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**Panel 215: Electoral Reform and Political Representation**

**DRAFT: Comments invited!**

**Paper 1056: Trying to Manage Hegemonic Control Using National Electoral Systems in Autonomous Regions: Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland Islands Compared**

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Denmark and Finland are unitary states as the other three Nordic states. Denmark and Finland, however, differ from Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as they both control – or whatever word one should use – autonomous islands. Denmark controls the Faroe Islands and Greenland, Finland controls the Åland Islands. None of these three regions come with a heritage as having previously been independent. The three islands have previously either been fully integrated to the state (Sweden, Russia/Finland) as the case of Åland, or have experienced a period of self rule in the past (Faroe Islands), or in the case of Greenland experienced a status of colony. The idea of regional difference within the state refers to either WW I or WW II when weakened Finland in the first case and Denmark in the latter lost full control over the islands. In all three cases the islands had a strategic role in the defence of a third country. The islands were no more an internal domestic affair which could be managed by old means when eventually guns had cooled on European battlefields.

First, international conflicts were brought to the peripheral islands for a short period, which boosted a consciousness of difference from the mainland. Second, demands were raised to merge with neighbour affine country (Åland), independence (Faroe Islands), and greater autonomy (Greenland). Third, the national governments reacted by offering autonomy which gave few – if any – options for the islands to resist. Fourth, prior to, but also after formal autonomy was introduced, the political integration with the mainland parliaments was managed by utilizing electoral systems as means of hegemonic control.

All three islands are separated from their mainland. Greenland is most remote and was during WW II a US military base and cut off from Denmark, which was occupied by German troops. Nato is still present at Greenland. The Faroe Islands was the base of British troops and was as well cut off from German controlled Denmark. Åland was for a short period occupied by Swedish troops and later German troops in midst of the Finnish Civil War between reds and whites in 1918. The demilitarised islands (since the Treaty of Paris 1856)

could be a threat to Sweden if newly independent Finland should in the future associate with an aggressive Bolshevik Russia. At that time the outcome of the civil was unclear.

People on Åland were mobilised to reunite with Sweden with which it shared the same language, culture, and good neighbourship. Åland was obliged to accept autonomy by a 1921 decision by the Council of the League of Nations (Jansson 1997, 2-4). Demands of independence rose on the Faroe Islands during the WW II and a proposal was sent to the British Government which rejected the attempt. After the war a new attempt was made to the Danish Government boosted by the results from a referendum where a small majority supported independence (Harhoff 1993, 50-70). The separation from Denmark during WW II changed the role and attitudes on Greenland and in Denmark. However, it was the upcoming Danish membership of the EEC which awakened Greenland. In a 1972 referendum 72 per cent of the voters in Greenland voted "No" fearing that their rich fishing waters would be exploited by others. Demands were raised to win autonomy which was introduced in 1979; and Greenland left the EEC in 1985 (Lidegaard 1991, 179-228).

Prior to and after autonomy on Åland was implemented, the region was integrated to the Åbo South Constituency on the mainland. No seat in Parliament was guaranteed until the revision of electoral laws and the autonomous region was separated to a single member constituency from the 1948 election (Sundberg 2011, 163-204). The Faroe Islands failed to get independence, but was given autonomy in 1948. Until 1915 Denmark was divided in single member constituencies, the Faroe Islands being one of them. After the introduction of multi-member districts Faroe Islands continued as a SMD until 1948, when the islands were given two seats in Parliament. Greenland was a colony and had no representation in the Danish Parliament prior to 1953. Greenland was then offered two seats in the Danish Parliament, which continued after the introduction of autonomy.

The aim of this paper is to analyse motives and decisions taken by the Danish and Finnish governments when some kind of autonomy was implemented in Greenland, The Faroe Islands, and Åland and what the consequences in the three cases were for political integration.

### **Nation-building in plural societies**

States are territorially defined populations recognising a common organ of government. Decisions are implemented by civil servants and the territories are protected by the military. These are core elements of state-making. Nation-building happens when the inhabitants of the state form a community of *Gemeinschaft*-feeling where members distribute and share benefits (Finer 1975, 85-86). Loyalty and commitment to the nation is more likely to develop in homogeneous populations. This in turn opens up for centralised politics and control

which yield high return to the government from a relatively uniform subject population (Tilly 1975, 78-80). Thus, homogeneity fuels effective government.

The nation state developed a range of agencies of unification and standardisation, which penetrate the local culture. A gradually widening of governmental activities made for a more complex system of alignments. Territorial oppositions and waves of counter mobilisation threatened the unity of the nation and set limits to nation-building (Rokkan 1970, 101). Democratic consolidation may be more difficult in multinational or multicultural states and dealing with issues of stateness are for some incompatible with democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996, 29-30). In democracies it is the magnitude and intensity of territorial opposition which challenge standardisation based on national institutions and laws. The implicit objective of a homogeneous state is unification and standardisation of the nation and deviations in terms of institutional arrangements and/or legislation will meet resistance.

According to Lijphart one can distinguish between homogenous and plural societies. In the former, increased contact are likely to lead to mutual understanding and homogenisation. In plural societies close contacts might lead to strain and hostility (Lijphart 1977, 88-89). To deal with such problems in a democratic manner two types of solution are available. A nation state can respond to demands of secession by reducing or eliminating ethnic differences (assimilation) from the majoritarian national order. Such actions tend, however, to generate the opposite effect. Plural democracies tend to introduce some form of federal or confederal system rather than to incorporate the differences. According to Easton "In systems of multiple nationalities, if the relevant members feel that each group recognizes respect, and is willing to consider seriously the major need and demands of others, the probability of eliciting support for a common community is increased" (Easton 1965, 250). If ethnic and geographic diversity is being recognized, it contributes to the development of a stable democracy.

