Gustav Vasa’s ascension to the Swedish throne marked the beginning of a long rule by the Vasa family. Without Lübeck’s help, however, Gustav would most likely not have been able to defeat the Danes. Paludan-Müller wrote that “without the assistance of Lübeck, Gustav Vasa would never have been able to remove the executioners axe from the hands of Christian the Second or to put the crown of Sweden on his head.”\textsuperscript{268} Although Gustav has often been portrayed as the father of the modern Sweden, his rule did face challenges from within his own kingdom. A number of popular uprisings occurred in 1527, 1530, and 1542. Gustav responded to these by violently repressing those who opposed him.\textsuperscript{269}

Shortly before Gustav ascended the throne in Sweden, a new king replaced the abdicated Christian. The town of Lübeck, in addition to its Swedish involvement, also conspired to place Frederik of Schleswig-Holstein, or Frederik I, Christian II’s uncle, on

\textsuperscript{266} Roberts, \textit{The Early Vasas}, 45.

\textsuperscript{267} Antjekathrin Graßmann, ed., \textit{Lübeckische Geschichte} (Lübeck: Schmidt- Römhild, 1988), 373.


\textsuperscript{269} Nordstrom, \textit{The History of Sweden}, 42.
the Danish throne, in March 1523. Frederik I enjoyed a rather short reign challenged by internal conflicts, until he passed away in April 1533. Letters and correspondence available from this period reveal that Sweden and Denmark managed to maintain, despite their troubled history, a close diplomatic relationship and eventual military cooperation. In other words, we will see that although the Kalmar Union had ended, these two countries continued to work together to face foreign threats and retained diplomatic ties.

**Gustav Vasa and Frederik I**

To get a better view of Denmark and Sweden’s relationship and cooperation during this period, we will begin by looking at Gustav Vasa and Frederik I’s interactions. One issue of tension was Sweden’s attempt to incorporate the area of Skåne. Historians have suggested that although it appears that Frederik had a fair relationship with his neighbor, he secretly never abandoned the thought of possible dominion over Sweden.

It is apparent, however, since Denmark was in control of Gotland, Blekinge and Skåne, that Frederik was content enough to maintain a peaceful relationship. There are, however, a few examples of issues which occupied Frederik: on 9 June 1523, three days after Gustav Vasa became King, Frederick addressed the Swedes in a letter where he reminded them that he had driven Christian II out, and encouraged them to consider the

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271 Paludan-Müller, *Grevens Feide* vol. 1, 179.

benefits for the three kingdoms if they chose him as king in accordance with the old union.\textsuperscript{273}

This was a bold move by Frederik, who must have realized, at least to a certain extent, the level of resentment in the Swedish population towards the Danes. It is uncertain whether he knew that Sweden had already crowned a king, or that such an event was imminent. Frederik actually repeated this message on 17 June, and by this date we can assume he realized that Sweden had already chosen Vasa. Frederik’s attempt to bring the three countries together in 1523 does show that he had hopes of returning to the old union, but there are no indications that he harbored such hopes throughout his ten-year reign. In fact, Frederik and Gustav entered into agreements, in September 1524 and August 1528, to assist each other in the likelihood of an attack by Christian II.\textsuperscript{274} When Christian II attacked Norway in 1531, Gustav realized that this threatened Sweden as much as Denmark, and honored his pledge by joining a Danish counter-attack to drive Christian out.\textsuperscript{275}

An example of how these monarchs worked together also occurred in September 1524, when Frederik and Gustav agreed to exchange escaped citizens from each country, and if any member of court or apprentice are separated from their master in Denmark and proceed to our kingdom, Sweden, without permission…and he is wanted by writing, then shall he immediately be sent back to Denmark again…and answer for his own actions…and, similarly, if any member of court in Sweden separate from his master…and go to Denmark…then he shall…be sent back to Sweden.\textsuperscript{276}

\textsuperscript{273} Petersen, “Krummedige og Norge,” 6-7.

\textsuperscript{274} Paludan-Müller, \textit{Grevens Feide}, vol. 1, 178-179.

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{276} “Ther som nogher hoffmandh eller sven skilies fran sin hosbondhe uthi Danmarch med umyndhe…och gefver sigh in uthi vorth rike Sverighe och ther vordher screfvit ephther hannum, thaa schal
Although the issue involved might appear insignificant, it does show that Gustav and Frederik cooperated early on in their reigns as ‘new’ monarchs of Sweden and Denmark-Norway.

Another issue had to do with Viken, an area close to the Oslo Fjord. Gustav Vasa, however, decided to occupy this area in 1523. Although this could have resulted in increased hostility and even a military response from Denmark, the two countries solved the problem diplomatically. In 1530, Denmark and Sweden agreed that Gustav Vasa could occupy Viken for another six years. Two years later, after negotiating with Frederik’s representative, Klaus Bille, Gustav agreed, for an annual fee, to hand Viken back to Denmark-Norway. In an open letter, Vasa explained that he had “to Denmark’s crown delivered Viken for a piece of gold, which [Klaus Bille] shall deliver to Lübeck.” A peaceful outcome resulted from Sweden’s occupation of Viken, which also helped Gustav repay some of his debt to Lübeck.


