The Åland Islands, Finland and European Security in the 21st Century

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Abstract

This article reviews the Åland Islands in the European and Finnish security context. The Åland Islands is a demilitarised, neutralised and autonomous province of Finland, and the aim of the article is to look at how the more than 160-year old demilitarisation regime relates to the current security context. The time period to be examined is limited to the 21st century, encompassing deeper security cooperation of the European Union and debates on Finnish foreign policy in the European context as a non-NATO country. A major theme of the discussion is to look at the militarisation trends in Europe and how that might affect Finland and the Åland Islands. The article also touches upon topical issues such as Brexit, advancement of European security cooperation, and Finnish NATO debates. It examines the demands for change concerning the status of the Åland Islands as well as how security is approached from the Ålandic perspective. Moreover, the issue of what could happen if Finland would join NATO is discussed. The article concludes that the status appears to have very stable role stipulated in international law, despite securitising and militarising trends in the surrounding region. Indeed, a multilateral solution such as demilitarisation serves as a contrast to the regionalisation operating on military logic.

Keywords

Åland Islands, Finland, European Union, Demilitarisation, Militarisation

The Åland Islands, Finland and European Security in the 21st Century

Saila Heinikoski[1]

1. Åland in International Politics in the 21st Century

This article was inspired by a report written by Teija Tiilikainen entitled "The Åland Islands, Finland and European security", which was published by the Åland Islands Peace Institute in 2002.[2] Much has happened since in both Finnish and European foreign and security policies, which has also spurred debate on the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands, an autonomous Swedish-speaking province of Finland. Those who are interested in what has happened before the turn of the millennium should get their hands on Tiilikainen's book, while this article focuses on the recent decade, more specifically, European and Finnish foreign and security policies after the EU Security Strategy published in 2003. I have utilised the same structure and even maintained many of the titles of the 2002 report, so anyone interested in having a longer timeframe for the contexts and debates on different topics is able to do so. This report also brings up more theoretical and analytical observations on the security policies and their relation to the Åland Islands. I have deliberately left out the specified legal implications of the status to be handled by experts in these issues.

The aim of this article is to look at the Åland Islands in a security context and to identify possible threats to the status of the islands. A major theme that is involved throughout is militarisation, i.e. the increase of military cooperation and spending, which is discussed in different contexts. I aim to trace the long-term

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[2] Tiilikainen 2002.

security trends that can be observed over the past 15 years, including the justification of further military cooperation with alleged threats. The threat discourse has been common also with regard to the Åland Islands recently, and the security of the islands is densely connected to affairs in Europe and in Finland.

This article is divided into four main sections, which are further divided into subsections. After this first introductory section, I discuss the changing European security context, including the legal changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty (particularly solidarity and mutual assistance clauses), the European Defence Agency established in 2004, the enlargement process of the EU, as well as NATO and its activities in Europe, and the changes brought by the British decision to leave the EU. The purpose of the section is to present the wider security framework for the Åland Islands. I also touch upon the development of European security conceptions in the 21st century, from the 2003 Security Strategy to the 2016 Global Strategy on Security and Defence Policy.

In the third section I discuss Finland's security policy in the 21st century in the EU context and the question of how Finland's non-alignment policy has been calibrated as "no membership in military alliances".[3] I also examine the Finnish Government Reports on Security and Defence Policy from 2004 to 2016, during which time four such reports have been published. Debate on Finland's possible NATO membership is taken into account, culminating in the 2016 report commissioned by the Foreign Ministry to assess the effects of Finland's possible NATO membership.[4]

In the final section I discuss the Åland Islands in the security context of the European Union and Finland and illustrate how the Åland Islands have been taken into account in Finnish policies, what sort of demands for change have been made, and how possible NATO membership would affect the islands. In addition, I examine demilitarisation from an Ålandic perspective and illustrate how the Ålanders have themselves appeared as the most active proponents of the demilitarised and neutralised status of the islands. Major developments that have spurred discussion on the islands' status in the 21st century include legal changes and intensified defence cooperation in the European Union, as well as terrorist attacks, and Russian activities in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. I ask in this article, 'how do the Finnish and European security contexts relate to the demilitarised area of the Åland Islands?'

[3] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b, p. 10.
[4] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b.

2. The Changing European Security Context

2.1. Regional Interests to Militarise the EU

The security context in the European Union has witnessed several terrorist attacks and deterioration of relations with Russia, with economic sanctions in place against Russia after the annexation of Crimea. The recent terrorist attacks and wars both in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods make people in Europe increasingly aware of security risks. Terrorist attacks of the 21st century in Spain, the UK, France and Belgium have further increased pressure to also control the internal borders in the European Union. Terrorist attacks and Russian actions have also been employed as an argument for further defence cooperation in the Union.

The conflicts in Northern Africa and Middle East have also spurred a flow of migration to the European Union, which has made some countries reintroduce border controls and even question the viability of the borderless Schengen Area. The number of asylum-seekers has also resulted in the EU concluding a much-criticised agreement with Turkey. The agreement allows for the return of asylum-seekers to Turkey in exchange for taking refugees from Turkish camps.[5] Furthermore, the EU provides money and has promised to grant visa-free travel for Turkish citizens. At the time of writing, the visa liberalisation has still not entered into force and seems unlikely to do so in the near future after President Erdoğan's harsh measures responding to the failed coup in July 2016.

Security is not only a military matter, but security can also be regarded as a major incentive for the EU to conduct enlargement policy. In the 21st century, the European Union has also successfully enlarged to cover thirteen new countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. There are other countries wishing to join the Union, but instead of preparing new enlargement rounds, the Union is about to lose one Member State after the British referendum to leave the EU in June 2016. The implications of "Brexit" for EU security policies are as yet unclear, but it might also provide the possibility to increase military cooperation after the exit of a reluctant Member State. Indeed, the UK has traditionally been the harshest opponent to EU defence, and after the British decision to leave the EU, defence cooperation has been intensified as decided by the European Council in December 2016. Then again, the EU simultaneously loses one of its strongest military actors, which undermines the EU's capability.

[5] European Council 2016.

The Union has already strengthened its legal and institutional security structures with enhanced cooperation on security, making it not only a domestic matter. A historical principle in military affairs has been a state monopoly on the legitimate use of force, which has been divided into domestic order and inter-state relations, that is, the police and the military. The EU has blurred these lines as well as the lines between different aspects of security. Traditionally, a trilogy of security threats, security strategies and security organizations has formed the basis of security policies, while today this trilogy has fallen apart in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP, previously European Security and Defence Policy).[6] The increased emphasis on military security is also in contrast with the view that the European Union is often perceived as a peace project; the European integration was launched after the Second World War to unite the continent into a security community.[7] However, the actual framing of the CFSP, including the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), did not start until the incorporation of the so-called Petersberg tasks into the Treaty of Amsterdam[8] of 1997.

The political push for the ESDP was provided by the UK and France in the declaration of St Malo in 1998, followed by the Council's Helsinki Headline Goal of 1999. The ESDP was officially established at the Council's meeting in 1999, preceding the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) of 2001. However, the EU is in great difficulties when trying to draft common approaches to security challenges. This was evidenced, for example, in the inability to find a common stance in the Libyan crisis in 2011, as well as in the problems of drafting common principles to deal with the number of asylum-seekers. The question of migration has particularly demonstrated the differences between the western and eastern Member States, as some of the eastern countries have taken very harsh stances on migration, building fences and refusing to agree to any quotas at the EU level. Furthermore, although proponents of a deeper defence community exist, it is unlikely that the EU would witness defence cooperation including all Member States. Instead, Permanent Structured Cooperation[9], enabled in the Lisbon Treaty that came into force in 2009, could be one option for willing Member States to establish a smaller defence alliance.

[6] Schroeder 2011, pp. 19–24.
[7] See e.g. the transactionalist integration theory of Deutsch et al. (1957).
[8] The Treaty also established the architecture for the internal security with the title "Visas, asylum, immigration and other policies related to free movement of persons".
[9] A military alliance constituted by willing EU Member States.