Neither mainland Denmark nor Finland are homogenous states, as Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Åland are excluded. Southern Jutland has a small German-identifying minority close to the German border. Since 1977 the German minority has not been represented in the Folketing, although the German Minority Party has previously argued that its special character should provide for special arrangements (Elklit 1981; Elklit 2002, 63). Finland is according to the constitution bilingual, but in practice it is only in the Southern and Western coastal areas that Swedish is visible (and audible) in daily life. The electoral system does not recognise the Swedish electorate with any special measures, and the Swedish People's Party compete for votes and seats in elections as other contesting parties. Thus, neither Denmark nor Finland gives room for ethnic differences in electoral laws.<sup>1</sup> The electoral systems are in reality engineered for national homogenisation.

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<sup>1</sup> It should not be forgotten, however, that the German minority party can participate in parliamentary elections without having to collect supporting signatures (as other un-represented parties have to).

Homogeneity in terms of people and territory were the key elements of nation-building in Denmark and Finland, so combining territory with an ethnic group different from the nation was not in line with an idea of a unitary state. Therefore, the constitution and the electoral system were construed to work in this direction and it was dramatic events like war and occupation which broke the principles of unitary state. In the Finnish case, the constitution had to be amended to secure territorial autonomy for the Åland Islands, while it in Denmark was more complicated as the constitution is difficult to amend. Therefore, the regulation of autonomy for the Faroe Islands and – later – Greenland has taken the form of special legislation. By these means a region turns from *de facto* to a *de jure* region. The former refers to practice and the latter to legal processes where units of the state are treated different before law (Burgess 2006, 215-217). States with autonomous regions are located in a grey zone between a unitary and a federal state. Neither of these fit completely and the phenomenon is known as “asymmetrical federalism”. Asymmetrical federalism is used for both *de facto* and *de jure* regions, but the term is in our opinion most accurate when it refers to autonomous regions (i.e. *de jure* regions).

In all three cases the initiative and mobilisation for separate regional dispensations came from the regions, not from national government. The shift from *de facto* to *de jure* regions came with changes in the constitution (or in Denmark special legislation *almost* to the same effect). Electoral systems are instruments used to manage district magnitude and to determine how votes become seats, which means that they also impact on electoral turnout and the regional party system.

### **Electoral systems as national instruments of managing regional differences**

Electoral systems are normally a result of considerate electoral engineering. Political parties representing the main social segments (cf. the cleavage system) have devised the electoral system with its severe impact on parties and party systems. The history of the struggle over electoral procedures tells us a lot about how the system was used to raise thresholds against the mobilising working class, and how in Scandinavia the cleavage between urban and rural interests prevented an effective block building against the socialists (Rokkan 1970, 155-165). When the electoral puzzle is in place, large electoral system adjustments are not necessarily motivated by the more established parties as changes are risky, and short term advantages may in the long run turn into disadvantages.

Minor parties lack the strength to get new electoral rules legislated, but majority parties will have an interest in legislating a system which can protect them against upcoming uncertainties or situations where the old rules will not serve them any more (Cox 1997, 17-19). Parties in power are part of the state and can guarantee their success, e.g., by changing the electoral rules to protect them from challengers. When established parties went through institutionalisation process, actions of protection were carried out in inter-party

collusion cartels (Katz and Mair 1995, 5-28). If we for a moment assume that the cartel model is correct, it follows that it would be easy to modify electoral rules to the advantage of cartel members as electoral systems are easier to manipulate than, e.g., political culture and tradition (Sartori 1986). However, contrary to the cartel model suggestion many parties do not want to change the electoral system. This is certainly true when system changes disadvantage winning parties in situations, where a distinct geographic area, which is different in terms of language and/or culture, is separated from the national electoral system.

What distinguish electoral system change in autonomous and devolved regions from system changes encompassing the entire electorate? First, we must look at the motives behind separate territorial system applications or – opposite to that – the motives behind not implementing a separate electoral system when a devolved/autonomous region is being recognised. Second, we must also deal with the effects of territorial system change (or lack thereof) when autonomy is established. Thus, the problem is two-folded: How the majority in the national parliament deals with exceptions based on territorial exceptions, and what the consequences of territorial system change (or lack of change) is expected to be for the political parties, the party system, and the voters.

The process of nation-building builds on the idea of a homogeneous people within the territory of a unitary state. Deviations from this picture by an ethnic group is something unitary states want to avoid. Rokkan named it the conflict between central nation-building culture and the resistance of the ethnically, linguistically, or religiously distinct subject populations in the provinces and peripheries (Rokkan 1970, 102). Non-democratic regimes have frequently used violent means to eliminate such differences. Assimilation is one such method of elimination, but more commonly democracies have tried to manage differences rather than eliminate them. In peripheral, geographic, and ethnic distinct regions like the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland assimilation was not a realistic option, as compared to minorities on the respective mainlands where no distinct region is assigned for the minority populations.

A more efficient method is the management of differences, which can be achieved in various ways. According to John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (1953, 4-25) the most common system of managing ethnic conflict is that of hegemonic control. If democracy is understood as majority rule it can become an instrument of hegemonic control, but strong powers do not guarantee freedom and fair treatment for ethnic minorities. If an ethnic community wish to belong to an external nation-state. The need for a system of control by the majority increases. The concept of hegemonic control is best applied to the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland before (almost) full autonomy was obtained. It is also applicable to the German and Swedish minorities in Denmark and Finland, but obviously together with efforts of assimilation and/or integration.