279 Klaus Bille, “Agreement between Sweden and Denmark regarding the area of Viken,” May 1532, in Laursen, ed., Traité Du Danemark et De La Norvège, 123.

Towards the end of 1533, some months after Frederik’s death, Vasa approached the Danish National Council in a letter. In it Gustav laments Frederik’s death, and stated he was saddened that he and Sweden have lost such a dear friend and neighbor. He wrote that Frederik’s “death is a complete sorrow and discomfort of the heart, and we have for this reason met you with great compassion”\(^\text{281}\) Such condolences were common and perhaps a formality among neighboring kingdoms. In this case, the remark came in a letter which responded to a Danish request to Sweden which addressed several issues. It is difficult to know for sure whether Gustav wrote in sincerity or out of duty, and whether he actually meant anything by his remarks. However, since he took time to address this along with other issues, it suggests that he had been affected somehow by Frederik’s death and that the two kings shared a relationship of mutual respect. There is also a strong possibility that Vasa had written the National Council or others in Denmark about Frederik’s death earlier than this, as it appears strange he would wait until November to send condolences for Frederik’s passing which occurred April.

In December 1533, Vasa addressed an audience of godparents, most likely Danish nobles, and wrote that God, through His tender mercy, had blessed him and his queen with a son.\(^\text{282}\) On the occasion of the boy’s christening, Vasa invited the Danish godparents to “suffer the inconvenience for our sake to come to Stockholm at the prescribed time and make yourselves merry with us and other of our lords and good


friends...[for] that good part which God has given us, we would like to share with you.”²⁸³ Although it might have been a common practice to invite neighboring nobles to such events, this shows that Vasa had put aside at least some of his resentment towards the Danes, and used the occasion to encourage friendship with the Danish nobility. Likely that some of the Swedish and Danish nobility at the time were related through marriage, as it had been common during the Kalmar Union for Swedes to own property and spend time on Danish lands and vise versa. Vasa was himself related to Christian III through marriage as well. Other examples of interaction with the Danes come from the spring and summer of that same year as Gustav evinced a keen interest in Danish attitudes towards Lübeck.

**Lübeck**

It is virtually impossible to write about this topic without a discussion of Lübeck’s continual involvement in the Baltic. In a constant search for expanded Hanseatic domination and monopoly in the area, Lübeck found itself on the path towards war with the Netherlands, which also had trading interests in the region.²⁸⁴ Lübeck approached both Sweden and Denmark and suggested that they too ought to join in the war against the Netherlands. Vasa most likely found himself trapped between a rock and a hard place because of indebtedness to Lübeck incurred during Sweden’s war against Denmark.

On 5 May 1533, Vasa drew up a letter to Frederik I regarding Lübeck’s

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negotiations with the Danes concerning relations with the Netherlands. In it, Gustav discussed how Lübeck had written to Sweden and requested it join in the war effort along with Denmark. He also expressed astonishment that Denmark had not informed him that representatives from Lübeck had previously traveled to Denmark in search of support for the war.\footnote{Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Frederick I,” 5 May 1533, in Paludan-Müller, ed., Aktstykker, vol. 1, 2. This letter was written and addressed to Frederik I after the King had actually passed away. It is possible Gustav had not yet received word of his death, and therefore addressed the letter to the King instead of the council.} In the same letter, Vasa asked how Denmark viewed the whole situation of a possible war with the Netherlands.\footnote{Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Frederick I,” 5 May 1533, in Paludan-Müller, ed., Aktstykker, vol. 1, 2.} Two months later, Vasa followed up with a similar letter, this time addressed to the Danish National Council, seeking Danish support:

We… wrote and requested the mind and opinion of you good men about the struggle between Lübeck and the Netherlands….As of now we have not obtained a final answer…we desire that you would let us know how you feel about the struggle.\footnote{“Wij…Scriffwe…begerandes wetta eder godhe herrers sinne och mening um them feijde, ssom siig nu emellam the Lubska och the Hollendeare begeffwer…Så haffwe wij…nu äff ider ingenn endelig swar belongatt…Begere wij än nu gerna, atti wele geffwa oss tilkenne, huruledis i um sama feijde til sinnes äre.” Gustav Vasa, “Letter to the Danish Council,” 31 July 1533, in Paludan-Müller, ed., Aktstykker, vol. 1, 4.}

It appears Vasa had a keen interest in what Denmark intended to do. Although he most likely could have acted completely independent of Denmark, as no official agreement existed at this point, he still kept a close watch on his neighbor and its intentions. In the same letter he tried to convince the Danes that a joint war with Lübeck would not be worthwhile, because the war simply had nothing to do with either of them, and that Lübeck had no other intention than to create tensions and rifts between Sweden and Denmark, following in the footsteps of their old habit.\footnote{Ibid., 5.} In the middle of the struggle
with Lübeck, Gustav seems to have started attempts to build up a healthy relationship with Denmark. His letters indicate that he took the initiative as he openly sought council and opinion from the Danish Council and offered advice at the same time. As it turns out, neither Sweden nor Denmark assisted Lübeck against the Netherlands, and in many ways this represented the beginning of close cooperation between Sweden and Denmark.

