

The Åland Islands Meet European Integration:

Politics of History and the EU referendums on Åland

Hasan Akintug
University of Helsinki
Faculty of Social Sciences
European and Nordic Studies
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HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

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| Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>This thesis aims to provide an analysis of the decision of the Parliament of Åland to join the European Union in 1994. The chosen time frame is the period between the Korfu Summit on 24 June 1994 and the decision of the Parliament to join on 2 December 1994. While the EU process has its roots at the end of the Cold War and Finland's membership to the Council of Europe in 1989, this timeline is chosen to emphasize the deliberative process in which Åland decided to join the European Union.</p> <p>The theoretical approach is discourse analysis as foreign policy analysis by Ole Wæver. This rests on the post structuralist understandings of language which due to its constitutive power can be used to explain the foreign policy choices which lie upon historical and identarian legacies. This is done by analysing the relationship between the "core concepts" such as "state" and "nation" with "Europe" in which the national identity is constructed upon. This thesis aims to analyse the Ålandic decision to join the EU by using 7 parliamentary debates as primary data alongside newspaper articles to construct a chronology of the referendum process while at the same time adjusting Wæver's framework to suit the regional context of Åland.</p> <p>This study shows that the Ålandic EU debate took place in a context in which the Regional Parliament had to consider the choices of its immediate environment and the lack of enthusiasm of the Ålandic voter. On the pro EU camp, the prospect of EU membership was understood as new field for Åland's external relations, an economic opportunity and further recognition of Åland's status according to international law. The anti-EU camp drew arguments from a fear of centralisation, transferring legislative authority and concern regarding the competences of the EU in agriculture and fisheries. This study also shows that the choice of certain arguments was structured by the regional parties' conceptualisation of Europe and the relationship between that and their conceptualisation of "autonomy" and the "people" which are in turn constructed by the two main cleavages on Åland: the autonomy policy cleavage and the urban-rural cleavage.</p> | | | |
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“EU membership is the most revolutionary process since the creation of autonomy in 1921”¹

-Harry Jansson

“The time that Ålandic politics could be limited exclusively to what is happening in Åland is gone”²

-Barbro Sundback

1. Introduction

The Åland Islands with their population of nearly 30,000 people and 6,500 islands represent a unique deviation from the “one nation, one language” conceptualisation of the romantic nationalism of 19th century. This rests not only on the grounds of its unilingual Swedish speaking status in an overwhelmingly Finnish speaking state, but also on its demilitarised (from 1856) and neutralised (from 1921) status according to international law.³

Once an integrated part of the Swedish realm, it was incorporated to the Russian empire alongside Finland in the treaty of Fredrikshamn in 1809 and as a result of the Crimean war became demilitarised in 1856 in a treaty between Russia, the UK and France⁴. Prior to the birth of the Finnish nation state in December 1917 “The Åland movement” considered re-joining the old mother land, Sweden as the only way to guarantee the islanders’ Swedish identity and security. As a response Finland hastily offered autonomy in May 1920 but this was rejected by the Åland Movement at time. The following year, the Åland question was brought before the League of Nations which decided on a compromise solution which would grant the Islanders further autonomy alongside neutralisation⁵ in exchange for Finnish sovereignty over the islands.

¹ Ålandstidningen 15 Novemeber 1994

² Sundback 2006, p.102

³See Hannikainen and Horn eds. 1997 and Spiliopolou-Åkermark ed. 2011 for legal perspectives on the international legal order regarding the Åland Islands.

⁴ See Ålandskulturstiftelse for the full documents

<http://www.kulturstiftelsen.ax/images/internationellaavtal/engelskaavtal.pdf>.

⁵ This was done in a multi-lateral manner and was the primary concern on the Swedish side. see Barros 1968

Ålands autonomy act was revised in 1951 which introduced the concept of “hembygdsrätt” (regional citizenship) and again in 1991 which required Finland to seek the Ålandic parliament’s consent in order for international agreements to be considered valid also on the territory of Åland.⁶

During Finland’s accession process to the European Union it was recognised that the state would need to conduct negotiations in such way as to gain the confidence of both the Ålandic Parliament and the EU. After long negotiations, this resulted in the so-called “Åland protocol”⁷ on 22 February 1994 which was then added to the Finnish accession treaty and signed in the Korfu Summit on 24 June 1994.

The final stage of the Åland’s journey to the EU was between the Korfu Summit and the final decision to give consent to the application of Finnish EU membership on the territory of Åland on 2 December 1994. This decision and the process preceding it can be defined as first in the history of Ålandic autonomy as it was the first time the Ålandic parliament transferred a share of its powers to a supra national structure, the first time the tool of public referendum was used on the Islands and the first “foreign policy” decision only it was authorised to take. This thesis aims to put this decision in its historical context with special focus on the internal political cleavages that have developed over the decades of autonomy on Åland.

1.1 Research Questions

Against this background, this thesis sets out to answer the following question.

-How did the members of parliament of Åland discuss the topic of EU membership during the ratification process?

Additionally, this thesis also asks the following supporting questions.

-How did the political parties on Åland converge and diverge on the EU membership during the ratification process?

-How did the historical cleavages play a role in the EU debates on Åland?

1.2 Aims and Objectives

⁶ Autonomy Act 1991, Chapter 59

⁷ See Fagerlund 1997.

Through the research questions stated above, this thesis aims to deepen the understanding of how the world's "first autonomy in the modern sense"⁸ willingly transferred a share of its legislative power to a supra national structure, the European Union. By analysing the parliamentary debates during the ratification period of the EU membership application, the thesis aims to analyse the justifications of the decision to join and contribute to the studies of paradiplomacy⁹, which is a growing field in autonomy studies.

The criticism towards "methodological nationalism" within Political Science has been driving force for studies of sub state entities. Methodological nationalism has been defined as the tendency to view the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis in Political Science and International Relations at the cost of sub state units who are no less affected by global developments.¹⁰ This approach is also evident in studies of the Nordic region's¹¹ relations to the EU, the main premises of the research usually only incorporates nation states' perspective and sometimes excludes Iceland when deemed necessary.¹²

This thesis aims to contribute to against "methodological nationalism" by providing Ålandic perspectives to the topic of EU membership. It must also be remembered that by rescaling the unit of analysis to the sub state unit the intention is not to homogenise "Åland" into a monolithic actor as several studies tend to do but to also highlight the divergence of understandings of the EU within its own context.

1.3 Relevance of the Research

The studies regarding the interaction of autonomy systems with the wider world have been dominated by larger stateless nations and regions within federal states.¹³ In the Nordic context, due to the expansion of "foreign policy" capacities of Greenland and Faroe Islands with the most recent Home Rule act of 2005, a burgeoning literature on the topic may be observed.¹⁴ However, Åland seems to be lacking behind both in the Nordic context and in the broader field of "sub state diplomacy". The reasons for this lack are manifold but some probable causes will be proposed. One

⁸ Benedikter 2009, p.10

⁹ This concept can be simply defined as the interaction of sub state units with foreign governments and entities. More about the concept below

¹⁰ See Wimmer and Schiller 2002, Jeffrey and Wilcott 2010.

¹¹ This is understood to the five nation states of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden plus the three autonomous regions of Faeroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.

¹²For example, Hansen and Waever 2002 omit Iceland and the three autonomous regions in their analysis about national identity and the Nordic region in relation to the EU.

¹³ See Keating and McGarry 2001, Keating and McGarry 2006, Gagnon and Keating 2012.

¹⁴ See Bartmann 2006, Maria Ackren 2014 and 2018.

reason is the sheer smallness of Åland (with approx. 30 000 population) in comparison with larger regions such as Catalonia (with approx. 7.5 million in population) or Scotland (with approx. 5.4 million in population). Similarly considering the recent developments regarding the 2014 Scottish and the 2017 Catalan referendums, the situation on Åland can be perceived as relatively uneventful from a global perspective. One other factor could be the broader sense of ethnicity on Åland whose official language is also an official language in Sweden and Finland softens the identity-based antagonism between the region and the state, at least to some degree.

Åland itself has been subject of several studies from the perspective of international law¹⁵, and conflict resolution.¹⁶ Studies regarding the internal dynamics of Åland have been so far been few and far apart. These studies have focused on the development of the party system¹⁷, voter participation¹⁸, classification of the party system¹⁹, immigrant integration and nationalism²⁰, development of secessionist parties in the Nordic region²¹ and intergovernmental relations.²²

More specifically, studies regarding the Åland islands and the European Union have overwhelmingly focused on the consequences of the membership for the islands.²³

During the writing of this thesis the Åland Islands Peace Institute has been commissioned by the Government of Åland to prepare a report on the 25 years of EU membership.²⁴ This thesis positions itself as complementary to this research agenda with the intent of bringing forward, the often forgotten, deliberative process in which Åland took the decision in joining the Union when an exclusion was well within the realm of the possible.

1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

Following the introductory chapter this thesis will provide the theoretical framework in which the thesis will build upon in Chapter 2. This will focus on studies on sub state units and their “foreign affairs” which has been conceptualised with the term Paradiplomacy. Furthermore, this section will explain the method which will be used for analysis and its justification. The final subsection

¹⁵For example Hannikainen 1993, Fagerlund 1997, Jääskinen 2005, Sliverström 2013, Suksi 2011 and Stephan 2017.

¹⁶ See Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011.

¹⁷ See Wrede 1976.

¹⁸ See Wrede 1981.

¹⁹ See Söderlund 2008.

²⁰ See Jansson 2018.

²¹ See Ackren and Lindström 2012.

²² See Eve Hepburn 2014.

²³ For example Hannikainen 1997, Tiilikainen 2002 and Ekman 2006.

²⁴ <https://mailchi.mp/fdd627d32682/land-islands-peace-institute-lands-fredsinstitut-newsletter-nyhetsbrev-4063521>

explains the data selected for analysis. Chapter 3 will give a historical oversight on the development of the Ålandic autonomy and the development of political cleavages until the membership of the European Union. This section will aim to describe the cleavages in Ålandic politics that would later play a role in the EU debates. Chapter 4 will summarise the events that led up to the referendum process. Chapter 5 will include the analysis of the debates and will aim to analyse the themes and genres regarding the decision on EU membership in the Ålandic parliament. Chapter 6 will provide a discussion regarding the findings and Chapter 7 will conclude the thesis by highlighting further possible areas of research in this area.

2. Theory, Method and Data

2.1 International Relations Theory and Constructivism

Diplomacy and foreign policy have traditionally been perceived as strict matter of the nation state units. Furthermore, traditional foreign policy analysis has conceptualised foreign policy via a distinction between “high politics” (i.e. diplomacy, defence policy and national security) and “low politics” (i.e. cultural policy, municipal affairs).²⁵

The main traditions of the study of International Relations which have been understood to have progressively developed over the end of the First World War primarily focused on inter-state relations which in turn reinforced the idea that the nation-state is the default unit of analysis in global politics, reinforcing the practice of methodological nationalism.²⁶

The realist approach has drawn its philosophical underpinnings from a Hobbesian interpretation of global affairs which understands the interaction of states as a “state of nature” in which states act upon self-interest and are by definition in conflict with other states who are naturally seeking their own self-interest.²⁷

In contrast to the realist approach, the Liberal approach to global affairs emphasises the interconnectedness and the possibility of states to overcome the anarchy of “the state of nature” through global cooperation.²⁸ This approach has its roots in “social contract theory” which is based

²⁵ Michelmann 2009, p.1

²⁶ Brown and Ainsley 2005, p.19

²⁷ See Morgenthau 1978 and Carr 2001.

²⁸ See Moravscik 1997

on an understanding of society as a hypothetical contractual relationship between individuals who come together for mutual benefit and establish “society”.²⁹

After the failure of the two main approaches and their “neo” off springs to predict the end of the Cold War, the Constructivist approach brought a new take on global affairs by bringing an interpretive perspective. This approach draws from the post structuralism mode of thought within social sciences and humanities and focuses on the discursive aspect of global politics. Instead of theorising about the inherent nature of global affairs, they emphasize the discursivity of politics which is “social constructed”. In other words, “anarchy is what states make of it”.³⁰ This approach is most noted for incorporating the effects of identity into the actions of states and international actors.³¹

The theoretical approach of this thesis will be based on the Constructivist approach in International Relations studies. Originally coined by Nicholas Onuf, this term and its followers has functioned from a broadly interpretivist standpoint in contrast with Realist and Liberal accounts of International Relations that focus heavily on states and non-states actors with objective aims.³²

The overall characteristics of this approach can be summarised with three main propositions; 1- Social interaction is affected by ideational factors and not only material ones. 2-The most important ideational factors are “intersubjective” beliefs that cannot be reduced to the level of the individual and 3- these beliefs construct the actors’ identity and interests.³³In the words of Finnemore “interests are not just out there waiting to be discovered, but are constructed through social interaction”³⁴

Notable constructivist Alexander Wendt in his seminal work *Social Theory of International Politics* states that constructivism does not provide a theory of international politics but rather that “constructivist sensibilities” encourage the researcher to analyse how social actors on an international field are constructed but say nothing in regards to which actor to study and where they are socially constructed³⁵. He further advises the constructivist to choose the “units” and “levels” of analyses and the “structures” in which they operate in.³⁶

²⁹ Brown and Ainsley 2005, p.23

³⁰ Wendt. 1992, p.395.

³¹ See Howarth and Torfing 2005

³² See Onuf 1989

³³ Finnemore and Sikkink 2001. pp. 392-393.

³⁴ Finnemore 1996, p.2

³⁵ Wendt 1999 p.7

³⁶ Ibid.

To use Kari Palonen's 4-fold conceptualisation regarding the dimensions of politics will be beneficial in contextualisation of the "units" and the "structures" selected for this thesis.³⁷ He defines the 4 dimensions as the following.

Polity as the institutional framework of an established political system.³⁸

Policy which refers to the outputs as a result of the political process.³⁹

Politicking as the performative aspect (e.g. speeches) of politics, the essence of viewing "politics as action"⁴⁰

Politicisation as the process or act which turns an issue into a political issue⁴¹

The utilisation of this framework is justified on the grounds that it is beneficial to distinguish the political context of Åland and highlight the separate party system operating in the *polity* of Åland. This framework also contributes to highlight that the *policy* of the decision on EU membership was dependent on the action of the politicians in operating in this context and to emphasize how they discussed this policy via *politicking*. The time frame of the *politicisation* is chosen on basis that until the European Council summit in Korfu, the process contained an European dimension which required the content of the EU member states and EU institutions, however after the granting of consent to the Finnish accession treaty, the EU process became an internal political process on Åland, which will be the focus of this thesis.

Utilizing this framework, the overall context of the subject matter of this thesis can be summarized as:

Polity: The autonomous region of Åland

Policy: Final decision on EU membership

Politicking: Discourse on Ålandic EU membership by members of the Åland Parliament

Politicisation: The signing of the Finnish accession treaty in Korfu on 24 June 1994 and the following referendum process.

³⁷ Kari Palonen 2003, p.171

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

2.2. The Concept of Paradiplomacy

By nature of the chosen topic, this thesis departs from the traditional understanding of Foreign Policy strictly a concern for the sovereign nation state⁴². In practice, several occasions of sub state units have developed their own foreign policy agenda that may differ from the central state that they are connected to. The practical application of this situation may include (but is not limited to) conducting trade agreements with sovereign states and other regions, establishing representative offices abroad and having a strong role (which may include an opt-out option) in the national preparation in international agreements.

The chosen framework to analyse this external policy decision of Åland to join the European Union is Paradiplomacy. Phonetically similar to paramedic and paramilitary this concept also deals with a parallel occurrence, that of foreign policy. The aim of the utilisation of this conceptual tool is to place this research project in a wider academic context while also being wary of the potential insularity of case-study research conducted by qualitative methods. A brief overview of the concept and its corresponding research agenda will be provided below.

The concept of Paradiplomacy has its etymological roots in the words “parallel” and “diplomacy”. The implication being that it constitutes something else than what is traditionally accepted as diplomacy and occurs simultaneously. In studies regarding autonomous regions and stateless nations “Paradiplomacy” has been used as a synonym to several concepts including “Sub state diplomacy”, “Regional diplomacy”, “Micro diplomacy” and so on.⁴³ This situation has led the concept to be described as a “political buzz word with mysterious successes in specialized literature, even though their analytical definition is not clear”.⁴⁴

Paradiplomacy’s first known instance of usage is within British diplomatic historian Rohan Butler. In his work titled *Studies in Diplomatic and Historiography* published in 1961. He dedicates a separate chapter to “paradiplomacy” which he considers to be:

“The highest level of personal and parallel diplomacy, complement or competing with the regular foreign policy of the minister concerned, is thus a recurrent temptation to the head of the executive, be he a primer or president, dictator or monarchy”⁴⁵.

⁴² Morin and Paquin 2018, p.7

⁴³ Kuznetsov 2014, p.25.

⁴⁴ Aguirre 1999, p.185.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Kuznetsov 2014, p.26.

As noted by Kuznetsov, this definition has been criticised and has never seriously considered by later political scientists who take the agency of autonomous regional units and their political systems to be main unit of analysis.⁴⁶

The foreign policies of regional units have been a growing field of study from the 1970's onwards. However, these studies primarily had a North American perspective and anchored its research agenda on case study research on US states and Canadian provinces.⁴⁷ It was in 1984 when the concept of paradiplomacy was rearticulated by Duschacek within a proposed explanatory framework. He originally preferred the term "micro-diplomacy", a form of diplomacy which according to him resulted in two different forms of paradiplomacy; transborder regional regimes (which are understood to be informal contacts with the surrounding environment) and global micro-diplomacy which is the interaction of constituent governments into relation with other national and constituent governments.⁴⁸

Duschacek later shifted his conceptual preference to wholly embrace Panayotis' usage of the term Paradiplomacy, albeit with the same content, on the grounds that: "Not only has it no derogatory sound, but 'para' expresses accurately what it is about: activities parallel to, often co-ordinated with, complementary to, and sometimes in conflict with centre-to-centre 'micro-diplomacy'"⁴⁹.

Although the content of the term remained the same, it must be noted that Paradiplomacy has since gained a much wider acceptance in the field of regional research in relation to "micro-diplomacy".

The concept made another return to the field of political science during the 1990's. The post-Cold war period had opened a new page in Europe, with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the discourse on "Europe of the Regions"⁵⁰. According to this paradigm the "stateless nations" of Europe now had the chance to exert influence in global affairs as national borders were rapidly losing significance and the border between "internal" and "external" policy was on its way to become irrelevant. This perspective has been sometimes been described as "New Regionalism" which viewed the future of autonomous regions, not as nation states-to be but rather as a part of the "post-national" and interconnect world which was embodied in the newly transformed European Union. The Committee of Regions (CoR) was especially pointed out as a potential forum for paradiplomatic activities together with an emphasis on the "subsidiarity principle" in the Maastricht treaty.⁵¹ This idea was

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Duschacek 1984, p.5

⁴⁹ Duschacek 2001, P.32, Note 1.

⁵⁰ Keating 2013, p.193

⁵¹ Keating 1998 pp.161-183.

also prevalent in the context of Åland where the EU was considered to increase Ålands room for manoeuvre against the Finnish state, at least by proponents of EU membership.

By penetrating the traditional borders of the nation-state, this process of rapid integration in Western Europe has on one hand opened up the traditionally isolated markets of autonomous regions to international competition but on the other hand also offers new possibilities to access new firms and production methods which can help formulate new policies according to the new socio-economic realities.⁵²

It is no accident that it was within this decade that saw the founding of a research journal titled *Regional and Federal Studies*⁵³. Furthermore, a special edition of the journal published in 1999 was dedicated specifically to Paradiplomacy as was latter gathered into a book titled *Paradiplomacy in Action: Subnational Governments* edited by Francisco Aldecoa and Michael Keating.

In this volume, Michael Keating argues for three main factors which drives regions to seek action on the international field; Economic, Cultural and Political.⁵⁴

On the economic front he argues that regions attempt to seek new markets for their industries, foreign investment and technology for modernisation and promote tourism opportunities in an ever-mobile global economy.

On the cultural front Keating argues that regions have attempted to expand their contact with countries and regions of a similar cultural background (e.g. Quebec and the Francophonie) or collaborate with other minority regions (e.g. European Bureau for Lesser used Languages).

Finally, on the political front Keating claims that regions that view themselves as separate national project may use the international arena to legitimize their separate national or regional identity by appearing on the world scale as an actor of itself. All three of these factors will be crucial to the analysis of why Åland chose to join the union.

Another proposed alternative to “paradiplomacy” has been the concept of “constituent diplomacy”.⁵⁵ However, this term has a unique emphasis on federalism and term “constituent” does not correspond well with autonomous regions within otherwise unitary states. For example it would be somewhat of a stretch to claim that Åland is a “constituent state” of the Republic of Finland

⁵² Soldatos and Michelmann 1992, p.134

⁵³ Kuznetsov 2014, p.39

⁵⁴ Keating 1999, pp.4-5

⁵⁵ Michelmann 2009 p.7

especially with consideration that Ålandic laws are not considered to be in a hierarchical relationship with the laws that are passed by the Parliament of Finland.⁵⁶

A more contemporary definition of “paradiplomacy” has been put forward by Kuznetsov as:

“a form of political communication for reaching economic, cultural, political, or any other types of benefits, the core of which consists in self- sustained actions of regional governments with foreign governmental and non- governmental actors.”⁵⁷

The adoption of this definition is justified on the ground that such a definition is broad enough to include regions belonging to both unitary and federal states without invoking a larger discussion on *de jure* and *de facto* legal status of regions with some degree legislative powers. However, one conceptual adjustment is deemed necessary. Instead of “regional government” it will be argued that “regional polity” would be a more accurate definition for the unit of analysis as regional parliaments may have the capacity to play a significant role in formulating or approving the regional government’s foreign policy initiatives. Additionally, the parliament may be the sole authority in appointing delegates to forums of international and regional cooperation such as the Nordic Council and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. This is particularly important in the context of Åland where two thirds (20/30) majority was required to confirm the validity of the Finnish EU accession treaty on the territory of Åland. Furthermore, the scarce majority in favour (51.9) of membership in the state-wide referendum also indicates deep division within the population and governing political parties as well.

In conclusion, the units of analysis, which form the basis of paradiplomatic research have enough commonality with each other in terms of being governmental organs with administrative and legislative authority that makes them “more than a city and less than a state”⁵⁸.

In light of the chosen research framework, it will be argued that the decision of the Ålandic Parliament to join the European Union on 2 December 1994 falls into this definition of paradiplomacy and that it constitutes the most important foreign policy decision made in the history of Ålands autonomy so far. The primary aim of this thesis is to put the Ålandic decision to join the EU in its historical context.

⁵⁶ See Suksi 2005 for a legal analysis of the legal arrangement regarding Åland.

⁵⁷ Kuznetsov 2014 p.34

⁵⁸ Cornago 2010 p.14

2.3 Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Analysis

Discourse Analysis as method entails a variety of different approaches to the analysis of that can vary within itself.⁵⁹ When applying Discourse Analysis in the field of Political Science one inevitably begins with the pre-arrangement of the narrative, namely the ontology of politics. This is to ask the question of “what is politics?” and “what is the political?” with the intent of grasping the context in which the narrative is arranged in.

While it would be vastly beyond this thesis’s scope to go into a detailed discussion of perennial debate of the ontology of politics within political philosophy and political science, it is nevertheless necessary to clarify the working framework of the thesis.

Wiesner et. al states that certain common elements of methodology and ontology among discourse analysts are as follows:

- Language is social practice and should be analysed as such.
- A discourse is a set of practices that create meaning and are distinguishable depending on its context
- Discourse is a way of creating and circulating world views and ideologies.
- Discourse is not random but occurs in a structured form.⁶⁰

The discursive and constitutive conceptualisation of language has been conceptually defined as “Speech Acts” by philosopher J. L. Austin in his work *How to do things with words* and was elaborated on by John Searle.⁶¹ The main importance of this theory is to express the power of linguistic constructions on the human experience. From this point of departure both the discussion on EU membership and the decision to join are “speech acts” which create new political realities.