Full hegemonic control collapsed prior to the introduction of autonomy. From a unitary nation perspective management of differences is preferable to open secession from the state. Facing this, unitary democratic states have often preferred *cantonisation* rather than third party intervention or power sharing. Cantonisation is synonymous with devolution organised on ethno-territorial basis which also encompasses some (but low) degree of sovereignty as well as an asymmetrical relation to the central government (McGarry and O'Leary 1993, 30-31). Mini sovereignty includes as a necessary element that state power is devoluted to the regions. However, the sovereignty is partial as only clearly specified spheres of state power is devolved. Autonomous regions also have a regional parliament elected by those eligible to vote within the borders of the territorial region.

However, those elements of state power which are not devolved are still the responsibility of national parliament. Maximum state power is the case, when the region has no access to the national parliament. Greenland had neither autonomy, nor access to the Danish parliament prior to 1953, when the islands only had colonial status. It appears to be a better way of managing differences is to give access to parliamentary representation and include the citizens of the territorial region into the electoral and political processes. So three options are open for the national government:

1. Exclusion from national representation,
2. Electoral laws remain unchanged, or
3. Special electoral rules are enacted for the autonomous region.

All three alternatives have consequences for the relationship between the national government and the regional government. Autonomous regions are not federal units, which would guarantee representation according to some mutual agreement. The national government/parliament can decide with or without regional approval/acceptance.

The consequences of the three alternatives are:

1. Exclusion from the national representation increases distrust between the two parties and tends to lead to national disintegration,
2. District magnitude and distribution of seats can remain unchanged after the transition to autonomy with or against the will of the region, but an unilateral decision by the state (the parliament) will not enhance mutual confidence,
3. Special solutions aim at contributing to national unity by political integration.

### **Asymmetrical federalism in Denmark and Finland**

Daniel Elazar claims that the world is in the midst of a paradigm shift from a world of states to a world of diminished state sovereignty and increased interstate linkage of constitutional

federal character. Alongside those federations are numerous asymmetric federal arrangements where the federate power has a constitutional connection with a smaller federate unit with a different basis than the ordinary federal-state relationship (Elazar 1996, 417-429). Federations are a deliberate creation where legal sovereignty is shared between the national (federal) government and the state (province) government. The legal function of the federal government includes external relations and some domestic functions as the currency. The state functions often include education, local government, and law enforcement. In almost all federations, states have a guaranteed representation in the upper chamber where states have equal representation.

In the asymmetric federations Denmark and Finland there are no upper chamber to balance the voice of territorial units. These states are organised as unitary states except for their autonomous regions. Before autonomy was introduced the centralised power had not to take formal notice of the *de facto* regions. In contrast to federal states the creation of autonomous regions was not at the outset a result of deliberative processes. Both Denmark and Finland were more or less forced to accept territorial autonomy within their borders. Autonomy was more a result of conflict than of a deliberative process. The MPs elected from the autonomous regions represented a tiny minority in the Parliament with few chances to win a conflict with the majority. It was an asymmetric situation as the autonomous regions differed in terms of sovereignty from other regions but still had only very modest influence in national decision-making.

The common aim for these three regions is and was to utilize whatever level of sovereignty obtained to transfer legislative power from the national legislature to the regional assemblies. As electoral rules for the national Parliament remained unchanged when autonomy was introduced, a certain level of tension is constantly evident between the national and regional governments and parliamentary influence and power is utilized both by the national and regional governments to either reject or to enlarge regional sovereignty.

In all three cases sovereignty is insular combined with ethnic diversity from the national majority population. Combinations of these two facts reinforce the sense of a regional *Gemeinschaft*. In the following sections we examine the process of inclusion of legislators from the three autonomous regions. What electoral system changes did the Danish and Finnish Parliaments legislate to reject or include these regions in the national decision making? What was the response from the electorate in the autonomous regions in terms of turnout in national elections? How was party life organised on the autonomous islands and which parties did they collaborate with in the national Parliaments, and with what effect in terms of increased sovereignty? What are currently the most manifest demands from the autonomous islands *vis-à-vis* the national parliaments? What conclusions can be drawn from these cases of asymmetric federalism, i.e., was it a successful process of integration into the nation state or was it primarily a stepping stone on the road to more separatism?

## National elections in the autonomous regions

### *National Elections in the Faroe Islands*

At the 1814 Peace Accord in Kiel – after the Napoleonic wars – it was decided that the Faroe Islands should be part of the Danish monarchy and not follow Norway to become part of a united Swedish-Norwegian state. Subsequently, the islands were in 1816 made a Danish county, on par with the other counties, even though the islands' special geographical position had to be taken into consideration.

Despite the fact that the islands were part of the Danish monarchy, the 1849 Constitution was only implemented – as far as national elections are concerned – in mid-1851, partly because of the need for special legislation reflection the weather-dependent transport conditions in the North Atlantic. The special act on national elections on the Faroe Islands was only passed in late December 1850 and it is fascinating to study the parliamentary debate in both houses on the proposed legislation (in particular the committee report in the upper house and the debate in the lower house (RT, FT, 1850, II, cols 2866-2561 and 2893-2974)).

It was a quite principled debate focusing on how to combine the view of the Faroese as an independent nation with the fact that the islands were now an integral part of the Danish realm, covered also by the constitution of 1849. How could one vote for a piece of legislation about the representation of the islands in Parliament without even consulting the islanders? But then, the answer was, who should one consult when there was not yet an elected, more or less representative body to consult? And would it be acceptable that a MP elected on the islands might have the casting vote on Danish legislative issues (as the balance in the house was sometimes close)? The arguments *pro et con* sound very familiar for a modern reader, but the government's proposed law was in any case enacted through a 35:2 vote in the upper house, and then 51:20 in the lower house.