2.2. The EU's New Security Structure

The European Union has undergone a process of enhanced militarisation during the past 15 years. In addition to political turmoil around the failed constitutional treaty of the European Union, much has happened in the EU's security structure. In 2003, the European Security Strategy (ESS) was launched, defining the general strategic objectives of "addressing the threats", "building security in our neighbourhood", and fostering "an international order based on effective multilateralism", but it was mainly a general statement of principles instead of a detailed strategy.[10] The first European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) missions were launched in 2004, preceding the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in the same year. The EU Battlegroup concept and a new Headline Goal 2010 were also launched in 2004. In 2010, the Internal Security Strategy (ISS)[11] was published and complemented by the Commission with five steps towards a more secure Europe. The ISS was preceded by technical programmes of Tampere (1999–2004), Hague (2005–2009), and Stockholm (2010–2014) for internal security. In 2015, the Commission published a European Agenda on Security, which "was the basis for the European Council's endorsement of a renewed internal security strategy".[12] This agenda was mainly focused on preventing terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime, and related less to military security. Military security, in turn, was given more space in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy published in June 2016.[13]

In addition to political strategies, defence cooperation has progressed at the legal level. Although the EU Constitutional Treaty envisioned at the beginning of the 21st century did not become a reality, the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 included the same defence clauses that were introduced in the constitutional draft, including those concerning Permanent Structured Cooperation, mutual assistance, and solidarity. The Treaty of Lisbon also renamed the ESDP into CSDP and introduced the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Treaty provides a legal framework for further defence cooperation, including, inter alia, the following provision:

"The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common

[10] European Union 2003.
[11] The Internal Security Strategy emphasised a comprehensive approach to security, being an "indispensable complement" to the European Security Strategy (European Council 2010).
[12] European Commission 2016, p. 2.
[13] Mogherini 2016.

defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides." (Article 42(2) of the Consolidated Treaty on Functioning of the European Union). It is thus possible that the EU would have a true common defence in the future.

Permanent Structured Cooperation is the measure closest to a military alliance, which would be limited to Member States willing to participate in such arrangements. With the Lisbon Treaty, the security guarantees of the previous European defence alliance, the Western European Union, were also incorporated in the so-called mutual assistance clause: "If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power" (Article 42(7), TEU). Another EU assistance provision is the so-called solidarity clause (Article 222 of TFEU), which obliges Member States to help in case of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster. Instead of the solidarity clause, France activated the mutual assistance clause after the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015. This was an unexpected decision in the sense that the solidarity clause specifically mentions terrorist attacks. However, the mutual assistance clause enables tougher military measures and is intergovernmental, in contrast to the supranational solidarity clause.[14] All Member States stated that they would provide assistance to France, including Finland, which is also in the process of adopting a new act to be able to receive and provide military assistance.

Recently, there has been more pressure for deeper defence cooperation in the Union. For example, the current European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has made a "forceful call for a European army", and proposed launching Permanent Structured Cooperation in his State of the Union speech in 2016.[15] Permanent Structured Cooperation was also discussed in the Global Strategy published in June 2016, and the Council accepted its implementation strategy in November 2016. Furthermore, France and Germany have called for a European Security Compact, and Germany has also proposed a European Security and Defence Union under the EU.[16] Nevertheless, it is up to the Member States to decide whether they deem such defence necessary, given that most states are also NATO members. Only six out of the 28 EU Member States are not part of NATO: Finland, Sweden, Austria, Ireland, Malta and Cyprus. None of these countries has refused to participate in European defence cooperation, and Finland and Sweden have even been active supporters of it, especially in crisis management. Indeed, instead of preparing for war, the European Union has traditionally been more focused on preventing different types of risks from mate-

[14] See also Spiliopoulou Åkermark forthcoming.
[15] European Commission 2015; Juncker 2016.
[16] The Federal Government of Germany 2016, p. 73; Steinmeier & Ayrault 2016, p. 3.

rialising, including conflicts around the world. This requires civil-military cooperation, and the intertwining of these aspects may make military activities more justifiable, also in the European Defence Agency.

2.3. European Defence Agency and its Role

The European Defence Agency is a central actor in the process contributing to the militarisation of the Union, i.e. increasing the role of the Union in military affairs. The Agency's purpose is to promote pooling and sharing of defence equipment and resources, and all Member States except for Denmark participate in it. Nevertheless, it is up to the Member States to decide which activities they want to join. The EDA is tasked by the European Council and governed by national Defence Ministers constituting the Steering Board of the agency. Although the EDA may not be well known to the general public, the Agency has been discussed in military and academic circles. The role of the EDA can be characterised as controversial, which "some regard as redundant and others as part of an undesirable militarization of the EU".[17] It has been argued that in the context of the EDA common defence procurements and measures are presented as a non-choice, i.e. the Member States are seen as having no other choice but to harmonise their defence.[18] With the Ukraine crisis and the Russian annexation of Crimea, the need for stronger European military capability can also seem more easily acceptable.

Military cooperation is not obligatory under the umbrella of the EDA, since it is up to the Member States to decide which EDA projects they want to participate in. The EDA is officially an intergovernmental organisation, where national politicians make the decisions. However, it seems to have some individual power rather than being merely the sum of its parts.[19] The EDA is officially presented as an interface between national Defence Ministries and EU institutions,[20] and this status was reinforced by a Council decision in November 2015 that gave more power to the Commission in defence matters.[21] There is also some willingness to provide more power for the EDA, preferably by establishing the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) as defined in the Lisbon Treaty.[22] PESCO is presented by the European Commission as the ultimate military solution to address potential risks,[23] and there is increasing willingness to adopt such cooperation.

[17] MacKenzie 2012.
[18] Davis Cross 2015.
[19] Davis Cross 2015.
[20] European Defence Agency 2015.
[21] Council of the European Union 2015.
[22] Mauro & Thoma 2016, p. 7.
[23] European Commission 2015.

Finland has also been an active participant in the projects of the European Defence Agency, in which the demilitarised status of the Åland Islands has to be taken into account. The Åland Islands are part of the European Union, and EU defence cooperation is not usually considered to threaten their status. For example, all cooperation in the European Defence Agency is done on a voluntary basis, and the EU Battlegroups are the only "troops" that the Union has. Moreover, the CSDP of the Union has been more focused on crisis management and activities outside Europe. The defence of the Union has been traditionally considered to be covered by NATO, but there have been recent implications of the desire to have a stronger independent European defence. The EDA is one institution that could drive such a process. However, it appears that Finland is not very active in insisting on the demilitarisation of Åland in the cooperation under the EDA if it is not strictly necessary.[24] The same applies to relations with NATO; the Åland issue is rarely brought up in the Finnish NATO debate.

2.4. NATO and its Activities in Europe

The current EU defence cooperation is not much opposed in the Åland Islands, but Finland's NATO membership would be more complicated. [25] NATO membership is not likely in the near future, but NATO can also enter "through the back door", along with the EU and the Alliance cooperating more closely. The close relations were reflected also in the signing of a joint NATO-EU declaration in July 2016, stating that: "A stronger NATO and a stronger EU are mutually reinforcing. Together they can better provide security in Europe and beyond". [26] In contrast, the EU Global Strategy compiled by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, stated that the EU should develop its own military capabilities to go beyond NATO: "European security and defence efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO".[27] It seems that both tracks are important to follow.

Of course, the autonomous capability of the EU and increased NATO cooperation are not mutually exclusive, a view that is also reflected in many Finnish political documents. For example, the 2016 Report on Foreign and Security Policy of the Finnish government states that: "It is important to develop the EU's defence cooperation in concert with NATO, which also serves Finland's interests".[28] Furthermore, according to a joint defence declaration of

[24] Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2017.
[25] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 46; Parliament of Åland 2013.
[26] Tusk et al. 2016.
[27] Mogherini 2016, p. 11
[28] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2016, p. 21.

Finland and France in summer 2016, the EU and NATO should work in concert: "While NATO remains the cornerstone of collective defence, the EU's role as a security and defence provider both within Europe and abroad needs to be reinforced, including through a more strategic approach to its relations with NATO".[29] It appears to be in the Finnish interest to reinforce the defence capabilities of the EU, while simultaneously cooperating more with NATO. In this manner, Finland could obtain security defence partners while not having to fear Russian reactions to full NATO membership.

Although Finland has enhanced its military cooperation with NATO, there is no wide-ranging support for applying for membership among the Finnish public. The Finnish government still wants to maintain the NATO option, and NATO is not planning to close the door to further applicants. The Alliance has grown to cover all the Central and Eastern European Member States that joined the Union after the millennium, of which Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined the organisation in 1999. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia also joined the Alliance, and in 2009 Albania and Croatia became members. NATO has thus even enlarged to cover countries not accepted as members of the European Union. Albania only received EU candidate status in 2014 and has not even started membership negotiations with the EU. There are also four aspiring countries to NATO, none of which is an EU Member State: Montenegro, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia. Ukraine has not formally pursued membership since 2010, although in 2002 Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma maintained NATO membership as a goal.