When it comes to interpretive methodology and the discipline of International Relations, as a part of the constructivist approach Iver Neumann discusses the larger “linguistic turn” in social sciences and notes that for International relations studies, analysing linguistic patterns doesn’t simply mean a focus on narrative discourse and rhetoric but to how politics are affected by the construction and

⁵⁹ Wiesner et.al 2017, p.68

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See Austin 1962 and Searle 2011.

utilisation of such discursive acts.⁶²In other words Neumann invites the researcher to attempt to understand how political actors “do foreign policy with words”.

From a similar perspective, Ole Waever proposes to combine discourse analysis with foreign policy studies on the premise that the analysis of discourses can in fact enlighten and explain foreign policy decisions.⁶³ He notes that while not every specific policy can be explained via Discourse Analysis, for general overarching issues such as European Union membership, it can provide an explanatory framework for the adopted policy.⁶⁴

This is done via analysing the conceptual use and change of identity based terms such as “nation”, “state” interact with each other and with concept of “Europe” which in turn affects the discursive logic behind an actor’s positioning on the European Union.

Waever considers foreign policy discourse as a “public logic” which limits the political action of the actors involved as it has intimate connections with “core concepts” such as “state” and “nation”.⁶⁵ This according to him, replaces the idea of political speech as unsystematic but rather that political argumentation is in fact structured by the basic conceptual logic found in a society which in turn designates the field of discussion for the following political struggles.⁶⁶

2.4 The Layered Framework of Analysis

In light of this methodological background, this thesis adopts Waver’s “three-layered framework” to utilise within the national debates regarding the European Union.⁶⁷ While Åland is not a state or nation in the classical sense this framework is useful for its previous applications on the Nordic referendums which took place in the same time frame as this thesis⁶⁸ and its post positivist ontology allows for conceptual flexibility needed for its adaption for an autonomous region.

On *Level I* he proposes an analysis of the relationship between the concepts of the “nation” and the “state”.

⁶² I. Neumann 2002, p. 628.

⁶³ Waever 2002 pp.26-33.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ He emphasizes that the layers are not 3 levels of separate discourse but rather that a discourse exists simultaneously on three interconnected discursive planes which affect each other.

⁶⁸ See Hansen and Waever 2002.

This has traditionally been done vis-a-vis the two ideal types of Civic Nationalism and Ethnic Nationalism.⁶⁹ Civic Nationalism emphasises the community of belonging based on political loyalties towards state institutions and Ethnic Nationalism emphasizes the “natural” qualities of a community such as culture, language and traditions which can only be accessed upon birth.⁷⁰

Civic nationalism has constantly been associated with the French republican form of citizenship and a fusion of the “nation” and the “state”. Ethnic nationalism on the other hand has been associated with the German cultural nationalism which presupposes a distinction between the “nation” and the “state”.⁷¹

On *level 2* this construction of state and nation is put in a relational interaction with the concept of “Europe” which in turn gains meaning through the lenses of the “nation” and the “state”. On this level, the key question is how the nation and the state are articulated through the concept of Europe? Furthermore, what does the concept of Europe mean for nation and the state? Does it constitute a threat or an opportunity for the nation and state? The basic presumption is that the construction of nation and state have a primary role in answering these questions.

On *level 3* the discourses of the prior two levels take a concrete form through articulation of specific European Policy. This is usually done by political parties or other political actors when they argue in favour of or against EU membership and explain their rationale for it. Waever argues that this is level that a researcher should begin working towards his or her analysis as the actors construct a European Policy based on their conceptualisation of the idea of Europe on *level 2* in relation to their understanding of the state and nation on *level 1*.⁷²

There are certain advantages and disadvantages of adopting such a framework. The most obvious problem with adopting this framework in the context of the Ålandic EU debate is the immediate problem of “nationhood”. From the perspective of international law, the Ålanders do not constitute a “nation” as such and the institutions of autonomy are not considered to be a “state”.

Additionally, the fact that Swedish is an official language in both Sweden and in Finland broadens the Ålandic sense of ethnicity in a way that does not necessarily conform to the idea of a nation-state, nor that of diaspora nation.

⁶⁹ See Özkirimli 2010.

⁷⁰ Kymlicka 2001, p.243

⁷¹ Waever 2002, pp.34-35

⁷² *ibid.*

However, the choice of a post-structural methodology can be viewed a potential way around this conceptual dilemma. By focusing on the *uses* of the term “nation” and “state”, it aims avoid the conceptual rigidity can could potentially arise in analysis. The goal here will be to seek for potential substitute terms within to fit the regional context yet serve the same political purpose within the Ålandic EU debate.

Two possible candidates in this context are the terms “the people” and “autonomy”. The first step is to substitute the term “nation” with the term “the people”⁷³, which has a similar conceptual use in the rest of the Nordic region, and secondly to substitute the “state” with the concept of “autonomy”⁷⁴ as the political unit “the people” are in relation with. This is not to claim that the concepts are synonyms to “nation” and “state” *per se* but serve an identical *function* within the context of Foreign Policy and the debates regarding the membership of the European Union on Åland.

This framework is also beneficial for the analyses of national identities *visa vie* Europe which in its turn necessitates a “*lounge durée*” approach to shed light on the historical developments in the cultural, social and political spheres which have influenced the way in which the ideas of “autonomy” and “the people” have been utilized in.

2.5 Data

This thesis primarily utilises 7 parliamentary debates manually collected and printed out of the archive of the Parliament of Åland (Lagtinget). This corresponds to roughly 300 pages of debate dedicated to EU membership and its consequences.

The analysed period is between the Korfu Summit between 24 June 1994 and the ratification of EU membership by the Parliament of Åland on 2 December 1994. This timeline is chosen to emphasize the internal political process on Åland. Prior to the Korfu Summit, the EU or a member state could withdraw from the process essentially ending the EU’s expansion in 1995. The approval of the Finnish membership treaty in Korfu “put the ball in Finland and Åland’s court”. 2 December 1994 is date that the Regional Parliament gave its consent to membership, which guaranteed membership from 1 January 1994. This is not to claim that the EU process for Åland started from the Korfu

⁷³ Folket in Swedish

⁷⁴ Självstyrelsen in Swedish

summit but to contextualise the referendum process that led to the political decision in favour of EU membership for Åland.

Due to the working schedule of the Parliament of Åland, the month of October is considered a break period between parliamentary sessions and the new legislative year begins on the first week of November. Therefore, the first three debates which are included in the analysis are actually considered to be a part of the final session of the 1993-1994 parliamentary session while the debates which take place after October are considered to be a part of the 1994-1995 parliamentary session.

The debates held on EU membership and its consequences during the ratification process took place on the following dates;

-14 September 1994

-21 September 1994

-26 September 1994

-11 November 1994

-17 November 1994

-28 November 1994

-2 December 1994

Considering the lack of academic research on the topic and the absence of parliament during the month of October, this thesis also utilizes newspaper articles from both Ålandstidningen and Nya Åland from 16 June 1994⁷⁵ until 2 December 1994. These were collected from the digital archive of the National Library of Finland in Helsinki. The intention of this is to further explore the context in which the debates took place in.

This thesis argues that by utilizing the parliamentary debates and the public statements of Ålandic politicians, it will be possible to sufficiently describe and analyse the context in which the Åland Islands joined the European Union. The analysis of these debates aims to contribute to the understanding of the EU from the perspective of an autonomous region in which Åland is the designated case study.

2.6 Conceptual and Methodological Considerations

⁷⁵ It was on this date on which the Parliament of Åland decided to hold a separate referendum on the islands.

As the entirety of data is in Swedish language, translation is an essential part of the research design. This also brings with it a need for caution when adopting certain concepts to English. Most problematic is the Swedish term “riket” which roughly translates to “the kingdom” or “the realm” in English but is used in two separate ways in Swedish. In the context of Åland “riket” refers to the state, in this case being Finland. However, this term also appears in demonym “rikssvenskar” (literally, “swedes of the realm”) which was a term coined to distinguish the Finland Swedish community from Swedes in Sweden. The issue with this term is that “rike” does not refer to Finland but rather to Sweden. While this is culturally and politically self-evident in the Swedish speaking social sphere, an English translation needs to avoid confusion. The choice made in this thesis is to avoid a literal translation of “riket” and to use the referred country in the relevant text. This means that “Finland” instead of “realm” or “state” will be preferred in order prevent confusion. Similarly, when joint terms such as “riksmyndigheterna” (state authorities) or “rikspartierna” (state parties) appear in the data the preferred translation will be Finnish authorities and Finnish parties respectively. This is to make clear which “rike” is in question. Furthermore “rikssvensk” will be translated simply as “Swedish”, in conformity with standard English customs. Similarly concepts such as Landstinget/Lagtinget, Landskapsstyrelsen and Lantrådet will be translated into English based on their functions within the political system which would be Regional Parliament, Regional Government and Premier respectively.

Another potentially limiting aspect of the research design comes from the elite driven nature of the data chosen. Methodologically discourse analysis is not equipped with the tools to measure the grassroots understandings of the EU. This is due to its dependency on publicly available documents such as newspaper articles and parliamentary debates. This dependency gives primacy to the argumentation of the political elite. Therefore, this research project does not aim to survey voter attitudes or to explain why the referendum results came out in the way they did. Rather this project aims to analyse the linguistic structures in which European Integration was discussed. These structures are constructed by the leading political actors that usually represent broader interest groups in society.⁷⁶

It is also unrealistic to expect that a researcher will be able to present every small detail of every debate regarding the European Union and Åland. This project is aware of this practical limitation and focuses strictly on parliamentary speeches given by MPs. It will omit all “reply” sessions in the chamber, not on the basis of their worthlessness but on the understanding that they are

⁷⁶ Waever 2002, p.42

supplementary data which are not constitutive of the premises of the debate but rather supplements to it.

On these premises, the thesis will attempt to construct a system of discursive structures regarding the debate on the Ålandic decision to join the European Union.

3. Historical Background

The international status of Åland, as it is so often framed within Ålandic discourse, rests on the “holy trinity” of Åland’s constitutional status, autonomy and the demilitarised status of the islands.⁷⁷ The dominant interpretation on Åland regarding these three legal orders and their implications formulate an indivisible whole in which one component cannot be separated from the other two which make up the whole. This was especially prominent during the EU process in which the Finnish government had a much narrower interpretation of the legal order regarding Åland. The Finnish government’s interpretation rested on the assumption that demilitarisation and neutralisation were not legally connected to the autonomy arrangement.⁷⁸

Despite its small geographic area and minuscule population, the Åland Islands have managed to punch above their weight by using their “nuisance power” in adjusting to the geopolitical realities on a European and global scale, through adopting a unique interpretation on the neutralisation and demilitarisation treaties and through formulating a parallel negotiation process regarding membership of the European Union to form a sense of actorness outside of the classic power political rhetoric of the nation state.⁷⁹

This section aims to provide a general overview of how Åland came to exert such a “nuisance power” through a historical overview of the development of the Åland Example and the interactions of the internal political dynamics of Åland with developments around the wider world. This is necessary to understand the politicisation of these historical developments within the EU debates.

Åland despite having earlier archaeological remains of Viking settlements was integrated fully in to the Swedish realm sometime during the 14th century.⁸⁰ It was then later incorporated in the Åbo-Björneborg (Turku-Pori) district as a part of the Swedish government reform in 1634.

⁷⁷ For Peter Lindbäck’s claim to have created this concept see Svensson 1997, pp. 295-296.

⁷⁸ See Fagerlund 1997 and Hayes 2011

⁷⁹ See Joeniemi 2003 and 2014 for more on Åland’s “nuisance power”

⁸⁰ See Ahola et al 2014 for Åland and the Viking legacy

The islands became subject of international attention when Sweden temporarily lost control over the islands in 1714 when Russia occupied mainland Finland. The islands were restored to Swedish control under the terms of the 1721 Treaty of Nystad but the islands were “henceforth an international problem”.⁸¹ The islands were once again occupied by Russia in 1742 but were promptly returned to Sweden through the treaty of Åbo a year later in 1743⁸². In 1759, Sweden and Russia concluded an agreement with the intent on guarantying free trade and neutrality in the Baltic Sea region⁸³. Russia attempted once again to control the islands in 1808 which led to the district of Åland being incorporated into the Uppland district of Sweden on 8 July 1808 and strict instructions were given to the Swedish negotiators that the Åland islands were not to be conceded in any case but their room for manoeuvre was limited, being on the losing side of the war⁸⁴.

Sweden permanently lost the whole territory of Finland with Åland to Russia in 1809 with the signature of the Treaty of Fredrikshamn. With this development, Åland became a part of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland who enjoyed a great deal of self-governance within the Russian Empire.⁸⁵

Due to its close proximity to the Swedish capital of Stockholm, Åland still had a crucial role to play within Russian-Swedish power politics. According to a quote attributed to Napoleon “the Åland Islands in the hands of a great power is like a pistol aimed at Sweden’s heart”.⁸⁶

Russia began developing plans to fortify the islands already from 1809 but due to several varying causes the plans were delayed until the 1850’s and the semi constructed Bomarsund fortress was caught off guard when the Crimean War began in 1854.⁸⁷ During the peace negotiations which took place in the aftermath of the war, Sweden pushed for a number of possible options to handle this glaring security threat to its mainland which laid approximately 150 kilometres away:

(1) That the Åland Islands shall be returned to Sweden or (2) That the Åland Islands shall be made a “free state” which would be guaranteed by the UK, France or Sweden-Norway, and (3) that the islands would be demilitarised⁸⁸

⁸¹ Padelford et. al. 1939 p.466

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Barros 1968, p.2

⁸⁵ Mattsson-Eklund 2000, p. 257

⁸⁶ Quoted in Sliverström 2013, p. 11

⁸⁷ Robins 2004, pp.4-5.

⁸⁸ Padelford et al.1939. p.467.

The first two options were not considered to be viable options. Demilitarisation, however, was looked upon favourably by the winning French-British alliance. The Paris Peace Treaty that was signed in 1856 between Russia, France and the United Kingdom, declared that:

“..the Åland Islands shall not be fortified, and that no military or naval establishments whatsoever shall be maintained or created there”⁸⁹

According to De Geer-Hancock, this treaty was the founding moment of the “Islands of Peace” discourse in which Åland received a special profile in the Nordic region.⁹⁰ Therewith the first pillar of the international legal regime regarding the Åland islands, demilitarisation, was established.

The arrangement regarding the demilitarisation of Åland has also been labelled as the “Åland servitude”.⁹¹

At the beginning of the First World War, Russia initially did not place any active military presence on the island but after a German attack on 21 August 1915, it was revealed that Russia had sent a certain number of troops and batteries on the islands. Sweden issued a protest claiming the violation of the 1856 treaty but Russia claimed that militarisation on the island was of temporary nature and caused no change in the islands’ status. However, the developments in the following year followed a trajectory of further increased militarisation and Sweden was only prevented from declaring war on Russia through guarantees given from France and the UK regarding the status of the islands.⁹²

3.1 The Rise of the Åland Movement 1917-1921

The following year, 1917 would be host to even more dramatic events not only for the Baltic Sea region and Åland but from a global perspective also. Most notable among these is the collapse of the Russian Empire and the birth of several newly independent states, among them Finland.

Already in the early stages of 1917, certain voices on Åland had expressed their concern regarding the future of the island and its population. This movement would later be described as the Åland Movement.⁹³

⁸⁹ Convention on the Demilitarisation of the Åland Islands, 1856.

⁹⁰ De Geer-Hancock 1986 p. 23

⁹¹ Björkholm and Rosas 1990, p.22

⁹² Mattson-Eklund 2000, p. 315.

⁹³ Ålandrörelsen in Swedish.

This culminated in a meeting at the Ålands Folkhögskola on 20 August 1917. The representatives came mainly from the rural Åland mainland⁹⁴, while the archipelago⁹⁵ was not represented.⁹⁶⁹⁷ The meeting resulted in a unanimous statement which claimed that Åland, as an ancient Swedish province, should be reunited with Sweden after the fall of the Russian empire. At the meeting it was also decided that a deputation be sent to the Swedish king with the demand that Sweden actively work towards incorporating Åland into its territory.⁹⁸ This statement, made months before Finland's independence on 6 December 1917, can be considered a contributing factor in the Committee of Jurists' of the League of Nation statement regarding that the sovereignty of Åland could not be considered only as an internal Finnish matter.⁹⁹

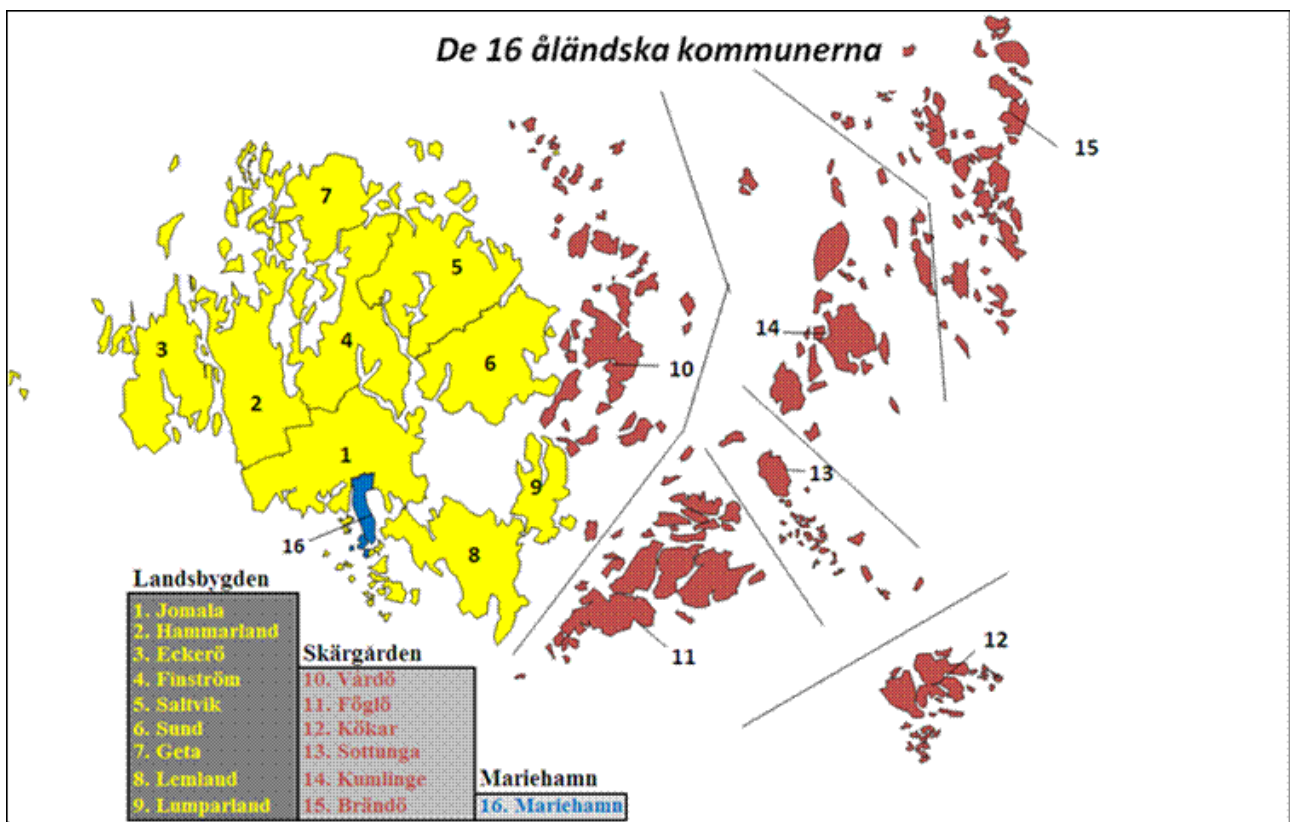


Figure 1: Municipal Districts on Åland¹⁰⁰

After Finnish independence on 6 December 1917 efforts on Åland continued with an attempt to legitimise their claim to self-determination. These efforts resulted in a hastily arranged petition in

⁹⁴ Called Landsbygden in Swedish.

⁹⁵ Called Skärgården in Swedish.

⁹⁶ Kurt Lindh 1984 p.35

⁹⁷ The division between the City, the Countryside and the Archipelago has a crucial role in Ålandic politics and will be given more attention below

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ League of Nations 1921

¹⁰⁰ Source: http://old.regeringen.ax/.composer/ls-prot/NARING/2014/N2014P02_130514.html

which 7.135 names which were collected in less than a week.¹⁰¹ On 29 December 1917 it was decided that the petition would be forwarded by a delegation which included notable Ålandic public figures of the likes of future Speaker of the Parliament¹⁰² Julius Sundblom and Premier¹⁰³ Carl Björkman. These plans were partially disrupted by eruption of the Finnish Civil War on 27 January 1918 between the conservative “whites” and the socialist “reds”. Julius Sundblom, who was also the sole Ålandic member of the Finnish Parliament for the Swedish People’s Party¹⁰⁴ at time, was considered on the side of the “whites” had to go undercover and therefore was absent when the petition reached Stockholm on 3 February.¹⁰⁵ It must be noted that at this point Sundblom had significant doubts about the possibility of the chances of a reunification with Sweden. He had personally subscribed to the Finland-Swedish form of identity and viewed Ålanders as a part of Finland’s Swedish minority rather than as Swedish diaspora which needed to return to its “home country”. His background as a politician is also relevant for his hesitations to leave legal politics and “play the international card”.¹⁰⁶ In other words as a part of the Finland Swedish establishment he was not whole heartedly to break with official line in Finland and join the Åland movement’s irredentist project.

From a military perspective it must be reminded that while Finland declared independence, the First World War was still an ongoing process. This led to a situation where Finnish, Swedish, German and Russian soldiers all situated on the island simultaneously at a certain point. The intentions of the Swedish expedition to Åland are disputed although the actions of the Åland Movement have been claimed to be influential in the decision. This sort of extensive and direct inclusion in military affairs was not heard of since the Crimean War of 1853-56.¹⁰⁷

An interesting yet perhaps unfortunate event during the Finnish Civil war was the appointment of General von Bondsdorff as military governor by State Regent Mannerheim. By placing one of his loyalists in the Islands sole newspaper Åland¹⁰⁸ Von Bondsdorff attempted to control the narrative on the islands through heavy handed censorship. Additionally, he felt the need to remind the Ålanders that: “The judgment of history will not be kind upon traitors and cowards.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ Kurt Lindh 1984 p.38

¹⁰² Talmanen in Swedish

¹⁰³ Landrådet in Swedish.

¹⁰⁴ Svenska Folkpartiet in Swedish.

¹⁰⁵ The Reds were in control of the Southern part of Finland at the time, including the capital region

¹⁰⁶ Salminen 1979, pp. 47-75

¹⁰⁷ See Barros 1968, pp. 75-83. For the Swedish expedition to Åland in 1918.

¹⁰⁸ Founded by Julius Sundblom 1891 which gave Sundblom a unique role in formulating the “Ålandic position” on certain issues.

¹⁰⁹ De Geer-Hancock 1985 p.38

This hostility from the governor's side is said to have helped the Åland Movement by firmly rooting resentment towards Finnish officials on the Åland Islands.¹¹⁰

Sundblom returned to the Islands on May 1918 after the end of the Civil War and promptly requested the removal of von Bondsroff which was granted the following month.¹¹¹ On 8 June 1918 an Ålandic County Assembly (Landstinget) was formed on the island with Carl Björkman elected as Speaker. The post was originally offered to Sundblom but he refused on the grounds that it would mean a total break with the Finnish officials, which he was not willing to dare until he was confident of Swedish support. The intention was to form an assembly that would represent the Ålanders externally in the context of the Paris Peace Conference.¹¹² While this was considered an illegal action from the viewpoint of Finnish law which was itself in a period of transition at that time, it could be considered one of the most important events in Ålandic paradiplomatic affairs.

