

A NEW EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

Speaking Notes for Alyson JK Bailes, Director, SIPRI

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I would be the last person to question or underestimate the importance of the concept, and the real-life tradition, of a 'Nordic peace'. As a British person who has come to know all the Nordic lands fairly well, I can see how the power of this tradition affects the whole worldview and scheme of judgement of Nordic citizens and makes these so interestingly different from the habits prevailing in my own or other parts of Europe. The story of Åland also helps us to appreciate how very serious and, one can really say, traumatic were the earlier historical events that drove both decision-makers and ordinary people to strive for some better and calmer way of living together in the North. We may too often forget that as recently as the middle of the 19th century, major powers were engaging in major military operations in the very heart of the Baltic and turning local populations both into their instruments and their victims. Of course, countries like Norway and Finland itself have seen an equally traumatic repeat of that syndrome as few as 65 years ago.

But while we honour the past and present achievements of the Nordic way of peace and remind ourselves of where it comes from, it may also be a good time to ask ourselves where it is going. Since the end of the Cold War in 1989-90, both the nature of the security environment and the nature of security thinking have evolved rapidly in ways that certainly don't leave the Nordic-Baltic area untouched, even if not all the changes have been felt quite so strongly and clearly here as elsewhere. The problem of understanding and adapting to such changes is one that constantly preoccupies my own institute, SIPRI, which was founded as long as forty years ago with an emphatically Cold War-oriented agenda. We have found that one of the best tools for tackling the problem is to grasp that we are not facing one new security agenda but a number of different ones that have caught the world's special attention at different times, but have never quite gone away as the focus moved on elsewhere: some of them concerning problems that existed long before 1990 and are still with us, others more genuinely reflecting objective changes in the world system such as the march of globalization and the latest trends in technology.

At the risk of simplifying, I could separate four of these overlapping agendas that have demanded the attention of governments, parliaments and civil society as well as researchers in Europe since the early 1990s. First, as the shadow of a total global war moved away from us, we were confronted with the security challenge and indeed the human challenge of smaller localized conflicts, first in more distant locations like Somalia and then right on our own doorstep in the Balkans. Next, as the decade went on, we got caught up in the issue that can be briefly defined as enlargement: in other words how far we could and should extend the particularly deep forms of multilateral cooperation represented by the EU and NATO into other parts of the greater European continent, not least as a method of building peace and avoiding more conflicts of the Balkan or Chechen kind. This was a particularly tough issue for Norden insofar as the collapse of the Soviet Union created a new demand for independent security for the Baltic nations, but providing this through NATO and EU membership seemed to threaten a new confrontation with the residual Russian state. Thirdly, in the first years of the new century we were overwhelmed by the challenge of the so-called new threats of terrorism and proliferation, coming as much from private persons as from enemy countries

and operating in a new and hard-to-control 'transnational' dimension. One irony of this new and very much US-led threat picture is that it has driven certain Western countries to create new conflicts of their own (notably in Afghanistan and Iraq), in the course of trying to combat both the terrorists and their suspected state sponsors. Then, fourth and not least we have the agenda of what might be called natural or unintentional threats to human security, such as SARS and other likely future epidemics, hurricanes and other one-off natural disasters, and the longer-term problems associated with climate change, resource depletion and population growth.

What I'd like to do in the rest of this short talk is offer some thoughts and questions about how the Åland model, and the Nordic concept of peace and security building in general, relates to each of these four sets of modern challenges which are all still with us and which confront us in some extremely tricky combinations today.

Peace, Conflict and Armaments

The Åland model was of course born of conflict and its whole essence is to try to prevent future conflict, by a method that could be characterized as one of restraint and avoidance ie forbidding the presence of troops, armaments and military objects in the territory where we wish peace to be preserved. At the same time and especially in the present-day context, it is important to note that the model has a number of constructive and active aspects: obviously in the way it provides for a high degree of self-government for a special local community, but also in the way it leaves the territory free to take a dynamic part in all peaceful forms of international life and notably in commerce and tourism. Without knowing all the details of specific recent cases where people have shown interest in reproducing the Åland model, I would argue that it is this second set of elements that have the widest application in the modern world. Everywhere we are seeing local communities trying to gain more control of their own affairs, not only if they happen to be ethnically or culturally different but sometimes even where they aren't and where they have more subtle elements of local interest and identity to protect against both the central national power and the larger challenge of globalization. In this context the Åland example has genuinely very attractive elements of balance and compromise, combined with great openness and fully democratic credentials for all the relevant institutions.