Recently, NATO has strengthened its presence in Europe, inter alia, by establishing a mission shield in Romania. NATO has also been more visible in the Baltic Sea, which has not been positively approached in the Kremlin. As the presence of US NATO forces has increased in the Baltic Sea there have been reports of Russian troops harassing the US navy, after which the US made a formal protest.[30] It has also been envisioned that NATO should draft a NATO maritime framework for the Baltic Sea due to Russian activity in the area.[31]

One recent and particularly controversial NATO exercise was the BALTOPS exercise in summer 2016 in the Baltic Sea, in which non-NATO members such as Finland and Sweden also participated. BALTOPS exercises have been organised since 1971 in the Baltic Sea region, and Russia has also been part of the exercises several times, *inter alia*, in 1998, 2001, 2008, 2011 and 2012. Reflecting the current tense relations between Russia and NATO, the 2016

[29] France & Finland 2016, p. 2.
[30] Nordenman 2016.
[31] Kramer & Nordenman 2016.

exercise was criticised by Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, who maintained that Russia would respond to NATO activity in the Baltic Sea and that the country has a "sovereign right to guarantee its security with measures proportionate to the current risks".[32] However, no serious disturbances occurred.

2.5. European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargements

In addition to military security, there are other efforts to enhance European security, such as enlargement and neighbourhood policy. During the 21st century, the European Union has gone through three enlargement rounds, including the 2004 "big bang" enlargement, when 10 new countries joined the EU, increasing the number of Member States to 25. In addition to Malta and Cyprus, eight countries from Eastern and Central Europe joined the Union (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia). In 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined the Union, and Croatia became the 28th Member State in 2013. Despite this impressive pace of enlargement, the European Union is currently cautious about taking any new commitments, and it is unlikely that any of the current candidate countries – Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey – will join the Union any time soon. Turkey has been the most controversial candidate country, and despite being granted candidate status in 1999, it is questionable whether it would ever be able to join the Union. The current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan introduced much criticised measures after the failed coup in July 2016, which makes the possibility of joining the Union a more distant scenario.

Instead of enlargement policy, the European Union seems to currently put more emphasis in its neighbourhood policy, which allows for impacting the policies in the neighbouring states without promising any membership perspective. Although it might seem like a "looser" instrument than enlargement policy it can also be very controversial, especially in the countries that Russia considers central to its interests. This is particularly palpable in the Ukraine conflict, with its roots in President Yanukovych not signing the Association Agreement with the EU in November 2013. This agreement was later signed in June 2014, but the Netherlands rejected the agreement in a (non-binding) referendum in April 2016. The Netherlands has demanded some changes in the agreement, but at least the lower house of the Dutch Parliament backed the agreement and the senate is expected to do the same by the end of June 2017.[33] Some parts of the agreement have already been applied, including a number of free trade provisions. At the same time, fighting in Eastern Ukraine persists.

[32] Reuters 16 June 2016.
[33] Kroet 2017.

Traditional territorial wars have not been the major source of concern in the European Union, but the Ukrainian conflict has reintroduced war on European soil. This also shows how the EU's "soft power" instruments can lead to more military tension and provide an incentive for increased military cooperation inside the Union.

Another neighbour of the European Union that causes controversies is Moldova, with its autonomous and Russian-speaking Transnistria and Gagauzia regions. In 1992, Transnistria declared independence after the war of Transnistria under the title of a Pridnestrovian Moldovian Republic, but it lacks the recognition of the international community. In 2014, Russian loyalists in Transnistria also asked to join Russia after the annexation of Crimea, while the response of Kremlin has been to ease the application of Russian citizenship. In contrast, the Gagauzia province voted with 97 % in favour of joining the Eurasian Union in 2014, whereas the Moldovan state has signed an Association Agreement with the EU and strives to become a Member State. If Moldova becomes an EU member, Gagauzia would be constitutionally able to separate from Moldova in such a situation.[34]

Despite Moldovan pursuits, the European Union has not accepted it as a potential candidate, but cooperates with Moldova under the umbrella of the European Neighbourhood Policy. With further deepening of free movement and trade agreements between Moldova and the EU, more actions may also be required from the Moldovan side, also in solving the Transnistrian issue. The EU concluded an Association Agreement with Moldova in summer 2014, in which "the Transnistrian issue will constitute one of the central subjects on the agenda of political dialogue and cooperation between the Parties".[35] Since January 2016, a free trade area agreed in the Association Agreement with Moldova covers the entire area, including Transnistria. Russian reactions, however, may impact the development of EU-Moldova relations. According to a report commissioned by the Finnish Foreign Ministry, Russia seems to consider that EU membership inexorably also leads to NATO membership, which is why it opposes EU membership in its neighbouring countries.[36] As a constitutionally neutral state with high dependence on Russia, Moldovan NATO membership is unlikely, but the country has furthered its cooperation with the Alliance.

[34] Lauri Hannikainen and Tero Lundstedt, "Kansainvälisen oikeuden rooli nyky-Venäjän ulkopolitiikassa [The Role of International Law in the Foreign Policy of Today's Russia]," *Finnish Ministry of Defence*, 2016, p. 56.
[35] Anon 2014.
[36] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b, p. 24.

2.6. Brexit and its Impact on EU Security Policies and Åland

In addition to having countries wishing to join the Union, the EU is about to lose one Member State. The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union in a referendum on 23 June 2016. It is as yet unknown how the decision will impact EU security cooperation, but the consequences can be expected to be major in every policy field. As already noted, the UK has been the most reluctant country to share sovereignty in defence matters,[37] and the eventual exit of the country might make it easier for the Union to foster common defence. In the post-Brexit months, several national politicians have proposed increased military cooperation, including Finland.[38] In addition to the three major founding states,[39] such proposals have been heard also from the traditionally "Eurosceptical" Eastern European countries such as Czech Republic and Hungary. [40] Furthermore, the Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker proposed establishing a joint civil-military headquarters in his 2016 State of the Union speech, and this might become reality in the form of the proposed European Military Planning and Conduct Capabilities (MPCC) unit.[41] The UK had vetoed previous plans to establish such headquarters, but does not have much bargaining power now.

In contrast, the two-year negotiations launched in March 2017 on leaving the Union may also stall further integration in the field of defence. A further problem is the eventual mushrooming of the British referendum: Dutch and French populist parties have already demanded referenda in their countries, and similar reactions are expected in other countries. To address this problem, it is likely that the Union will be tough in the negotiations with the UK in order to prevent others calling for similar arrangements. Within the UK, there is also a fear that the pro-European Scotland will revote on independence.

Overall, Brexit is likely to result in much political instability in the European Union for several years to come. The Union will also be a weaker actor and it might be more difficult to find a common stance on conflict situations, which could even be a risk for the security of the Union. In contrast, security is one of the fields where the Union has most incentive in cooperating with the UK; the British Commissioner appointed after Brexit was assigned responsible for "security union". As reported in the press, "Terrorism is the only topic where the Commission wants to keep the UK in for as long as possible".[42] Security seems

[37] Biscop 2012.
[38] France & Finland 2016.
[39] Heath 2016; Steinmeier & Ayrault 2016.
[40] BBC 2016.
[41] Juncker 2016; Barigazzi 2017.
[42] De la Baume et al. 2016.

to be the main field where the Union needs the UK, one of the greatest military powers in Europe. Then again, losing such a powerful security actor may further push the Union to strive for closer military cooperation among the 27 Member States. Brexit thus creates a controversial situation: on the one hand, there might be better momentum to create common defence, but on the other hand, deeper integration may be overshadowed by the British exit negotiations and economic instability. With Britain, the Union loses a large part of its power in external affairs. It should not be forgotten that the absence of Britain naturally decreases the global power of the Union. As a NATO member, Britain will continue to be a major actor in the European security and defence policy, but probably not part of the security and defence cooperation led by the Union.

The UK is also a signatory to both the original 1856 agreement on the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands as well as the 1921 League of Nation Convention. Furthermore, it is a signatory to the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty confirming the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands. In other words, the UK is part of all the legal agreements on the status of the islands except for the bilateral treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1940 and renewed in 1992. The British EU exit does naturally not affect the agreements as such, but it results in a situation where all the 1921 signatories are no longer EU Member States. It might thus be more complicated to mobilise the signatories to the Treaty through EU structures if the status of Åland was endangered. It has also been speculated that the demilitarised status could be questioned in the EU's defence cooperation,[43] and Brexit would mean that there is one less signatory to eventually defend maintaining the status.