In the light of the so-called Wilsonian Principle of Self-Determination, the Åland County Assembly sent out a message in November 1918 to the United States, Italy, France and the United Kingdom claiming that the "right of self-determination" be applied also for the population of Åland which would make possible a referendum on a future reunion with Sweden.¹¹³

The Swedish government supported the claims on the basis of historical and "racial" ties while Finland emphasized the long-lasting administrative link between the Åbo province and Åland.

In January 1919, Julius Sundblom, Johannes Eriksson and Johan Jansson were sent to the Paris Peace Conference to put forward the reunification agenda in the international arena. Despite support from the Swedish side, the peace conference did not take any decision on the Åland question as more pressing issues were at hand.¹¹⁴ On their return to from Paris they were interrogated by an order of the Government of Finland and received a penalty which included a travel ban and a prison sentence for "treasonous activities". However, the penalty was annulled by the State Regent Mannerheim shortly after.¹¹⁵

During June 1919 the Åland movement yet again attempted at a petition with the aim of creating attention and legitimacy towards their political project. The question was then referred to the newly established League of Nations in the September of the same year. This led to proactive measures on

¹¹⁰ Kurt Lindh 1984, p.42

¹¹¹ Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.327

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Lindh 1984. p.43

¹¹⁴ Carpulla 2002, p.11

¹¹⁵ Lindh 1984 p.44

the Finnish side such as Mannerheim's diplomacy in Paris which argue that a rightful solution of the Åland Question would allow "a white Finland" to intervene against a "red Russia" when needed. The leader of the Åland movement Sundblom reacted scathingly by claiming that the Åland Question was "not a question of states but rather a question of nationality".¹¹⁶

The Finnish state reacted by setting up a parliamentary committee¹¹⁷ which brought forward a proposal of autonomy for Åland in December 1919. This laid the basis of what would later become the autonomy law. Sundblom noted that although the proposal contained "certain benefits" it did not go far enough to offer protection for the Swedish language, and it was rejected by the Åland County Assembly in February 1920.¹¹⁸ However, a watered-down proposal was official adopted by the Parliament of Finland on 30 April 1920 by a majority of 157 to 27 and was refused by the Åland County Assembly as well when it came into power on 6 May. At the end of the month the Assembly sent another delegation to Stockholm with the intention to remind the Swedish king and Government that the Ålanders had not changed their political goal which was reunion with Sweden and not autonomy.¹¹⁹ As a reaction to this visit, the Finnish Prime Minister Rafael Erich decided to visit Åland on 4 June 1920 as attempt to convince the leadership to apply the newly adopted autonomy law. This ended in failure when the leadership represented by Sundblom insisted that Ålanders had every right to decide on their future on the same basis that the other peoples of the fallen Russian Empire had been able to.¹²⁰ After his speech the Ålandic representatives left the meeting in protest and Sundblom and Björkman were arrested on the grounds of "conspiracy to commit high treason" and received a year and a half-long prison sentence. However, they were pardoned by the President only 5 weeks in. This turn of events drew international attention, first and foremost in Sweden which withdrew its ambassador in Helsinki and engaged in an "intensive exchange of diplomatic notes" with Finland.¹²¹

The issue was then brought to the League of Nations by the initiative of the British¹²² in the following month as a matter falling under Article 11 which stipulates that member states have the

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.329

¹¹⁷ Unofficially called the Tulenheimo Committee due to the leading legal expert in charge of it.

¹¹⁸ Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.330.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Lindh 1984, p.45

¹²¹ Id. p.46

¹²² The Swedish side considered that its own application to the League might be considered a admittance of failure in light of their previous attempts during the Paris Peace Conference see Baros 1968 and Scarpulla 2002

right to submit matters “affecting international relations which threaten to disturb international peace or the good understanding upon which peace stands”.¹²³

As a result, the League of Nations established two committees, the committee of Rapporteurs and the Committee of Jurists in July 1920 which would examine the Åland Question in relation to international law.

The Committee of Jurists had to deal with two main legal issues; (1) If the question of sovereignty over Åland was still open to dispute and (2) If the international guarantees from 1856 were still in force.¹²⁴

On 5 September 1920 the Committee of Jurists had decided that the matter did indeed fall within the legal competence of the League of Nations and that the demilitarisation agreement from 1856 was still in effect.¹²⁵ As a result, the Committee of Rapporteurs visited Sweden, Finland and Åland before releasing their final statement on the issue on 16 April 1921. The Committee argued that the sovereignty of the islands belong to Finland with some notable restrictions. These included internationally guaranteed support to maintain the Swedish character of the islands. This decision was justified on several historical and geopolitical reasoning, the main arguments included:

- That the administrative separation between Sweden and Åland had occurred earlier than 1809 and that Åland was historically a part of the Åbo district
- that the separation of Åland would affect Finland Swedes’ relations with the Finnish majority and could potentially endanger Finland’s entrance to “the Scandinavian group of states”
- that neither Swedish nor Finnish sovereignty of the islands would constitute a threat for the other,
- that the geographically the border between Sweden and Finland had been the Sea of Åland
- that Finland’s role in combating “Bolshevik communism” was to be taken into account.¹²⁶

Based on this report, the League of Nations decided on the 24 June 1921 while the islands were to be considered under Finnish sovereignty, Finland would need to take further legal action. In terms

¹²³ League of Nations Covenant, article 11

¹²⁴ Björkholm and Rosas 1990, p.22

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ League of Nations 1921, Raport Presented to the Council of the League of Nations by the Commission of Rapporteurs.

of demilitarisation, it was decided that a new agreement needed to be signed to prevent a similar military build-up as was experienced in the First World War.¹²⁷

The new guarantees proposed by the League aimed at preserving the Swedish language, to keep landownership in the hands of the locals, to determine restrictions on non-Ålanders rights to political participation and to ensure Ålandic participation in the selection of the governor of the islands. Additional Article 7 of this decision gave the right for Ålandic officials to appeal to the League of Nations should they fall into conflict with Finnish officials regarding the application of the guarantees¹²⁸ These guarantees were confirmed by a text agreed upon by Finland and Sweden and was annexed to the resolution of 24 June three days later.¹²⁹ This has been frequently labelled the “Åland Agreement” although varying interpretations of the validity of this claim in terms of international law have been brought forward.¹³⁰ The decision was implemented through the Guarantee Act passed by the Parliament of Finland in August 1922.

The military status of Åland was taken up again by the League on 20 October 1921. This resulted in a multilateral agreement regarding the neutralisation of the islands with the intention to ensure “that these islands may never become a cause of danger from a military point of view”¹³¹. The convention confirmed the validity of the 1856 demilitarisation convention, added the neutralisation of the islands and further expanded the number of parties involved in the Åland regime with the signatures of Britain, France, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Germany, Sweden and Finland. This treaty added limitations not only to the fortification of the island but also put restrictions on the capabilities of the host country (Finland) to maintain a military presence on the islands, albeit with exceptions not granted to the other signatories.

With this the Åland Question had been concluded from the perspective of international law, Finland had ensured its sovereignty over the islands and Sweden had strengthened the demilitarisation agreement from 1856 through international engagement which led to the neutralisation of the islands. However, from the perspective of the Åland Movement and its consolidated leader Julius Sundblom this was hardly a satisfactory result. Their ideological commitment to irredentist nationalism simply did not have the same ideological power on the Swedish front once their geopolitical concerns were taken care of.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Decision on the Åland Islands of the Council of the League of Nations. “The Åland Decision”.

¹²⁹ The Åland Agreement in the Council of the League of Nations 1921

¹³⁰ See Hannikainen 1997

¹³¹ Convention on the non-fortification and neutralisation of the Åland Islands 1921

3.2. Autonomy Despite the People 1922-1945

The reaction from the Åland Movement towards the agreement of 24 and 27 June 1921 was summarized as a “deathblow” by Julius Sundblom in his newspaper *Ålandstidningen*¹³². Although the Åland settlement is considered to be a model in solving ethnic conflicts through mediation, it must be noted that the predominant mood among Ålandic elites were far from convinced that the League of Nations decision had concluded the Åland episode. Their fear of “förfinsking”¹³³ and Finland joining the Soviet sphere of influence were very much intact, at least in rhetoric.

Concrete expressions of this disappointment was the breaking of all formal ties with the Swedish People’s Party in Finland and the failure of the concept of Finland Swede¹³⁴ to gain hold on the islands who via Sundblom’s ideological drive and control over the local media, emphasised their regional identity (i.e. being an Ålander) above all other forms of markers of identity.¹³⁵

Between the period of the introduction of universal suffrage in the Grand Duchy of Finland in the year 1906 and the 1919 election which took place during the Åland Crisis, the Swedish People’s Party was clearly the dominate political force on the island. The SFP’s voter support gathered at least 90 percent of the Ålandic vote during this period and considered Åland to be one of its strongholds.¹³⁶ The relation between the Ålandic leadership and the SFP soured when the party supported the offer of autonomy towards the island group and the regional sections of the party were shut down as a result of this disagreement in 1919. This created a form of power vacuum which left the significantly weaker Social Democrats (also active from 1906) and the Communists remaining in the field of party politics on Åland.¹³⁷

The new “legal” regional parliament, also named Landstinget, held its first elections on 8 May 1922 which resulted in a huge victory for Sundblom’s *Ålands Svenska Valförbund*¹³⁸ which received 29 out of the 30 mandates in the Landsting while the only opposition seat went to Johannes Holmberg under the *Självständiga Ålänninngarnas Förbund*¹³⁹, who held a contrary line to the Ålands Movement and was an open advocate of autonomy for Åland and not for secession to Sweden. It

¹³² Quoted in De Geer-Hancock 1986 p.53

¹³³ A term that can be translated as “Finnisation” and corresponds to the fear of Åland losing its monolingual Swedish speaking status as a result of Finnish speaking immigration to the Islands.

¹³⁴ Finlandssvensk in Swedish

¹³⁵ Meinander 2016 p. 195

¹³⁶ Sundberg 1985, p.121-125

¹³⁷ Sundberg 2012 p.214

¹³⁸ Swedish Electoral List of Åland in English

¹³⁹ The Independent Ålanders’ Electoral List in English

should be noted that these were not political parties in the traditional sense but rather election lists that were only activated prior to election.

This Landsting took office on 9 June 1922 and this day is now celebrated as Självstyrelsedagen¹⁴⁰. It is interesting from a nation building perspective to note that instead of taking the date of the League of Nation decision regarding the “Åland Agreement” the Ålandic officials decided that the first meeting of the Landsting was a more appropriate occasion to mark the importance of the day.

On 1 August 1922 the office of Landrådet¹⁴¹ was established as the head of the Landskapsnämnd¹⁴² and Carl Björkman was appointed to the post. De Geer-Handcook notes that the meeting of the “legal” regional parliament constitutes a starting point in terms of nation building on the Åland Islands. The leadership made sure to verbally distance themselves from the Finnish state through using the term Riket. Additionally, a national anthem was created in the same year and a separate tripartite blue and yellow flag was put into use as a sign of a separate Ålandic identity in relation to Finland.¹⁴³

It must be noted that the establishment of the autonomy did not immediately produce a party system similar to the rest of the Nordic region. In fact, Matt Drejer, the “national archaeologist of Åland” describes the politics of Åland during this period as “an untouched idyll” in terms of developing political cleavages.¹⁴⁴

Several reasons can be pointed out for this relative lack of political organisation on Åland during this period. The most important factor can be highlighted through the character of Julius Sundblom, whose biography titled “the King of Åland” was written by author Johannes Salminen.¹⁴⁵ Through ownership of the paper Åland¹⁴⁶, his position in the local bank and position as Speaker of Parliament, he established a very unique and unusually powerful position in Ålandic society which allowed him to set the tone of Ålandic politics until his death in 1945.¹⁴⁷ He was staunchly against the practice of party politics on the grounds that Åland was too small to afford internal quarrels and faction building. Similarly, the “language question” between Finnish and Swedish speakers that constituted a separate political cleavage in the context of Finland, played a unifying role in Ålandic

¹⁴⁰ Autonomy Day in English.

¹⁴¹ Premier in English.

¹⁴² Provincial board in English

¹⁴³ De Geer Hancock 1986, p.54

¹⁴⁴ Drejer 1947 p.180

¹⁴⁵ See Salminen 1979

¹⁴⁶ Åland's only daily newspaper at the time.

¹⁴⁷ Wrede and Wrede 1982 p.184

politics.¹⁴⁸ From the economic perspective Ålands economy lacked any large industry and in place one can observe the importance of seafaring, agriculture and fishing which some argue has created a much more individualistic political culture than the typical understandings of the solidarity based political culture of the Nordic nation states in which the working class have played a more significant role.¹⁴⁹ There were also institutional constraints regarding the building of a party system on Åland. The relationship between the Regional Assembly and the Regional Administration did not resemble a parliamentary system until 1988, The Regional Administration would be appointed proportionally according to each party's mandate which blurred the line between opposition and government. Additionally, the sheer smallness of Ålandic society can increase the role of personal relationship within the political sphere, making certain issues a matter between persons and not of ideology.¹⁵⁰

In light of these structural factors the elections of 1925 and 1928 were received with a low voter turnout and a similar result for the Sundblom camp.¹⁵¹ The 1931 elections saw the first Social Democratic member of the regional parliament (MP), Karl Hussell, enter the legislative assembly with a clear party affiliation, although he lost his seat in the next election of 1934 to regain it 1937.¹⁵² The 1937 elections were the last ones to be held before the outbreak of the Second World War.

The 1930's were a difficult time both in a global context and on the local context as well. The approaching war pressed Finland and Sweden to take action and Åland was once again on the international arena. It was revealed that the Sweden and Finland had mutually agreed to fortify the islands and that the Premier of Åland, Carl Björkman had agreed to it with the hopes that a military contribution from the Ålanders would result in an expanded autonomy alongside the prevention of the arrival of Finnish speaking troops on the island.¹⁵³ As a reaction Julius Sundblom organized a protest during October 1938 which was later to be labelled the "Farmers March" in which 4000 people, i.e. 20 percent of the total population of the islands.¹⁵⁴ This has been considered the first time where public discourse about the legal status regarding demilitarisation and neutralisation was brought into the Ålandic political sphere.¹⁵⁵ The immediate consequence of this protest was the

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁰ Wrede 1979, pp. 52-54

¹⁵¹ Drejer 1947 p.183

¹⁵² Ålands Socialdemokrater 2006, p. 19

¹⁵³ Holmen 2015, p.221

¹⁵⁴ Spilioupoulou-Åkermark et. al 2018, p.38

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

resignation of Björkman as a result of a motion of no-confidence from the Landsting, who since the early days of the Åland Movement had a leading role in Ålandic politics. The plans came to nothing when it was rejected by the Soviet Union. Although the protest has been interpreted as a sign of the commitment of the Ålanders to ideological pacifism by Johannes Salminen¹⁵⁶, this has been disputed by other authors on the basis that Sundblom feared that the Ålanders would be incorporated into Finnish speaking military troops which would in turn have an effect on the Ålanders' political and linguistic attitudes and values.¹⁵⁷

The Åland Islands were not directly involved in the battlefield of the Second World War but Finnish military presence had existed on the islands according to the exception given to Finland in the 1921 treaty to defend the island during times of war.¹⁵⁸

As a result of the Winter War a bilateral treaty was signed on 11 October 1940 between the Soviet Union and Finland which reaffirmed the demilitarisation of the islands.¹⁵⁹ This gave the Soviet Union, and later Russia, to maintain a consulate on the islands to supervise the agreement. Demilitarisation was confirmed once again in Article 5 of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947¹⁶⁰.

At the end of the war in 1945 both Finland and Åland were in a precarious situation. Finland had maintained its independence but as a result of the 1948 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, it was forced to follow a very cautious foreign policy which also affected Åland in a significant way.

3.3 Acceptance and Expansion of Autonomy 1945-1989

The abolishment of the League of Nations, which was the legal organ that supervised the Guarantee Law of 1922 caused worry among the parliamentarians on Åland. This was due to the newly established United Nations was not considered to be the legal successor of the League of Nations and the ideological drive from the Ålandic side to reunite with Sweden.¹⁶¹ Sundblom had also learned that during September 1944 in a moment of desperation the Finnish government had offered Hangö and Åland to Stalin who insisted on the Porkkala military base outside the Finnish capital¹⁶².

¹⁵⁶ Salminen 1979 p.181

¹⁵⁷ Sundback 2006, p.111

¹⁵⁸ Convention on

¹⁵⁹ The Soviet Union was not a party to the 1921 Neutralisation Treaty

¹⁶⁰ Spilioupoulou-Åkermark et. al 2018, p.33.

¹⁶¹ Mattson-Eklund 2000, P.351

¹⁶² Spilioupolou-Åkermark 2007, p.33

The Åland Parliament insisted that it needed representation within the Finnish delegation at the Paris Peace Negotiations, that the current autonomy act was insufficient and furthermore that the Ålanders still desired to join Sweden. The demand for representation was rejected but the Prime Minister of Finland Paasikivi contacted the Ålandic leadership and warmly indicated that the Finnish government was ready to negotiate a new autonomy agreement¹⁶³.

Sundblom visited Stockholm to once again attempt to convince the Swedish government to take interest in Åland however received a cold reception from the Swedish Prime Minister Per Albin Hanson. This was Sundblom's last paradiplomatic action as a politician and he died in the summer of 1945.

Elections were held in April 1945 after the activities of war had ended and it resulted in a confirmation of the dominance of the Sundblom line advocated by Ålandstidningen with some reservations. Ålänningarnas valförbund 1 and 2¹⁶⁴ winning 26 seats, Fria valförbundet¹⁶⁵ winning 2 seats and the Ålands arbetares valförbund¹⁶⁶ winning 2 seats. The new Landsting sent a new message to the government in Helsinki noting that the application of the guarantee law was insufficient and additional measures would need to be taken to protect the Swedish character of the islands.¹⁶⁷ The only reservation towards this declaration came from the representative of the Folkdemokraterna which was an extension of the communist party on Finnish mainland. The following elections in 1948 followed a similar line with 27 seats going to Ålänningarnas valförbund, 2 to the People's Democrats and 1 to the Social Democrats.¹⁶⁸

It was now the task of a new generation of Ålandic politicians to set a political agenda considering the vacuum Sundblom left behind him. After the death of Sundblom and the sunset of the reunification ideology with Sweden, a new form of leadership took over which departed from the irredentism of the old. This leadership mostly associated with the new Speaker Thorwald Eriksson¹⁶⁹ based on the ideology that the institutions of autonomy should be used to develop the national distinctiveness of the Ålanders.¹⁷⁰ This ideology focused much more on the civil side of the Ålandic people, in which the ethnic affiliation towards Sweden was replaced with a discourse on the

¹⁶³ Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.351

¹⁶⁴ The reason why two separate lists exist can be traced to a technicality in the election law which only allow 30 candidates on a given list while the number of candidates for Ålänningarnas Valförbund were 43

¹⁶⁵ An electoral list of politicians who held Björkman's line, that is a positive view regarding the militarisation of the island, it was considered a right-wing political organisation. Drejer 1947 p.221 and Wrede 1976 p.47

¹⁶⁶ An electoral list composing of the social democrats and people's democrats (i.e. communists), see Drejer 1947

¹⁶⁷ Drejer 1947 P.190

¹⁶⁸ Tudor 1993, p.196

¹⁶⁹ Speaker of Parliament 1955-1971, later contributed to the development of a separatist party on Åland.

¹⁷⁰ Sundback 2006 p. 92

importance of the Ålanders to govern themselves within the legal institutions of the autonomy act. This added an extra layer of differentiation between not only the Finnish state but also with the Finland Swedes.¹⁷¹ A clear manifestation of this new autonomy ideology was the publication of a small brochure, authored by Eriksson in 1965 in several languages, including English.¹⁷² Linguistically, this document provides the basis of the new understanding of the autonomy which labels the “Åland Agreement” from 24 and 27 June 1921 as “Ålands Magna Carta” which emphasizes that the application of this agreement constitutes a “basic obligation” for Finland and a “basic right” for Åland¹⁷³. The hembygdsrätt is labelled as “citizenship”, the landskapstyrelse a “government”, the Landsting a “parliament”. It also discusses the implications of the term province¹⁷⁴ and notes that in the word province in the context of Åland stands for: “a community with a high degree of self-government, with its own national identity, its own elected Parliament and its own central administration, ‘a state within a state’”¹⁷⁵. This formed a political doctrine in which Ålandic politics were formulated with a clear territorial framework and persistent demands for an expansion of autonomy.¹⁷⁶

The first immediate challenge after the Second World War was to negotiate the new Autonomy Act with the Finnish state¹⁷⁷. After long discussions and a dispute regarding the internationally guaranteed nature of the autonomy arrangement¹⁷⁸, the new autonomy act was accepted by both parliaments in 1951.

The new autonomy act introduced a new form of identity symbolism for the Ålanders; the concept of the hembygdsrätt¹⁷⁹. This legal construction increased the political power of the regional authorities over the participation of newcomers to Ålandic society by putting certain restrictions on immigrants’ participation in Ålandic society. According to the new autonomy act, the regional citizenship would be granted on approval to the Regional Government after a 5-year residency on the Åland provided that they also had Finnish citizenship.¹⁸⁰ Without this regional citizenship it

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² See Eriksson 1965

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Landskap in Swedish

¹⁷⁵ Eriksson 1965

¹⁷⁶ Sundback 2006, p.92

¹⁷⁷ An effort had been made to revise the autonomy act in the 1930’s but the beginning of warfare prevented it from bearing fruit see Sipilopoulou Åkermark 2007

¹⁷⁸ While the Ålandic side insisted on the continuation of the international supervision of the autonomy arrangement in another form, the Finnish side made it clear that the Soviet Union was opposed to the idea. In conclusion it was removed from the final proposition. See De Geer-Hancock 1986 p. 70-74 and Sipilopoulou Åkermark 2007 p. 33

¹⁷⁹ Usually translated as “right of domicile” or “regional citizenship” see Sipilopoulou Åkermark 2007 p.19-38 and Öst 2011 pp.72-85

¹⁸⁰ Autonomy Act 1951

would be impossible for one to participate in elections for Ålandic local and regional elections, buy or sell property on Åland or to partake in business that requires a permit from the local authorities¹⁸¹.

Although the new autonomy act had increased the legal authority of the Åland authorities, the overall proposal was in no way uncontroversial. The proposal passed with a 17-10 majority. Magnus Wrede notes that in terms of autonomy policies a cleavage between two groups could be observed.¹⁸²

1- A political fraction that frequently refers to the legal defence mechanism of the autonomy act, emphasised the importance of the Swedish language and customs, emphasizes the fear of Finnisation on Åland and the importance of maintaining close relations with Sweden. (The Legality Line)¹⁸³

2- A political fraction which emphasizes good relations with the state, does not view an impending fear of Finnisation on Åland and downplays the defence mechanism aspect of the autonomy act as the primary aim of the politics of autonomy. (The Pragmatic Line)¹⁸⁴

It should be noted that this cleavage does not imply that these two lines disagree on whether to increase Åland's autonomy but rather how that should be achieved. None of the representatives of either side argue in favour of transferring authority to Finland.

The second symbolically important action regarding the construction of the Ålandic identity in this period was the adoption of an official flag for the autonomous region. After the autonomy act took effect in January 1952 the Landsting passed a law proposing a new flag for the autonomous region. The design was based on a typical Nordic cross with a dark blue base and yellow cross with another dark blue cross filling. The Finnish president Paasikivi did not appreciate the colour scheme deeming it to be too similar to the Swedish flag and he vetoed the proposal. The Ålandic side then came up with another proposal which was also to be rejected and a compromise was reached when the Finnish president approved the proposal with a Nordic cross on a blue base, yellow cross and a red filling within that cross.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Wrede 1979, p.45

¹⁸³ Laglighetslinjen in Swedish, the 10 MP's who voted against the new autonomy act

¹⁸⁴ Den Pragmatiska Linjen in Swedish, the 17 MP's who voted in favour of the new autonomy act.