In addition to seeking and offering advice, Gustav also asked the Danish Council to write a letter to Lübeck on Sweden’s behalf, as a means of diplomacy. In fact, he sent a copy of a draft of a letter he thought would be ideal and asked the Danes to add whatever they thought useful. This might have been an unusual request, and it is hard to know if he actually expected this to be followed up. Evidence suggests, however, that the Danish council did in fact comply with Gustav’s request.

This does not mean, however, that Gustav did not express his opinions to the Danes when he saw fit. He did on occasion write blunt messages to the Council. One such message, in a letter written in April 1534, about a month before the start of the Count’s War, had to do with issues surrounding Denmark’s supposed trade with Lübeck. Although Lübeck had ended its war against the Netherlands by this time, it remained hostile towards Sweden throughout this period, due to Gustav’s failure to pay his financial debt. About the Danish trade with Lübeck, Gustav wrote:

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Furthermore…it is of great surprise to us, how Lübeck has such great dealings in Denmark with this and the other. They are purchasing large amounts of oxen…and are eating beyond all fashion, by which we wonder, especially after the existing agreement which details how no kingdom should favor the other kingdom’s enemies by aiding or supplying them with provisions, food or other comforts. We therefore ask you to make it known, by your writing, how we are to understand this.292

If based on accurate information, this offers descriptive details about Danish activity and trade with Lübeck as the Count’s War drew near. Vasa, however, did not use harsh language but merely asked the Danes what they were doing, and gently reminded them of a mutual agreement.293 The nature of this reprimand or reminder indicates that Vasa never desired to create hostile sentiments among the Danish councilors.

The Swedish-Danish Agreement of 1534

The most detailed and significant agreement of cooperation between Sweden and Denmark since the breakup of the Kalmar Union came about in February 1534. Danish nobles Niels Lunge, Axel Jull, and Truid Ulfstand traveled to Stockholm and met with Vasa and the Swedish Council to arrange cooperation and assistance in case of foreign attacks on Sweden or Denmark-Norway.294 It is believed this agreement was the product of Danish determination to get Vasa’s support against Lübeck.295 However, Vasa

292 “Ytterligere…är oss tesliges forwitterligt giort, hurulunde the Lubske haffue mecktig stor handling in Danmark både i ene motte oc andra. Them tilstædes att köpa oxan wijd stora hopar oc…bespizza siig endels wtöffwer all motte, på hwilkit wij endels formodra, besynerliga efter slichtt forbund…att jnthett rige skulle gore tess annen riges fiende tiföring eller undsetning mett prophant, spis eller annen trost; Hwarföre bedie wij eder gerne, ati wele giffwe oss tilkenne mett eders scirffwelse, hur wij thett forstå skole” Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Claus Bilde,” 2 April 1534, in Paludan-Müller, ed., Aktstykker, vol. 1, 58. It is clear that Vasa saw the agreement as standing, although the Danish Council failed to ratify the agreement that year. Duke Christian ratified it in 1535.

293 This agreement was made in Sweden in February 1534.


received the Danish delegates with open arms in January 1534 and the parties reached an agreement by 2 February.296 The Danish National Council failed to convene in 1534 and so the agreement was not ratified that year.297 However, Duke Christian ratified the agreement the following year and applied during the Count’s War.298 It is therefore important to get a better insight into the agreement, at least to get Gustav’s perception of it, especially since he appears to have considered it a valid agreement.

Some of Vasa’s letters offer significant insight into the nature of the agreement. He referred to it as an eternal and friendly agreement forged between Denmark’s noble messengers and Sweden’s council and all its inhabitants.299 In a letter to Claus Bilde, Danish Council member, Gustav wrote about the agreement and outlined some of its key points. He assumed that

The ambassadors and messengers for the Danish council have announced the friendly actions, agreements and assistance which these three kingdoms have agreed on in the name of the Holy Trinity…how one kingdom should be committed to come to the help, assistance, and aid with all possible power…[and] hope in the name of the almighty God, that when these three kingdoms are bound together and are willing to stand together, that no one, including Lübeck, will have much progress here.300