This first section has demonstrated how EU militarisation involves many different components, ranging from institutional and legal preconditions to geopolitical ones. Although Finland has supported defence cooperation in the EU, Finland has its own security context, with its own institutional, legal and geopolitical components. These are the topics of the following section.

3. The Finnish Security Context

3.1. Finland – National Interests to Militarise the EU

In recent years, Finnish security policy has started to be increasingly affected by the harmonisation of European policies, and Finland has been active in furthering the EU's defence cooperation. It can even be stated that Finland has sought to further the militarisation of the EU. Finland participates actively in the crisis management conducted under the umbrella of the EU, and Finland has had

[43] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 351.

to reinterpret its traditional policy of non-alignment in the 21st century due to the new obligations that were introduced in the Lisbon Treaty. Indeed, it was reinterpreted by the Finnish Government during the treaty negotiations that the non-alignment policy is a policy of not being part of any military alliance.[44] The Government Programme of 2007 describes the foreign policy line, if it can even be called such, as "not a member of a military alliance" instead of describing Finland as a non-aligned country.[45]

Teemu Palosaari has analysed Finland's Europeanised foreign policy and concluded, *inter alia*, that after 2003 the emphasis changed from peacekeeping to military crisis management. In addition, the role of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) became larger in the Finnish debate; CSDP, crisis management operations, battle groups, the solidarity clause and mutual defence were the main EU issues under discussion. Since 2004 Finland has also participated in the EDA, and it contributes to EU battlegroups and crisis management missions. In terms of politics, traditional politics of consensus decreased in importance in the Finnish foreign policy, but domestic discourse in general became more supportive towards the CDSP.[46] Although Finland has been an active supporter of the CSDP, the mutual assistance clause of the Lisbon Treaty has been much discussed, eventually gaining wide-ranging support. Despite the obligation of providing mutual assistance that may include military means, the Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy in 2012 argued that the EU does not yet have any common defence arrangements, but that Finland supports the development of the CSDP:

> The Member States have not discussed the implementation of the mutual assistance obligation. Finland will improve its capacity to provide and receive assistance and, during the present Government's term in office, aim to determine the needs to review its legislation so as to enable the implementation of the clause. In its own policy Finland takes into account the fact that the Union does not have any defence planning of its own, nor common defence arrangements. Finland advocates the development of the common security and defence policy, which will facilitate the ability to receive and provide assistance.

In Finland, there were some reservations regarding the solidarity clause. While issues of internal security are usually tackled by police, the solidarity clause includes military as one response to terrorist attacks. This was opposed, *inter alia*, by a Finnish MEP and a member of the defence working group of the constitutional treaty, Esko Seppänen (Left Alliance), stating that "I am also

[44] Palosaari 2011, p. 185.
[45] Finnish Government 2007, p. 9.
[46] Palosaari 2011, pp. 173–206.

against the idea that the military should be involved in terrorist actions, as would be the result of such a clause".[47] Furthermore, Finland, Sweden, Austria and Ireland issued a letter to the President of the Council of the European Union stating that "formal binding" would not be compatible with the security policies of these countries.[48] Despite these and other critical comments, the solidarity and mutual assistance clauses were approved, as previously discussed. However, it was stipulated that the mutual assistance provision shall not compromise the foreign policy lines of Member States, and a separate Protocol on Irish concerns was even appended to the treaty.[49]

3.2. Political Perspectives to the Security Situation

In the early 21st century Finnish emphasis in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy was mainly on crisis management, leaving aside territorial defence. However, a constant topic of discussion relates to eventual NATO membership and Russian reactions towards it. Along with the European development, there have also been proposals on abolishing the conscript army that have lacked wide-ranging support. It could be argued that it is rational to maintain the conscript army and territorial defence, since it might increase the attractiveness of Finland as a defence partner, which seems to be the line taken by the incumbent government. There is also much divergence in the political rhetoric on security and defence, which has recently become more focused on threats. Indeed, the past decade has testified significant variation in the perception of threats in Finland's neighbourhood, ranging from stability to tension. In the 2004 Government Report on Security and Defence Policy, the perception was overtly positive: "the overall impression is that the enlargements of the European Union and NATO, deepening integration of the EU and changes in Russia have increased stability in Finland's neighbouring areas".[50] A similar sentence was included also in the 2009 report, but the Georgian war was considered to have an impact: "Russia's use of military force against Georgia will also have knock-on effects on security thinking in Finland's neighbouring areas. This might result in a review of defence arrangements, especially in the Baltic States".[51] It seems that Russian behaviour towards its neighbouring states is the main factor that determines whether the security situation in Finland is considered good or bad.

[47] The Secretariat of the European Convention 2002; see also Martino 2014, p. 23.
[48] Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States 2003.
[49] Anon 2013.
[50] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2004, p. 75.
[51] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2009, p. 56.

After the Georgian war, no major conflicts between Russia and other countries occurred before the Ukraine war that began in 2014. Apparently that quiet period led the Finnish government of the time to conclude that the security situation was also good in the Baltic Sea. Indeed, according to the 2012 report, the security situation in the neighbourhood was considered good, and "The consolidation of cooperation in the Baltic Sea area and in the north, based on mutual interests, strengthens stability and promotes comprehensive security in Finland's neighbourhood".[52] In spring 2013, when the report was discussed, it was still considered that states around the Baltic Sea have consolidated cooperation, and no threats were in sight.

In contrast, the change between the 2012 and 2016 Foreign and Security Policy Reports is striking. While the Baltic Sea was seen as an area of cooperation in 2012, it had turned into a place militarily threatening Finland in 2016. According to the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy published in June 2016, "The security policy environment of Finland […] has transformed. A tenser security situation in Europe and the Baltic Sea region will directly impact Finland. The use or threat of military force against Finland cannot be excluded".[53] Such comments can also be interpreted as securitisation,[54] whereby politicians employ threat rhetoric in order to justify exceptional measures to address those threats. It is not certain what these measures could be, but the possibility of Finland joining NATO is also much more discussed, without wide-ranging public support for membership.[55] It can be questioned whether the situation had really changed that much or whether the party political changes in the government had a larger impact. After the 2015 parliamentary election, the more left-wing government parties stayed in opposition and the Finns Party has come to hold both Foreign and Defence Minister posts. The government also published a separate Defence Report in February 2017, which started from the premise, that: "Finland's military operating environment has changed. Military activity and military tensions have increased in the Baltic Sea region. The early-warning period for military crises has become shorter and the threshold for using force has lowered".[56] This securitisation can be reflected in the context that the report was accompanied by calls for more defence resources.

The general pursuit for more military partners is visible in the fact that Finland concluded a defence cooperation pact with the UK and with the US. In addition to these practical pacts, the current government considers that in case of

[52] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2013, p. 64.
[53] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2016.
[54] For securitisation, see e.g. Vuori 2011.
[55] Yle 2017.
[56] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2017, p. 5.

further tension in the Baltic Sea Finland might have to apply for NATO membership, which the government considers a stabilising force in the Baltic Sea: "In response to the deteriorated security situation NATO aims to stabilise the Baltic Sea region through its measures while continuing to prepare for a possible outbreak of a military crisis" and "The presence and action of NATO brings security to the region".[57] In the parliamentary debate on the report, the opposition accused the government of scaring people with threats and of having an uncritical position towards NATO, which, according to these politicians, may not really stabilise the situation in the Baltic Sea.[58] Indeed, in addition to changes in the foreign and security policy line, it seems that the previous foreign policy consensus is further eroding in Finnish politics. According to Teemu Palosaari, the purpose of the Government Reports has been to seek consensus in foreign policy, but that pursuit appears to have decreased in significance lately.[59]

3.3. Finland's Security Paradox: Finland-Russia-NATO

The incumbent Finnish government, in power since 2015, has declared that Finland would not apply for NATO membership during their term. With regard to NATO membership, the 2016 Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy states that "While carefully monitoring the developments in its security environment, Finland maintains the option to seek NATO membership"[60]. The political institutions also revived the NATO debate in Finland, especially in spring 2016. First, Finland contributed to hosting a large NATO-led military exercise BALTOPS, which spurred discussion on Finland's relations with NATO and the parliamentary control of NATO exercises. Baltic Sea security is obviously important for NATO, also testified by the activities and exercises NATO forces have conducted in the area. Secondly, the Foreign Ministry published a commissioned report on the eventual impacts of Finland's NATO membership,[61] which aroused much debate about whether it would be possible for Finland to join the Alliance. In addition to the specific reports on NATO, two separate reports on Russia were also published in summer 2016, one on Russia and international law commissioned by the Finnish Defence Ministry[62] and the other on Russia's role in Finland's neighbourhood by the Prime Minister's Office.[63] All three reports were commissioned by different ministries and provide a different picture of Finland, Russia, and eventual NATO membership.