¹⁸⁵ Meinander 2015 p.188

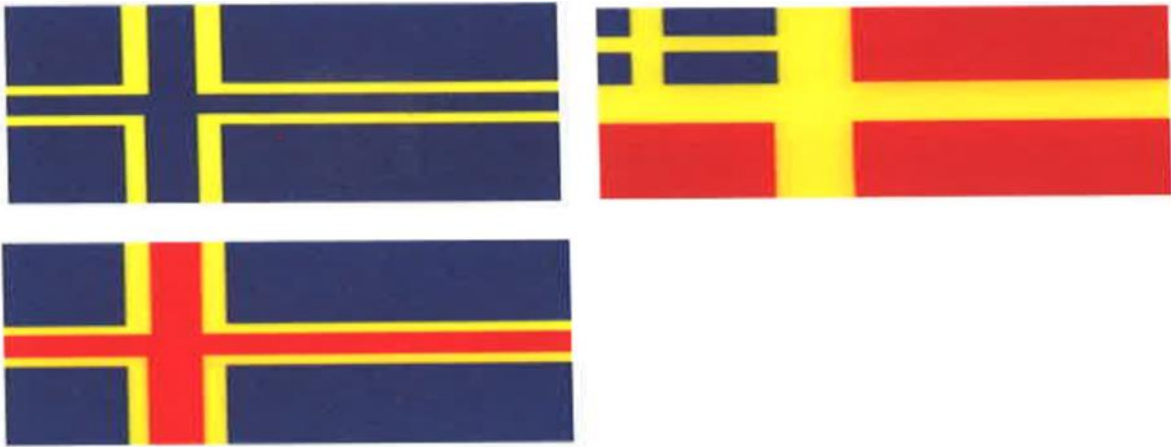


Figure 2: Flag proposals from the Landsting to the President¹⁸⁶

In terms of party politics Ålands Tidningen, in the shadow of Julius Sundblom, still maintained a negative view on the fracturing of Ålandic society and dividing “the Ålandic party”.¹⁸⁷ This seemingly had an effect on the Social Democrats who officially cut their ties with the Finnish party in 1948 and sought cooperation with the dominant right-wing organisations.¹⁸⁸ The party did not participate in the 1951 elections allowing the more radical People’s Democrats to be the predominant left wing party on Åland albeit with only 1 mandate compared to the 29 of the Ålänningarnas valförbund. The People’s Democrats increased their seats to two the following election in 1954 while the Social Democrats got one seat within the larger right-wing bloc¹⁸⁹.

The year 1957 saw the establishment of the Ålands Samling¹⁹⁰ which is better characterised as an umbrella organisation than a traditional political party¹⁹¹ as the replacement for Ålänningarnas Valförbund. The Social Democrats pursued their political goals (and achieved 4 seats in the parliament) within this umbrella while the People’s Democrats remained isolated as the only political organisation which identified as a political party¹⁹².

Up until this period Åland remained an overwhelmingly agrarian society which was dominated by the farming and fishing sectors. The political left remained significantly weak due to sheer numerical inferiority (i.e. lack of large industry) and organisational weakness and the ties of the People’s Democrats to the Finnish People’s Democrats drew suspicion among the nationalist

¹⁸⁶ Taken from Meinander 2015, p.188

¹⁸⁷ Wrede 1976, pp. 45-49.

¹⁸⁸ Wrede 1979, p.49

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p.51

¹⁹⁰ Åland Coalition in English

¹⁹¹ Wrede 1976, P.63

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 51-63

agrarian leadership which were the majority in the common election lists on grounds that it provided an alternative to the existing economic order and that they were connected to the Finnish communists.¹⁹³

From the late 1950's onwards a new form of economic activity would come to characterise the Ålandic economic structure, which would be taken into consideration during the EU membership negotiations: tourism. Prior to the introduction of regular ferry lines, the Åland islands received around 39.000 summer tourists in 1958, the year after that the number rose to 64.000 and to 116.000 the following year. By the turn of the century the number of summer visitors had reached 1.700.000.¹⁹⁴

By 1963 the Åland Samling was internally divided into List 1 (right leaning) and List 2 (left leaning) fractions which then officially split into smaller factions in the following elections¹⁹⁵. List 1 gained 22 seats while List 2 gained 7, the People's Democrats won 1 seat. This was the last election in which any party to the left of the Social Democrats gained representation in the Regional Parliament. Åland Samling still maintained its umbrella status within elections to the Finnish parliament but withdrew from the politics of the Landsting.

The following elections of 1967 showed a permanent split and step forward toward a clearly defined multi-party system. The List 1 of the Ålands Samling split into a conservative urban based party Frisnad Samverkan (FS)¹⁹⁶ and a liberal urban based Mittenliberalerna¹⁹⁷ which got 4 and 2 seats respectively. The remainder of List 1 formed the Landsbygdens och Skärgårdens valförbund (LoS)¹⁹⁸ and received 20 seat which was a predominately rural political movement as evident in its name. The rest of the 4 seats went to the Social Democratic Löntagarnas lista¹⁹⁹. The People's Democrats lost their only seat. Magus Wrede describes this fragmentation of the political arena as the result of the reaction of the urban ideological groupings and the rural reaction towards it.²⁰⁰ It is also noteworthy to consider that this election was the first time the voter turnout exceeded 50 percent in Regional elections, a sign of increasing acceptance of party politics on the islands and the consolidation of ideological differences.²⁰¹

¹⁹³ Wrede 1979, p.49.

¹⁹⁴ Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.358

¹⁹⁵ Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.360

¹⁹⁶ Freeminded Cooperation in English

¹⁹⁷ Centre Liberals in English

¹⁹⁸ The Electoral List of the Countryside and the Archipelago

¹⁹⁹ The Electoral List or the Wage earners

²⁰⁰ Wrede 1979, p.49-50

²⁰¹ Wrede 1981 p. 17

The two other main internal developments during this decade were the pressure put on the state officials, namely the president, to approve the construction plans for the new parliament house which bore fruit in the so.-called Project 77 and the quarrel between the Speaker Thorvald Erikson and the Primer Martin Isaksson in 1968. The later event can be considered the biggest internal quarrel on Åland since the split between Sundblom and Björkman in 1938. The main point of conflict was that the Speaker, also the chief of the Bank of Åland at the time had struck a deal with a Swedish construction group that would build summer homes and would then sell them to customers from Sweden and Finland. This obviously required a circumvention of the rules regarding the regional citizenship and Finnish legislation regarding land ownership and the Speaker was willing to offer concession to the Swedes which in contrast the Primer reminded that the same must be done for Finnish citizens.²⁰² Due to the intensive debate in the media the plans were never realised as the company withdrew its bid, but this event showed once again the split in the political area between the Legality Line and the Pragmatic Line.

Toward the end of the decade the Regional Administration and the Regional Parliament attempted to acquire some form of participation in the Nordic Council. Although met with some resistance on the Finnish side initially, the Danish initiative to offer representation to the Faroe Islands assisted the Ålandic intention in receiving their own representation in the Nordic Council in 1970.²⁰³ This can be considered another important turning point for Åland's paradiplomacy. With membership in the Nordic Council the members of parliament had access to an official forum in which they could establish contacts beyond regional and national borders. Additionally, the symbolic gesture of the Ålandic flag being hoisted alongside the other Nordic nations' flags has had profound effect in the minds of the Ålandic members of parliament and will play a role in the discussions regarding European Integration as well.

²⁰² Mattson-Eklund 2000, p.362-363

²⁰³ Stephan 2014 pp.16-23



Figure 3: The Självstyrelsegården was completed in 1978²⁰⁴

The 1971 elections saw the appearance of the independent political lists, the Social Democrats were now a separate organisation from the umbrella party of the previous decades. The election results were along the lines of the previous one with LoS meaning a majority with 18 seats, Frisnad Samverkan (FS) gaining 4, Social Democrats gaining 4, the Liberals gaining 2 and Allmänna valförbundet ²⁰⁵gained 2.

The fractionalisation of politics continued in the following election of 1975 with LoS-Liberalarna breaking from LoS and FS-Framstegsgrupp splitting from FS. The division of the seats were as follows: LoS 9 seats, LoS-Liberalerna 7 seats, Social Democrats 5 seats, Liberals 3 seats, FS 3 seats, ÅF 2 and FS-Framstegsgrupp 1. According to Wrede LoS, FS-Framsteg and ÅF (12 seats) can be described as belonging to the The Legality Line and the Social Democrats, Los-Liberalerna, Liberals, and FS as the group belonging to The Pragmatic Line (18 Seats)²⁰⁶.

After this election, activities within the LoS brought forward the solidification of party politics on Åland with the arrival of the Ålandic Centre²⁰⁷ in 1976 which combined the LoS group with ÅF and

²⁰⁴ From Lindh 1984 p.69. The building to the left is the Regional Administration while the building to the right is the Regional Parliament

²⁰⁵ Can be described as a successor of the Sundblom line hence the " non-ideological" choice of name see Drejer 1972 p.236

²⁰⁶ Wrede 1979. p.50 see note 50

²⁰⁷ Åländsk Centern in Swedish

FS-Framsteg.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, the Los-Liberalerna group fused with the Centre Liberals to form Liberals for Åland²⁰⁹ in 1978.

The last election of the decade in 1979 saw the establishment of a party system that resembled the other party systems in the Nordic nation states with some notable exceptions. The Centre Party became the dominant force with 14 seats, the Liberals gained 9 seats, the conservative FS gained 4 and the Social Democrats gained 3. The communist Ålandic Left also participated but failed to gain any seats.²¹⁰

The 1970's on Åland may be interpreted as a period of increased politicisation and societal change. In the economic context it has been said that Åland has "skipped" over the industrialisation of society associated with modernism and the construction of national identity²¹¹. From being an agricultural society, the islands became a service society which in turn led to a significant urbanisation around the capital (Mariehamn) region and led to the development of well organised Social Democratic organisation which in turn became a motivating factor for right wing political parties to organize. The anxieties related to these have caused an anxiety of depopulation of the countryside and the archipelago and suspicion toward centralisation not only within Åland but also towards centralisation to Brussels as a result of European integration.

It should also be noted that the absence of a strong unifying leader with overwhelming economic and societal influence can also be considered as a contributing factor in the development of the Ålandic party system.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Söderlund 2008, p.132

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Lindh 1984, p.72.

²¹² Id., p.74

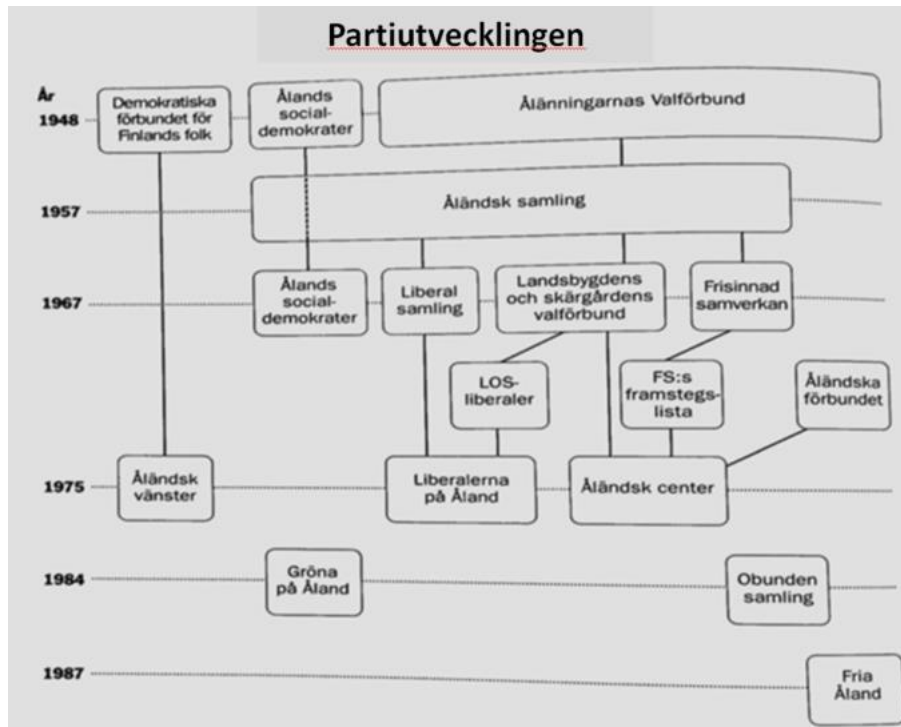


Figure 4: The chronology of the development of the party system²¹³

In the figure above the political parties are presented roughly according to their perceived economic policies. It must be said that this is not confirmed by political science research and the limited autonomy in the realm of economic policy makes it difficult to predict the actual preferred economic policies of the parties. The 1951 Autonomy Act was quite limited in the authority it bestowed upon the Regional Parliament. With the expansion of financial autonomy with the introduction of the “lump sum” system in 1991, the Ålandic Parliament gained distributive authority which created some understanding of bloc politics. This posed the Social Democrats and Liberals on the side that is sceptical of obtaining more taxation authority with the Centre, the conservative FS and Unaligned Coalition insist on the total overtaking of taxation powers by Åland.²¹⁴

With the 1979 election, one can observe the formalisation of cleavages in Ålandic society between the urban-rural divide something that would have repercussions for the EU process as well.

The following decade brought forward several events which would have a profound effect on the political and social dimensions of Ålandic society.

²¹³ From Svensson 1997, p.24.

²¹⁴ Sundback 2006, p. 116.

In 1981 the traditional single-newspaper characteristic of the media landscape on the islands finally came to a stop. This occurred when the chief editor for Ålandstidningen, Hasse Svensson²¹⁵, who was fired by the board of directors alongside most of his editorial board, decided to form a new, reader owned co-op newspaper titled Nya Åland.²¹⁶²¹⁷ On the legislative field, The Regional Parliament also set a committee to explore at the possibilities of a transition into a full parliamentary system in which the Regional Government would be formally reliant on the confidence of the Regional Parliament.²¹⁸

In the same year, an intra-Nordic meeting regarding the establishment of the Nordic region as a permanent “nuclear free” zone took place in the context of the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union²¹⁹. It attracted around 400 activists and politicians from the region and the idea of the Åland Islands as “The Islands of Peace” were put forth by the Speaker of the Parliament Sune Carlsson.²²⁰ This concept provided a new rhetorical device for both the Ålandic left and the right to promote the islands as a peaceful solution to minority conflicts. In this a light an Ålands Peace Association was founded which would then lead to the establishment of The Åland Islands Peace institute in 1992.²²¹ The demilitarised and neutralised status of the islands were incorporated into the political agenda of the Regional Government which began acting more proactively towards the legal status of the islands²²² where as it was largely considered an issue for the Finnish Ministry of Defence in prior times.²²³ This would be source of disagreement between the Finnish and Ålandic governments in the EU process.

The next elections occurred in 1983 which produced similar results as the election before: 11 seats for the Centre Party, 9 for the Liberals, 5 for the FS and 5 for the Social Democrats. The Ålandic Left failed again to gain seats and disbanded after the election.²²⁴

1984 saw another symbolically important development in terms of relations with the state, which allowed the Åland authorities to print their own postage stamps.²²⁵

²¹⁵ He had been faithfully loyal to the Autonomy ideology of Thorvald Eriksson see Sundback 2006

²¹⁶ New Åland in English

²¹⁷ Mattson Eklund 2000, p.364

²¹⁸ Sundback 2006, p.105

²¹⁹ Hannus 2012, p.9

²²⁰ Id. p.10

²²¹ Sundback 2006, p.109

²²² This is despite the fact that the Regional Government has no official legal authority in this regard

²²³ *ibid.*

²²⁴ Svensson 1997, p. 325

²²⁵ De Geer-Hancock 1986, p. 95-96



Figure 5: One of Åland's first postal stamps²²⁶

In 1987 Åland got two new political actors on the parliamentary scene; the Greens²²⁷ which were a part of the larger Green movement in the rest of the Nordic region and Europe and the Non-Aligned Coalition²²⁸ a self-described “non-party” which refused to adopt a party program but have maintained a right wing profile.²²⁹

The election in 1987 resulted in 9 seats for the Centre, 8 seats for the Liberals, 5 for the FS, 4 for the Social Democrats, 2 for the Greens and 2 for the Non-Aligned²³⁰. With the introduction of parliamentary government in 1988, a Regional Government was installed on the basis of a parliamentary majority and Primer who was directly responsible to the parliament. The first coalition government consisted of the Centre Party, the Liberals and the FS and was led by the Liberal Sune Eriksson.

The efforts on the Ålandic side from the early 1970's onwards to renew the autonomy act of 1951 resulted in the setting of a parliamentary committee consisting of representatives from both the region and the state that finalized its proposals for a new autonomy act in 1987.²³¹ The act was then ratified by both sides in 1991 and came into force in 1993. This act would further expand Åland's autonomy within the fields of economy, culture, education and ability to affect international treaties signed by Finland.²³² The ability of the region to affect Finland's participation to international treaties is regulated through Chapter 9 of the Autonomy Act²³³. Section 58 stipulates that the Regional Government of Åland may propose negotiations regarding a treaty with a foreign state and

²²⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postage_stamps_and_postal_history_of_the_%C3%85land_Islands#/media/File:Åland_post_1984_Flag.jpg

²²⁷ Gröna på Åland in Swedish

²²⁸ Obunden Samling in Swedish

²²⁹ The founder Bert Häggblom has its roots in the Centre party see Svensson 1997, pp. 264-275.

²³⁰ Svensson 1997, p. 325

²³¹ See Eriksson and Kangas 1988 for the committee report.

²³² See Hannikainen 1993 p.11-13 and Autonomy Act 1991

²³³ Autonomy Act

be informed of the negotiations if deemed appropriate. The Regional Government is also reserved the right to participate in negotiations regarding international treaties if seen to be appropriate.²³⁴ Section 59 stipulates that if a treaty contains a provision that is subject to the authority of Åland, the Regional Parliament must give its consent in order for the provision to be considered valid on Åland²³⁵. This had two importance consequences for Ålandic paradiplomacy; firstly gaining the capacity to propose an international treaty to the Government of Finland if it viewed it necessary and secondly the ability to force Finland to take into account the interests of Åland before entering an international agreement.

3.4 Summary of the Political and Economic Cleavages on Åland in the Beginning of the 1990's

By the early 1990's the political field consisted of 5 parties representing different sections of the Ålandic electorate. The largest party was the Centre Party which has been considered as the successor of the Sundblom and Eriksson line of autonomy politics, that is a relatively aggressive profile in autonomy politics. The party has its base in the Countryside and the Archipelago while lacking similar influence in Mariehamn. The party emphasizes the antagonism between the city and countryside and between Finland and Åland²³⁶

The second largest party on the islands were the Liberals which have support among public sector workers and has a split voter base between Mariehamn, the Countryside and the Archipelago. It has had a relatively pragmatic profile in autonomy politics. It also has close links to the Swedish People's Party in Finland.²³⁷

The Frisnad Samverkan (FS) is a liberal conservative party with a strong support base in Mariehamn. It has a free market orientation and emphasises the importance of the family.²³⁸ They have an aggressive rhetoric on autonomy policy but in terms of actual policy they have been more pragmatic.²³⁹ This is evident also during the EU referendum process.

The Social Democrats is a Social Democratic party and has affinity with the other Nordic Social Democratic parties commonly associated with the 'Nordic model'. However due to the prevalence

²³⁴ Autonomy Act 1991, Chapter 9, Section 58

²³⁵ Autonomy Act 1991, Chapter 9, Section 59

²³⁶ Sundback 2006, p.100-101. It should be noted that Sundback herself is a Social Democratic politician. The reliance on her work here is due to the scarcity of political science research on the ideology of the Ålandic parties.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Id. p.101.

of autonomy politics and a lack of an organised working class in urban regions, it has been significantly weaker than its Nordic counterparts. It emphasizes the importance of welfare policies and social equality.²⁴⁰ It has traditionally been perceived as the least aggressive party in terms of autonomy politics.

The Unaligned Coalition was founded in 1987 by the more nationalistic elements of the Centre Party. They have insisted on not adopting a party program but have been labelled right wing.²⁴¹ They are clearly the most aggressive in terms of autonomy politics in Regional Parliament during this term.

It should be noted that these parties are much smaller in scale than their Swedish and Finnish counterparts and single individuals can exert an enormous amount of influence regarding the parties' positioning on certain policies.²⁴²

European Integration was not on the agenda for the Regional Elections which took place on 20 October 1991 which resulted in: 10 seats for the Centre Party, 7 seats for the Liberals, 6 seats for FS, 4 seats for the Social Democrats and 3 seats for the Non-Alligned Coalition.²⁴³ The Green Party on Åland lost its 2 seats and later disbanded as an organisation, unlike its Swedish and Finnish counterparts which were to become regular governmental parties. The Regional Government was formed by Ragnar Erlandsson, leader of the Centre Party with a coalition of the FS and the Social Democrats.

| Party | Ideology | Group in Nordic Council | MP's after the 1991 election |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Centre Party | Liberalism/Agrarian | Centre Group | 10 |
| The Liberals | Liberalism/Social Liberalism | Centre Group | 7 |
| FS | Liberal Conservatism | Conservative Group | 6 |
| Social Democrats | Social Democracy | Social Democrat Group | 4 |
| Unaligned Coalition | Conservatism/Nationalism | Conservative Group | 3 |

Figure 6: Presentation of the Political Parties in the Regional Parliament in 1991.

²⁴⁰ Id. p.102.

²⁴¹ Id, p.116. and Söderlund 2008

²⁴² See Wrede 1979.

²⁴³ Details at Ålandstatistiksbyrå website: http://www.asub.ax/statistic_detail.con?iPage=45&m=76&sub=2

On the economic side, it is also necessary to clarify the economic structure on Åland before the EU debates took place. Utilising a report on the EU's possible effects on the Ålandic economy published by SIFO Future AB in 1992 it is possible to paint a picture of the state of the Ålandic economy at the time. According to this report of all the employed on Åland 30 percent were in the service industry, 17 percent in traffic and communications²⁴⁴, 15 percent in trade, roughly 10 in agriculture (farming and fishing)²⁴⁵, 13 percent in industry and 15 percent in banking.²⁴⁶

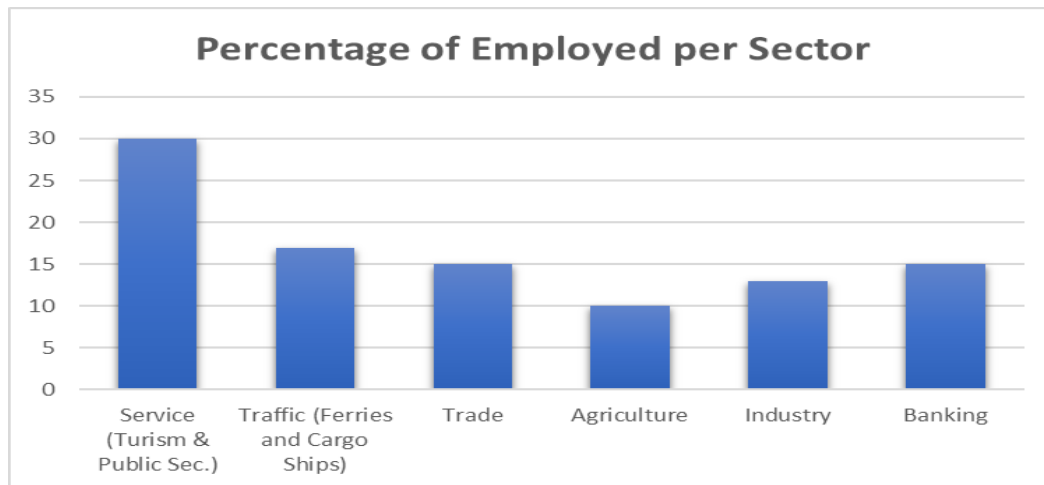


Figure 7: Distribution of Employment per Sector.