Contrary to the rest of Denmark, voting in the Faroese SMDs should not be in only one central place, but simultaneously in the seven parishes, i.e. on the main islands, in order to reduce the need for travelling in small boats in sometimes very rough weather.<sup>2</sup> Among the proposals from members in the *Folketing*, one was to give the islands more than one member (two or three) as well as delayed implementation until after consultation with the population on the islands. Both these proposals were, however, rejected.

Turnout in parliamentary elections on the islands during the first several decades was often extremely low (i.e., below 10 per cent), and between 1851 and 1915 it only at two occasions

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<sup>2</sup> An example: Southern Denmark had ordinary *Folketing*-elections in November 1873, but on the Faeroe Islands the election could only take place on January 9, 1874. However, elections could only be conducted in four parishes, and the incumbent MP was therefore returned on the basis of only 57 votes for and nil against his re-election.

(1906 and 1910, i.e. after the politization of the home rule debate) above the 50 per cent mark.

The islands also elected one member of the upper house, the *Landsting*, in indirect elections. Until the turn of the century, almost all parliamentarians elected were either explicitly Conservatives or leaning in that direction, i.e. supporting the government of the day, as Danish governments in the decades before 1901 all were Conservative.

It was evidently a problem during the preparation and discussion of these laws in 1850 that there was no elected representative body on the islands. However, Parliament in 1851-52 legislated on the creation of a local council, the *Lagting*, which was then elected and started to function in 1852. The *Lagting* was to govern in affairs common to the islands and to provide counsel in legislative matters. The proposal was discussed the year before in a meeting on the islands, where voices were raised against having the county prefect as *ex officio* member (and chair) as well as the provost in Torshavn as an *ex officio* member. But this was not special for the Faroe Islands. The prefect was also in Southern Denmark *ex officio* member (and chair) in the county councils, and the local minister was an *ex officio* member of the local councils in the rural areas. The deliberations in the *Folketing* on the new legislation clearly benefitted from the presence of the newly elected member from the Faroe Islands.<sup>3</sup> One of the issues raised was that the suffrage requirements were quite high compared to what they were in Southern Denmark, where local councils (in the rural parish municipalities had been introduced in the early 1840s).

During WWII, the islands were occupied by British troops in order to avoid the islands being conquered by the Germans, like Southern Denmark was since April 1940. This experience – and probably also Iceland’s declaration of full independence from Denmark in 1944 – inspired an intense discussion about Faroese home rule in the years immediately after the liberation in 1945. A September 1946 referendum on the islands on independence or acceptance of a proposal for the future arrangements had a majority for independence. However, the government in Copenhagen was not willing to accept the result and called for fresh elections to the *Lagting*. Renewed negotiations resulted in a Home Rule Agreement proposal supported by the government and three of the parties on the Faroe Islands. It was adopted in December 1947 in the *Lagting* with 12 members in favor and 6 against, and in March 1948 in the Danish parliament. The six members of the *Lagting* voting against represented a new party (Folkeflokkun, the People’s Party), which were very keen on independence.

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<sup>3</sup> The first MP from the Faroe Islands constituency, Mr N. Winther, was elected on July 1, 1851 in a close election.

**Table 1:**  
**Comparison of electoral systems for the Faeroe Islands, Greenland, and Southern Denmark 1836-2011**

Period	Faeroe Islands	Greenland	Southern Denmark	
1836-1848	No representation	No representation because of the island's colonial status	Consultative Provincial Assemblies	
1848	Faeroe Islands represented through one of the King's appointees (the county's prefect)		Constitutional Assembly	
1849-50	No representation		100 SMDs (but 101 from 1867 and 113 from 1894)	
1851-1915	1 SMD		MMP introduced, but only used in 1918  Votes from the Faeroe Islands included in the overall computation of the three national (as compared to regional) compensatory seats	
1915-1920	Election day might be different from the rest of the country because of communication problems			
April-July 1920				Two-tier PR introduced, with altogether 139 seats. Votes from the Faeroe Islands to be included in the allocation of compensatory seats, if elections on the islands were not later than in Southern Denmark
1920-47				Increase to 148 seats because of the reunification with North Schleswig after WWI.  Same provision for inclusion in compensatory seat allocation
1947-48	Two-member constituency; PR using d'Hondt		Increase to 149 seats  Votes from the Faeroe Islands <i>not</i> to be included in the allocation of compensatory seats	
1948-1953				
1953-1974				2 SMDs  Increase to 175 seats after the introduction of the current unicameral system
1974-		Two-member constituency; PR using d'Hondt		

During this politically complicated and heated situation, it was – as a separate issue – decided to increase the number of *Folketing* seats elected from the islands from one to two. The two seats were to be allocated proportionally (using d'Hondt), and the parties putting up candidates were to be the parties represented in the *Lagting*, not in the *Folketing*,

*apparentement* was allowed (which has never been possible in national elections in Southern Denmark), and votes from the islands were not any longer to be included in the allocation of compensatory seats. In the first election under this system (in February 1948), The People's Party won one of the two seats, while the Faroese Social Democrats took the other because of an *apparentement* agreement with the Home Rule Party.

The electoral system has since 1948 been used continuously, also after the 1953 amendments to the constitution, which did not impact on the way in which the islands were represented in the Danish parliament.<sup>4</sup>

### ***National Elections in Greenland***

The table above also shows that Greenland had no parliamentary representation until 1953, when the island's constitutional status was changed that of a county in the Danish realm as part of the political process leading to comprehensive constitutional amendments.