296 Paludan-Müller, Grevens Feide, vol. 1, 177-78.
297 Paludan-Müller, Grevens Feide, vol. 1, 183.
300 “Danmarks riges rådz ambasianter oc sendningebud, well haflwe kungjorrt eder the wenlige handlinder…enighett oc bistand, som nw udi the helge trefallighetz nampn tesse trende riker emellan….Tesliges hur thett ene rige skulle wara forplictugt att komma thett annett till hielp, bistand oc vndsetning mett all mact, thwar thett så behöfder….Oc forhoppas til then alzmeetigste gud, att når tesse trij riker äre så samans bebundne oc were sedan….stå mett hwar annen, att hwärken the Lubske eller någen annen skall få her någen stoor framgang.”Gustav Vasa, Letter to Claus Bilde,” April 1534, in Paludan-Müller, Aktstykker, vol. 1, 57.
It appears the agreement served a military function for defensive measures. Gustav also mentioned that none of the three countries should engage in any form of trade with potential enemies.³⁰¹ It is clear from Vasa’s statements that Lübeck loomed as an enemy for the three countries. Historically, Lübeck had had hostile dealings with Sweden, and at the time Vasa wrote the letter he was under pressure from Lübeck. By a strange coincidence, the letter was written about a month before Count Christoffer of Oldenburg attacked Denmark on behalf of Lübeck. It is important to note that Vasa referred to three kingdoms and not two. This was natural, as Norway belonged to Denmark and therefore fell under the agreement, even though Norwegian delegates had no voice in the matter. Thus, the agreement included Norway and played a vital role in Sweden and Denmark’s relationship during the Count’s War.³⁰² As we will see, the two countries shared intelligence and supported each other militarily during the war, indicating a willingness to establish a closer relationship than they had enjoyed for years.

One aspect of Sweden and Denmark’s cooperation in the time leading up to and during the Count’s War, was connected with sharing intelligence. In July 1534, a month after Lübeck’s attack on Denmark, Gustav wrote Henrik Rosenkrands, officer of law at Jutland, and informed him of Lübeck’s actions.³⁰³ He wrote about a supposed scheme by Lübeck to lay siege to Dutch ships in the Baltic in order to use


³⁰² This agreement failed to be ratified by the Danish council in the 1534, but was ratified by Duke Christian.

them as reinforcement to their existing fleet.\textsuperscript{304} He continued this warning with a proposal that Denmark and Sweden do the same thing, namely capture Dutch ships and “take the advantage to strengthen ourselves with them as Lübeck, our enemy, has done.”\textsuperscript{305}

Later that same month, Vasa wrote to the inhabitants of Copenhagen:

We have discerned, through certain knowledge, how Lübeck has in mind, through some secret plan and treachery, to engage in a hostile attack and action against you…and wish to place Christian [II] back on the Danish throne again….Therefore we pray, advise and admonish you all…not to put any faith or trust in Lübeck or their design regarding King Christian, as it is not King Christian that is truly on their mind, rather it is to cause these three kingdoms eternal damage and despair.\textsuperscript{306}

Vasa offered a voice of warning to Copenhagen and reminded them of the imminent danger of a possible return of Christian II through Lübeck’s efforts. More important was his attempt to persuade the Copenhageners not to assist Lübeck in the war, indicating Vasa’s diplomatic attempts to strengthen Scandinavian efforts against the German instigator. In the same letter he also encouraged them to stand by Frederik I’s son, Duke Christian.\textsuperscript{307} Despite Gustav’s efforts, Copenhagen fell to Lübeck and

\textsuperscript{304} “Tesliges giffue wij eder tilkenne, atwj for son tidender besport haffue, att the Lupske äre till sinnes att tage vp the Hollendere skip. Som nw äre i Östersiön, och forsterke siig mett them.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{305} “…at wi brukade then fordell oc forsterckte oss medt same Hollendere skip, som wåre fiender the Lupske.” Ibid., 102-103.

\textsuperscript{306} “Wij haffue uataff wisse kundskap fornummert…hurulunde the Lupske alffwarligen till sinnes äre, att giffua siig vtij någen fienthlig angrip och handling mett eder…mett någen hemelig list och bedragerij…thom wille Eska konung Christiärn…till Regimenthet och Cronon i Danmark igjen…huarföre bedi, rade oc formane wij eder alle…atj ecke wele settia tro eller lijt till the Lupske eller theris forrettelige ansleger vm konung Christiern; that är jnhet konung Chrisitern, them ligger så Hartt på hiertad, thar är Alt Annet vppunder, nemplige tesse trenne tikers ewige skade och forderff.” Gustav Vasa, “Letter to the inhabitants of Copenhagen,” July 1534, in Paludan-Müller, ed., Akstykker, vol. 1, 106-107. It appears Vasa concerned himself with the issue of Christian II as he, in the same letter, asked the people of Copenhagen to remember the many burdens the former king had placed upon them while in power.

