The Åland Example and Its Components – Relevance for International Conflict Resolution

Research project

The Åland Islands Peace Institute

2010 & 2011
RESEARCH DESIGN

Part I

The Three Components of the Åland Example

- Autonomy legislation
- Demilitarisation & neutralisation
- Cultural and language guarantees

Research question: Continuity & Change

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RESEARCH DESIGN
Part II
The Use and Relevance of the Åland Example in International Conflict Resolution

- Professor Yash Ghai
- Professor Kjell-Åke Nordquist
- Dr Fujio Ohnishi
- MP Elisabeth Nauclér

Autonomy in practice
- Hong Kong, Nagaland, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea/Baugainville
- East Timor
- Discussions in Japan (Northern Territories and Okinawa)
- Former Yugoslavia
RESEARCH DESIGN

Part III
Interviews and Case Studies

Experts interviewed:
Jan Eliasson, Terhi Hakala, Pär Stenbäck, Thorvald Stoltenberg, Heikki Talvitie, Sten Widmalm

Case studies:
Nagorno-Karabakh
Abkhazia and South Ossetia
Kashmir
South Sudan
Palestine-Israel
The Autonomy and Its Institutions – Sarah Stephan

Legislative framework

1921 Act on Autonomy: substantial revisions in 1951 and 1991, 3rd revision under preparation

+ Recognition of Åland’s status in Constitution of Finland

**Continuity and change:** League of Nations’ guarantees have remained major points of reference while Act on Autonomy has been adapted to national and international developments (HR standards, EU membership)
Institutional Design:

Strong Ålandic institutions
Legislative Assembly, Government of Åland

+ ‘Joints’
The President of the Republic, the Governor, the Åland Delegation, Ålandic MP

+ Continuous and long-term forms of contact on ministerial level, through contact group, Nordic cooperation & on EU level
Adaptation of the legal framework

- clear enumeration of Autonomy vs. State powers (1951 & '91)
- ’Åland Protocol’ to EU Accession Treaty (1994)
- right to vote in municipal elections extended to foreign residents (1995 & 2006)
- changes in system of tax equalisation (1991)

& institutional set-up

- extended role of the Åland Delegation
  - establishment of an EU Unit
- Ålandic representative at Perm. Rep of Finland in Brussels
- ’coalitions’ on party level with counterparts on the mainland and in Brussels
  - Ålandic representation in Nordic cooperation
    - contact group
The Demilitarisation and Neutralisation of the Åland Islands — Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark

- Continuity ensured by longstanding reaffirmed international agreements – not questioned but not really kept alive?
- Absence of constitutional entrenchment
- Deviations during periods of war and prewar from the neutralisation regime
- The Ålanders (the regional authorities, the Åland Parliament as well as the general public) are the most keen supporters of the regime
The Demilitarisation and Neutralisation of the Åland Islands – current trends

- Absence of updated nautical charts for specialised as well as for general use
- Challenges to demilitarisation due to technological developments, intensified military cooperation in the region, the grey zone between military and non-military activities and economic efficacy
The Cultural and Linguistic Safeguards – Heidi Öst

Four areas of regulation

1
Language used by public authorities

2
The right to vote and stand in elections

3
Language used and taught in public schools

4
Access to land and resources
The Cultural and Linguistic Safeguards:  
**Continuity and Change**

Adaptation of safeguards to national and international developments:

* e.g.*

- Evolution of the land regime from a "right of redemption" to a system of prior permission required for land acquisitions and for business establishments (1951)
- Teaching of foreign languages in public schools (1951 & 1991)
- Extension of right to vote in municipal elections to foreign residents (1995 & 2006)

But basically stable regulations of the language used by public authorities.
Summary of Conclusions

Theoretical framework concerning the robustness and longevity of autonomy solutions

1) Timing
2) Nature of the dispute
3) Democratic requirement
4) The role of external actors, including most importantly parties to disputes and kin-states
5) Institutional design
The use of the Åland Example in practice

• Upon demand, rather than promoted
• As temporary or as permanent solution
• Usage at three levels:
  - As a set of principles (will to compromise and minority accommodation)
  - As an example of evolving institutional design
  - As a physical and a symbolic meeting space
Reconceptualising autonomy and the Åland Example

The regime on Åland can be looked at as a network of multi-level contacts rather than as a tool of isolation.

Issues of security and territorial control are often kept essentially outside discussions concerning conflict resolution and autonomy solutions. On Åland they were solved beforehand.