It's not quite so easy to say how universally useful the 'restraining' components of the Åland model are, namely the complete demilitarization and neutralization of the territory. Especially since the end of the Cold War, security thinking has been moving away rather fast from the idea that armaments and military potential are automatically dangers to peace and that territories that have less of them automatically have more security. The shift in thinking has obviously been driven by the end of superpower confrontation and the reduced danger of any old-fashioned arms race damaging ourselves in Europe: but just as important has been the rise of interest in helping to heal other people's conflicts through altruistic military intervention, now under the flags of the EU, NATO and other regional organizations as well as the UN. This creates a respectable basis for advanced states to maintain and even improve their military capacity, so long as it is redesigned in the directions most appropriate for peace missions, and that is exactly what we see happening at national level in Sweden and Finland among others. The flipside is that in countries that have just come out of a conflict or might fall into conflict in future, the mainstream international thinking is *not* now that we should

demilitarize them but rather that we should rebuild and modernize their defence structures, in ways that unite and re-direct old combatants and that ideally turn the problem state into a potential peacekeeping contributor itself. What Serbia is trying to do is a direct example of that in Europe and there are many other such cases in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia. So while DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of combatants – is now a pretty routine element of post-conflict planning, so is SSR – Security Sector Reform, or the reconstruction of the state's defence, security, intelligence and justice machinery on a model as close as possible to the so-called normal state: and the normal state is armed. In the very topical case of Iraq, most experts would now say that the present security chaos has been aggravated by the Americans doing too much DDR for too long (but not very efficiently!) and not enough SSR, especially in the early stages.

Does that mean to say that de-arming and de-militarizing territories is no longer relevant? On the contrary, it can be a solution closely fitted to some rather specific contingencies that are directly related to Åland's own experience. Most obviously, if there is a tense relationship between two states that comes to a head along their mutual land or sea borders, demilitarizing the relevant frontier zones will reduce the risk of conflict and hopefully also help both sides to concentrate on the more positive potential of their relations. When Norway became independent there was such a zone along its frontier with Sweden and the relevant treaty was only cancelled as recently as 1993. Other such zones still exist for instance between Russia and China and on the Korean peninsula. New cases for applying them are now rather few and specialized but Cyprus is certainly one such and, in another area close to home, one might imagine such provisions forming part of eventual solutions for the 'frozen' conflicts of the western post-Soviet space.

Secondly, in the Nordic context a major purpose of strategic restraint measures like those applying in Åland but also in Svalbard, and all the various ways that Nordic states have limited the application of alliance membership or foreign troop presences on their own territories, has been to prevent the region becoming an active strategic front and possible battleground between two much larger outside powers or military blocs. We could imagine that motive applying in some other specialized cases even today, notably around the Russian, Chinese and perhaps Indian frontiers - although it must be noted that some other small states in positions of this sort (like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) have tried to keep the balance by giving *both* sides access to their strategic facilities rather than by keeping both out. In our own Nordic area, it is perfectly clear that the strategic tension between Russia and the West has not wholly disappeared and is not going to any time soon, even if the main disputes are now (on the surface) about things like energy supplies and minority rights rather than anything explicitly military. If Åland's status and the other Nordic measures of restraint can help to reduce the remaining small risks of these tensions turning into a military form, then we can conclude that they do have some continuing strategic logic. But what we should *not* do is to somehow slip into assuming that the other, *non-military* riddles of the West's relations with Russia *cannot* have any serious consequences for the Nordic states, or that we can safely stand aside and wait for bigger powers to resolve them in the same way that we stand aside from the military confrontation. In the Cold War, both the Russian and the NATO sides had reasons of their own to maintain an effective strategic balance and standoff between themselves, literally over Nordic heads. It's clear that the general level of US and NATO strategic interest in this region is much lower today; and as a result, the Nordics and Baltic

states themselves are going to have to make a considerable *active* effort if they want to see a long-term accommodation emerging that fully reflects their own special interests and values.

Enlargement and Integration

Of course, one of the things that has kept relations with Russia sensitive in the North is the enlargement process that has brought both NATO and the EU right up to Russian borders with the incorporation of all three Baltic States as well as Poland into both institutions. Because of the nature of Åland's status it has been for Helsinki rather than Mariehamn to take an official position on enlargement policy issues; and as we know, after a very cautious start, the Finnish leadership has eventually come round to see the Baltic States' membership as a positive feature for stability and cooperation as well as democratic progress in this region. A more subtle question is how the forward march of double EU and NATO membership has affected Norden's own relative status in Europe including the significance of the Åland model. In simple terms, being fully integrated and subject to the laws both of the EU single market and NATO military alliance has become *the norm* for a much larger majority of European states than hitherto. Of the ten who joined the EU in 2004 only two have national policies based on neutrality, and Malta and Cyprus are both very small and Cyprus's neutrality is probably more imposed than freely chosen. Norden has thus become, even more clearly than before, the single largest grouping of states in Europe that have voluntarily excluded themselves from complete and double EU/NATO membership and that have limited their acceptance of common obligations in other ways, ranging from Sweden's No to EMU, through the well-known Danish opt-outs from EU policies, to Norway's and Denmark's refusal to let foreign armed forces or nuclear objects be stationed on their soil in peacetime. A young French scholar who recently wrote a short book for SIPRI about these elements of Nordic 'apartness' - or separation from mainstream European integration processes - has suggested that the Nordic motives involved have a lot to do with identity and independence, as well as with specific security considerations. In Norden, being different or being apart can also be a matter of pride and can actually be linked with feelings of superiority rather than about 'marginalization' (or 'utanförskap'!) and inadequacy. In the case of Åland but also for example, of the Faeroes we could argue that we are seeing a *double* level of this enhancement of identity through measures of restriction and of opting out: the Danish or Finnish fatherland already has a distinctive status involving limits in certain areas of integration, and the territory with special status is even more exempt from normal EU obligations as well as being either formally or *de facto* more demilitarized.