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 108.
Count Christopher shortly thereafter. Vasa received intelligence concerning the fall of Copenhagen to Lübeck most likely at the end of July 1534.\textsuperscript{308}

With its future tied to trade in the Baltic and exemption from sound dues, Lübeck, under leadership of Jürgen Wullenwever, made a desperate attempt to mold the Danish succession crisis to meet its own interests. Wullenwever, a Lutheran merchant and politician, became burgomaster of Lübeck in 1533.\textsuperscript{309} In light of Wullenwever’s efforts to convince the Danes to join him in Lübeck’s struggle against the Netherlands, he set his hopes on helping Christian II regain the throne.\textsuperscript{310} Two other options also existed. Count Christopher of Oldenburg, who belonged to the Oldenburg line, could serve as a candidate for the Danish throne.\textsuperscript{311} It also appears that Henry VIII of England might have been a possible candidate in the mind of Wullenwever. Marcus Meyer, an adventurer from Lübeck, went to England in 1533 and gained enough favor from Henry to become knighted. Wullenwever subsequently drew up a treaty with Henry VIII in 1534 that increased England’s influence in the Baltic, through assisting Lübeck militarily in attempting to seize Denmark’s vacant throne.\textsuperscript{312} However, this treaty was completely abandoned a year

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Korell, \textit{Jürgen Wullenwever}, 72.
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later. For some unknown reason, Lübeck never ratified the treaty, thereby precluding any English assistance in the Count’s War.

Accordingly, Wullenwever and Lübeck had to rely solely on German mercenaries and Count Christopher. In 1534, the Count penned an agreement with Lübeck and Wullenwever, which outlined Wullenwever’s design regarding control of the Danish throne. This agreement stated that “after [Christian II’s ] death no king shall be chosen without the co-operation, agreement and goodwill of the town of Lübeck….We shall use our best endeavors to ensure that…Denmark and Norway will accept [this].” The agreement also stipulated that Lübeck remain in control of Bornholm and destroy the fortress in Bergen which had caused “so many dissensions.” Lübeck, then, focused on total control of Denmark, along with increasing its overall influence in the Baltic. Since Wullenwever constituted the mastermind behind the Count’s War, he had to face the consequences of its failure. On 24 September 1537, he was executed beheaded, drawn and quartered.

In addition to sharing intelligence of Lübeck’s undertakings with Copenhagen, Vasa also warned inhabitants of Skåne and Blekinge, two provinces under Danish control in southern Sweden, of Lübeck’s hostility. He informed them

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316 Ibid.
317 Dollinger, *The German Hansa*, 327.
that Holstein and Denmark had been attacked by Lübeck which, according to Gustav, wanted to place a foreign king in Denmark:

Our enemy Lübeck, which has attacked Denmark and installed…an unknown and foreign lord, whom they intend to place as lord and king…and suppress you of all privileges and freedoms….We let you all know, both rich and poor, the unhappy result of ending up under an unknown lordship….Therefore we advise and admonish you all…not to let yourselves be deceived or betrayed away from the noble Duke Christian, our dear brother-in-law, and Denmark’s national council.\textsuperscript{318}

A significant aspect of this letter is Vasa’s diplomatic attempt to persuade Skåne not to take the side of Lübeck, but instead accept and support Duke Christian of Holstein. Although Duke Christian had not yet become king of Denmark, he played a major role in Danish attempts to drive Lübeck and Count Christoffeuer out of Denmark. Gustav referred to the fact that he had a family tie to Duke Christian, which might explain why he insisted Skåne should be loyal to him.\textsuperscript{319} Another reason Gustav wanted Skåne to be loyal might have been that it bordered his own lands, and he had little interest in having Lübeck so close to him. The fact that he encouraged Danes to stand on the side of the Duke also indicates his dedication to a common cause. Vasa acted in the interest not only of himself, but of Denmark. The agreement of February 1534, as far as Gustav was concerned, applied and might have encouraged his diplomatic attempts as well.

\textsuperscript{318}“Wores fiender the Lupske, som nw haffue… giort anfall i Danmark och haffue ther jnfört…eem fremmande och wtensk Herre, huilkin the ackte ath jnsettie ther en Herre och konung…och fortryckia eder och alle the privilegire oc friheter…Sågiffwe wij eder godeinmenn alle, fatige och rike, sielfflue tilkenne, huad nytto, gang eller profit ther wille epterfölle, atj komma vnder eth fremmande Herskap….Therföre råde, biude och högelige formane wij eder alle…atj ecke lathe eder forföra eller bedrage ifrÅ…Hertug Krijstiern, wor käre Swåger, och Danmarks riges råd” Gustav Vasa, “Letter to council at Skåne,” August 1534, in Paludan-Müller, ed., \textit{Aktstykker}, vol. 1, 138-140.

\textsuperscript{319}Roberts, \textit{The Early Vasas}, 99. Christian III married a sister of Katarina of Saxe-Lauenborg, the wife of Gustav Vasa.
Gustav acted diplomatically with Skåne on other occasions as well. In one instance he instructed his army leaders to act cautiously in their interaction with the Danes: “see to that you do not commit any harsh acts towards the Danish gentlemen…we should aid and comfort them with all our power.”

It appears that Gustav wanted to avoid any clashes with the Danes in Skåne and that he remained committed to giving help and support. The most significant aspect of this, however, is that Gustav did indicate that he willingly kept his promises and wanted to keep a peaceful relationship with Denmark.