There was however – since 1911 – a representative body on the island, the Consultative Council on Greenland (*Grønlands Landsråd*). From the beginning there were two such councils (one for the North and one for the South), but they were amalgamated in 1950, when direct elections were introduced (as voting rights for women had been in 1948). The council's political influence increased gradually, as Danish governments were keen not to take decisions against the expressed opinion of the Consultative Council.

There was not much discussion 1951-52 about the general issue of what the relationship between Greenland and Southern Denmark should be in the future. One reason was the generally accepted need for a modernization of Greenland, another was the simultaneous discussion in the UN about the future for areas with colonial status, and a third the post-WWII development of home rule in the Faroe Islands. When it became clear – in the elected Consultative Assembly on Greenland and as presented in various committees and commissions by the representatives from Greenland – that there in Greenland was a strong wish of full integration in the Danish realm (i.e. not some kind of independence) and representation in parliament), this was easily agreed on (DIIS, 2007: 247ff).

So the decision to give Greenland two seats in the new *Folketing* was easy, also because the parallels to the other county in the North Atlantic – the Faroe Islands – were so obvious. But the shift from colonial status to something else had only started recently, so political parties had not yet developed in Greenland, and there was therefore no point in introducing PR (as on the Faroe Islands in 1947-48). Consequently, two SMDs were established in Greenland. But based on recommendations from the Consultative Council, sparsely populated and less

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<sup>4</sup> Apart from – of course – that the islands lost a representative in the upper house when that house was abolished.

developed Northern and Eastern Greenland were not integrated in the new electoral set-up. So of the two SMDs Constituency # 1 covered the Northern part of Western Greenland, Constituency # 2 the Southern part.

Only independent candidates were allowed and it sometimes happened that candidates (often the incumbent MP) were returned unopposed. In 1973, the Consultative Council suggested that individual candidates should be allowed register a kind of *apparentement* and that PR should be introduced, as on the Faroe Islands. The *Folketing* legislated on this in 1974, and it is interesting that one of the two MPs from Greenland accepted the proposal outright, while the other – the more radical of the two – was against it because – as he claimed – it would make it more difficult to hold individual MPs accountable in their SMDs.

The act foresaw the development of political parties in Greenland, so it allowed candidates to run for a Greenlandic political party (defined as a party represented in the Consultative Council), even though it was still individual candidates who registered and ran for election. It took until 1979 before the candidates for parliamentary election formally registered their attachment to a political party. Candidates could also register an *apparentement* agreement, where it from the first election became the pattern that two such “candidate coalitions” were formed, one with two center-right candidates and one with two center-left candidates – and each candidate coalition then got one seat, which went to the candidate with most personal votes.

### ***National elections in Åland***

Universal suffrage was introduced in the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1906. During the period from 1907 to 1917 not less than eight elections were conducted. According to the law Finland was divided into 16 constituencies. In 15 of these constituencies proportional elections were applied following the d’Hondt system in the transfer of votes to 199 seats (Kommittébetänkande 1906: 12; Vallag för storfurstendömet Finland 26/1906). Åland was merged to the Åbo South county constituency which had 17 seats. At that time Åland had the status of a jurisdictional district together with five other such districts in the constituency. Of those eligible to vote in the constituency, 10.5 per cent were residents on Åland. That would entail close to two seats for Åland.

The process for autonomy was a complicated operation. No solution was found between the newly independent Finland, Åland, and Sweden. The case was brought to the League of Nations where Åland in 1921 was guaranteed autonomy under Finnish rule. In the act of autonomy from 1920, which Åland first rejected, but then accepted after the decision of guarantees was taken by the League of Nations, nothing was said about electoral rules. The electoral law from 1906 remained in force in the new Republic of Finland (1917) with its constitution from 1919 (Törnudd 1968, 41-62). Åland remained part of the Åbo South

county constituency in the 1919 election and continued to be a part of it after 1921. It had a severe impact as the autonomous Åland lacked any guarantee of representation in the Finnish Parliament. Thus, Åland could be left without any representation at all or could win more than one seat.

It is open to speculation whether Åland at the time could have got guarantees of representation or not. The disappointment because of the unsuccessful merger with Sweden was of such magnitude that representation in the Finnish Parliament had minor or no importance in the early days of autonomy. Åland was formally an integrated part of independent Finland in the 1919 election. Due to the conflict with Finland no candidates were nominated from Åland. The boycott continued in the 1922 election when Åland had got its unwelcome autonomy. However, Åland was dependent of the national legislation and finances and in the subsequent elections candidates from Åland were nominated.

The reform prior to the 1948 election was made in conjuncture with the preparation of a new self-government law implemented in 1951. Prior to this Åland and Finland faced dramatic events. Soviet Union made demands in the autumn 1944 to establish a military base at Porkkala outside Helsinki. The Finnish Government panicked, Cape Hangö and Åland were mentioned, it leaked to Åland, and preparations were made to merge with Sweden (Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2007, 20-33). The Finnish Government denied such attempts but offered an extended law of self-government. Without these dramatic events a separation to a single member constitution would probably not had been possible. Now for the first time Åland was separated from the Åbo South county constituency which had 15 seats in the 1945 election. The size of the population corresponded to one deputy in parliament, and one mandate was now guaranteed and plurality was implemented.

A problem arose because what should be done in case of a vacancy as by-elections were not foreseen in the legislation (Vallag 1906), as that is not a problem in constituencies with proportional elections. After two elections the system was changed and from the 1954 election to the last plurality election in 1983 all candidates on the list had a deputy candidate. The 1975 election and the year after became crucial for the future of plurality elections as the elected candidate died and his deputy was appointed MP. This caused a discussion because the support of the deputy candidate never was measured, was the argument. According to this interpretation, the main candidate and her/his deputy candidate is not a collective, but rather two individual single candidates, which means that the deputy candidate has never had his support in the electorate measured. Right or wrong, his former deputy's electoral support was counted in 1979, when he was elected by largest minority (as the only candidate during the era of plurality voting).