[57] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2016, p. 12
[58] Finnish Parliament 2016.
[59] Palosaari 2011, p. 55.
[60] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2016, p. 24.
[61] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b.
[62] Hannikainen & Lundstedt 2016.
[63] Martikainen & Pynnöniemi 2016.

All the reports expect Russia to react strongly to its neighbours' intentions of joining NATO, but whereas the report on Russia and international law deems that Russia respects and appeals to international law in its activities, the report on Russia's role in Finland's neighbourhood provides a gloomier picture of the Finnish-Russian relations. It can be concluded that the approach towards Russia depends much on who is looking and from which perspective, but it is safe to say that the approach of Finns towards Russia is controversial.

The support of the public is not in favour of NATO membership, but the military personnel have in general supported NATO membership. In a spring 2017 poll 21% of respondents reported being in favour of NATO membership, while 51 % were against. The largest change has occurred in the share of don't-knows, which grew from 16% in 2014 to 28 % in 2017.[64] Taking into account the reluctance of the public, it may be seen as rather surprising that two political parties openly support membership. The Coalition Party has traditionally been a supporter of NATO membership, and the Swedish People's Party even declared in their party programme in spring 2016 that Finland should be a NATO member by 2025.

There seems to be a wide-spread political consensus in Finland that Finland and Sweden should join NATO simultaneously if they chose to do so, and in particular, if Sweden were to join NATO Finland should follow suit. This is unlikely to occur very soon, since the current Swedish government has announced unequivocally that Sweden would not join NATO. Furthermore, a government-commissioned security report in autumn 2016 considered that Finland should be taken into account while contemplating NATO membership. However, Finland should not prevent Sweden from joining.[65] A major concern with regard to Finnish membership relates to the reactions of Russia, which were extensively speculated in the NATO report commissioned by the Finnish Foreign Ministry. It is to be expected that the most difficult period would be the application period for joining NATO, when Russian reactions would be harshest in an effort to stop the negotiations. In case Finland was to join the Alliance, it is argued that it should keep the transition period as short as possible in order to minimise antagonism from Russia.[66] In this regard, the UK Defence Committee of the House of Commons has even proposed that Article 5 could already apply during the transition period in order to prevent the harshest reactions from Russia.[67] The tensions between NATO and Russia are also visible in the report, which states that "Dialogue between NATO and Russia is essential to reduce the

[64] Yle 2017.
[65] Bringéus 2016, pp. 150–151.
[66] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b, p. 7.
[67] Defence Committee of the House of Commons 2016, p. 40.

risk of military escalation and misunderstandings between them both. It is not incompatible with a more adversarial relationship, such as has recently developed".[68] In addition to describing the adversarial relationship between Russia and NATO, the report also states that the relations between Russia and the UK are at an "all-time low" and Russia is described as a strategic competitor rather than as a partner.[69]

Russian politicians often comment on the relations between Finland and NATO. The incumbent Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, has even announced that Russia would not attack any NATO country.[70] The comment is controversial in the sense that it might be used as a further argument for Finland to join NATO. According to Edward Lucas's Baltic Sea Security Report, it is also unlikely that Russia would attack a non-NATO country like Finland due to the diplomatic cost of such aggression.[71] This creates a paradox: while Finland is more vulnerable outside NATO, there is less reason for Russian aggressive behaviour. If Finland were part of NATO, it would be covered by security guarantees but more likely to be the subject of "intimidation and subversion" as measures that would not trigger Article 5.[72] Finland also has strong economic interests with Russia, including the right of the partly state-led flight company Finnair to fly over Russia. Russia could "raise the costs of overflights at the stroke of a pen",[73] and might be tempted to do that in case Finland were to apply for NATO membership.

The leading Finnish politicians reiterate the need to have public support for NATO membership. In 2014, Juha Sipilä, who was elected as the Finnish Prime Minister the following year, stated that a referendum should be organised before Finland could apply for membership. He has also speculated that eventual membership would decrease Finland's political room to manoeuvre, but would not remove the need to strengthen Finland's own defence capability.[74] In a political speech held at the party conference of the Centre party in June 2016 he reiterated his view on organising a referendum and emphasised that NATO membership would be an enormous change in Finnish foreign policy.[75] In the speech he also quoted the NATO report published in spring 2016, stating that "It is, in essence, a question of grand strategy, which has to be considered

[68] Defence Committee of the House of Commons 2016, p. 34.
[69] Defence Committee of the House of Commons 2016, p. 7.
[70] Sharkov 2016.
[71] Lucas 2015, p. 13.
[72] Lucas 2015, p. 13.
[73] Lucas 2015, p. 10.
[74] Pirjo Kontio, "Juha Sipilä: Nato-jäsenyys rajoittaisi Suomen liikkumatilaa [NATO Membership Would Restrict Finland's Freedom to Manoeuvre]," *Suomenmaa*, June 15, 2014.
[75] Juha Sipilä, "Seinäjoen puoluekokous poliittinen linjapuhe 11.6.2016 [Political Speech at Seinäjoki Party Conference]," June 11, 2016.

thoroughly. Small nations do not often change their basic foreign policy guidelines. They are more dependent on continuity than great powers." [76] Without a doubt, NATO membership would be a huge shift in the Finnish foreign policy tradition. In addition to the change in status, NATO membership would transform the Finnish foreign policy identity as a country not part of military alliances. Traditionally, continuity in foreign policy has been important for Finland, which has sought to maintain its foreign policy principles such as neutrality and non-alignment as long as it has been possible. The neutrality policy was only abandoned when Finland joined the EU, and not being a member of a military alliance is held onto, even though Finland committed to the defence clauses of the European Union. Then again, it is questionable whether Finland can describe itself as not a member of a military alliance while simultaneously pushing forward European defence. NATO membership would obviously abolish this principle altogether.

Continuity is also what Ålanders emphasise as crucial in the demilitarisation regime. Russian reactions to Finnish NATO application or to any attempt at modify the existing demilitarisation agreements are likely to be critical, to say the least. In her report in 2002, Teija Tiilikainen suspected that in case Finland joined the Alliance it would not bring reformulation of the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands to the table in an attempt not to polarise the already tense situation with Russia. Alternatively, Finland could try to "sell everything in one package" and aim at changing the demilitarisation regime simultaneously. [77] Demilitarisation thus appears a relevant question even in eventual NATO membership. However, in the 2016 assessment report on Finland's possible NATO membership drafted by Tiilikainen and other experts, the Åland question is not discussed despite much devotion to Russian reactions. The only entry on the Åland Islands reads as: "The relationship between the international agreements that cover the sui generis status of these islands and the undertakings implied in membership need to be examined further".[78] In legal terms, making a reservation concerning the demilitarised islands would probably not be a problem. However, in military strategic terms it might be challenging, as NATO would have to provide security guarantees for the entire of Finland under Article 5.

The relations between Finland and Russia are good but not without tension. However, there seems to be some interest from the Russian side to improve the atmosphere in the Baltic region, as Russia has invited NATO countries in the Baltic Sea area as well as Finland and Sweden to a multilateral debate in

[76] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b, p. 56.
[77] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 48
[78] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2016b, p. 4.

Moscow to discuss tensions in the Baltic Sea.[79] The countries have, nevertheless, taken a rather sceptical approach to such a proposal. Although Russian leaders maintain that Finland's membership is a domestic issue, they assure that they would react if Finland were to join NATO. President Putin predicted in June 2016 that "NATO would gladly fight Russia to the last Finnish soldier" and that Russia would have to react if Finland's defence forces would no longer be independent but under NATO command.[80] President Putin assumes that Finland could no longer make independent defence decisions if it were a NATO member. If this were so, Finland might not be able to maintain the status of the Åland Islands in case it was contested. In Mr Putin's rhetoric Finland appears a friendly neighbour which is at risk of becoming subsumed under an evil organisation dictating to Finland what it should do. Simultaneously, in Russian accounts, NATO has been presented as a warring organisation, while Russia has been highlighted as the friendly neighbour pulling its troops further from the Finnish border.[81] If such perceptions are really considered to be valid, the transition period towards Finnish NATO membership could be very tense. That does not mean that it would affect Åland.