As time passed, however, these areas fell under control of Lübeck. Prior to Skåne’s fall, Vasa attempted to get the council to accept and support Duke Christian. Vasa wrote to Vincent Lunge in Norway, informed him of the current status, expressed surprise over the fact that the inhabitants of these regions would negotiate with Count Christoffer, since they previously accepted the leadership of Duke Christian. In this situation, Vasa informed the Council of Skåne that, “since you have accommodated Count Christoffer we have to leave it to God in Heaven and put it into His Hands and let events transpire according to His Divine Will.”

Evidence suggests that Vasa engaged himself in correspondence with the Danes in order to warn and offer advice as hostilities loomed. There are, however,

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only a few examples of the Danes following a similar practice. The Danish

nobleman, Tyge Krabbe, wrote to Vasa and informed him of Lübeck’s activities with

the Netherlands in the Baltic. Vasa replied, expressing his appreciation. In another

instance, Vasa received intelligence regarding Lübeck from Danish nobleman Claus

Bilde, to which he applied:

We have in these days received your writing and letter where you make it known unto

us regarding how things are with Lübeck. How they now have been in a meeting with

the Dutch in Bremen in order to enter into friendship with them again and with the help

of others, bring all evil to the Swedish kingdom in order to place whomever they desire

as king here.

This passage, to Bilde, gives us some sense of what intelligence the Danes shared

with Sweden. The fact that there are only a few examples available does not

necessarily rule out the possibility that the Danes neglected to share vital

information. There is, however, evidence that Gustav had issues with the kind of

information he received about the progress and the state of the war in Denmark.

In January 1534, Vasa ordered leaders of his army to select a capable person

to travel to Denmark to learn the true nature of the situation. His instructions

suggest he felt a need to obtain more detailed information then could be

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324 “Wij haffue nw I tesse dagar vndfongit eders scrifwelse oc breff vdi huilka i oss tilkenne
giffwa the legenheter, some sig begiffwa mett the Lubske, huruledes the nw haffue warit till mote mett the
Hollendere i Brämen, acktendes att komma sig I friid oc wenskap mett thom igjen, och om the….mett någre
andre städers till hjelp… bedriffwa jn på oss oc Sweriges riike alt onth oc insettia her for herra oc konung

325 Gustav Vasa, “Letter to army leaders,” January 1535, in Paludan-Müller, ed., Aktstykker, vol. 1, 301. It is uncertain if Gustav already had spies or other military personnel in Denmark monitoring the situation.
communicated by letter alone. He basically wanted a trusted individual to learn personally from Duke Christian “how Duke Christian will use his forces…on land and on water…so that we might better supply help and assistance and what else might be needed against our enemies”\textsuperscript{326}

The most significant aspect of sharing intelligence and warnings, however, is that Gustav willingly kept to the agreements and wanted to assist the Danes when possible. The Danes in turn shared information with Sweden, strengthening the relationship between the two neighbors.

Sharing intelligence and warnings was an important aspect of Swedish-Danish cooperation during the Count’s War. Another significant element related to their military endeavors against Lübeck. Paludan-Müller offered a useful summary of military aspects of the agreement of 1534, which set guidelines for numbers of soldiers and ships to be at each other’s disposal, and financial responsibilities. In case of an attack on Denmark, Sweden was to send 800 men including ships, and if Sweden fell under attack, Denmark was to send 1000 men including ships; and all soldiers would be paid and fed by the country supplying the help. If either Denmark or Sweden was completely overpowered and the agreed help prove insufficient, then they would supply as much military assistance as possible.\textsuperscript{327} Evidence suggests military cooperation during the Count’s War accorded with the latter part of the agreement.

\textsuperscript{326}“…huru hertug Christian vill taga sin stycker...tiil Landh och vathn, sså atwj...tess bättre kunnom göra huar annan tröst, hielp och bistond, ee huar behoff görs, emott vora fiender” Ibid., 302.

\textsuperscript{327} Paludan-Müller, \textit{Grevens Feide}, vol. 1, 180.
In July 1534, Vasa encouraged the Danes to send some of their ships to join with the Swedish fleet at Kalmar.\footnote{Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Henrik Rosenkrands,” July 1534, in Paludan-Müller, ed., \textit{Aktstykker}, vol. 1, 102.} He reasoned that with reinforcement, his fleet could do more damage to the enemy, and explained that his own ships were armed and ready to sail, and hoped that assistance would come with the first favorable wind.\footnote{Ibid., 102.} He also promised to support Denmark by land and sea to the very best of his abilities.\footnote{Gustav Vasa, “Letter to the inhabitants of Copenhagen,” July 1534, in Paludan-Müller, ed., \textit{Aktstykker}, vol. 1, 107-108.} The following month, he responded promptly to a letter from the Danes requesting help, and sent in soldiers:

We kindly remind you that the good men of the Danish National Council have…an eternal league between these three kingdoms…Due to the events which are now happening, that Lübeck, the enemy of these three kingdoms, has attacked Denmark…we have, according to the same league, sent the most possible force, both by horse and foot, to yours and Denmark’s National Council’s help and assistance…and make it known to you that the noble Count and Lord Christian…have requested our help…which we very much want to do.\footnote{“Wij giffue eder…tilkenne att the gode Herrer Danmarks rige råd hade…en ewig…forbund och conferderats tesse tenne riker emellam…eftet then leglighet, son nw på ferde är, att tesse tenne rikens fiender the Lupske äre jnfalne vdj Danmark…haffue wij epter same forbund…wtskickat all thenn meste magt, bade till hest oc foot…eder och menige Danmarks riges råd till hielp, tröst och wndsetning. Och giffve wij eder tilkenne, ath högborre förste och Herre Her Christiern…haffue begat aff oss hielp…huilkît wij och så gerna göre wille.”Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Mogens Gøye,” August 1534, in Paludan-Müller, ed., \textit{Aktstykker}, vol. 1, 141-142. See also Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Duke Christian,” Jan 1535, in Paludan-Müller, ed., \textit{Aktstykker}, vol. 1, 298.} This passage shows that Vasa held to the agreement of 1534, but says nothing concerning the number of horses and soldiers supplied at this time. In another
instance, he referred to the fact that he had sent about six to eight ships, and there are several other references to the deployment of soldiers and ships.\textsuperscript{332}

Although it might be impossible to know for sure if Vasa did as much as he possibly could to assist Denmark in the Count’s War, he suggested he had done his best.\textsuperscript{333} The fact of the matter is that he managed to build a small but very efficient navy by the time the Count’s War began. Together with the Danish and also the Prussian fleet, they defeated Lübeck’s navy. Albrecht of Prussia, a Lutheran, had diplomatic ties with Denmark through his marriage to Dorothea, daughter of Frederik I, so when Vasa requested Albrecht send ships and soldiers to help his brother-in-law in June 1534, he happily complied. His contribution to the fleet was minimal, however, as only one of the two ships sent actually made it.\textsuperscript{334} The big break came in the summer of 1535, when a combined Danish, Swedish and Prussian fleet defeated Lübeck off Bornholm.\textsuperscript{335} For Lübeck, the loss at sea constituted a naval disaster which ultimately marked its eventual defeat.\textsuperscript{336}

An important element of the victory at sea came through the leadership of the Danish Admiral Peder Skram, a man who has stood as an example of Danish

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{333} Gustav Vasa, “Letter to Danish National Council,” Sept 1534 in Paludan-Müller, ed., \textit{Aktstykker}, vol. 1, 195.
\item \textsuperscript{334} Ekman, “Albrecht of Prussia,” 21-26.
\item \textsuperscript{335} Olesen et al., \textit{Middelalderens Danmark: kultur og samfund fra trosskifte til Reformation} (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 2001), 50.
\item \textsuperscript{336} Antjekathrin Graßmann, ed., \textit{Lübeckische Geschichte}, 405-406.
\end{itemize}
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heroism ever since. Skram came from a Danish noble family from southern Jutland, and began his military career in his youth. He participated in military expeditions, on land and sea, in both Norway and Sweden under Christian II and Frederik I. By the time the Count’s War began, he had already made a name for himself as a capable leader. Even Vasa knew of Skram and wrote, “we should get a fine and capable man for an admiral or skipper for our fleet of ships…and mention Peder Skram and praise him as a…clever soldier at sea.” As the war progressed, Skram became Admiral of the Danish fleet, while Måns Svensson commanded the Swedish ships. Vasa desired even a greater responsibility placed upon Skram’s shoulders. After Vasa learned of the victory at sea, he wrote a letter of thanks:

Peder and other good men…God has given you victory…over our enemy, for which we first and foremost will and should thank and praise God, our Father in Heaven…and thank you all good men…for you faithfulness.

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337 Paludan-Müller, Grevens Feide, vol. 1, 364. Paludan- Müller wrote the following about Skram: “The not so tall, but strongly built, broad shouldered figure, the unusually strong arm and hand, and the platinum blond hair, are real national features, and when we read about his endurance, his unwavering courage and impetuous, but open, valiant and honest character, then one feels; here stand a worthy representative of the old Nordic tribe before us.” “Den ikke meget høie, men stærktbyggede, bredskuldrede Figur, den ualmindelig kraftige Arm of Haand, det hvidgule Haar ere ægte nationale Træk; og naar man læser om hans Haardförhed, hans uforfærdede Mod,hans heftige, men aabne, djæerve og redelige Charakteer, saa føler man, at her staaer en værdig Repræsentant for den gammelnordiske Menneskestamme for os.”

338 Emmanuel Briand De Crèvecoeur, Peder Skram: Danmarks Vovehals (Copenhagen: Nordisk Forlag, 1950), 14-25.


340 Briand De Crèvecoeur, Peder Skram, 74.

The leadership of Skram made a difference in the naval battles, and it appears Måns Svensson also followed Skram’s tactics to defeat the enemy.\textsuperscript{342} It has been suggested that Skram’s involvement had a decisive effect on the outcome of the war.\textsuperscript{343} Although he certainly played an important role in securing victory, the Count’s War, however, most likely ended in Scandinavia’s favor because Sweden and Denmark worked closely together to overcome a common enemy. Gustav Vasa and Christian III of Denmark subsequently maintained a peaceful and cordial relationship until their deaths in 1559 and 1560.