From the given statistics it can be concluded that the economy of Åland was dominated by the service and information-based economy. This economic structure can be considered an explanatory factor towards the positivity towards membership on the side of the largely urban based Social Democrats and the conservative FS. Fishing and farming-maintained 10 percent of all employment (a relatively high percentage in a comparative perspective) of was particularly an issue for the rural based Centre Party and the Unaligned due to those sectors being directly EU competences. The Liberals, being a regionally spread out party emphasized Liberal ideals of integration and cooperation over regional and sectoral interests.

When analysing the population structure, we see a tripartite division between the capital Mariehamn city with its 10,429 people, the rural regions²⁴⁷ on mainland Åland with 12,290 people and the Archipelago²⁴⁸ with 2,439. Here we observe that the majority of Ålanders lived outside the city

²⁴⁴ This includes the employment on the ferries between Sweden and Finland and employment on ships carrying goods.

²⁴⁵ The corresponding percentage was 4 percent for Sweden and 6 percent for Finland at the time see SIFO Future

²⁴⁶ SIFO Future, 1991. pp. 49-57

²⁴⁷ Landsbygden in Swedish.

²⁴⁸ Skärgården in Swedish.

which could explain the dominance of the Centre Party in the rural regions and the archipelago. The anxiety deriving from the depopulation of the rural regions and increased urbanisation on Åland is also evident among the members of this party, the Unaligned and FS MP from the archipelago Harry Eriksson. To compare the drastic change in regional demographics, in 1920 Mariehamn had only 1,403 residents, the rural regions on mainland Åland had 14.229 and the archipelago had 5.949.²⁴⁹

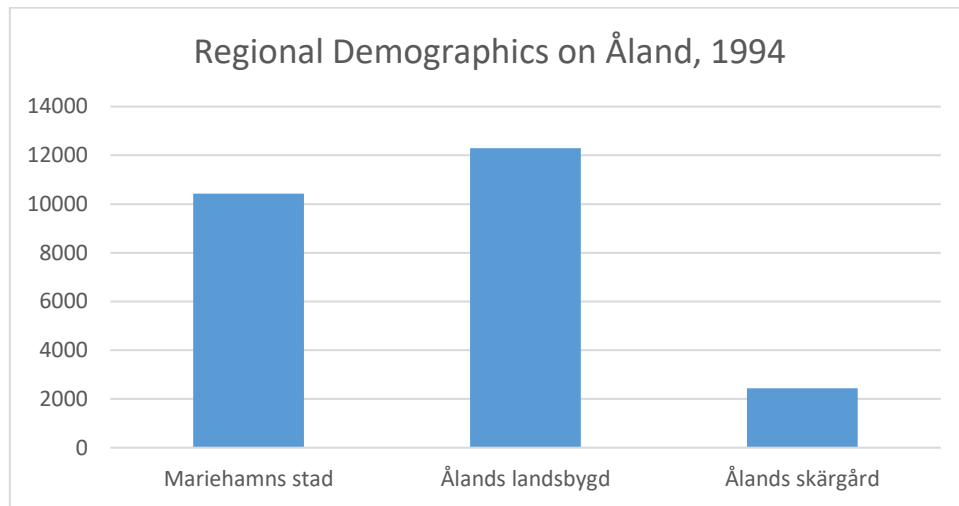


Figure 8: Population distribution according to region in 1994²⁵⁰

3.5 Continuity and Change in Ålandic External Relations

As analysed above, relations between Ålanders and the wider world has played a significant role in the political history of Åland and would play a role in the EU debates. The anxiety towards losing its Swedish character has been a crucial motivator for the Ålandic political leadership to for seek solutions outside. Both the Åland movement and the Åland government during the EU process sought out to seek out ways to ensure that Åland retains its monolingually Swedish status. The former sought refuge in “Mother Sweden” through contacts in Stockholm and the later sought out guarantees from the EU in Brussels. This stated the political goals were different, the former strictly being an irredentist movement while the later defended the autonomy arrangement and also claimed subjectivity on the military status of the islands.

²⁴⁹ Lindh 1984. p.271.

²⁵⁰ Source: Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå (ÅSUB) <https://www.asub.ax/sv/statistik/befolkning-befolkningens-storlek-och-struktur>

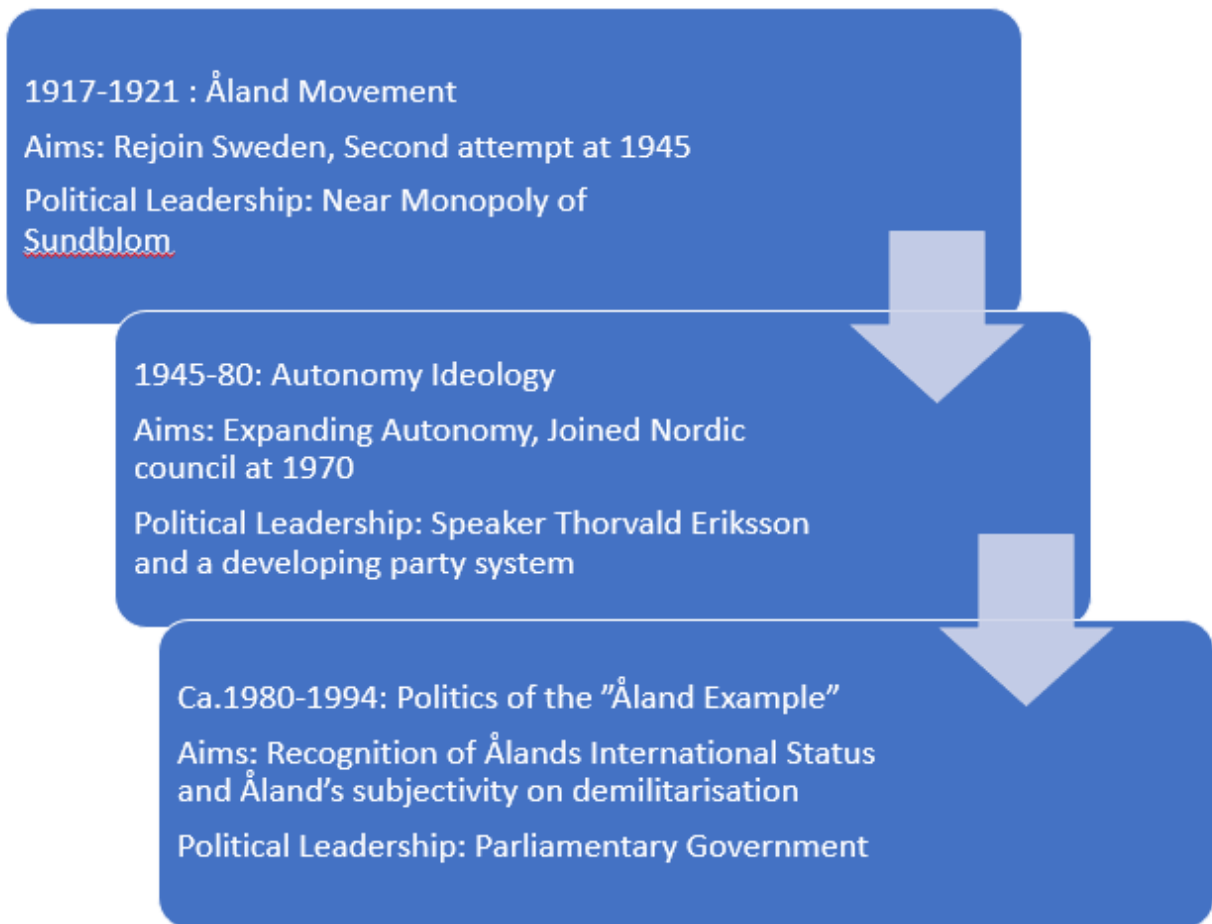


Figure 9: Summary of the Political History of Åland

4. Autonomy and European Integration 1989-1994

The late 1980's was a time of change in not only in Europe but from a global perspective. This section aims to summarise the foreign policy environment Finland and Åland found themselves in the post-Cold War era. This section will give an overview of the developments prior to the debate to provide an overview of conditions in which Åland began its referendum process and the political attitudes towards the EU by the members of legislature.

Finland's cautious foreign policy regarding a balance between "the East" and "the West" was being replaced with a clear western orientation.²⁵¹ Finland became the last neutral European country to join the Council of Europe in 1989 and began negotiating the European Economy Area treaty between 1989 and 1991. Already during the EEA negotiations, it became clear that Åland was at a crossroads and had to choose between the "inner track" and the "outer track" in relation to ongoing

²⁵¹ Silverstörn 2002 p.9

integration process²⁵². The main point of contention for the autonomy of Åland was that the measures regarding the Regional Citizenship and the restrictions regarding it were at clear odds with the “four freedoms” regarding free movement of capital, persons, services and labour.

By “inner track” it is referred to the scenario in which Åland actively chooses to join the integration process and perhaps seek membership of the EEA and later on the European Union. In this scenario it was necessary to negotiate a form of special arrangement or derogation in order to maintain the purpose (i.e. minority protection) of the restrictions regarding it.²⁵³

The “outer track” refers to the situation in which Åland chooses to fully remain outside the integration processes just as the two other Nordic autonomies, the Faroes Islands and Greenland had chosen to do so earlier. However even in this scenario Åland would have needed some form of cooperation agreement with the EU such as some form of a cooperation agreement or a free trade agreement²⁵⁴.

The chosen option was the “inner track” method with derogations, this was the basis of the EEA agreement which did not touch upon the restrictions involving Regional Citizenship, and was passed unilaterally by the Regional Parliament in November 1992 and the act came into force on 1 January 1994.²⁵⁵ This non-controversy has been attributed to the fact that the restrictions regarding landownership and the right to certain professions were given derogations in the agreement.²⁵⁶

The Regional Government realised that it would need close cooperation of the Regional Parliament according to the new Autonomy Act and established a parliamentary committee with all of the parties represented in the chamber. Additionally, the Regional Government periodically sent written messages regarding the membership negotiations to be debated in public.²⁵⁷

Finland applied to join the European Community (EC) in March 1992 and the Regional Government consequently sent out the first communications to the Regional Parliament. This message noted that membership in the EC would be much more expansive than the EEA agreement and that the decision on membership would be one of the most important decisions since the establishment of autonomy.²⁵⁸

²⁵² Id. p.10

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., Fagerlund 1997 p.191

²⁵⁶ Fagerlund 1997, p.190

²⁵⁷ Fagerlund 1997, p.190

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

The second message regarding membership was sent to the Regional Parliament in August 1992 which has been described as a “very ambitious agenda” by then-EU ambassador to Finland Eric Hayes.²⁵⁹ The two main objectives from the Regional Government was to ensure the protection of the autonomy arrangement and the sustainability of the local economy.²⁶⁰ The specific topics were stated to be in need of special regulation were:

- The recognition of the Demilitarisation and Neutralisation of the islands
- The legislative authority of Åland in regard to Community legislation
- The unilingual Swedish speaking status of Åland
- Restrictions on political participation of non-regional citizens to local and regional elections
- Restrictions regarding property ownership
- Restrictions regarding the right of trade on the islands
- The right to have special commercial and tax laws on Åland
- Satisfactory participation of Ålandic representatives in the EC decision making process²⁶¹

It was especially emphasized that due to the heavy dependency of the local economy to shipping and tourism, Åland would need exemptions in regards to the tax harmonisation within the union which would allow the continuation of tax free sales on ferries from and to Åland²⁶². Fagerlund observes that one of the most interesting aspects of this message from the Regional Government is that it denies to take a position regarding Ålandic membership to the EC but rather notes that there were several options considering other Island regions which belong to EC member states but were kept out the union through special regulations.²⁶³ He notes that this position is quite distinct from the official line of the Government of Finland which considered EC/EU membership to be the official political goal and actively pursued it.²⁶⁴

In response, the Finnish government decided to form a joint committee in which the Regional and State officials would attempt to arrive at a common position in regard to the EC.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ Hayes 2017, p.60

²⁶⁰ Fagerlund 1997, p.191

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Such as Greenland, Faroe Islands, Isle of Man, Guernsey.

²⁶⁴ Fagerlund 1997, p.192

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

From the side of the European Communities it was recognized in a report published in November 1992 that the status of Åland would require a further examination considering its status under international law and the importance of the service sector to the local economy.²⁶⁶ This report was perceived positively from the Regional Government as it constituted an official recognition of the international legal arrangement regarding the islands, demilitarisation and neutralisation included.

The demilitarised and neutralised status of the Åland Islands proved to be a heavy point of contestation between Åland and Finland. The activism on the Ålandic side can be attributed to the fear that the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the Member States and the European Union could endanger the established status regarding the islands.²⁶⁷ On the Finnish side it was maintained that no mention of Åland's international status, particularly the aspects regarding demilitarisation and neutralisation should be brought forward in the membership negotiations. It must be noted that the Finnish Government was also pressured from certain military circles who were in favour of a reconsideration or a total removal of demilitarisation and neutralisation in the post-Cold War security context.²⁶⁸

After a number of bilateral meetings, a compromise was reached between the Finnish Foreign Ministry and the Ålandic Regional Government on 17 September 1993. This was to submit a unilateral declaration to the European Union that would be a part of the Final Act of the Accession Conference. This declaration would include the phrase "Åland's established status under international law" which the Finnish Foreign Minister, Heikki Haavisto ensured was a reference to demilitarisation and neutralisation.²⁶⁹

The Finnish Government then presented its position paper regarding the special provisions for Åland to the European Union in October 1993. This was taken up on a ministerial level EU meeting at Brussels on 22 February 1994 in which the representatives of the Ålandic Government were also present. The result became Article 2 of the Finnish accession treaty to the European Union, more commonly known as the "Åland Protocol".²⁷⁰ This amounted to a legal recognition of the permanent derogations demanded by the Ålandic side regarding the restrictions deriving from Regional Citizenship and the exclusion of the territory of Åland from the tax union.²⁷¹ The main

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Id., p.193

²⁶⁸ Tillikainen 2002, p.38-39

²⁶⁹ Fagerlund 1997, p.195

²⁷⁰ Silverström 2013, p.34

²⁷¹ Which would allow the continuation of tax-free sales on ferries and consider Åland as a "third country" in terms of tax harmonisation see Silverström 2013.

surprise for the Finnish and Ålandic sides in the Åland Protocol was the last-minute addition of the phrase “the special status that Åland enjoys under international law” as the justification for the given derogations from the main principles of community law.²⁷²

The substantive accession negotiations between Finland and the EU had concluded by 1 March 1994, however there were two specific fields which would still cause some stress between the Finnish and Ålandic sides.²⁷³ These were communicated by the Åland Government to the Regional Parliament in their third message regarding the consequences of EU membership on 20 May 1994.²⁷⁴ The Regional Government noted that in order for the region to give its consent to join the EU, it would need a guarantee from the Finnish government that it would be granted the power to levy taxes on the islands if the Ålandic Government would express its desire to do so.²⁷⁵ The Åland Government also noted that it required satisfactory participation within the decision-making structures of the European Union and influence on EU policy making at the national level.²⁷⁶ A separate Member of the European Parliament was specifically singled out as vital for the region. These two political goals would be constitutive of the debates which were to follow.

The Regional Government then decided to hold an advisory referendum on Åland in addition to the state-wide referendum on 16 October 1994. Only holders of the Regional Citizenship would be allowed to vote, and it would be held sometime after the results of the Swedish and Finnish referendums were clear.²⁷⁷ However, this was not an entirely uncontroversial decision, the proposition passed with 22 votes in favour and 7 votes against. The strongest opposition came from the Social Democrats who noted that a decision that required a qualified majority should not be submitted to a basic majority among the voters and that neither Finland nor Åland did not have a tradition of using the referendum as a tool for public policy.²⁷⁸ In addition to 4 Social Democratic votes, 2 MP’s from the Centre Party and 1 MP from the conservative FS voted against the proposal²⁷⁹. As the Autonomy Act did not regulate the use of referendums on Åland the proposal had to be brought to the Supreme Court of Finland which later decided that the Regional Parliament had not exceeded its legislative authority by proposing the referendum.²⁸⁰

²⁷² Hayes 2017, p.64

²⁷³ Fagerlund 1997, p.191.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ According to the Autonomy Act of 1991, most forms of taxation belong exclusively to the Finnish State.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ålands Tidningen, 16 June 1994

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Ålandstidningen, 9 September 1994.

The Finnish membership treaty was confirmed by the EU member states on 24 June 1994 and the final stretch of the EU saga had been reached. It must also be noted that while the membership agreement was prepared Finland requested further financial support for the agricultural sector and for regional support to mitigate the immediate effects of access to the common market and increased competition from produces from other member states.²⁸¹ These negotiations would also play a role in the Ålandic debate, especially from the perspective from the Centre Party which as an agrarian party has put special emphasis on the importance of this support for farmers on Åland.

Right after the decision to hold a separate advisory referendum on Åland the parliament went into summer recess which meant that the next Government communication to the Regional Parliament would be in September.

During the summer season on 19 August 1994, the newspaper *Nya Åland* had published an investigation of the positions held by the MP's on the topic of membership in the European Union.²⁸² According to the answers given by the individual MP's²⁸³: the main point of contentions were the MEP question, taxation, agricultural policy and the lack of an alternative to EU membership.²⁸⁴

In terms of individual parties, the largest party in the chamber and the governing party, the **Centre Party**, was the most split among their MP's. 6 of their 10 MP's refused to take a clear position on deciding on EU membership, 2 said they would vote against membership under certain conditions²⁸⁵, 1 said he would vote No for Finland's part and Yes for Åland due to the need for EU agricultural support and 1 stated that he had already decided in favour of membership during the EEA process.

The **Liberals** (7 MPs), were more positive albeit with certain reservations, 3 MPs stated that they would vote in favour and 4 maintaining positivity with reservations.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Hayes, 2017, pp. 66-74.

²⁸² Ålandstidningen, 19 August 1994

²⁸³ Only Jan Lillehage from the Unaligned Coalition could not be reached for comments, but he can be safely considered in the No camp alongside the other MP's of the party. He voted no to membership in the final vote on 2 December 1994.

²⁸⁴ *Nya Åland*, 19 August 1994

²⁸⁵ One MP stated the refusal of Finland to grant Åland taxation authority would be a reason to vote no and another stated that a rejection of membership in the Finnish and Swedish referendums would cause him to vote no. see *Nya Åland*, 19 August 1994

²⁸⁶ Such as the decisions of Finland and Sweden, improvements on the membership agreement, yes for Finland but unsure about the specific conditions for Åland see *Nya Åland*, 19 August 1994

The conservative **Frisinad Samverkan (FS)**²⁸⁷ (6 MPs), were split but with a clearly positive leaning majority, 4 MPs stated that they were positive towards the European Union, 1 was not sure about his position and 1 maintained a no.²⁸⁸

The **Social Democrats** (4 MPs) had all positive answers towards a membership.²⁸⁹

Finally, the **Unaligned Coalition** (3 MPs) were all negative towards membership.²⁹⁰

Based on the replies of the MPs it can be stated that the EU membership was considerably controversial both between and within political parties. This is notable as the interviews were conducted after the permanent derogations granted in the Åland Protocol.

Before the reconvening of the Regional Parliament, the committee²⁹¹ set for the exploration of the potential transfer of taxation authority for Åland in 1992 came out with its final report on 25 August 1994. The report considered that taking over of taxation powers by Åland would expose the local economy to cyclical economic distress and that it could lead to Åland becoming a tax paradise. The two Ålandic representatives on the committee stated their reservation towards the decision and their indignation toward the usage of the term “tax paradise”.²⁹²

The Regional Government sent their fourth message to the Regional Parliament on 7 September 1994 which also refused to take a position on membership and preconditioned the consent of the Regional Parliament for a membership to a promise regarding the overtaking of all taxation authority and a seat in the European Parliament. Furthermore, the ongoing negotiations between Finland and the EU regarding regional policy and agricultural support were noted as an unresolved issue. In conclusion the Regional Government stated that it would send its fifth and final message in November.²⁹³

During this week, the Finnish Supreme Court sent its decision on whether or not the Regional Government had exceeded its authority by preparing legislation on organizing a separate referendum on the island. The court considered that the Regional Parliament had not exceeded its authority according to the Autonomy Act. Following this decision the President also sent his

²⁸⁷ The name of the party roughly corresponds to “Freeminded Cooperation” but for the sake of convenience and common usage in the source material FS will be preferred.

²⁸⁸ Nya Åland, 19 August 1994

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Olssons Comittee

²⁹² Ålandstidningen 25 August 1994

²⁹³ Ålandstidningen 7 September 1994

approval of the regional law which ensured that Åland would vote on the 20 November.²⁹⁴ The date was a deliberate choice on the Regional Government's side to ensure the Ålandic decision would be made after the result of the Swedish referendum on membership would be clear.²⁹⁵

The Regional Parliament then set the first debate about the Regional Government's message on the date 14 September 1994 which began the first of the seven debates on EU membership in the Åland Parliament.

5. The EU Debates and the Referendum Process.

This section will provide a chronology of the debates from the closing session of the Regional Parliament in September 1994 to the final decision on membership on 2 December 1994. It will begin with a presentation of the first three debates that took place on 14 September, 21 September and 26 September. These are the debates that took place before the vote and were a part of the closing session of the 1993-1994 Regional Parliament term. Then, a separate section will be given to the reactions toward the vote to incorporate the Ålandic reaction to the results on Åland and Finland on 16 October. This is to provide a chronology of the political process and to contextualise the debates that took place afterwards. The debates after opening of the new session of the Regional Parliament on 1 November will be presented in a subchapter each. These took place on 11 November, 17 November, 28 November and 2 December.

5.1 The First Debate Before the Finnish Referendum (14.09)



Figure 10: Headline regarding the first EU debate. “Brussels more generous towards us than Helsinki”²⁹⁶

The first debate took place on 14 September 1994 and was discussion of the government report of the consequences of the EU membership for Åland and potentials alternatives to membership. It

²⁹⁴ Nya Åland 10 September 1994

²⁹⁵ The Swedish referendum took place on 13 November 1994.

²⁹⁶ Ålandstidningen 14 September 1994.

was stressed by the Premier that the alternatives were hypothetical scenarios that would require further negotiation processes which could not be foreseen at the time. The parties appear to have similar positions to their answers to *Nya Åland* a month earlier.²⁹⁷

The **Centre Party** group which also led the Government coalition remained somewhat ambiguous towards the prospect of EU membership. The Party Leader and Premier Erlandsson claimed that during the EU process Brussels had been “more generous” than Helsinki in terms of accepting Ålandic demands and that a non-membership scenario could create increased dependency towards Helsinki which was not a desirable situation. He stated that a separate MEP for Åland alongside a promise from Helsinki to expand taxation powers for the region were “threshold questions” in order to “maintain a positive outlook towards EU membership”. He stressed that the transfer of Legislative authority toward the EU organs gave the demand for a separate MEP legitimation.²⁹⁸ Agriculture Minister Anders Eriksson emphasized that the EU’s Regional and Agricultural was the only way to “get money back” from the membership fee.²⁹⁹ Göran Bengtz, the parliamentary group leader also repeated the “threshold questions” and also expressed confidence that the EU would be able to accommodate a situation where Åland remained outside.³⁰⁰ Christer Jansson, MP expressed his displeasure of transferring legislative competences to the EU without getting compensation in return (i.e an MEP) and his fear of “Finnisation” in a scenario in which Sweden did join the union as the status of Swedish as an official language of the EU would be in doubt in that scenario.³⁰¹

The **Liberals** were represented by party leader Olof Erland and Folke Sjölund. They conditioned that the decision on EU membership for Åland was dependent on the actions of Finland and Sweden and maintained a positive outlook on membership in this case. They stressed the importance of the four freedoms of the EU for the Ålandic economy and that access to the EU markets would allow Åland to maintain a competitive trade policy. They maintained that a separate MEP for Åland was a justified demand. However, the Liberals were not convinced of increased taxation powers to Åland and stated that this was a matter between Åland and Finland. They also stressed the principles of the European peace process and the benefits of international cooperation as the backbone of European Integration. Erland also advocated a decentralised Nordic Union based on the EEA agreement in the scenario as an alternative to EU membership.³⁰²

²⁹⁷ See section 4.