Although the question of the demilitarised Åland Islands might not have a major role in the political discretion over NATO membership, the decisions made by Finland in terms of security and defence policy also impact the islands. The islands do not have any foreign policy competence, but Ålanders do take a stance on the foreign policy decisions made in Finland. There is currently much discussion on eventual Finnish membership in NATO, but the demilitarised Åland Islands do not often feature in the debate. In addition to Russia, Finland would have to discuss the international agreements with the parties to the 1921 League of Nations Convention if it were to alter the status.

In the next section, I focus on the role of the demilitarised and neutralised Åland Islands in the current security framework. I touch upon the Finnish debate on demilitarisation, the eventual NATO membership in Ålandic terms, and the Ålandic perspective towards security.

4. Åland in the New Security System

4.1. Ålandic Interests not to Militarise

Despite much happening in the Finnish and European security policies, Finland has little incentive or possibility to change the demilitarised and neutralised status of the Åland Islands, which is stipulated in several international

[79] YLE News 2016b.
[80] YLE News 2016a.
[81] YLE News 2016a.

agreements.[82] Demilitarisation refers to the absence of military equipment or personnel during peace time, whilst neutralisation stipulates that the islands may not be used for any war-like purposes during war time. The demilitarisation of the Åland Islands can be seen as a contrary example to the militarisation trend in Finland and in the European Union. Despite being bound by the international agreements, Finland seems to have some leeway in interpreting the 1921 League of Nations Convention on demilitarisation and neutralisation.[83] Finland has, however, chose to assure that no changes in the status are foreseen, despite further defence cooperation with other states. Before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, it was estimated that the situation of the Åland Islands could become an object of increased strategic planning when common European defence is established.[84] Strategic planning concerning the islands is obviously not public, but the relation between Åland demilitarisation and European defence cooperation is surprisingly little discussed in any contexts, although the mutual assistance provisions obviously concern the islands. A report drafted in 2008 by Teija Tiilikainen on the mutual assistance provision of the Lisbon Treaty states that "In the implementation of the mutual assistance provision, it is necessary to take into account the international obligations concerning the demilitarisation and neutralisation of the Åland Islands".[85] While Finland was recently drafting legislation on providing and receiving international assistance, however, it was not considered that such legislation would impact the status of the islands in any way.[86]

The Treaty of Lisbon (Art. 57 TEU) also defines the international legal personality of the Union, which makes it possible for the EU to also become a party to the 1921 Convention. The 1921 Convention authorises the high contracting parties both to intervene in case of aggression as well as to include new signatories to the convention (Articles 7II and 9). The Convention currently

[82] For example, the 1921 League of Nations Convention on the demilitarisation and neutralisation of Åland provides that Finland could ask for help from the signatory states, which include Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Sweden. Russia is not a party to the treaty, but Finland and Russia have a separate agreement on the demilitarisation of the islands, concluded first in 1940 and renewed after the Soviet collapse in 1992. Originally, the demilitarisation of the islands was stipulated in a convention of 1856 after the Crimean war, and also the Paris peace treaty after the Second World War confirmed the status of Åland.
[83] An interesting note is that the Tall Ships Races competitions in 1988 inspired Finland to interpret the 1921 agreement so that each foreign state may have one ship in the Ålandic area. None of the signatories to the convention opposed to this interpretation. It seems that Finland can relatively rather freely interpret the 1921 convention without opposition from the signatories, but Russia might not be as tolerant towards Finnish deviations from their bilateral agreements.
[84] Tiilikainen 2006, p. 351.
[85] Teija Tiilikainen, "Report on the Mutual Assistance Provision in the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union" 2008, p. 38.
[86] Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, "Legislation on the Provision and Reception of International Assistance" 2016, p. 82–83.

includes 10 EU Member States, and the EU's membership could further strengthen the authority of the EU in a crisis situation. The prospect of the EU joining the Convention was speculated by Lauri Hannikainen as early as 1994,[87] but it appears that the issue has not been seriously considered. An argument for not putting this issue on the table is that introducing new parties to the convention might cast a shadow on the status of demilitarisation and neutralisation as part of customary international law. In addition to being a legal matter, demilitarisation also features in the Finnish political debate.

4.2. Political Discussion on Demilitarisation in the 21st Century

The demilitarisation of Åland was one of Finland's concerns in the intergovernmental conference (IGC) of the European Union, which started to prepare a constitutional treaty for the EU in 2001. The draft constitution included provisions on intensified defence cooperation. Although the constitution failed, the following Lisbon Treaty, in force since 2009, maintained the provisions concerning solidarity and mutual assistance. In the Finnish Government Report 2/2003 regarding the IGC, it was stated that the Protocol on the Åland Islands included in the Finnish Accession Treaty to the European Union was not a conflictual issue in the intergovernmental conference and that the provisions on common foreign and security policy did not affect the status of the islands.[88] Furthermore, Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen specified that maintaining the position of the islands was one of the Finnish objectives that were reached.[89]

The 2004 Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy did not mention demilitarisation, and the absence of references was justified with the lack of changes by the Finnish President Tarja Halonen: "[t]he report does not discuss the special position of Åland, because in this regard no changes have occurred or been considered […] I take it for granted that Finland respects the international legal status of the Åland Islands". [90] In the subsequent 2009 report, the demilitarisation of Åland was considered relevant enough to be mentioned, but the report only included one reference to the islands: "[t]he Province of Åland Islands has a recognised status under international law. The special status of the province does not prevent Finland from intensifying defence cooperation within the European Union and in international organisations". [91] The same was

[87] Hannikainen 1994.
[88] Finnish Government, "Government Report to the Parliament on the Results of the Convention and on Preparation to the Intergovernmental Conference 2/2003," 2003, 6.
[89] Matti Vanhanen, "Prime Minister's Announcement Made to the Parliament Concerning the Intergovernmental Conference of the EU on 22 June 2004," 2004.
[90] Tarja Halonen, "President of the Republic Tarja Halonen at the Inauguration of the Parliament of Åland on 1 November 2004," 2004.
[91] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2009, p. 70.

reiterated in the 2012 and 2016 reports in a slightly different form, and seems to be added in order to take into account the demands of the Ålandic politicians. Indeed, the one Ålandic MP in the Finnish Parliament is usually the one to bring up the Åland case in the debate on the Government Reports.

The Government Report 2012 explicitly stated that the solidarity clause introduced in the Lisbon Treaty should not affect Åland's status: "Regarding this [the mutual assistance clause], the international obligations on the non-fortification and neutralisation of the Åland Islands are also taken into account in Finland".[92] Furthermore, new types of non-military threats were also discussed: "The Government will establish how the special status of the Åland Islands will be taken into consideration during potential oil spills and other crises, and how to ensure the appropriate authorities' sufficient preparedness".[93] This promise was fulfilled with a report on the Defence Forces providing executive assistance in the islands.[94] A surprising feature of the report is that it is dealing with ultimately civil activities, but was drafted by the Defence Ministry. This may also be read as a sign of an increased militarisation in Finland.

An interesting observation is that while the perceptions of threat varied greatly in the reports, as discussed before, the changes had no impact whatsoever on the formulations regarding the status of the Åland Islands. In 2016, the Foreign and Security Policy Report only mentions demilitarisation with the traditional formulation: "the Province of Åland Islands has a recognised status under international law. This does not prevent Finland from intensifying defence cooperation within the European Union, with international organisations and in the Nordic context."[95] While previous governments only mentioned the EU and international organisations, the current government wanted to emphasise Nordic defence cooperation, which has indeed intensified after the establishment of Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) in 2009.

As can be observed from this recent period, the government argues the demilitarisation to be a rather stable arrangement, which receives little attention in the security and defence policy debate. Nor have the Finnish parliamentary debates on the reports been very active on Åland. In order not to give room for demands for changing the status, it is of course rational to assure that the demilitarisation agreements do not hinder Finland conducting defence cooperation in any arenas. Leading politicians have thus not questioned this status, but sought to adapt the obligations into changing situations. However, outside the political scene the demands for change have been more vocal.

[92] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2013, p. 57.
[93] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2013, p. 88.
[94] Finnish Ministry of Defence, "Report on the Implementation of Tasks in Åland" 2015.
[95] Prime Minister's Office Finland 2016, p. 12.