The period between 1533 and 1536 constituted a great example of how Sweden and Denmark, former enemies, worked together to overcome an outside threat only ten years after the end of the Kalmar Union. The correspondence of Vasa indicates he wanted Denmark’s help to deal with Lübeck prior to the Count’s War, and that Denmark responded reasonably well. Through correspondence and diplomacy Vasa made significant efforts to further his relationship with Denmark and therefore played an important part in establishing a close relationship. As events unfolded, the two countries forged an agreement to assist each other in case of foreign aggression, which secured their success in the Count’s War. This three-year period is significant, then, because Sweden and Denmark managed to overcome years of previous hostility. In fact, Sweden and Denmark built a mutual relationship of respect and peace which lasted until 1563.

\footnote{342 Briand De Crèvecoeur, \textit{Peder Skram}, 89.}

\footnote{343 Paludan-Müller, \textit{Grevens Feide}, vol. 1, 363.}
Conclusion

Through a careful study and analysis of the sources, this thesis has shown, in greater detail than presently available, some significant issues that prevailed in Scandinavian history during the early sixteenth century. Frederik I intentionally overpowered Norway by placing his own men in prominent political and military positions throughout the country. The sources show how men like Hans Mule, Vincent Lunge, Esge Bille, and Henrik Krummedige enjoyed such positions and gained significant political influence at the cost of the authority of the Norwegian Council. This directly violated the promises Frederik had given in his Norwegian charter, that as King, he should rule Norway along with the Council, leaving the fortresses in Norwegian hands and letting the Council appoint ecclesiastical leaders. This thesis has also presented detailed insight into how Frederik’s men used their positions to further their own political or economical positions. Hans Mule and Esge Bille used violent means to achieve their goals. These men, along with Vincent Lunge and Henrik Krummedige, did what they could to gain land and financial benefits from their positions. This only helped to alienate themselves from the Norwegians, who looked at them as outsiders, or at least not as Norwegians.

Through the discussion of Denmark and Norway’s relationship during the reign of Frederik I, it is clear that his policy regarding Norway succeeded. He managed to suppress the Council but never completely dissolved it. This task was completed by his son, Christian III, who obliterated it and permanently removed Norway’s political
influence. The evidence provided show how Danish royalty managed to gain full control of Norway within a thirteen year period.

Similar to the contribution on Denmark and Norway’s relationship, this thesis has also portrayed how Denmark and Sweden, bitter enemies in the 1520s, developed a close relationship of mutual friendship during the 1530s. The sources show how Gustav Vasa and Frederik I worked together harmoniously on various issues even before the Count’s War. Their mutual cooperation during the war resulted in victory over Lübeck, and gave Vasa and Christian opportunities to set aside differences and establish a closer relationship and peace between the two countries, at least until 1563, when new leadership emerged.

Another significant outcome of the Count’s War which deserves to be mentioned has to do with Lübeck. Due to its unsuccessful attempt to manipulate Denmark-Norway politically, Lübeck suffered the consequences. Lübeck had enjoyed, many years previous to the Count’s War, a prominent position in the Baltic both in regards to trade and politics. It had in fact been the head of the influential confederation of Hansa and as such enjoyed considerable privileges. After the war, however, Lübeck lost previous privileges and considerations from others. Its political leadership in the North was over. Much of its fleet had also been destroyed, but all was not lost. Lübeck managed to maintain control over Bergen until the 1560’s, and continued to send ships through the

346 Gade, *Hanseatic Control of Norwegian Commerce*, 118.
Sound following the Count’s War. In 1537, Lübeck sent fifty ships through the Sound, in 1538, thirty-four ships, and sixty-five in 1539. Between 1540 and 1560, Lübeck sent 516 ships through the sound, an annual average of 47. These numbers suggest that Lübeck did indeed still participate in naval activities after the war and maintained a merchant fleet. Lübeck also continued to play an important role in Sweden’s trade with the rest of Europe, but never regained its former hegemony in the Baltic.

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347 Ibid., 119.

348 Nina Ellinger Bang, Tabeller over Skibsfart og Varetransport gennem Øresund 1497-1660: Tables De La Navigation Et Du Transport Des Marchandises Passant Par Le Sund 1497-1660 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, Nordisk Forlag, 1906), 6-8. The records from activity in the Sound are somewhat limited. In fact, the records are scant before 1536. Prior to this date, records only exist from 1503 and 1528. During these years, Lübeck sent respectively eight and twenty-seven ships through the Sound. These records also show that the Netherlands heavily dominated traffic in the Sound, 3-4.


350 Larsson, Vasa, 203.
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