

Between the devil and the deep blue sea

Trade negotiations between the Western Allies
and the Scandinavian neutrals, 1914-1919

Knut Ola Naastad Strom

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Handelshögskolans fakultetsnämnd vid Göteborgs
Universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i ekonomisk historia framläggs till
offentlig granskning fredagen den 15 mars 2019, kl. 10.00 i CG-salen,
Handelshögskolan, Vasagatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Gunnar Åselius, Militärvetenskapliga institutionen,
Försvarshögskolan



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
HANDELSHÖGSKOLAN

ABSTRACT

Strøm, Knut Ola Naastad; *Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Trade negotiations between the Western Allies and the Scandinavian neutrals, 1914-1919*; Gothenburg Studies in Economic History 21, Department of Economy and Society, University of Gothenburg; Gothenburg, 2019

This thesis analyses the interplay between Western Allied policymakers and the governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden during the Great War. It explores to what extent Allied economic warfare authorities were able to dictate terms to their Scandinavian counterparts on matters of trade policy, and examines whether there is such a thing as a “Scandinavian experience” of the Allied blockade of Germany. The thesis consists of an introductory chapter, followed by a two-part main body.

The first of these parts is a three chapter long secondary source-driven study of wartime Scandinavian trade and trade policies between 1914 and 1917. It reassesses the findings of the established Scandinavian historiography in light of more recent publications on Allied blockade efforts during the early stages of the war. The section argues that the British-led blockade during the early stages of the war was ineffective, allowing Scandinavian trade flows to shift as the Central Powers began to reroute trade through the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian domestic markets. From late 1915 onwards, these shifts were gradually reversed as British authorities reformed their economic warfare strategy.

The second part of the thesis is a five chapter long primary source-driven study of the late war trade negotiations between Allied and Scandinavian authorities. It uses archival material from the Danish Foreign Ministry, the British Ministry of Blockade and the American War Trade Board to show how British, and later American and inter-Allied economic warfare authorities were gradually able to harness and coordinate trade control efforts in Scandinavia over the course of 1917 and 1918. Scandinavian governments were eventually forced to accept severe restrictions on their external trade, in return for continued access to increasingly important international western markets. The Danish, Norwegian and Swedish governments nevertheless retained a degree of economic and diplomatic freedom through to the end of the war. Consequently, Western Allied economic warfare authorities remained unable to impose full control over Scandinavian trade.

Keywords: blockade, economic warfare, embargo, the Great War, Scandinavian cooperation, security policy, trade, trade negotiations, trade agreements, World War I, World War One

ISBN 978-91-86217-24-2
<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/58614>
© Knut Ola Naastad Strøm
Printed by BrandFactory AB

Distribution:
Department of Economy and Society
P.O. Box 625
SE 405 30 Gothenburg