²⁹⁸ Ålands Lagting, 14 September 1994, pp. 43-45.

²⁹⁹ *Id.* pp. 45-48.

³⁰⁰ *Id.* pp. 48-50.

³⁰¹ *Id.* pp. 78-82.

³⁰² *Id.* pp. 50-54 and pp. 85-88.

The conservative **FS** was represented by K-G Eriksson, Max Siren, May Flodin and Harry Eriksson. The majority of the group spoke of the EU on economic terms and stressed the benefits of EU membership through the “four freedoms”. K-G Eriksson and Siren insisted that increased taxation powers for the region and a separate MEP were justified on the subsidiarity principle in the EU and Finland’s promise to expand Ålandic autonomy from the first autonomy act in 1920.³⁰³ Harry Eriksson broke the party line by arguing that the transfer of legislative authority to a supranational authority was unacceptable in any situation and that the common market posed a threat to the local economy due to increased competition.³⁰⁴ May Flodin also addressed the EU from a gender perspective, agreeing with the Social Democrat Sundback that the EU’s equality directives were better than the legal arrangements in the Nordic countries although the de facto situation was better in the Nordic region. Flodin did also state that there were cultural differences between the “Catholic model” of housework for women as opposed to the “Lutheran model” which stressed the need for women to be more active in the job market but that the EU itself was not a hinder for women’s rights.³⁰⁵

The only **Social Democrat** to speak in this session was Barbro Sundback who stressed the peace element of the European integration process and the benefits of a borderless Europe. Sundback also mentioned the economic benefits of the common market and the recognition of the defence mechanisms in the Åland protocol regarding the regional citizenship. Sunback emphasised that a non-membership scenario would cause economic difficulties for attracting investment and maintain welfare levels on Åland as the EEA agreement would no longer be valid. She criticised the members of parliament who “laid their souls” into obtaining taxation saying that there was no inherent connection with the EU process and increasing taxation authority. Sundback also viewed the EU’s gender equality directives and increased contacts outside of Åland as beneficial to Åland. She responded to Erland’s Nordic Union idea as unrealistic due to foreign policy differences between the Nordic countries.³⁰⁶

The final group was the **Unaligned Coalition** represented by Bengt Häger who opposed EU membership on the grounds of his and his party’s opposition towards transferring authority to a supranational organisation. Häger insisted that a special free trade agreement or some form of customs union would be a more suitable solution for Åland’s relation to the EU.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Id. pp. 63-68 and pp. 91-94.

³⁰⁴ Id. pp. 94-96.

³⁰⁵ Id. pp. 104-107.

³⁰⁶ Id. pp.69-73 and 96-99.

³⁰⁷ Id. pp. 76-77.

5.2. The Second Debate Before the Finnish Referendum (21.09)

This debate took place on 21 September 1994 and was a continuation of the first debate which discussed the consequences of membership or non-membership for Åland. The positioning of the parties were the same as the previous session, the Centre Party stressed the threshold questions, the Liberals maintained an ideologically positive attitude towards EU membership and the Social Democrats stressed that EU membership would not endanger the rights of workers.

The **Liberals** were represented by Gunnevi Nordman, Edgar Abrahamsson and Gunnar Jansson. Nordman's speech was a response to the previous debate's theme on gender equality and the EU. She agreed with Sundback and Flodin on the fact that the EU's equality directives were superior to the legislation in the Nordic region.³⁰⁸ Abrahamsson criticised the Centre Party and the Regional Government on not being able to negotiate a satisfactory deal on agriculture support and regional policy. He also accused them of using "political jargon" on "threshold question" and demanded that the Regional Government clarify if the MEP and taxation issues were actually preconditions for an Ålandic Yes to the EU.³⁰⁹ Gunnar Jansson likened the choice between membership and non-membership as a "choice between a Volkswagen and a Wartburg" the implication being that choosing the west (i.e. membership) is better than the east (i.e. non-membership).³¹⁰

The **Centre Party** was represented by Olof Salmen, Tage Boman, Sture Gustafsson and Christer Janson. Salmen insisted that the MEP and taxation issues needed to be resolved by the time to decide on EU membership and blamed Helsinki for "wanting to control the Ålandic economy". Salmen also insisted that the Åland Protocol was evidence that Brussel would be supportive of Åland expanding its taxation authority and that Finland should be ready to negotiate a non-membership scenario for Åland should it be required.³¹¹ Tage Boman stated that he was overwhelmingly negative towards EU membership and repeated the party line on the "threshold questions".³¹² Sture Gustafsson expressed his anxiety regarding agricultural policy and increased competition within the EU.³¹³ Christer Jansson stated that he was positively inclined towards the EU but nevertheless expressed his worry of lowering life standards as a result of EU membership

³⁰⁸ Ålands Lagting, 21 September 1994, pp. 134-137.

³⁰⁹ *Id.* pp. 145-147.

³¹⁰ *Id.* pp. 155-160.

³¹¹ *Id.* pp. 140-142.

³¹² *Id.* pp. 144-145.

³¹³ *Id.* pp. 154-155.

and that obtaining the authority for indirect taxation could help combat the difficulties in trading that could arise as a result of the tax border that was included in the Åland Protocol.³¹⁴

The **Social Democrats** were represented by Britt Marie Lund, who stated the fears of privatisation and the reduction of the public sector was overdriven and there was no need of fear of losing the achieved social benefits or the collective agreements as a result of EU membership. She concluded by stating that the purpose of the EU was to establish peace, democracy and increase solidarity between the member states.³¹⁵

5.3 Third Debate Before the Finnish Referendum (26.09)

This debate was final one before the vote on 16 October. It was also a continuation of the first two debates and the discussion revolved around the potential consequences of the referendum.

The **Centre Party** participated with Premier Erlandsson, Christer Jansson, Göran Bengtz and Anders Eklund. The Premier's speech focused on the international status of Åland. He stated that there was a significant difference of interpretation of the phrase "in consideration to the special status the Åland islands enjoy under international laws" between themselves and the Finnish authorities. Erlandsson stated that without this status the EU would hardly grant the derogations found in the Åland Protocol. For Åland he clarified that this international status consisted of three pillars which could not be separated from one another. Erlandsson explained that these were: Åland's constitutional status, the autonomy arrangement, and the demilitarised and neutralised status of the islands. He stated that the Finnish side refrained from any mention on demilitarisation and insisted that the preamble only referred to the autonomy arrangement. The premier stated that he could not understand this attitude from Finland and claimed that the "Åland example" should be promoted as a peaceful solution towards minority conflicts.³¹⁶

Christer Jansson's speech agreed with the Premier on Åland's international status and focused on the realisation of the tax exemption. Jansson stated that if Finland insisted on integrating Åland into its tax region despite the derogation Åland could turn to certain EU institutions such as the European Court of Justice and the European Commission to realise this. He took a different approach from the majority of his party on the MEP issue by stating that it was not an essential matter and representation could be achieved through other means such as the Committee of

³¹⁴ Id. pp. 151-153.

³¹⁵ Id. p. 161.

³¹⁶ Ålands Lagting, 26 September 1994, pp. 248-250.

Regions. He also stressed the importance of the Finnish and Swedish referendum results for the Ålandic decision on EU membership.³¹⁷ Göran Bengtz expressed his deep concern for the future of the agricultural section in an EU membership and stated he would vote No in the first referendum on 16 October.³¹⁸ Anders Eklund criticised the EU's agricultural policy which he stated was the reason he would also vote no in the referendum on 16 October.³¹⁹

The **Liberals** were represented by party leader Olof Erland and Gunnar Jansson. Erland repeated the Liberal position of “if Sweden and Finland were to join the EU, so should Åland” and mentioned the benefits of the EU from the perspectives of peace, economy, democracy, and welfare. He insisted that a separate MEP for Åland would mark Åland's international status and would provide a useful political platform in the EU. He also stated that an exclusion scenario would cause uncertainty for Åland.³²⁰ Gunnar Jansson's speech revolved around an emphasis on the economic benefits of EU membership that would allow Åland to maintain its welfare levels. He nevertheless stated some concern toward the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy in the EU.³²¹

The **Unaligned Coalition** participated with Bengt Häger and Bart Häggblom. Bengt Häger criticised Finland for not demanding opt-outs like Denmark did. He expressed his disappointment with EU regulations on agriculture, tax harmonisation and claimed that in practice the subsidiarity principle would end up being synonymous with subordination. Häger concluded by refer to the Faroes precedent which got a 3-year transition period with association with the EU before deciding on membership.³²² Häggblom gave a similarly EU critical speech, constructing an EU that was incompatible with the autonomy arrangement and governed by unaccountable bureaucrats. He stated that once a member, it would be practically impossible to the leave the EU unlike in the EEA arrangement. He also invoked the Faroese precedent and also claimed that demilitarisation of Åland had not been recognized since Finland had not asked for a derogation like Denmark. He stated that the EU only wanted the Nordics in to become net payers to the budget and complained about the lack of the “principle of public access to official records”³²³ in the EU.³²⁴

³¹⁷ Id. pp. 251-255.

³¹⁸ Id. pp. 277-280.

³¹⁹ Id. pp. 284-286.

³²⁰ Id. pp. 286-288.

³²¹ Id. pp. 264-268.

³²² Id. pp. 261-263.

³²³ Offentlighetsprincipen in Swedish.

³²⁴ Id. pp. 270-272.

5.4 Reactions to the Results of the Finnish Referendum on 16 October 1994

By the end of the month of September 1994, some of the parliamentary parties began discussing their final officials' positions toward the referendum. In the meanwhile, the Regional Government visited the Finnish parliamentary party groups with the intention of convincing them to allocate Åland a separate MEP.³²⁵

The Social Democrats held a meeting on the referendum on 26 September 1994 which resulted in a “clear majority in favour of membership” according to party leader Pekka Tuominen despite some opposing voices and no actual vote on the issue.³²⁶

The conservative FS held its own meeting in the same week and recommended its members to vote Yes in the referendum on 16 October.³²⁷

A week later the Liberals also recommended a Yes in the vote.³²⁸

The Centre Party and the Unaligned Coalition did not formally take a position towards the referendum on 16 October.³²⁹

The “convincing round” with the parties represented in the in Helsinki for a separate MEP for Åland ended in failure “despite Åland’s constitutional right to a MEP” according to the Premier on 6 October 1994.³³⁰ With this failed round of negotiations it appears that despite the declaration of an Ålandic MEP and the overtaking of taxation authority as “basic preconditions” for maintain a positive attitude towards EU membership, these preconditions had not been met, at least in the context of the Finnish referendum.

³²⁵ Åland Tidningen 28 September 1994

³²⁶ Nya Åland 27 September 1994

³²⁷ Ålandstidningen 30 September 1994

³²⁸ Nya Åland 4 October 1994.

³²⁹ Nya Åland 14 October 1994

³³⁰ Nya Åland 8 October 1994

Så röstade ålänningarna



Figure 11: The results on Åland in relation to Finland³³¹

The results on the evening of 16 October 1994 painted a markable different picture than on the Finnish mainland. Of the 18 752 registered voters, 11 483 voted which would mean a participation rate of 61,2 percent. The Yes votes totalled at 6.041 (**51.9 percent**) while the No votes gathered 5.608 (**48.1 percent**). The difference was remarkable lower than in Finland as whole where the Yes side enjoyed a much more comfortable majority (57 percent to 43).³³²

Another interesting element of the results was a clear Urban-Rural divide on the Åland Islands; of the 16 municipalities only two of them maintained a Yes majority, namely Mariehamn³³³(with 63,7 percent in favour) and Lemland³³⁴(50,9 percent in favour).³³⁵ Considering the slim majority in Lemland, it would not be farfetched to claim that Mariehamn was the only district in Åland with any notable enthusiasm towards the prospects of EU membership.

Premier Erlandsson stated to Ålandstidningen that he was surprised at the results and was expecting a triumph from the No side. He stated that he was expecting a larger Yes in the second referendum considering that the Producers Union³³⁶ were now recommending a Yes. He maintained that the insecurities regarding the future were still higher if Åland chose to remain outside the EU.

³³¹ Ålandstidningen 17 October 1994

³³² ÅSUB 1994.

³³³ The capital of the Åland Islands and its only town.

³³⁴ The district immediately to the south of Mariehamn

³³⁵ ÅSUB 1994

³³⁶ Producentförbundet in Swedish, influential organisation in the agricultural sector on Åland. Has a close relationship with the Center Party. It recommended a No in the first vote.

Erlandsson also stated that the influence in EU policy and taxation questions must be resolved before a Yes in the second referendum could be obtained. He stated that: “A massive Ålandic No due to a stepmotherly government would be harmful for Finland’s reputation. Finland wins internationally by following the spirit and intention of autonomy”. He also felt the need to state his disappointment at how the Nordic region “hopped on the EU train” and that it would have been better to have waited some years to see how the Maastrich treaty functioned in practice and have more time to reach a higher level of national unity.³³⁷

The Speaker of the Regional Parliament, Roger Jansson³³⁸ stated that he was satisfied with the results of the referendum and that the results were good for country from an economic and defence policy perspective. He stated that the Ålandic debate had been notably more negative than the Finnish on grounds of the unresolved issues and influences from the Swedish debate. Jansson also said that so far there had not been a clear “Yes movement” on Åland and that “it was up to Helsinki to decide” when it was going to begin. Jansson stated that he was for membership on the condition that “Åland gets what belongs to Åland and that the autonomy does not get devalued by the state”.³³⁹

The MP for Åland in the Finnish Parliament Gunnar Jansson, noted his concern over the urban-rural divide on the EU issue both in the region and the state as a whole.³⁴⁰ Two other Liberal MP’s were also available for comment at the evening of the results Sune Erikson and Olof Erland, leader of the party.

Eriksson stated that the turnout in the referendum was a sign of voter interest towards the EU. He theorized that Lemland’s Yes depended on its proportion of commuters³⁴¹ which was higher than the farmers in the district. He stated that he did not believe that the second referendum would be much different than this one and noted that Finland as a sovereign state had taken a decision without looking towards Sweden.³⁴²

Erland also stated that the bare majority in favour of membership pointed towards a deep division among the voters, especially between urban and rural regions. He also noted that all parties had Yes and No flanks. He argued that the bare majority increased the importance of the second referendum and that it was important to get a clear Yes result from it. Erland stated that with Finnish

³³⁷ Ålandstidningen 17 October 1994.

³³⁸ Member of the Conservative FS

³³⁹ Ålandstidningen 17 October 1994

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ To Mariehamn

³⁴² Ålandstidningen 17 October 1994.

membership the EEA agreement was now invalid and that a Nordic union outside the EU was also no longer realistic. He concluded by stating the importance of maintaining scattered settlements and a living countryside and archipelago in the EU.³⁴³

Parallel to the referendum process, the so-called Jääskinen Committee, set up under the leadership of legal expert Niilo Jääskinen gave its report to the Ministry of Justice on the inclusion of Ålandic representatives on EU policy at the state level.³⁴⁴ The result was unanimous agreement to amend the Autonomy Act to ensure Ålands participation in certain areas of EU policy making. These were:

-One of Finland's seats in the Committee of Regions

-Input of Åland's representative when the national position on EU policy is being formulated at the Parliament should the subject be considered within Åland's authority or be considered of importance by the Regional Government

-A permanent representative at the Finnish delegation in Brussels.

-Granting the MP for Åland in the Parliament permanent access to the meetings of the Grand Committee³⁴⁵

The changes were met with great enthusiasm on the side of the Åland Government but the remaining "threshold questions" namely representation in the European Parliament and increased taxation authority to the region would still remain high on the agenda going forward.

The most dramatic example of this was a speech given by the Speaker of Parliament, Roger Jansson in which he stated that by withholding a MEP from Åland, Finland was on its way towards a "constitutional crisis" if the state attempted to "downgrade the autonomy". He stressed that the Åland parliament had also transferred a share of its legislative authority to the EU and hence required compensation. Jansson also included the possibility of Åland to seek external help *visa vie* the states which were involved in the 1921 resolution³⁴⁶ United Nations which "according to certain interpretations, could be considered the successor of the League of Nations".³⁴⁷

Developments regarding the application of the Tax exemption provisions were also quite discouraging, at least from the perspective of Ålandic politicians. The economic-political committee

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. See Jääskinen 2005 for his own analysis of the matter.

³⁴⁶ Although he doesn't specify, this likely refers to the October 1921 agreement in which the Neutralisation treaty was signed by a number of states. See section 3

³⁴⁷ Ålandstidningen 21 October 1994

of the Finnish Government stated that a tax border between Åland and Finland was not possible to achieve at the entrance to the European Union and that border practicalities should be avoided.³⁴⁸

Both the Regional Government and MP for Åland, Gunnar Jansson stated their frustration with the decision and the later also state that going to the European Court of Justice was an option.³⁴⁹

In this context Ålandstidningen interviewed 29 of the 30 legislators³⁵⁰ in the Regional Parliament on which way they would vote if they had to in the current situation.³⁵¹ The results were as follows;

Out of the 10 **Centre Party** MPs 4 were unclear, 3 were against and 3 were in favour.

Out of the 7 **Liberal** MPs, 1 was unclear³⁵² and 6 were in favour.

Out of the 6 **FS** MPs. 2 were unclear, 1 was against and 3 were in favour

Out of the 4 **Social Democratic** MPs, 1 was unclear³⁵³ and 3 were in favour

Out of the 4 **Unaligned Coalition** MPs, all 4 were against.

From these results it can be concluded that 17 MPs were ready to vote Yes, 7 were not and 6 were unclear. While this fell short of the 2/3 requirement (i.e. 20 MPs) to take the decision to join the EU, it seemed that the referendum results had pushed a certain number of MPs towards accepting membership. Most notable was that the Centre Party remained quite divided in its orientation towards the EU.

The new regional parliamentary term was opened on 1 November 1994, Roger Jansson from FS was re-elected speaker of parliament and gave a speech on the topic of EU membership. He noted that the EU issue was simply “too large to achieve unity on” and that despite certain uncertainties regarding taxation, “sufficient representation” (i.e. a separate MEP) and “clarity” regarding demilitarisation there seemed to be “positive interpretations” regarding the these issues in the (Finnish) Parliament even if the Finnish Government was not expressing it. Jansson also stated that “After 77 years Finland should have the confidence to accept that its sovereignty over Åland will remain strongly limited.” He urged for a Yes vote in the referendum and claimed that a No option

³⁴⁸ Ålandstidningen 25 October 1994

³⁴⁹ Ålandstidningen 26 October 1994

³⁵⁰ 28 of them were interviewed on 26 October and 1 was interviewed the day after. Bengt Häger was unavailable but as the head of the Utanföör EU (Outside EU) movement it will be assumed that he is a No vote.

³⁵¹ Ålandstidningen 27 October 1994, 28 October 1994.

³⁵² It was Gunnar Jansson who said we would wait for the referendum results. Based on his previous argumentation in favour it will be assumed that he would be a Yes vote.

³⁵³ Party leader Pekka Tuominen stated that the “question was hypothetical” and that he didn’t need to go into the question. However, he will be assumed to be a Yes vote on grounds of his previous positive statements on the EU. Ålandstidningen 27 October 1994

could lead to greater dependency to decisions taken in Finland which he considered undesirable for the autonomy of Åland.³⁵⁴

The Regional Government sent its final message to the Regional Parliament on 8 November 1994 in which it officially recommended the voters to vote Yes. The Regional Government had clearly admitted that it could not achieve a separate MEP for Åland even though it was satisfied at the level of participation at other levels. It also mentioned that it was of “definite opinion” that the easing of tax formalities as a result of Åland’s exclusion from the tax harmonisation should be applied not only to trade between Åland and Finland but also for trade with the other EU member-states. The Regional Government urged the Finnish Government to set a committee to change the Autonomy Act in order for Åland to receive authority in the field of company tax and indirect taxation which should also propose a time table for the whole transfer of taxation authority to the region. The Regional Government also stated that a special agreement with the EU would be needed if the “outside track” was selected and that they had contacted the Finnish delegation at the EU to inquire if Finland was prepared to negotiate one. Finally, on the topic of Åland leaving the EU, the Regional Government stated that the Ministry of Justice had stated that it was technically possible, provided that all the member states would consent to it. The Regional Government promised to “take measures” towards the unresolved issues before the referendum, which was only 12 days away.³⁵⁵

5.5 Debate Before the Swedish Referendum (11.11)

This debate took place after the fifth message on the EU by the Regional Government was sent on 8 November 1994. The Regional Government finally took a position and recommended a Yes in the second referendum that would take place the week after.

The **Centre Party** was represented by the Premier and Christer Jansson. The Premier Erlandsson began his speech by noting the change in paradigm in relation to the previous debates in that now the question was not about whether to join but rather on which conditions will Åland and Finland join the EU. He largely repeated the contents of the message sent on 8 November and concluded his speech by stating that a Yes would result in an orderly future while a No would cause uncertainty.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ Ålandstidningen 1 November 1994

³⁵⁵ Ålandstidningen 8 November 1994 and Nya Åland 10 November 1994.

³⁵⁶ Ålands Lagting, 11 November 1994, pp. 22-26.

Christer Jansson held a speech on the application of tax exemption granted in the Åland Protocol. He stated that the signals from Brussels were quite positive regarding formalities of the tax border however the Finnish side appeared to have more negative understanding of this.³⁵⁷

The **Liberals** participated with Folke Sjölund.

Sjölund stated that while the EU was no paradise, the alternative was much worse. He reminded that the EEA agreement would no longer apply at the turn of the year and that Åland did not have an alternative in place. He claimed that the Regional Government's insistence on the taxation issue³⁵⁸ was a stillborn attempt and that they should have focused on the realisation of the tax exemption status instead.³⁵⁹

The conservative **FS** joined with K-G Eriksson, Max Siren, May Flodin and Harry Eriksson.

K-G Eriksson recommended a Yes justified on their agreement with the Regional Government's message and also stated his belief that the MEP issue and increasing the taxation authority would be resolved "positively".³⁶⁰ However, Harry Eriksson maintained his sceptical stance on the EU claiming that there was a significant lack of information among the voters and expressed worry for the depopulation of the archipelago and countryside on Åland.³⁶¹ May Flodin was ambiguous on the final vote and Max Siren spoken in favour of a yes vote. Siren also stated that he would do so even if Sweden voted against membership. Flodin stressed that the results of the second referendum on Åland would be morally binding despite it being an advisory referendum. She also expressed her scepticism towards lobbying in Brussel.³⁶² Max Siren struck a slightly more positive tone stated that he believed that the EU was an organisation that was built for keeping peace, restoring the environment, and securing prosperity.³⁶³

The **Social Democrats** had Barbro Sundback and party leader Pekka Tuominen as participants.

Barbro Sundback reminded that she had previous stated that the MEP and taxation authority questions would not have been solved by membership, and that this had proven to be the case. She stated her belief that Ålandic membership in the EU would increase the room for negotiation in

³⁵⁷ Id. pp. 28-31.

³⁵⁸ Meaning the attempt to increase Åland's tax authority by labeling it a "threshold question".

³⁵⁹ Id. pp. 33-34.

³⁶⁰ Id. pp.39-40.

³⁶¹ Id. p. 57.

³⁶² Id. pp. 62-63.

³⁶³ Id. pp. 39-40.

several fields and that Åland's influence at the state level would also increase compared to the current situation.³⁶⁴

The leader of the party Pekka Tuominen stated that throughout this process, demilitarisation and restrictions regarding land acquisition were the two main points of concern for the party and both had been dealt with in a satisfactory manner. He claimed that the current state of affairs justified the Social Democratic scepticism towards a separate referendum and sent his thanks to the MPs that had supported their proposal in June. He concluded by stating that the party would not issue a recommendation for how to vote in the referendum but that "It is important to go out and vote".³⁶⁵

Bengt Häger from the **Unaligned Coalition** stated his displeasure with the Regional Government's inability to provide a real alternative to EU membership. He also claimed that: "I heard in the countryside that they say they feel misplaced to sing the line 'the freedom of inheritance we carry'³⁶⁶ in the Song of the Ålander". Häger stated that with EU membership Åland would practically surrender all of its decision-making power.³⁶⁷



Figure 12: Headline regarding the results of the Swedish Referendum on 13 November 1994³⁶⁸³⁶⁹

The Swedish referendum took place on 13 November 1994 and resulted in a slim majority (52.2) in favour of membership.³⁷⁰ This meant now that Åland's referendum and the consequent decision on

³⁶⁴ Id. pp.41-44.