4.3. Demands for Change

There is currently much discussion on the alleged deteriorated security situation in the Baltic Sea area, reflected also in the recent government reports. A couple of years ago, the Finnish discussion on risks facing the demilitarised Åland Islands was heated by a researcher of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs who speculated the potential of Russian "green men" entering the islands.[96]. This risk seems to have been internalised to some extent by the current government, considering similar comments of the incumbent Finnish Defence Minister about potential green men in the islands.[97] Other researchers have also speculated about a possible Russian occupation of the Åland Islands,[98] arguing that demilitarisation might pose a security threat.

Traditionally, the proponents of changing the demilitarisation regime have come from the military personnel, who argue that demilitarisation has not prevented the use of the Ålandic territory in wars, that weapon technology has made it easier to attack, and that Finland's international freedom to manoeuvre enables it.[99] This debate was most vivid in the 1990s, but the military forces never received support from the government in calls for re-examination of the regime. [100] The current Defence Minister has also been worried about the vulnerability of the demilitarised islands, but the contrary has also been argued, particularly before the alleged deterioration of security situation. For example, with regard to the 2009 Government Report on Security and Defence Policy, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament stated that: "The arrangements concerning the Åland Islands' position contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the Baltic Sea area".[101] As we already observed, despite critical comments, no demands for change have come from the high political level. However, it has been argued that calls for change could come from outside Finland in the course of intensified military cooperation or eventual NATO membership.[102]

4.4. Åland and NATO

If Finland joined NATO, it would have to make a reservation that no military equipment or personnel could access the demilitarised zone. This is not impossible, as NATO already includes demilitarised zones, such as

[96] Salonius-Pasternak 2014.
[97] Nurmi 2015.
[98] Myntti 2016; Tarkka 2015a; Komulainen 2005, pp. 277–278.
[99] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 38; Hannikainen 1994, p. 627.
[100] Poullie 2016, p. 207.
[101] Finnish Parliament Committee for Foreign Affairs 2009.
[102] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 44; Tiilikainen 2006, p. 355.

Svalbard/Spitsbergen and a group of Greek islands in the Mediterranean.[103] Some neutralised and demilitarised areas, such as Malta, are impeded by international law to join NATO,[104] but in that case demilitarisation covers the entire country. In contrast, the Åland Islands would have to be excluded from the sphere of military activities if Finland were to join NATO.

It is also possible that there would be demands from NATO to end demilitarisation in case Finland was a member of the Alliance. However, it has also been speculated that the European Union would make such demands,[105] but no discussions on the issue have been reported. Moreover, since the members of NATO and the EU partly overlap, it is unlikely that these countries would present such demands at any arena.[106] Upon joining NATO, Finland would have to demand commitment form the other Alliance members to maintain the demilitarisation and neutralisation of the Åland Islands.

It is particularly in the interest of Russia to maintain the demilitarisation regime. Russia is part of the 1856 demilitarisation agreement and has also concluded a bilateral treaty with Finland in 1940, which was renewed after the Soviet collapse in 1992. Although Russia is not a party to the 1921 League of Nations agreement on demilitarisation and neutralisation, Russian consent for terminating the demilitarised status would be helpful to say the least. Russia has a particularly strong position in monitoring demilitarisation, since the Russian Consulate in Mariehamn is tasked with observing this. It was established after the 1940 treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union in order to monitor compliance with demilitarisation. It would thus be difficult for Finland to agree with the other signatories to terminate the 1921 treaty but not to negotiate bilaterally with Russia on the issue.

4.5. Strategy and Politics

The Åland Islands have a strategic position in the middle of the Baltic Sea. This became infamously clear in the comment of Finnish Defence Minister Jussi Niinistö in summer 2015, when he stated that Åland is not defended for the Ålanders' sake but due to the islands' strategic importance for Finland.[107] He later regretted his choice of words, but has often reiterated the strategic significance of the islands and challenges in defending them. As claimed by a Finnish historian Jukka Tarkka, the one who controls the Åland Islands controls

[103] Ronzitti 1985; Ronzitti 2010; Grydehøj 2013.
[104] Ronzitti 2010, p. 20.
[105] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 39.
[106] Källman 2007, p. 55.
[107] Vuorikoski 2015.

the Northern Baltic Sea.[108] Other Finnish researchers and former politicians have made similar comments on how militarily vulnerable the islands are.[109] However, military personnel, who have traditionally been the most critical towards demilitarisation, have not publicly commented on the issue in recent years. Then again, there have been enough others who have done so.

With new hybrid warfare and technology, defending the islands may be more complex on the one hand, as no military troops or equipment may be positioned in the islands. On the other hand, new military technology may also make it easier to protect and monitor the islands. In a strategic document from 1995, Anders Gardberg speculates that European integration may make Finland and Sweden coordinate their efforts in protecting the islands and adds that: "The development in arms technology can offer new possibilities for Finland and Sweden to make the defence of the islands more effective, each in its own territory, independent of the limitations stipulated in the conventions."[110] This is the dual face of modern military technology: it makes monitoring easier, but may also leave the islands more vulnerable to others using remote military technology.

In the 1990s, the Finnish Defence University also published some other reports in addition to the Gardberg report on the Åland Islands, but recent publications of the University related to the Åland Islands include mainly master's theses. In one of these, the Åland Islands were seen as strategically extremely important; they are important for sea and air transport as well as for communication technology. They also provide a challenge for Finland, which is obligated to restore the demilitarised and neutralised status in a crisis situation.[111] Another challenge is the eventual position of Finland in a military alliance, whereby it would have to ensure the security of the islands while simultaneously ensuring that the alliance does not violate the demilitarisation agreements.

4.6. NATO Members Include Demilitarised Areas

As already mentioned, NATO countries include demilitarised areas, such as Svalbard/Spitsbergen in Norway and the Greek islands of Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Nikaria, and the Dodecanese Islands. The case of Svalbard is most similar to the Åland demilitarisation case, whilst the demilitarisation of the Greek islands is a more complex question. Although NATO has not held any military exercises in the area, the Greeks themselves have not entirely complied with demilitarisation. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union often criticised

[108] Tarkka 2015b, p. 130.
[109] Salonius-Pasternak 2014; Moberg et al. 2015; Lehtinen 2016; Myntti 2016.
[110] Gardberg 1995, p. 62.
[111] Lindgren 2014.

Greece for not holding onto demilitarisation, i.e. playing in the hands of NATO, and Turkey accuses Greece of violating its obligations every once in a while. It could even be said that the demilitarisation of the Greek islands is a dormant issue.[112]

The Svalbard case can be compared to that of the Åland Islands. The Svalbard Treaty dates back to 1920, but posed no difficulties for Norway to join NATO in 1949. The Soviet Union argued nevertheless that Norway violated demilitarisation provisions when Norwegian vessels visited the islands and when it was placed under NATO command.[113] The Svalbard archipelago is extraordinary also in the sense that the signatories to the 1920 Svalbard Treaty have the right to economic access in the islands, which has been exploited by Russia, which established a coalmine there in 1932.[114] It is noteworthy that the NATO agreement does not mention Svalbard at all, but NATO membership may also be important for Norway in light of defending Norwegian interest in Svalbard.

Although NATO includes demilitarised areas, there does not seem to be interest in demilitarising further areas. It has been speculated that Svalbard might be employed as a start to create Arctic nuclear weapon-free zones,[115] but no such intentions have been publicly present. Researcher Franklyn Griffiths has in the past proposed a seminar on demilitarising the Arctic and brought up the issue also at a NATO Arctic workshop in 2010. However, representatives from Norway, Russia and United states shot down his views right away "as unrealistic and as undesirable in proposing to alter the high-seas regime in international law". Similar speculations of a demilitarised Mediterranean have been presented, but that too remains a distant scenario. Italy and Libya have agreed to promote the Mediterranean as a WMD-free zone, which can be seen as an effort, albeit a modest one.[116] Furthermore, during the Cold War there were Finnish proposals on creating a Nordic nuclear-free zone. Responding to these, Swedish Foreign Minister Hans Blix proposed making the entire Baltic Sea nuclear-free, and the Soviet Union also showed some interest in a nuclear-free zone in its neighbourhood. However, no consensus was reached, and Norway was particularly reluctant to give up its nuclear option.[117]

When compared to the other European demilitarised areas, the Åland Islands have a fairly stable position. For example, the Svalbard Treaty is under constant negotiation, as especially Iceland and Russia have questioned the Norwegian

[112] Ronzitti 2010, p. 5.
[113] Byers 2013, p. 21.
[114] Byers 2013, p. 18.
[115] Byers 2013, p. 256.
[116] Ronzitti 2010, pp. 20–21.
[117] Gutteridge et al. 1981, pp. 111–114; Rotkirch 1986, p. 357; Joenniemi 1993.

interpretations of the treaty as regards resource exploitation in the area. Although the disputes do not relate to demilitarisation, Norway has called for its military allies to support the Norwegian interpretations. Petroleum interests in the north also have a strategic significance, in addition to the military interests in the area.[118] Such interests can create tensions, but the Svalbard and Åland Islands have one striking difference: while there are only around 2,500 inhabitants in Svalbard, the Åland Islands are constitutionally autonomous and have almost 30,000 inhabitants, as well as well-functioning political institutions to take a stance to the demilitarised status.