The reform committee appointed to look into the matter concluded that the nomination procedure was too much significant, while the voters had too little (or no) influence, as compromises between factions in the relatively unstructured party field were common in the nomination process. Different solutions were discussed and the reform committee in

the end favoured a proportional system for the election of the single member to parliament (PM 1977). No demands were raised to increase the size, i.e., the members elected from the constituency. However, proportional systems purport that votes are translated to seats in a proportional way. Proportional systems require multi-member constituencies. Proportional elections in single member districts are unheard of in the literature of electoral systems (Sartori 1997, 7-10; Farrell 2001, 68-96). At Åland dominating political interests did not pay much notice to such arguments at that time and nor do they today.

In preparing the government bill in 1985 three arguments were raised to support the change of electoral rules on Åland: 1) the number of candidates will increase, 2) voting turnout will increase, and 3) the electoral support to the deputy member will be measured (Tarasti 1998, 407-408). Nothing is said about disproportionality and the electoral threshold which is related to the former. The reform had a discrepancy as the constitution stated that where local conditions demand deviation from proportional, one or two single member districts might be established (Riksdagsordningen 1928/7). According to the provision in the new constitution all members of Parliament are elected in proportional elections. Åland is mentioned as the sole constituency with a proportionally elected MP in a single member district (Finlands grundlag 1999/731).

As already mentioned Åland boycotted the first two elections after independence by not nominating any candidates. Åland was formally an integrated part of Finland in 1919 but due to the conflict and lack of Ålandish candidates turnout dropped considerably (19.7 per cent) compared to the previous election. The first election during the era of unwelcomed autonomy was even worse as less than 24 per cent of the entitled voted. From 1924 and onwards candidates were nominated from Åland but the voter activity remained low. Not until the last election before WW II did turnout exceed the national figure.

During the decades after WW II voting turnout rose in Finland to a level unheard since. The development on Åland followed a different path. Turnout sank dramatically, and the difference to the entire Finland grew to almost 47 per cent in 1954. After the 1954 election, participation in elections increased. The 1975 elections saw the right to vote enlarged to Finnish citizens living abroad and not registered for census purpose in Finland. The reform had a negative impact on electoral participation in the country and most so Åland. Of the Finnish citizens enfranchised 8.2 per cent were not registered in Finland. The share on Åland was 32.5 per cent. Most of them were residents in Sweden lacking motivation to vote. The turnout among residents on Åland was 58.5 per cent in 1975 which is a difference of 18.7 per cent compared to the national average.

First and most important, proportional voting show no impact at all on turnout. The difference to the mainland has decreased mainly due to diminishing electoral activity in Finland. Also, voters not registered at Åland have increased their electoral activity from 0.9 per cent in 1987 to 5 per cent in 2007. Still this group of voters are quite passive and only

scarcely involved in political life in Finland. If this group is excluded, turnout among those living on Åland oscillates between 50.8 per cent in 1991 and 60.3 per cent in 2003.

## **Parties and party systems in the regions**

### ***Faroe Islands***

Results of the direct *Folketing* and the indirect *Landsting* elections since 1851 clearly reflected local issues as well as personality reputation, and almost inevitably, those elected sided with the Conservative government.<sup>5</sup> It was only around 1900 that a more focused Faroese cultural and political movement started to develop – including the formation of a political party advocating home rule (Selvstyrepartiet) – even though it at most national elections was not able to get its candidates elected. But one natural consequence was the formation of an adversary, unionist party (Sambandspartiet) and therefore also was some increase in electoral turnout.

The 1948 arrangement established a more potent *Lagting*, with legislative powers in internal Faroese matters. It also resulted in the further development of a Faroese party system. The four main parties on the islands (Social Democrats, Unionists, People's Party, and the Republicans (started in 1948 as a reaction to the introduction of home rule in spite of the outcome of the 1946 referendum)) have also been the only parties winning one of the two Faroese *Folketing* seats.

The most recent election was on November 13, 2007. 67 per cent of the 34,529 registered voters voted. One seat went to the Republicans, while the Unionists took the other. The level of preferential voting is very high (94 per cent), and the vote distribution to a considerable degree reflects political cleavages and personal reputation on the islands. An ongoing discussion about prospective constitutional amendments might influence the upcoming parliamentary election, which must take place before than November 13 this year.

### ***Greenland***

This gradual politicization of Greenlandic politics was partly due to the situation after the 1972 referendum on Danish entry into the EEC, where 70 per cent of the voters on Greenland voted No, but where Greenland nevertheless had to follow Southern Denmark into EEC on January 1, 1973. One reason to work towards some kind of home rule was that this might allow Greenland to leave the EEC (as it eventually happened in 1985). Another reason for the political awakening was the government's decision to grant concessions to oil

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<sup>5</sup> At a couple of occasions, it looks as if the same person was representing the islands in both houses. This looks strange, but I have not (because of time constraints) been able to establish if it really was so – or if it was allowed for reasons of practicality.

companies to start exploring the possibilities for a profitable oil and gas production, which might in a longer time perspective change the economic outlook for Greenland completely. In the short run, it contributed to a demand on Greenland for a kind of home rule, which were subsequently discussed in a commission, established in 1975.