³⁶⁵ Id. pp. 58-60.

³⁶⁶ "Frihetens arvsrätt vi bära" in Swedish, a line from the national anthem of Åland adopted in 1922.

³⁶⁷ Id. pp. 45-48.

³⁶⁸ Nya Åland 15 November 1994. Translates to "Åland took a step towards the EU"

³⁶⁹ Ålandstidningen's headline on 14 November was "Sverige banar Ålands EU-väg" (Sweden paves Åland's EU path). Interestingly both newspapers presumed that the Swedish results would have direct effect on Åland's behaviour on the matter.

³⁷⁰ Ålandstidningen 14 November 1994.

EU membership would be taken in the knowledge that both of its immediate neighbours would join the union.

5.6 Debate Before the Ålandic Referendum (17.11)

The last debate before the separate referendum on Åland took place on 17 November 1994.

The **Centre Party** participated in this debate with Göran Bengtz and Christer Jansson.

The debate began with a group speech from Göran Bengtz. He stated that although Sweden's Yes vote made it easier for Åland to join, there were still problems regarding the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy within the EU he declared that "farmers are serfs in the EU". He also said that he would personally vote No despite his belief that the Yes side would win the final vote. Bengtz stated the Centre Party would not have an official position towards membership neither at the referendum or during the final parliamentary vote on 2 December. On the two former "threshold questions" (i.e. the MEP and increased taxation authority) he stated that a separate MEP for Åland should be pursued "with thought about the autonomy our forefathers gave us to administer"³⁷¹ and that the demand was based on the fact that every legislative organ in the EU had been compensated for their transfer of authority to EU organs. He also expressed his confidence that the EU would be helpful for Åland to achieve greater taxation powers with consideration on their acceptance of the tax exemption, something which the Finnish authorities had not been as accepting of. Despite not being in favour of EU membership he still recognized that Brussels were more willing to acknowledge Åland demilitarised status than Finland was willing to.³⁷²

Christer Jansson gave a speech which departed from his party line (or rather lack thereof) in which he stated that, despite the ongoing issues with the tax exemption, he was personally in favour of membership. He qualified this statement by claiming that EU membership was "the most important development in terms of nationality protection since Åland was separated from the Swedish realm in 1809", that it was "important to maintain the same trade relations with Sweden as with Finland" and that this aspect was crucial in maintaining Åland as a monolingual Swedish speaking province was going forward.³⁷³

The **Liberals** participated with leader Olof Erland and Gunnar Jansson.

³⁷¹ This an interesting reinterpretation of history considering the original attitude towards the autonomy arrangement by the Sundblom leadership see section 3.

³⁷² Ålands Lagting, 17 November 1994, pp. 65-70.

³⁷³ Id. pp. 91-93

Olof Erland began his speech by claiming that Åland was now in the “third important epoch” in the history of autonomy. He stated that the first stage was the birth of autonomy, the second stage was participation in Nordic cooperation process and the third stage was the European integration process since 1989. He reminded the Helsinki-critical voices that Åland had got it’s said during this process and perhaps the persistence of “ill will and ignorance” towards Åland from Finland was of Ålands own doing. He summarized the Liberal position as “Voting Yes even if the price is high”. On the MEP issue he stated that the argument base on the transfer of legislative powers were insufficient and the real legitimisation of a separate MEP came from the fact that the Ålanders were a separate people with a separate party system. He stated that they were not interested in one of Finland’s MEP’s but rather a separate MEP for Åland it. Erland concluded by hoping for a Yes and a large turnout in the referendum on Sunday.³⁷⁴

Gunnar Jansson gave a colourful and long speech on the benefits of EU membership, he especially stressed that the difference between internal and foreign affairs within the union would be blurred which would give Åland an opportunity to express its own viewpoints and demilitarisation. Jansson stated that this blurring of the internal and external in the EU would “dramatically increase” the foreign policy capabilities of Åland because foreign policy will not be subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or that it would not function at all, as in the Nordic Council.³⁷⁵

The **Unaligned** were represented in this session with Bert Häggblom. Bert Häggblom held a speech in which he insisted that the insecurities of EU membership are still higher than remaining outside. He expressed his concern for the whole population of Åland especially the farmers, the fishers and the rural communities. He stated his belief that due to increased urbanisation, “Åland will have a large head but no body” with Mariehamn being the dominant region while the countryside and archipelago consistently depopulate. Häggblom also insisted that the alternative to EU membership could be found in continued association with the EEA provided that the EU and Finland could agree on it.³⁷⁶

The separate referendum on Åland took place that Sunday on 20 November 1994, a week after the Swedish referendum and a week before the Norwegian referendum. The idea was to have a “domino effect” within the Nordic region to ensure that the most EU-positive country (Finland) vote first and the most EU-sceptic country (Norway) to vote last.³⁷⁷ It seems that the political

³⁷⁴ Id. pp. 75-83.

³⁷⁵ Id. pp. 95-100.

³⁷⁶ Id. pp. 107-109.

³⁷⁷ See Jahn and Storsved 1995 for more on this strategy.

leadership on Åland were aware of this strategy which accurately predicted the decreasing enthusiasm towards the EU among the east-west axis in the Nordic region³⁷⁸ but still failed to convince the Norwegian voters which ultimately voted to remain outside the union.



Figure 13: Headline regarding the Ålandic Referendum on 20 November 1994³⁷⁹

18 090 persons on Åland were registered to vote in the second referendum and of that number 8 878 persons decided to vote meaning the turnout was 49.1 percent. The total amount of Yes votes totalled at 6 456 which corresponded to **(73.6 percent)** and the No votes totalled at 2 311 **(26.4 percent)**.³⁸⁰ Despite the overwhelming proportion of Yes votes, which were a majority in every district on Åland, the significantly lower turnout can be interpreted as lack of motivation to vote

³⁷⁸ The Yes votes were 57 percent in Finland, 52.2 percent in Sweden and 47.8 percent in Norway.

³⁷⁹ Ålandstidningen 21 November 1994

³⁸⁰ ÅSUB 1994

again among the no side and the undecided. Interestingly, the number of Yes votes increased by 415 from 6 041 in the previous referendum.³⁸¹

The first immediate consequence of the referendum results was the decision of the Centre Party to vote in favour of EU membership in the final vote which was to take place on 2 December, joining the Liberals, Social Democrats and FS.³⁸² Harry Eriksson from FS still insisted against the party line that he would vote against membership and all 3 MP's from the Unaligned Coalition also maintained their positions against membership.³⁸³ This meant that the Regional Parliament now had a qualified majority (26 votes) in favour of membership which was required for the decision.

5.7 Debate After the Ålandic Referendum (28.11)

This committee report was sent to the parliament for debate and was debated over on 28 November 1994. The debate began with committee chairperson Sune Eriksson's expression of gratitude for the No-side in the referendum process for "deepening the debate" and stated that the "critical yes" result from the referendum results should not be forgotten during Åland's participation in the European Union. His speech consisted of the committee proposals for the final statement the Regional Parliament would attach to its declaration on the decision to join the EU.³⁸⁴

The **Centre Party** participated with Göran Bengts, and Christer Jansson

Göran Bengts spoke on behalf of the **Centre Party** and stated. He stated his support for the committee statement on the MEP issue as Åland had transferred some of its legislative power to the EU and should be compensated for it. Bengtz stated that it was gladdening to see that both the Yes and the No sides based their arguments in the defending and developing the base of autonomy. He ended on a positive note by stating that EU membership had the benefits of increased recognition for the autonomy arrangement, demilitarisation, and expansion of international law.³⁸⁵

Christer Jansson from the **Centre Party** expressed his concern regarding the application of the tax exemption and stated that the tax exemption could not be dealt with by unilateral legislation on Finland's side as the Åland Protocol was a part of EU primary law. He also proposed collaboration with Swedish and EU officials to ensure the enforcement of the regulation.³⁸⁶

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Nya Åland 22 November 1994

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ålands Lagting 28 November 1994, pp. 290-293

³⁸⁵ Id. pp. 293-295

³⁸⁶ Id. pp. 301-303.

The **Liberals** participated with Olof Erland

Erland stated that they would vote Yes in the vote on Friday³⁸⁷ but that it would be a “critical Yes”. He noted the difference in interpretation of demilitarisation between Åland and Finland but also claimed that the EU also wanted to avoid potential hinders for defence cooperation in the future³⁸⁸. Erland insisted that the Regional Parliament should insist on its demand for an MEP based on the idea of an “Ålandic people” as separate entity since Åland was joining the union on its own terms and not “just as Finnish citizens”. He expressed his hope that the cooperation of Nordic parliament within the framework of the EU could help introduce the “principle of public access to official records”³⁸⁹ into the EU which was “foreign” to many EU member states. Erland also proposed making Åland into a permanent meeting place for Nordic meetings on EU issues and that a congress house could be built for the occasion.³⁹⁰

From the conservative **FS** group, K-G Eriksson, Max Siren and Harry Erikson gave speeches.

K G Eriksson stated that the large majority of their group were in favour of membership, but they could not convince Harry Eriksson due to his “strong personal convictions”. He stated that it felt good that Åland was on its way to the EU with Finland and they would need to work towards solving the issues that remain.³⁹¹

From the same party Max Siren continued by stating that it was important to join the union despite the unresolved issues. He clarified by stating them as the MEP question and the application of the tax exemption.³⁹² He stated that this reluctance from the Finnish side to apply the tax exemption could result in Finland’s EU journey “beginning in court”³⁹³.³⁹⁴

A dissenting voice from the **FS** group Harry Eriksson insisted that “No true islander would accept being ruled by directive from far away” and that his No vote should be considered a protest against a lack of alternative of membership. He stated his belief that the lack of alternatives was the reason of low turnout in the second referendum and that “The disappointment among the people of the entire Nordic region will be large when the inevitable austerity packages start coming despite EU-

³⁸⁷ That is 2 December 1994

³⁸⁸ Hence the phrasing regarding “the status the Åland islands enjoy under international law” see section 3

³⁸⁹ Offentlighetsprincipen in Swedish.

³⁹⁰ Id. pp. 295-298.

³⁹¹ Id. pp. 298-300.

³⁹² The proposed law would incorporate Åland into the same tax region as mainland Finland, hence disallowing tax-free sales between Åland and Finland. See Fagerlund 1997, p.200.

³⁹³ This was a clear threat to apply to the European Court of Justice on grounds of Finland violating the Åland Protocol.

³⁹⁴ Id. pp. 300-302.

membership”. Additionally, he claimed that the treatment of animals within the EU region was “uncivilised”.³⁹⁵

Finally, another notable opponent to EU membership, Bert Häggblom from the **Unaligned Coalition** gave a speech where he expressed his regret over Åland “losing” a significant part of its authority to “another forum”. Häggblom went on to claim that the Åland Protocol could be expanded to incorporate the language of the “Sami Protocol”³⁹⁶ which clearly refers to their “exclusive rights to reindeer husbandry within the Sami territory” and that the protocol could be expanded in relation to developments regarding their “traditional means of livelihood”. He also complained about the presence of lobbyists by stating that Denmark had fewer representatives in Brussels than the Italian automobile producer Fiat. Contrary to the overall tone of his speech, he also stated that “The EU had never treated small island societies poorly, even if they chose to stay outside”³⁹⁷. He concluded by stating that Ålandic politicians were “all too eager to make EU-adjustments” that they “forgot to develop the autonomy” which he considered to be of the highest importance.³⁹⁸

On the same evening as this debate, the Norwegian voters also went to the polls to decide on EU membership. The results were 52,5 percent against membership and 47,5 percent against.



Figure 14: Headline regarding the results of the Norwegian EU Referendum³⁹⁹

Among the first to react to the Norwegian results on Åland was speaker Roger Jansson (FS) who stated that the Norway’s No would weaken the Nordic voice in the EU and this in turn make the introduction of the principles that the Nordic region wants to introduce (to the EU) “more weakly

³⁹⁵ Id. pp. 304-305.

³⁹⁶ Protocol No. 3 in the Finnish Membership Treaty see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SL/TXT/?uri=CELEX:11994N/PRO/03>

³⁹⁷ This is a clear reference to special arrangements done with Greenland, the Faroe Islands, the Isle of Man among others.

³⁹⁸ Ålands Lagting, 28 November 1994, pp. 306-307.

³⁹⁹ Ålandstidningen 29 November 1994. “The voice of the Nordic region becomes weaker in the EU”

advanced”. Jansson also stated that Nordic cooperation was “essential” to and there was a risk that Finland and Sweden joining the EU (without Norway) could weaken it.⁴⁰⁰

May Flodin, also from the same party emphasized that the Norwegians emphasized “their right to decide from themselves” and speculated that perhaps they could afford it on a different capacity than Finland or Sweden due to a better economy. She stated her belief that the Nordic passport union and the common labour market could be maintained in the EU but predicted that the Nordic Cooperation would be more focused on cultural and regional policy.⁴⁰¹

The leader of Utanför EU (Outside EU) movement and the **Unaligned Coalition**, Bengt Häger expressed his opinions on the results by stating that although it was a shame that the Nordic region was split, the Norwegians showed that “they want to stand on their own feet”.⁴⁰²

5.8 The Final Debate Before the Decision on EU-Membership (02.12)

The Regional Parliament convened on 2 December 1994 to give its final decision on EU membership. The vote was held after the referendums in the Nordic region, in which Åland voted twice in favour of membership and all parliamentary groups except one declared that they would be voting Yes. This made the final debate the shortest during this process and the final vote was less dramatic than what could be expected from the pre-first referendum debates and the split results in the first vote.

The **Unaligned Coalition** had Bengt Häger, Bart Häggblom and Jan Lillehage

The debate began with a speech from Bengt Häger, from the **Unaligned Coalition**. He began by stating that: “The decision we stand before today is certainly one of the largest that has been taken in this house and with the largest and most uncertain results for the province of Åland”. He took a comparative approach to the reactions to the recent votes on the EU in the Nordic region by claiming that after a Yes result in Finland, Nokia had decided to “move 2000-3000 jobs to Texas” and that in Sweden interest rates increased while the value of the national currency decreased. He contrasted this with the Norwegian No vote resulting in decreased interest rates and increased value of the currency. He lamented the split in the Nordic region on the EU issue. He also questioned the future of Nordic cooperation considering that “Carl Bildt goes out and wants to scrap it” Häger stated that it was “practically impossible” to leave the EU as it would require a unanimous decision

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

by the member states. He also stated that he could not understand the serving of champagne in the Regional Parliament after the decision since “it felt like salt in a wound”.⁴⁰³

Jan Lillehage gave a very short speech acknowledging his relative silence during the EU process and his worry over the potential dangers of the increased bureaucracy of the trade between Åland and Finland as a result of the application of the tax exemption. He said that he was now convinced that the tax exemption without the transferring of full taxation authority to Åland was only a disadvantage. Using colourful rhetoric, he proposed that: “...for God’s sake take away the tax exemption until we have got our own taxation authority”.⁴⁰⁴

Bert Häggblom, gave a final anti-EU speech in before the vote. He was strongly against the tax exemption granted within the Åland Protocol which he argued would create a border against Sweden which was something he could never accept. He went as far as to claim that an EU membership without the protocol would be more beneficial than a membership that was negotiated. Häggblom also insisted that “The Nordic region is something that is needed for the rest of Europe” and that the EU wanted the Nordics to strengthen the EU and “pay the bill” for keeping the weaker countries in the union. He also stated that the No side was now waiting on Spain to reject the membership applications of Austria, Finland and Sweden^{405, 406}.

Also coming from an EU critical perspective **FS**’s Harry Eriksson held a short speech in which he claimed that the main reason many were in favour of membership was to maintain the special status of Åland by a “less ugly authority”.⁴⁰⁷ He claimed that the Yes side had bluffed about there only being “one train to Brussels” in the EU process but that the Norwegian vote had called that bluff. He said that while Åland was not an independent state, he considered that “We have the same right to stand our ground”. He concluded by pleading to the MP’s to vote “according to their conscience”.⁴⁰⁸

The **Liberal** speakers in this session were once again Olof Erland and Gunnar Jansson. Olof Erland stated that EU membership will give Ålandic politics a new dimension. He mentioned that despite its small size Åland was “principally and constitutionally” a people in itself among the peoples of

⁴⁰³ Ålands Lagting, 2 December 1994. pp. 327-328.

⁴⁰⁴ Id. p. 331

⁴⁰⁵ Due to EU rules, every Member State has to approve for new members to be accepted in the union. Spain was set to vote on 28 December 1994.

⁴⁰⁶ Id, pp. 341-342.

⁴⁰⁷ I.e. the European Union in relation to the Finnish state.

⁴⁰⁸ Id. p. 330.

Europe, “The Ålandic people”. Erland stated the EU aimed for peace and cooperation and was striving for a free market to secure welfare and give individuals opportunities.⁴⁰⁹

Gunnar Jansson repeated his previous claims that the difference between domestic and foreign policy would be blurred and this would be beneficial to “strengthen the autonomy”. He also mentioned the MEP question by praising the Legal Affairs committee’s statement on ensuring the influence of Åland in the European Parliament which he considered to be an avenue for increasing the foreign policy competences for the people of Åland. He said that this decision was “the largest decision we have made” and that he had already said Yes once but he would do it again “with joy and not without pride” today as well.⁴¹⁰

At the end of the session the Regional Parliament decided to give its consent to EU membership in a 26 to 4 vote putting an end to the Ålandic membership process and ensuring membership from 1 January 1995.⁴¹¹



Figure 15: Speaker Roger Jansson signs the declaration by the Regional Parliament to be sent to the Finnish President.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Id. pp. 330-331.

⁴¹⁰ Id. p.332-339

⁴¹¹ Ibid. 3 MPs from Unaligned Coalition insisted on registering their reservations to the accepted declaration. Harry Eriksson, the other No-voter did not do the same.

⁴¹² Ålandstidningen 2 December 1994.

5.9 Results



Figure 16: Waever's Layered Framework Visualized⁴¹³

This subsection will serve as an application to of the theoretical framework of the thesis to referendum process described in the previous subsections. Waever's theory begins the analysis from the proposed European policy (**Level 3**) and working backward to the understandings of Europe and the EU (**Level 2**) which also grants access to the actor's understands of the people and autonomy (**Level 1**).

Using the final votes on 2 December 1994 as starting point we can discern the differences among and within the parties on their final positions on membership. At this stage of European policy **Level 3**, we find that the Centre, the FS (excluding Harry Eriksson), the Liberals and the Social Democrats voted in favour of EU membership while Harry Eriksson and the Unaligned Coalition voted against.

Starting with the largest party in the Regional Parliament we can then go to **Level 2** that is a conceptual understanding of Europe. For the **Centre Party** Europe's association with the common agricultural policy of the EU, increased urbanisation and centralisation provided a threat to the rural communities and farmers they set out to represent. However, the EU's derogations through the Åland Protocol and the statement regarding the international status of Åland allowed the party

⁴¹³ See section 2.

leader and Primer to imply that Brussels could be more understanding of the conditions on Åland than Helsinki could. The party also adjusted its positioning according the results of the referendums on Åland, Finland and Sweden fully acknowledging that the near environment had an important role to play for Åland's service-based economy. The lack of an alternative to membership also seems to have affected the party's final position as the EEA agreement would no longer be valid on Åland in an exclusion scenario which would endanger access to the common market and the freedom of movement to and from Åland. At **Level 1** the Centre Party understood of Åland as an autonomous region with an international legal status which required recognition. It stressed the expansion of autonomy and attempted to use the EU process to increase the taxation powers for Åland. It did not state many identitarian objections towards the EU apart from Christer Jansson who at times stressed a danger of "Finnisation" in case Åland joins the EU without Sweden. This view assumed that Finland would not introduce Swedish as an official language to the EU and is more suspicious of Finland than of the EU. They did not explicitly propose an alternative for membership but stated that it could have been arranged provided that the EU and Finland were willing to negotiate.

The **FS** maintained a qualified positivity towards the EU at **Level 2** they primarily stressed the importance of the "four freedoms" for the economy of Åland and the importance of international cooperation in Europe. They saw no inherent contradiction with the European integration process and the autonomy arrangement on the contrary the majority of their MP's claimed that the subsidiarity principle in the EU would help Åland in expanding its own taxation authority. They viewed the EU organs such the European Court of Justice and the European Commission as potential allies in case they could not get their demands through to Finland. May Flodin also praised the EU's equality directives on gender relation. On **Level 1** they insisted on Finland's obligation towards Åland in expanding Åland's autonomy as much as possible. The only identitarian objection came from Harry Eriksson who broke the party line and vote No in the final vote. He claimed that the supranational character of the EU was inherently negative and transferring authority to it was not acceptable, he also emphasized that islanders had a distaste for "rule from afar". This party did not propose an alternative to EU membership.

The Social Democrats had a defensive positivity towards the EU and at **Level 2** and stated that EU membership would create the economic preconditions to maintain the established welfare levels. They stressed international cooperation in Europe, the benefits of the common market and the positive role the EU played in post war Europe. Barbro Sundback stressed the value of the EU directives on gender equality. On **Level 1** they were much more reserved than the other parties and

did not connect the EU process with the expansion of legal authority for Åland. Prior to the referendum process they had opposed holding a separate referendum altogether. They also did not express any concern regarding urbanisation, centralisation or any identity-based anxiety during the process. The Social Democrats did not propose an alternative to membership.

The **Liberals** maintained an ideological positivity at **Level 2** stating that EU membership was positive on four fronts: Welfare, Democracy, Peace and the Economy. They stressed that access to the common market was necessary to maintain welfare levels on Åland and that the EU was established to maintain democracy and peace in Europe. However, they did qualify their position by stating that it depended on the Finnish and Swedish decision on the EU membership. They were very positive towards the idea of internationalisation and this was connected to their ideas on **Level 1** which saw Åland as a region that is dependent on and benefits from internationalisation. They insisted that the Ålanders were a separate people within the framework of the European Union and therefore was worthy of a MEP on its own. They did not view the EU process as a mean pressure Finland into increasing the taxation authority for the region. They proposed an alternative Nordic Union which would associate with the EU on the basis of the EEA agreement, provided that Finland and Sweden did not join.

The **Unaligned Coalition** maintained its negativity towards the EU at **Level 2** by portraying the European Union and its institutions as an unaccountable and undemocratic supranational structure that was culturally and politically incompatible with **Level 1** that was the commitment to autonomy and expanding it as much as possible. For this group the EU also posed a threat regarding urbanisation and centralisation, an internal process already occurring on Åland which according to them would only worsen the trends. They were the only parliamentary group to uniformly oppose EU membership. They proposed remaining in the EEA agreement as an alternative.

6. Discussion: Åland and the EU in 1994.

Åland's situation as "more than a province but less than a state" makes it notably more complicated to analyse the Ålandic conceptualisations of the EU without referring to the region's political and economic dependency on Finland and Sweden. Additionally, the identification with the rest of the Nordic region is also significant albeit less immediate than with Sweden and Finland.

The EU's lack of engagement with non-nation state entities forces the analyst to take in to account the relations between the region and the state. This is not to say there are not ontological understandings of the EU "as such" regarding the telos of the organisation independent of Åland's

relation to Finland. To take account of and distinguish between these levels of discourse a multi-level approach will be proposed. This schema is constructed as follows:

- 1-Arguments regarding the telos of the EU as an organisation
- 2-Arguments regarding the relation of the Nordic Region to the EU
- 3-Arguments regarding the Åland-Finland-Sweden axis in relation to the EU

6.1 Arguments Regarding the Telos of the EU

This section will focus on the discourses based upon how the European Union as an organisation has been understood in this period by the MP's of Åland.