At the factual level there is not much to quarrel about in this analysis, but the question is whether we want to turn it into a normative issue: is it good or is it bad to be detached or doubly detached in the relevant fields of integration, both for the nation-states involved and for their special autonomous territories? Many would argue that it is good for Europe in general or at least, that there is no real downside for other Europeans, especially since all Nordic countries have found ways to take part in just about all fields of multilateral security cooperation including international peace missions and joint defence industry projects. I'm not going to tell you that this is untrue but I would like to raise the question whether the status quo is really as stable as it seems, or whether different dynamics will gradually push the national capitals to reconsider their traditional rejection of NATO or of the EU, respectively. And if they did, if Finland wanted to join NATO for example, would that mean that Åland's non-integrated status also had to be reconsidered? Personally I think that this

wouldn't automatically or necessarily happen, because both NATO and the the EU have already accepted all kinds of special statuses for special parts of member countries ranging from Spanish territories in Africa though the British Channel Islands to Svalbard's special position in NATO. Bearing in mind that it will never be a good time for Western countries to provoke Russia militarily in the Baltic region, it's more than likely that other NATO members will be only too keen to leave the Åland solution untouched. The question that does remain open for reflection is how Åland's own identity and interests would be affected by a scenario in which the integrated status of the Finnish mainland, and perhaps even of the Swedish neighbour, began to move further away from that of Åland itself.

'New' and 'even newer' threats

That's a pretty vague as well as contentious question: so let me end by turning to the last two categories of security challenges that have dominated public policy in recent years, namely transnational terrorism, WMD and international crime on the one hand, and on the other hand defence against epidemics and the consequences of natural disasters, accidents and environmental change. The most obvious point about all of these is that they take no account of traditional boundaries and legal agreements and can in principle affect all European territories - no matter what their special status may be - in two main ways: hitting them as targets, but also using them for transit and for preparing attacks under cover. Norden as a whole has thankfully not been a target of terrorism and has not witnessed any local nuclear proliferation, but it could certainly be a base and transit region for the illegal non-state actors who are involved in both processes. And in face of bird 'flu or natural catastrophes or a new Chernobyl, Norden including Åland is just as exposed as anyone else: indeed, the tragic tsunami incident of December 2004 reminded us how all Nordic citizens can be hit by these things even thousands of miles away and where Norden itself has not been involved in the causation at all.

The political fallout from the tsunami has shown beyond doubt that Nordic citizens do expect their governments to protect them against all these modern dangers and their consequences, and I wouldn't expect that the people of Åland feel any differently. Is Åland's special status an issue in that connection? On the face of it, No, because the traditional types of military activity which it outlaws are rarely if at all the answer to these new kinds of threats, and the Treaty explicitly allows reinforcements to be brought from the mainland to deal with internal order problems such as could flow for instance from the aftermath of a terrorist attack or an epidemic that disabled most of the population. More widely, you could argue that controlling these risks in the Baltic area often demands close cooperation also with Russia, and that the general effect of Åland's status in calming Russia's concerns should also help to some degree to keep the door open for rational non-military cooperation with Moscow. I think that even as a critical Brit who was brought up with quite different security assumptions, I can just about buy all that. But what I'd like to say, also as my last word, is pretty much the same point that I made earlier when talking about new challenges from the Russian Federation. For counties like Finland and for territories like Åland, being separate in status and being free from guilt do not automatically mean being free from responsibility: in this case meaning the responsibility to cooperate actively and preventively with all relevant neighbours and partners to reduce the exposure of Europe as a whole to the whole spectrum of modern non-military threats. The Åland model as a building block of the 'Nordic peace' was, on my understanding, conceived very much in a spirit of *shared responsibility* and *active concern* in

the security dimensions that were most relevant to that time 150 years ago. As I stressed at the start, it was and is a model that is positive, open and active, rather than restrictive, closed and selfish. If it remains true to those values - which are also Nordic values *par excellence* - it can and should go a long way further in contributing to the new struggle for peace and human welfare that confronts all of Europe in the twenty-first century.