The formation of political parties started at about the same time, partly fueled by the discussion about the issue of ownership to the natural resources, partly by the issue of how the constitutional integration of 1953 should be interpreted. Was it best for Greenland to be an integrated part of Denmark – or was it better to realize that Greenland was something markedly different from Denmark and that Greenland was a nation of its own, which should strive towards more and more independency from Denmark? The home rule proposal was subjected to a referendum in 1978, where it was accepted, and then it was formally implemented from May 1, 1979 (see, e.g., on this Johansen, 1980; Harhoff, 1993). The new regional parliament, *Landstinget*, had 31 members and formed the basis for the regional government on Greenland. Landstinget had legislative powers on issues agreed on as part of the Danish-Greenlandic negotiations.

The most recent elections to the *Folketing* took also in Greenland place on November 13, 2007. Turnout was 64.5 per cent of the 39,706 registered voters. 16 candidates ran and they were all attached to one of the four main political parties on Greenland. The first seat went to the somewhat leftist IA party, while the second seat went to Siumut, the old partly socialist, partly social democratic, which for a long period was the majority party in Greenland. IA is currently to strongest party in *Inatsisartut*.

### **Åland Islands**

Swedish People's Party (SFP, Svenska folkpartiet) was founded in May 1906. The aim was to gather all Swedish votes along the Swedish speaking coast and archipelago. SFP managed to organise the Swedish white collar community in cities and the coastal population in the periphery. It failed, however, to integrate parts of the working class who already in 1899 founded the Finlands svenska arbetarförbund (Finland's Swedish Labour Union) which joined the Social Democratic Party in 1906 as an autonomous Swedish unit.

In August 1906 the first five local SFP branches were founded on Åland and in October 16 municipalities on Åland hosted a SFP local association. In comparison to mainland, activists on Åland were among the first to organise. The response for SFP in the 1907 election was overwhelming and Åland became a stronghold for the party (Sundberg 1985, 121-125). SFP support varied from 91.4 per cent in 1916 to 95 per cent in the 1911 and the 1913 elections. However, all organisational ties with SFP were broken from 1919, when SFP tried to offer autonomy according to the cantonial principle which was not accepted at Åland. The deep rift between SFP and Åland resulted in a political vacuum as no organisational party activity replaced SFP on the local or the regional level (apart from the weak Social Democrats and the Communists).

The first internal Åland Landsting (later named Lagting) election was held in 1922. Turnout is estimated to have been 13 per cent at its lowest in 1925 and 60 per cent at its highest in 1945 (Wrede 1981, 17-18). The Landsting's main functions were to assemble deputies to cope with internal affairs and with relations to the Finnish mainland. In 1924 Åland came to terms with its constitutional status and nominated candidates to the national parliamentary election. In official statistics, however, votes cast for Ålandish candidates on SFP lists continued not to be separated. This happened again in the 1930 and the 1939 elections when candidates joined the separate *Ålands valförbund*. These misleading data are the official basis for claiming that SFP won between 95 and 84 per cent of the vote. All MPs from Åland joined the Swedish Parliamentary Party. No other party could challenge this except the communists who won 11 per cent of the vote in 1945.

In the first election to the Landsting Ålands svenska valförbund won 29 seats out of 30. The coming Landsting elections were dominated by issues related to autonomy and the relation to Finland and Sweden (Wrede 1976, 27-28). Open politicisation of elections started smoothly in late 1960s. In the Landsting election of 1967 other groups than the Communists used party labels (Wrede 1976, 51-63). An unstable period followed with internal conflicts, but since 1979 a relatively stable four party system has existed on Åland (Söderlund 2008, 131-134). *Åländsk Samling* established in 1957 which took the role as an umbrella for different unorganised groups in elections lost its importance in *lands-/lagting* elections but prevails in parliament elections.

Legislative authority for the *Lagting* was not defined in the 1920 Act of autonomy. A brief specification was made on the general authority of the state, while the rest was left to the *Lagting* itself to enact. However, new national laws relevant to Åland will not come to force until they are approved by the *Lagting*. This division of labour resulted in numerous questions of interpretation. In addition, with the modernisation of society new activities have emerged which would have restricted the legal authority of Åland. Therefore, a new act of autonomy was prepared after WW II to cope with the problem. Now a specification was made to clarify the division of legal authority between Finland and Åland. However, everything could not be specified and a rest category was left to reciprocal interpretation (Suksi 2005, 171-175). In 1991 a new law of autonomy came into force enlarging the legal authority with more specifications on the list.

## **Current regional demands**

### ***Faroe Islands***

The most problematic current issue in the relationship between Southern Denmark and the Faroe Islands is the attempt to formulate a new constitution for the islands, as the draft – which has been on its way for years – opens with an article proclaiming that “all power rests

with the Faroese people". The draft has been developed in a special commission and was approved by the current Faroese government, which is a coalition between the Unionists and the social Democrats, i.e. the parties which are soft on the independence dimension! The key issue is if one of the three constituting elements of the Danish realm can on its own draft/implement a new constitution, which violates the current constitutional arrangement, as defined by the Danish 1953 constitution and the 1948 (Danish) law on home rule? At the time of writing (August 2011), Faroese authorities have gone back to the drawing room.

### **Greenland**

The development has continued as Greenland in 2009 – after a process that started ten years earlier – became even more “autonomous”<sup>6</sup>, subsequent to a referendum accepting the ideas developed in a special commission and later on accepted unanimously in the *Landsting*. Among these ideas is that the population on Greenland is a nation of its own, something which was stated less clearly before. The *Landsting* has now changed its name to *Inatsisartut*, but it still has 31 members, a number of parties represented and is the basis for Greenland’s government.

The development in the Greenlandic-Danish relationship has been different from that of the Faroese-Danish relationship. The latter formally still rests on the Home Rule legislation from 1948 (even though more issues than in 1948 are now under the regional Faroese rule), while Greenland in 1953 went from being a colony to being an integrated part of the realm, then got home rule in 1979, which was followed by an autonomous status in 2009. This has eased the tensions – e.g. on the very substantial financial subventions from Denmark – as the arrangement include an agreement on a pay-back scheme if (when) the exploitation of natural resources will start generating the expected huge profits.