In the first debate on the EU question, the Primer Erlandsson stated that their goal from the beginning had been to “participate in the development of the common market with derogations”⁴¹⁴. While he maintained his positivity towards the EU as an economic organisation, he acknowledged that the pressures of European integration had certain threatening aspects to the local economy. It should be noted that the EU had accepted almost all of the demands put forward by the Regional Government, including a last minute statement of “Åland’s international status” which made it possible for the Primer to conclude that perhaps “Brussels could afford to be more generous than Helsinki”.⁴¹⁵

However, fears due to the common agricultural policy of the EU would still be a divisive power among his own party the Centre Party, the traditional representative of the farmers and countryside. As the results of the first referendum show, the urban-rural divide was a real political phenomenon on Åland as with Finland and Sweden. The MP's of this party consistently maintained that the common market and the common agricultural policy constituted threats to the Ålandic farming sector due to increased competition and centralisation in the EU. Another fear was the transfer of legislative authority of to a supra national organisation, which was and still is a major concern in the Nordic region. The members of this party exclusively stressed the EU as an economic institution rather than a political union. The idea of a “peace project” was totally absent in their argumentation. The Centre party was also the most split of the parties and did not officially take a position until the results of the second referendum on Åland.

⁴¹⁴ Lagtinget 14 September 1994.p.43

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

The conservative FS party, also a member of the Erlandsson Government, had maintained a largely positive outlook on the EU based on the argumentation on access towards the “four freedoms” and that the EU as an organisation was based on the idea of creating a peaceful Europe through economic integration. They emphasised the “subsidiarity principle” of the EU as evidence that the EU would have understanding towards the local conditions on Åland, which according to some members of the party was to expand taxation authority on Åland. Only one of their MPs, Harry Eriksson insisted that the EU was a centralising force which could not be reconciled to the autonomy arrangement. Eriksson’s perspective was more in line with the Unaligned Coalition whose main argument was that transferring legislative authority to the EU was undesirable in any case.

The third coalition partner in the government were the Social Democrats. From the first debate they framed the purpose of the EU to create a Europe which would no longer go to war. They had also stated that it would be beneficial to join the Common Market to maintain economic prosperity needed to maintain welfare levels on Åland. They were also content with the Åland Protocol which recognized the “defence mechanisms” such as the Regional Citizenship⁴¹⁶ and the exclusion of Åland from the tax harmonisation process in the European Union. In a somewhat defensive manner, they also ensured their voters that labour relations (i.e. collective agreements) would not be worsened in the EU and privatisation of public services were not obligatory within the union.

On the opposition side the Liberals had always maintained positivity towards the EU “on the condition that Sweden and Finland join”. Despite this statement conditioning their attitude to the decision on the Sweden-Åland-Finland axis, the content of speeches indicate an overwhelming positivity on the organisation of the European Union. In several speeches analysed above Liberal MPs emphasized the importance of the EU on four points: Peace, Economy, Democracy and Welfare. They also acknowledged that the EU’s founding principle was to establish peace on the continent. From the economic perspective they emphasized the “four freedoms” and the strength of the EU as a trade block on the global scale. On democracy they focused on the diversity in the union and the rule of law. Finally, on welfare they stated that all though the Nordic countries were at a higher level of welfare, they could still push for improvement of union-wide welfare.

The final party, Unaligned Coalition, while otherwise non-committal to a fixed party program, were the only clear anti-EU party during this process. They drove a sovereigntist argument against the EU stating time and again that transferring legislative authority to the EU would essentially make

Åland's autonomy redundant. They put forward a centralised and anti-democratic EU which was not compatible with the Åland arrangement. They also stressed that the EEA agreement was preferable to EU membership since leaving the EEA agreement was significantly easier while leaving the EU required a unanimous decision by the member states. They did not criticise the Common Market as such (and had vote in favour of EEA membership earlier) but it appears that the political integration was the main point of contention for the party. Despite their overall negativity on the European Integration process the party emphasized their belief that the EU had understanding towards small island communities that chose to remain outside the union citing the the other two Nordic autonomies (i.e. the Faroese Islands and Greenland) and certain British isles (e.g. Isle of Man, Guernsey etc.) as examples.

For the pro membership side of the debate, even among the split Centre Party, the idea that the EU could provide an expansion of an increased "room for manoeuvre" indicates a perception of the EU as a forum for new paradiplomatic activity. This was evident from the very first debate on 14 September 1994 and maintained its prevalence throughout the process. Especially regarding the realisation of the tax exemption, the European Court of Justice was considered as a possible tool to pressure Finland into applying it.

6.2. Discourses regarding the Nordic Region

The 1990's have been considered a turning point for the development of the official organs of Nordic Cooperation.⁴¹⁷ This was acknowledged by the Nordic Council meetings that took place in Mariehamn in 1991 and resulted in the Mariehamn declaration in 1991 and the Bornholm declaration in 1992. These declarations are important as they openly address the relationship of the formal Nordic Cooperation to the accelerated European Integration process at the time. However it they have not been able to renew interest on the side of Nordic Cooperation but the rather served as an anticipation of the Nordic decisions on EU membership in 1994.⁴¹⁸ It appears that the idea and practice of the Nordic region as a coherent unit also struggled for relevance in the Ålandic EU debate.

All the parties in the Regional Parliament were positively inclined toward increased Nordic Cooperation. As mentioned in section 3 Ålandic membership in the Nordic Council has been

⁴¹⁷ See Miles 1996 and Strang 2015

⁴¹⁸ Olesen & Strang 2015, pp. 33-34.

considered a milestone in the external relations of Åland. This point was especially emphasized by Liberal MPs, Olof Erland and Gunnar Jansson.

Throughout the debate the Nordic region appears as a somewhat more intimate community of states and regions in relation to the European Union. However there appears to be no belief in the actuality of further integration within the context of official Nordic cooperation. The European Union appears as a larger and more significant form of cooperation despite certain misgivings regarding the Union and its member states.

In the earlier debates Olof Erland presents a hypothetical “Nordic Union” which would be an alternative to EU based on cooperation on the EEA treaty. However, he insists that this would have “minimal supranational structure” and would be decentralised. Interestingly he does not elaborate if Denmark, already an EU member state at that point, would be a part of this “Nordic Union” by leaving the EU.

Barbro Sundback from the Social Democrats had emphasized the overlap of Nordic Cooperation and the European integration process and that Nordic Cooperation would probably take place under the EU umbrella. She viewed a “Nordic Union” an impossibility on the basis of lack of a common foreign policy.

The topic of gender equality was also brought about by some MPs in the Regional Parliament. It was nearly exclusively discussed by the Women represented in the parliament and the discussion revolved around the legal framework regarding (i.e. de jure) equality against the actual gains (i.e. de facto) made in terms of participation rates in the labour market and in political representation in the respective legislative organs. This topic had been brought to discussion by Social Democrat Barbro Sundback and further discussed by the Deputy Primer May Flodin (FS) and Deputy Speaker Gunnevi Nordman (Liberal). They all agreed about the Nordic region being de facto more progressive than the rest of Europe however also noted that the EU’s equality directives are de jure more stringent than that of the Nordic region. It must be noted that a strong identification of the “Swedish model” of gender relations was present even if the applicability of that idea to the context of Åland of the time is problematic, this problem was highlighted by Sundback.

The Centre Party and Unaligned MP’s did not pay any notable attention to this topic in their speeches, which may be due to their total lack of female MPs. It must also be noted that the gender balance of the Regional parliament at the time was 26 men to 4 women. Of those 4 women 2 belonged to the Social Democrats, 1 to the Liberals and 1 to the conservative FS.

It is noteworthy to see within May Flodin's speech on the topic a construction of the "Lutheran tradition" of gender relations in which the women of the household are expected to work for their livelihoods as opposed to the "Catholic tradition" which expected women to stay at home. As her speech did not refer to the theological grounds for the differentiation of gender relations it can be assumed that this was a cultural argument which points out a difference between the "Catholic south" and the "Protestant north".

Another theme regarding the discourse of the Nordic region was idea of the region as a zone of wealth and welfare. This view was mainly propagated by the Unaligned group and Harry Eriksson of FS. The main argument with this was that the EU's intent with taking the Nordics into membership was to increase the number of net payers in the union to alleviate the economic hardships of the poorer south. The pro-EU camp i.e. the Liberals, Social Democrats and FS were on the defensive on the issue by insisting that membership of the EU provided a the conditions to sustain a functioning welfare system and that social welfare was not a competence of the EU.

The idea of the "principle of public access to official records"⁴¹⁹ in Sweden and Finland was also contrasted to the EU as secretive organisation under the influence of lobbyists. The parties for EU membership lamented this situation while also expressing hope that the Nordics would be an influence for increased transparency and democracy. The idea the Nordics could act as a progressive force within the EU was mainly put forward by the Social Democrats and Liberals.

In terms of discussing other Nordic autonomies, the Faroe Islands were the most prominently discussed by the Unaligned coalition members as evidence that the EU would be able to provide for a limited transition period of association for the region before finally deciding on membership. The Faroes precedent is indeed interesting and relevant for the Ålandic discussion however two structural differences makes the cases noticeably dissimilar. First of these differences is economic, while the Faroese Islands were entirely dependent on fishing products for their economy, Åland has a service and communications-based economy which was integrated to its near environment. Secondly Åland was granted permanent derogations justified on the status it enjoys under international law. Both the Primer of Åland Erlandsson and the EU ambassador to Finland at the time, Eric Hayes claim that without this status Åland would probably have not received such derogations making the prospects of membership for Åland more complicated.⁴²⁰ It should be reminded that even with the granted derogations the Ålandic voters were not entirely convinced of

⁴¹⁹ Offentlighetsprincipen in Swedish.

⁴²⁰ See Fagerlund 1997, pp.203-204 for the Faroese case and Hayes 2011 for the EU perspective on the derogations.

the benefits of the EU and the yes majority was very slim and only 2 out of the 16 municipal districts had a yes majority.

6.3 Discourses on the Sweden-Åland-Finland Axis

Since the foundation of the Åland movement, the conceptualisations of both Sweden and Finland have played a crucial role in the political history of Åland. In fact, Wrede states that the main political cleavage on Åland, that between the “the legality line” and the “the pragmatic line” rests on this axis.⁴²¹ This played out during the EU debates during the discussion of what was labelled by the Premier and certain parties⁴²² as “threshold questions”, namely the demand for a separate MEP for Åland and a promise for expanded taxation authority. These questions are separated from the discourses on the EU as such on the basis that they had no direct relation to the EU as such but rather provides indications of the political actors’ place on main cleavage of Åland’s politics.

The very label of “threshold questions” brings the implication that left unsatisfied, Åland would threaten Finland with the scenario of having to deal with a part of its territory remaining outside the European Union. This would potentially mean elongated negotiations with unpredictable results both with the representatives of Åland and with the European Union. Whether or not the uncertainty regarding the “outside track” could have been dealt with in a less uncertain way is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the difference between EU membership and this scenario was roughly 500 votes.⁴²³

It appears that the with this posturing the Regional Government was attempting to use the EU process it pursue its own political agenda to increase the representation of Åland at the European level and to increase its own powers in relation to Finland.

With the benefit of hindsight, it appears that the Regional Government had no actual short or long term plans on achieving these “threshold questions” as after 25 years of membership, Åland has neither its own MEP nor any increased taxation authority from the 1991 Autonomy Act.

On the first of the “threshold questions” the MEP question drew very little controversy among the parties of the Regional Parliament. All the represented parties argued in favour of Åland receiving its own MEP. This seems to be justified on two main lines of overlapping modes of thought: the view which based its argument on the transfer of legislative power to the EU organs and on the

⁴²¹ See Wrede 1979

⁴²² The Centre Party, the FS and the Unaligned all stated that these were “preconditions” for a EU membership.

⁴²³ See section 4.

view based on a normative understanding of the Ålanders as a “separate people” in the EU. It is interesting that the latter approach was mainly expressed by Liberal MPs, a party that is otherwise considered to be a part of the “pragmatic line” and holds close relations with the Swedish People’s Party. The MEP question brought out unity among the parties of Åland. The EU had decided that the allocation of MEPs would be decided on nationally meaning that the member states had the ultimate authority over the internal distribution of granted MEPs, which in Finland’s case in 1994 was 16. There was unanimity on obtaining a MEP for Åland based on the symbolic importance of the autonomy arrangement in relation to the rest of the state. There was also the belief that a direct access to the legislative organ of the European Union would increase the paradiplomatic capabilities of the region.

The taxation question on the other hand brought forward the classic division among the Ålandic party system. Those who take an aggressive approach towards the Finnish state by stating Finland’s “legal obligations” to expand Ålandic autonomy as much as possible and hold a romantic nationalist view of Sweden (i.e. the Legality Line). The parties belonging to this tradition are the Centre Party and the Unaligned. While the FS were grouped with the pragmatic line by Wrede⁴²⁴, their rhetoric was closer to this bloc during the EU process. This said it is noteworthy that they did admit that they were in favour of EU membership already in the first debate on 14 September. They were all in favour of expanded taxation powers and in varying degrees accused Finland of not respecting the 1921 settlement. Some MP’s along this line of reasoning expressed emotional and ideological concern about establishing a tax border towards Sweden as a result of the tax exemption.

On the other side of this the cleavage, the “pragmatic line” which emphasizes the value of cooperation with Finland as the means to advancing Åland’s autonomy. These parties are the Social Democrats and the Liberals. They did not connect the EU process with the efforts to expand Åland’s authority against Finland and maintained that the parties of the “legality line” were playing a risky political game that would threaten Åland’s credibility with the state officials. They frequently questioned the mentioning of the expanding taxation authority within the EU debates and also questioned the benefits of increasing taxation authority for Åland as such.

The main change of tone on these two questions came after the referendum results on 16 October 1994. After the approval of EU membership by the Ålandic voters, it seems that the Regional Government implicitly acknowledged that regardless of the “threshold” they had previously set, they had no other choice than to guarantee membership.

⁴²⁴ Wrede 1979, p.58 see Note 55.

After the referendum, the discussion shifted into the realisation of the tax exemption which was initially hindered by a proposal by the Finnish Parliament which integrated Åland into the Finnish tax zone. This was resolved a few years later and Åland became a third territory in relation to the EU on 1 July 1999. How this exemption was realised is a process worth analysis of its own.

6.4 Methodological Reflections

Using Waever's layered framework it can be observed that identity played a significant role for the Ålandic EU debates. The idea that Ålanders constituted a separate political entity which strove towards protecting and developing its autonomy shows that the "autonomy ideology" of the post-Sundblom leadership has taken root in the Ålandic party system. Both the Yes side and the No side framed their argument on the basis of improving or defending autonomy. Hence it can be said that on **Level 1** "autonomy" and the "people.", in the Ålandic political context have become intertwined and politicians operating from this point of departure seem to have accepted this constellation. The territorial basis of the autonomy and the civic tools of demarcation from the outside world through the tool of regional citizenship indicates a predominantly civic understanding of identity although an undercurrent of ethnic fear towards Finnish language and its potential presence on Åland appears to be evident. Another important element of this fusion is the consensus on the belief that Åland has moral authority to formulate its own foreign policy. The idea that Åland was demilitarised and neutralised and that this was connected to the autonomy arrangement was without any challenge on Åland and a notable factor on their positioning on **Level 2**, Europe. The understanding that EU membership promoted Autonomy and that the EU had recognized the Regional Government's interpretation regarding demilitarisation was decisive in promoting an environment in which on resulted in a membership at **Level 3**, European Policy. Those who were against EU membership maintained the incompatibility with Europe and the autonomy arrangement simultaneously arguing that they had "the true will of the people" on their side.

While this method showed to be quite fitting for a historical analysis of the EU referendum on Åland, it noteworthy that it functions well with a "frozen data set" such as parliamentary debates and newspaper articles. It takes the events within their historical context and theorises about the political and linguistic structures in which the discussions took place. The historical nature of the topic should not downplay the contingency of the actual political decision in 1994 through an implicit historical path dependency. Several factors could have played out differently such as the results of the referendum on 16 October or the results of the Swedish referendum on 13 November in which the political elite had little control over. The main use of this choosing this method was to

contextualise the historical processes on Åland which contributed into the final decision and not to imply that it was inevitable.

7. Conclusion

“The most revolutionary decision in the history of autonomy”⁴²⁵ relied on 500 votes. With those 500 votes Åland became a member of the EU alongside Finland and Sweden on 1 January 1995. It should be acknowledged that both the EU and Finland made significant accommodations to ensure this decision. The Åland Protocol recognized the legal restrictions regarding the Regional Citizenship alongside recognizing the economic dependency on the tourism and service industries through the tax exemption. The last-minute addition of the statement “with consideration of the status the Åland islands enjoy under international law” should also not be understated. Without this deliberately vaguely worded statement, it is likely that the political process to accept membership would have been much more difficult. This very statement allowed the Åland Government to claim that their understanding of the “international status” of Åland about the trinity of Åland’s constitutional status, its autonomy and its demilitarised and neutralised status had been recognized by the EU. This however was not the position of the Finnish Government who only accepted a reference to the autonomy arrangement, nor of the EU which was seeking after a justification for the derogations from the basic principles of the union.⁴²⁶

One striking feature of this process has been the difference in enthusiasm between the political elite and the Ålandic voter. This is not to claim that the political establishment represented in the Regional Parliament was uniformly enthusiastic about the EU but rather to highlight that viewing the process backwards from the decision on 2 December (26-4 in favour of membership) and the referendum results on 20 November (73.6 percent in favour) would give a skewed impression regarding political attitudes towards the Union at the time. If the first referendum had resulted in a No result, it was almost certain that neither of these events would have taken place as they have.

7.1 The Referendum Process and Historical Cleavages

In the regional context it was clear from the beginning that Åland’s decision would be dependent on the decisions of Finland and Sweden due to the intimate connections of the region to these two

⁴²⁵ Quote by Harry Jansson in Ålandstidningen 15 November 1994.

⁴²⁶ See Hayes 2017 for an EU perspective on this statement.

countries economically, politically, and culturally. This created two sub processes during this process: one before the vote on 16 October and one after.

The process before the first vote on 16 October can be characterised as period of uncertainty in which the MPs insisted on several demands regardless of the probability of actualising them. This caused a significant amount of debate on increased taxation authority despite no clear signals from the Finnish Government and Parliament that it would even be considered during this process.

The process after the vote on 16 October was noticeably restricted to the terms of how Åland would join the Union and the realisation of the tax exemption was put forward as main point of concern. This was noted by the Social Democrats who had from the beginning claimed that a second referendum was not necessary as Åland's membership also depended on the results of the vote in Finland.

The historical developments of Åland played itself on two fronts: The Urban-Rural divide and the autonomy politics cleavage between the "pragmatic line" and the "legality line".

On the urban-rural divide the Unaligned Coalition and the Centre Party had the most EU sceptic positions based on concern for the wellbeing of rural communities and the centralisation of power towards Brussels. The Unaligned Coalition refused to change its position and maintained its opposition to membership until the very end based on sovereigntist arguments. The Centre Party took a more compromising approach which took into consideration the EU as a new avenue to advocate Åland's interests, the choices of Finland and Sweden on EU membership and the uncertainty of a non-membership scenario. The Liberals with a split voter base maintained an ideological positivity towards the prospect of EU membership but also felt the need to acknowledge that it would also have some disadvantages for Åland due to the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policy of the EU. The FS as a mainly urban party was positive to the EU on economical and ideological grounds. However, it was the only party to not be able to achieve party discipline on the final vote due to Harry Eriksson, an MP from the archipelago stating his worries about urbanisation and centralisation of power. The Social Democrat MPs all were in favour of membership on grounds of ideological positivity towards international cooperation and economic advantages of participation in the Common Market. They did not express much concern regarding agricultural policy or urbanisation. The results of the first referendum strongly indicate a rural scepticism toward the EU on Åland. The lack of total party discipline on the conservative FS shows that the importance of the urban rural divide and personal politics have also played a role in the referendum process.

On the divide between the “legality line” and the “pragmatic line” rhetorically the Unaligned Coalition, the Centre Party and the conservative FS maintained a fairly aggressive tone towards Finland’s “legal obligation” to expand Åland’s autonomy as much as possible until the referendum on 16 October. The Unaligned was negative throughout the entire process while the Centre Party only took a position in favour of membership until the results of the second referendum on 20 November were clear. The FS maintained an EU-positive majority from the beginning of the referendum process in August 1994 but could not convince Harry Eriksson who voted with the Unaligned in the final vote. The Centre Party and FS insisted that a separate MEP and increased taxation authority for Åland were “basic preconditions” for a positive attitude towards membership in the EU but back down in response to the developments in Sweden and Finland and the prospect of uncertainty in a non-membership scenario. The “pragmatic line” was represented by the Social Democrats and the Liberals. They insisted that the taxation issue had no direct connection with the EU process and also questioned the benefits calling the MEP and taxation issues “threshold questions”. An interesting effect of the EU process has been the aggressive rhetoric on the conservative FS who have otherwise been grouped together with the Liberals and Social Democrats.

One topic that united a majority (except the No voters) of the MP’s was that the EU provided a new forum for Åland’s external relations, a recognition and strengthening of the international status of Åland and recognition of the economic sensitivities of Åland through the tax exemption.

It can be said that the EU has constituted a “cross cutting” cleavage in the sense that neither the “pragmatic vs legality line” cleavage nor the urban-rural cleavage could maintain its traditional groupings. Especially the conservative FS and its renegade MP Harry Eriksson is case in point. Perhaps the most important exception of these was that the Centre Party ended up voting in favour of membership despite the lack of support in rural regions in the first referendum and despite otherwise holding an aggressive tone towards Finland. The EU appears to have been an issue that caused stress in the traditional front lines of Ålandic politics.

7.2 Avenues for Further Research

Due to the elite driven design of this research project and the conduct of Political History in general, the focus has been on publicly available documents left behind from elected officials of the time. The discrepancy between the elected officials and the electorate was evident and this could provide Åland more presence in research on Nordic voter attitudes towards the EU.

An interesting research project would be to interview the MPs that took the decision to join the EU, at least the ones that are still among us and compare their responses to analyse if their understandings of the EU have changes over the decades of experience within the EU. This would help understand further conceptual and perceptual changes regarding the discourse on the EU on Åland after membership.

Regarding the “threshold questions” set by the Regional Government never came to fruition but the demand of a separate MEP was still added to the final declaration of the Regional Parliament’s consent to membership in the EU. It would be worthwhile to analyse if and how the successive Regional Governments have conceptualized the idea of a MEP for Åland and how they have acted on the topic after 1994.

It would also be interesting to see if the EU membership has affected the party system on Åland in any significant way and how the parties have reacted to EU membership in the long term.

7.3 Final Remarks

Returning to the two quotes at the beginning of the thesis, the discussion to join the EU was both the “most revolutionary decision” in the history of autonomy and evidence that politics of Åland could no longer be restricted to only internal Åland affairs. The interdependence of Åland to the broader international environment manifested itself in two dimensions: the need to react to the European Integration process and the need to react to the decisions of its neighbourhood (i.e. Finland and Sweden) on the European Integration. Considering the stated goal of the Regional Government as “membership with derogations” in the beginning of the process, the result can be considered a success. However, the demand of “threshold questions”, neither of which were demanded by the Åland Government during the negotiations with the EU during 1992-1994, had a different fate.

The decision to transfer a share of the Åland’s legislative authority to a supranational organisation, the European Union, remains the only occurrence where the Regional Parliament has willingly decreased its own right to decide in favour of EU membership with derogations. This study aimed to put this decision in its historical context with consideration to the longer political history of the Åland Islands. The consequences of this decision remain relevant 25 years after the fact and is likely to maintain its relevance so long as the Åland Islands remain a part of the EU.

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