

Convergence or Divergence in Baltic Security?

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Distinguished Ministers, Parliamentarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Neighbours,

It is an honour and a challenge to address such a group of experienced politicians and members of parliaments. It is a rare opportunity to address you in your multiple roles as members of parliaments, representatives of particular regions and as members of various types of civil society organisations. This morning's session shall end by the presentation of the progress report of the BSPC Working Group on 'Civil Security in Particular Trafficking'. I look forward to listening to the report, and meanwhile I note that the Working Group according to its mandate, 'should exchange experience on successful efforts of the countries. The Working Group and its members should raise political focus on civil security issues – especially on trafficking in human beings – on the national agendas of members of the Working Group'.

I intend to start by introducing to you some of the issues lying behind the term 'security' in itself, as opposed to choosing other terms. This is not in order to do an exercise in naming or to argue that this or the other term is better or worse. I want to highlight the conceptual baggage that goes with a term and the consequences it has in how we think and how we set our agendas. At a very superficial level, a level which reflects to some extent the preoccupations of our globalised world, I received 654 million hits at a google search under the word 'security', while the word 'peace' resulted in only one third of that number. In strict cyberspace logic 'security' is worth three times more than 'peace'.

'Security' has become a word very much 'à la mode' in recent years. From being a term always appearing in conjunction with the word peace, as in the classic UN Charter standard formulation of 'international peace and security' it appears more and more often in combinations such as 'national security', 'homeland security', 'common foreign and security policy', 'security sector reform', 'computer security' 'energy security'.

The core areas of interest of a well reputed journal entitled International Security and founded in 1976 are: the causes and prevention of war, ethnic conflict and peacekeeping, so called 'post-Cold War security problems', nuclear forces and strategy, arms control and weapons proliferation, and diplomatic and military history.

Recently, in Finland, the Security Subcommittee of the Advisory Board on Sectoral Research of the Ministry of Defence finalised its 'National Security Research Strategy'. The study makes in my view a correct analysis when it argues that 'security is often considered from the perspective of threats and risks'.

I believe that the examples above are sufficient in order to show that still today the dominating paradigm is that of realist security, i.e. the deterrence of threats

directed mainly to the state. The so call war on terror has accentuated this conceptual movement back to realist positions. Efforts in this direction have as their main avenues the use and cooperation of military, policiary, secret intelligence institutions and border control authorities.

In sum, security is about threats directed towards our states and/or our societies, and the response to it may well involve the use of force, or at least enforcement measures.

For sure, we know that at government level realist security concerns in the Baltic Sea region have not decreased in recent years. On the contrary NATO has recently made contingency plans for the Baltic States and increased the frequency of exercises in the Baltic Sea region, including PFP-countries such as Sweden and Finland. This is by observers seen as matching Russia's own military exercises last year in the region. Military expenditure in many of our countries seems to be on the increase. Are we moving to an era of cold security?

While all this holds in my mind true, the picture has of course been modified by the introduction of the concept of human security, slightly different in the case of the BSPC as 'civil security' possibly allowing for references not simply to individual, human security but also to societal security in its collective dimensions. The reference to 'civil security' has connotations to another dominating discourse in research as well as in politics, i.e. civilian crisis management. While security is an old term reminding us too much of the failures of collective security arrangements in the League of Nations and the security concerns of the cold war, 'crisis management' is a new response to the way peacekeeping operations and the new generation of missions are to evolve in what is nowadays called a 'comprehensive approach'. No doubt the intentions are excellent, i.e. evolving the holistic view when responding to crises, including in terms of political, military, security, rule of law and human rights aspects.

The result however is an opaque fusion of civil and military questions and tools and the relaxation of our critical view on various forms of use of force.

But I hope that you have by now discovered my argument. We describe and define our world as one of threats and crises and our reaction is of a responsive nature, according to which we encounter around every corner the possible use of enforcement measures, domestically or internationally.

This is, by the way, also a prevailing argument in work concerning trafficking. The global discussion on trafficking, if summarised crudely, is one about organised crime, protection of victims, and punishment of perpetrators, sometimes involving also the direct or indirect punishment of the victims of trafficking, through means of expulsion.

I believe that there is great convergence in all our countries concerning such conceptual trends, and I find them highly discomforting.

By now you are of course thinking, oh, those international lawyers and idealist peace proponents they just complain and lament and think that flower power will save the world. My contribution is not intended as a lamentation.

It is first of all an exclamation mark. How is it possible that we live in a world of huge accumulated knowledge, technological development, communication and mobility potentials – and in Finland according to a recent survey in the magazine *The Newsweek* we live in fact in the best country in the world – but in policy making and political rhetorics we still understand ourselves as in constant risk and threat?

Secondly, my contribution wants to honour the methodology of the BSPC Working Group on Civil Security and turn now to a positive argument about the potential and opportunities already existing in the Baltic Sea region. I shall give you five examples:

- Work focusing on gender equality as a precondition for the prevention of trafficking
- Increased contacts between civil society organisations, including academic and research institutions
- The management of diversity and multiculturalism
- The use of regional self-government as a tool for conflict prevention and diversity management, and, finally,
- Åland.