### **Åland Islands**

Taxation on the regional level is a national fiscal matter which has caused many depreciatory comments among nationalist Finns and dissatisfaction on Åland. According to the prevailing system taxpayers’ money from Åland is collected on a national basis and after an adjustment a certain amount is sent back to the islands. Among Finnish nationalist this is unfair as Åland, according to them, gets more support than other regions. In reality Åland is mostly a net payer which causes disapproval on the islands. To cope with the problem a committee was appointed on Åland in May 2010. It concluded that the authority of taxation should be shifted from Finland to Åland (Åländsk utredningsserie 2010:2). The proposal is not well taken in the Ministry of Finance as business on Åland (shipowners) can get special advantageous treatment. It seems likely that this issue will not be solved in the near future.

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<sup>6</sup> In Danish, the 1979 arrangement is called “hjemmestyre” (home rule), while the 2009 arrangement is called “selvstyre” (autonomy).

In addition, Finland entered the European Union in 1995. The membership was approved in a referendum in Finland and later on in Åland. Åland got a special status as tax free goods could still be sold on ships which landed on Åland on their way to or from Sweden. Without this exception communications to and from Åland would have been violated. However, Åland got no representation in the European Parliament. Originally Finland was represented by 16 MEPs. With new EU member states, the representation has been reduced to the current 13. Although candidates have been nominated, Åland has never succeeded in winning in representation in the European Parliament. Finland, including Åland, is one single constituency, which makes it in practice impossible for a candidate from Åland to be elected. If the representation of autonomous regions issue is not solved on EU level this conflict will remain unsolved for decades to come.

### **Conclusion: More National Integration or Diversification**

The conclusion on the overall issue of whether or not it has been possible to ensure hegemonic control by using the national electoral system is in the Faroese case a clear “No”. The concerns of those, who in November-December 1850 in the Danish parliament debated the problems of having a token, minuscule representation from the Faroe Islands in a parliament, which had the formal power – but not necessarily the insight – to determine all issues, are still at the center of the debate. So it is evident that the use of the national parliamentary system of representation has not worked as an avenue for integration and cooperation between these two parts of the realm (which is of course not to say that it has not at times been a useful means for exchange of opinions and information).

An example of this is that a close *Folketing* election in 1998 meant that the Social Democratic led government coalition was able to continue, because one of the MPs elected from the Faroe Islands was a Social Democrat. The Social Democrats’ surplus over the third largest party on the Faroe Islands was 179 votes, so the argument in Southern Denmark – and in particular among bourgeois voters and commentators – was that it was strange – and not really acceptable – that less than 200 voters from the North Atlantic should decide who should govern Denmark.

The positive development<sup>7</sup> in Greenland apparently owes very little – as was the case for the Faroe Islands – to the way the integration in the national parliamentary system was foreseen to happen and to impact on the development. Leading Greenlandic personalities were in the 1950s eager to secure Greenland’s representation in the *Folketing* to be able to influence the development of Greenland from a formal position, and it also happened that

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<sup>7</sup> The positive development can also be seen in the Greenlandic head of government’s most recent newsletter, which contains no mention of problems between the parts of the “Commonwealth of the Realm” (*Rigsfællesskabet*), as the formal term is.

their numbers counted in government coalition formation situations, but they never became integrated – and were probably never seen – as “ordinary” MPs. And they probably never saw themselves that way, partly because they saw themselves more as representing Greenland than representing a particular party, where most MPs elected in Southern Denmark claim that they primarily represent their party, not their constituency.

Åland follows a similar development. The introduction of a single member constituency which secured one seat in parliament was never a big issue. Much more focus has been on enlargement of autonomy and transfer of more legislative power to the Åland lagting. Voters are more concerned with *Lagting* elections than with national elections which never have mobilised a vast majority to the polls during the era of autonomy. The sole MP is a member of the Swedish parliamentary party and can get support from them. Still s/he is a lonely rider, who needs interpretation service to be able to follow the debates which are almost exclusively in Finnish. Although her/his parliamentary influence is almost non-existent, information important to Åland is gathered and exchanged, also with the support of the Åland “Embassy” (*Ålands kontoret*) in Helsinki. Matters of conflict caused by different legislative interpretations are handled by a special commission.

Our conclusion is that in none of the three cases hegemonic control via electoral systems have succeeded. Political aims of integration to the unitary state by offering seats in parliament have resulted in increased disintegration. Asymmetric federalism as an instrument for problem solving in multicultural states such as Denmark and Finland is relevant in a short run but has failed – at least in these cases – to settle interest conflicts in the long run. Interest conflicts are in all three cases handled by commissions. They act like interest organizations in a corporatist manner. The state with its representatives is present and so are the representatives from the autonomous islands. In addition, in all three cases the territorial units strive for more sovereignty while the most radical elements work for independence.

Those seeking independence are led by an ideological mission whereas those working for enlarged sovereignty are led by pragmatic *pro et cons* concerning finances, security, and other important issues. No organized interests work for closer integration with the nation state. Institutional arrangements and self-rule administration of the territorial units enhance the experience of ethnic divergence to the nation state and bolster territorial identity in the more homogenous islands. To be named a Dane or a Finn might even hurt the person’s national identity. In fact, the development towards an identity separate from the nation state has been reinforced by the development, helped also by visible symbols as an own flag, representation in Nordic Council, own languages and radio and TV channels. This development of ongoing development of identities separate from the nation state was certainly never intended, when the representation of these three regions in the national parliaments was first discussed.

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