4.7. Åland's Security from an Ålandic Perspective

Ålandic politicians are obviously the ones that most eagerly discuss the issue of demilitarisation, both in the Finnish Parliament and in the Ålandic political institutions. It goes without saying that support for demilitarisation is high on the islands, and local politicians constantly seek reaffirmation from the Finnish government that there are no intentions to make changes in the status. For example, at the request of Ålanders Finland made a unilateral declaration on maintaining the demilitarisation and neutralisation of Åland in the minutes of a meeting of the European Union Permanent Representatives in November 2009.[119] The Government of Åland also drafted Guidelines for the Government Opinion on Åland's demilitarisation and neutralisation in 2013. In this document, the Government of Åland assumed the view that demilitarisation and neutralisation in no manner hinder the development of the foreign and security policy of the EU. Article 351 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union would obligate Member States to overrule all agreements that are not in conformity with the EU Treaties, but demilitarisation agreements are not considered such.[120]

The current world involves many threats of other than military nature, but the demilitarisation agreements only deal with military affairs. Finland has, according to the 1921 convention, the right to have armed forces visit the islands to maintain order. However, in 2013 the Ålandic Government deemed that this should be interpreted restrictively and civil means should be used in civil crises.[121] A related issue under discussion is the separation between the Border Guard and the Defence Forces. While the Border Guard is in Finland under the command of the Ministry of the Interior, there are discussions on transferring the

[118] Anderson 2009, pp. 353–354.
[119] Council of the European Union 2010.
[120] Government of Åland, "Policy for Åland's Demilitarisation and Neutralisation" 2013.
[121] Government of Åland 2013.

Guard under the Defence Ministry and using conscripts in border guard tasks.[122] However, it has been acknowledged in this process that the Åland question would be problematic, since the Border Guard would no longer be able to operate in the islands.[123] The Ålandic politicians also recognise that the current situation often requires cooperation between civil and military authorities, which is a problem for the demilitarised Åland.[124] The starting point, according to the stance of the Autonomy Committee of Åland in 2014, should be that all eventual events in the Åland Islands should be able to be addressed without military involvement.[125] The committee also deemed that all visits of Finnish military ships should be terminated in the islands, as new technology enables monitoring the islands without physical presence.[126] The Ålandic politicians thus seem to be reluctant to have any military presence unless strictly necessary.

The Ålandic Government would also like to have power in cases where Finland's international agreements or obligations relate to the demilitarised status of the islands.[127] Indeed, if Finland were to be part of NATO or another collective defence organisation that would place the Åland Islands under a defence commitment, the Government of Åland should be informed and offered the possibility to participate in the negotiations.[128] There are also split opinions among Ålandic politicians on whether they should have a role in international defence cooperation in any manner. While the Government of Åland stated in its Government Opinion that Åland should remain completely outside the Nordic defence cooperation, a few representatives of the Ålandic Parliament thought they should be active.[129]

NATO is also discussed in the islands in connection to demilitarisation. In 2013, the Premier of Åland asked in a debate at the Parliament of Åland whether "the demilitarised and neutralised status is at all compatible with joining security policy cooperation such as NATO".[130] Then again, a number of MPs in the Parliament of Åland thought that since NATO already has demilitarised areas, membership would pose no threat to the status. One MP even deemed that demilitarisation and neutralisation could become stronger after NATO membership, since the status was, according to him, reinforced after EU

[122] Jarmo Huhtanen, "Eastern Border Preparing for New Threats - This Is How the Border Guard Would Operate in a Crisis Situation" *Helsingin Sanomat 26 February*, 2016.
[123] Huhtanen 2016.
[124] Parliament of Åland 2014.
[125] Autonomy Committee of the Parliament of Åland, "Report of the Self-Govenance Committee" 2014.
[126] Autonomy Committee of the Parliament of Åland 2014.
[127] Government of Åland, "Policy for Åland's Demilitarisation and Neutralisation"
[128] Katariina Simonen, "Suomi, Ahvenanmaa ja liittoutuminen" *Lakimies* 4 (2004): p. 678.
[129] Parliament of Åland, "Plenum den 4 december 2013 Kl. 14.00," 2016.
[130] Camilla Gunell, Parliament of Åland 2013.

membership.[131] Already this brief glimpse of the Ålandic debate reveals that there is no single "Ålandic opinion". There seems to be a wide consensus on supporting demilitarisation, but views on defence cooperation differ. As long as there is support for membership in the islands, it is also difficult for Finnish politicians to strive for changes in the status. If the Ålanders themselves support demilitarisation for various reasons, arguments on the vulnerability of the islands lose some of their power.

5. Concluding Remarks

It seems that there are no threats in sight for the status of the Åland Islands. There is much pressure to intensify European defence cooperation, but I cannot see it resulting in any calls to terminate demilitarisation. A few critical voices are heard in Finland, but no serious political discussion on the issue is held. However, the question of NATO is one that divides people both on the mainland and in the Åland Islands. As NATO includes demilitarised areas, the membership as such does not threaten the status of the islands, but the question might be more of a principle. As the Ålanders are proud of their "islands of peace", this identity might be more difficult to sell if Åland was under the umbrella of NATO. In this report I have not discussed the use of the Åland example in conflict management, but NATO membership could also weaken the power of the example of non-military solutions to territorial disputes.[132] Both in the Finnish and in the Ålandic discussion, the most important issue seems to be maintaining the status quo no matter what.

This report was intended as a presentation of the security political situation surrounding the Åland Islands. The surrounding area of the islands has witnessed increased tension in recent years, and the Åland Islands could also become a topic of discussion outside Finland. This tension in the Baltic Sea has even inspired Sweden's decision to remilitarise the Gotland Island, although there have also been proposals that Gotland could become a demilitarised area like the Åland Islands.[133] Indeed, one of the strengths of the demilitarisation and neutralisation of the islands is its successful record, although it must be stated that the islands have not been completely outside World Wars. However, hardly any battles have taken place in the islands, and the question has mainly been of constructing fortifications. The islands might have been a more desired target for foreign powers to occupy if there had been military presence. The example of

[131] Roger Jansson, Parliament of Åland, "Plenum den 4 december 2013 Kl. 14.00."
[132] Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011.
[133] Lars Ingelstam, "Kan Gotland bli som Åland?" *Mänsklig Säkerhet*, December 8, 2015.

self-government and demilitarisation is also what the islanders themselves try to purport, and this may also be wise in terms of guaranteeing the status of the islands.[134]

Teija Tiilikainen stated in the end of her report in 2002 that "Not even in today's peaceful situation is Åland's status a question that is of concern only to Finland".[135] I would argue that not even in today's tense world is the status of the islands questioned outside Finland. Hardly any calls for ending the demilitarisation and neutralisation have come from outside Finland, and Sweden, whose capital is close to the islands, can be seen as one of the fiercest supporters of the demilitarised status.[136]

In addition to discussing the role of the Åland Islands, this report has illustrated the militarisation trend in the Finnish and European security policies, which has barely concerned the Åland Islands. Indeed, the Åland Islands remain a relic of the past, where threats do not lead to abandoning old agreements, at least during peacetime. The Åland Islands can be regarded as a very early multilateral security solution. Currently, the European Union tries to build regional solutions to alleged security threats, supported by Finland. However, Åland reveals that this is not the only option.

[134] Wigell 2013.
[135] Tiilikainen 2002, p. 52.
[136] Komulainen, *Taistelu Ahvenanmaasta - Oolannin iäisyyskysymys*, 274.

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