I will start, however, by reminding you of the term ‘positive peace’ as established by thinkers such as Johan Galtung (from Norway) and Albrecht Randelzhofer (from Germany) in the 1970ies. The term ‘positive peace’ was itself a product of intellectual debates in the Baltic Sea region. It reminds us that peace and security is not simply about the absence of threat against a state and the absence of war and armed conflict. It is about the activities which are necessary for maintaining the conditions of peace, and moreover it is about the absence of violence in our societies. It is about preventive, not responsive attitudes, and it is about confidence-building measures in the widest sense.

a) Work focusing on gender quality and preventing trafficking

In trafficking, preventive work means preventing the causes that allow for the development of organised crime. This means addressing issues of gender inequality, gender stereotypes, sexual and domestic violence and about

continuous debate on these themes in particular with young people, girls and boys alike. The Åland Islands Peace Institute has long experience in facilitating such processes in a cooperative manner involving partner organisations in Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, incl. Kaliningrad and Belarus. There is on Åland great knowledge about theories and methods on these themes. Let me mention one such knowledge where researchers and civil society seem to converge completely. One of the most vulnerable groups in our societies is that of lone mothers, in particular those simultaneously belonging to migrant and minority communities.

b) Enhanced civil society contacts

In addition to addressing substantive issues on trafficking and gender equality, such cooperation enhances contacts between countries and persons who would not meet otherwise, in spite of being neighbours around the same sea. This breaks down fears and stereotypes of ‘the other’ in a natural rather than imposed and artificial way. In terms of interpersonal contacts and communication there is thus convergence among the citizens around the Baltic Sea. There is still much to be done in this field.

Such long term programmes of wide partnership, involving both EU and non EU countries are, however, still rare. In fact to my knowledge it is only the Nordic Council of Ministers that has engaged in a limited programme of this kind in recent years.

So, as politicians always ask, ‘what can we do’ I would say: facilitate contacts between various kinds of civil society actors around the region, including peace institute and academics. And introduce cross border girl and boy group work in all countries around the Baltic Sea.

Then you would naturally say: This means asking again for more money?

I find that a problem is that big money is for big civil society organisations, usually meaning well linked to state authorities and/or big interests. In many of our smaller countries and our regions there is neither the financial nor the institutional capacity to make use of the enormous funds available at international level which are coupled by huge bureaucratic requirements. And some of the countries are themselves unable or unwilling to contribute with the kind of co-funding usually required.

Around the Baltic Sea we also experience synergies and convergence in the field of research, including social science research. The Åland Islands Peace Institute is currently participating in a research project concerning language diversity and minority and involving eight academic institutions in seven countries, including Finland, Germany, Sweden and Estonia.

c) The management of diversity and multiculturalism

The Baltic Sea region has several examples to show concerning the management of diversity and regional identity. In recent years, there is increased awareness and attention to the situation of the Sami in the North, including in Russia and a Nordic Sami Convention is painfully slowly being debated. Minority protection mechanisms have been introduced in all our countries and while there are still problems and issues this has improved the self-esteem and the safety and material conditions of minorities in our region. The constant caveat is perhaps that of the difficulties in dealing with Roma and Sinti.

d) Regional self-government

Regional self-government, much debated in different parts of the world as a potential solution to conflicts is found well represented in our countries not only in the self-evident example of the Åland Islands, but also in strong local authorities in Sweden, in the Faroe Islands and Greenland and in a different sense in the Finnmarksloven in the North of Norway, and in the exclave of Kaliningrad in the Russian Federation.

e) The Åland Islands

There are two interesting things about the so called Åland example: first of all the combination of demilitarisation and neutralisation with regional autonomy; and secondly the longevity of the regime. I do not have the time today to make any deep analysis of the combined components. I would like to stress that as a fairly recent inhabitant of Åland myself, I can clearly see the existential importance attached by the Ålanders to this two sided regime of demilitarisation, neutralisation on the one hand and regional autonomy on the other. Finland has respected this regime and allowed it to evolve within a rule of law system, as has Sweden that has avoided undue interference in Ålandic – Finnish affairs. We all know that during the wars, and sometimes even during peaceful times the demilitarisation and neutralisation of Åland has occasionally been neglected. However, such breaches have been in many cases revealed and interrupted and the regime has been re-strengthened in this process. I have been particularly happy to read the recent Swedish translation of Aleksandra Kollontaj's diary for the years 1930-1940 in which she describes the importance for the then Soviet Union in retaining the demilitarisation and neutralisation of the islands. She describes in clear and simple words the devastating effect of the distrust between

all involved countries, including Finland, Sweden, Germany and the Soviet Union with regard to the status of the Åland Islands.

The longevity of the regime of the Åland Islands can be explained not simply by the environmental factors of it, i.e. the fact that it is a group of isolated islands, that it is perceived as a monolingual region, or as argued by some that it is nowadays strategically unimportant, things to which I do not subscribe and which do not hold scientifically nor empirically. I maintain that the longevity of the regime is a combination of institutional design and commitment by the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea to maintain the advantages for all parties in respecting the obligations concerning the international status of the Åland Islands. The institutional design allows for the combination of legal tools of regulating and controlling the regime with political tools of renegotiation and adaptation of it. Finland and Åland are to be congratulated ...

... for the moment.

Success in politics is only temporary and elusive, in particular in a fast and globalised world, and it needs to be reinvigorated every single moment. Or else it is called an 'obsolete regime' and is put in the drawer of the desk of some idealist international law researcher. I hope that you shall take upon yourselves the task of keeping these relative successes around the Baltic Sea alive and kicking by bringing with you back home the knowledge of their complexity and fragility!

Thank you!

Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark