Islandness in the Pacific and an emerging ‘Islandian’ sovereignty

– Gerard Prinsen

Contents

1. Islandness in the Pacific
2. Westphalian sovereignty
3. Islands without Westphalian sovereignty
4. Five patterns of Islandian sovereignty vis-à-vis their metropoles
5. Debate
Islandness in the Pacific
Islandness in the Pacific

Pitcairn Islands
Fiji
Tonga
New Caledonia
Marshall Islands
Pacific islands w/ Islandian sovereignty

1. New Caledonia (F, 269,000)
2. French Polynesia (F, 268,000)
3. Guam (USA, 160,000)
4. Fed. States Micronesia (USA, 106,000)
5. American Samoa (USA, 55,000)
6. Marshall Isls (USA, 53,000)
7. Northern Mariana Isls (USA, 52,000)
8. Palau (USA, 21,000)
9. Cook Islands (NZ, 16,000)
10. Wallis & Futuna (Fr, 14,000)
11. Easter Isl/Rapa Nui (Chili, 7,000)
12. Niue (NZ, 1,000)
13. Tokelau (NZ, 1,000)
14. Pitcairn (UK, 50)

T=2,193,000

Francophone: 553,000
Anglophone: 477,000
17th century, Westphalian Peace, European negotiations agree all state representatives are equals – irrespective of state’s size
Westphalian sovereignty: Origins

19th century nationalism: sovereignty belongs to the people born in a territory – not to kings
After 1960, UN declares all peoples have a right to sovereignty – whether they claim it or not.
Westphalian sovereignty... critiqued

- Westphalian concept of sovereignty is ‘Eurocentric’
- ... ‘just organised hypocrisy’; e.g. the ‘war on terror’, or R2P principle
- ... being eliminated by globalisation, moving of people, goods, capital
- ... being displaced by ‘sovereignty without a territory’, i.e. international bodies and regulations (UN, WTO, ICC)
- Latest critique on Westphalian sovereignty: Indigenous concepts of ‘sovereignty without a state’
Islands without Westphalian sovereignty: 45 or up to 100?

On “UN list of 17 territories to be decolonised”… 15 are islands.

• US has ‘constitutional’ bonds with 7 Pacific territories (Hawaii, Guam, NMI, Am. Samoa, Palau, FSM, Marshall Isl.)

• ... New Zealand with 4 Pacific territories (Cook Isl, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa)

• (And France with 3 territories) (New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis & Futuna)
Islands without Westphalian sovereignty: Rejecting it?

In 1983, St Kitts & Nevis were the last island state acquiring full, Westphalian, sovereignty.

Why? When comparing non-self-governing islands with sovereign island states since 1980s: (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006; Dunn, 2011; McElroy & Parry, 2012: 417; Oostindie, 2014)

“... The former consistently remained more affluent ... citizens were healthier with longer life expectancy…”

Arguably, amidst all debates about “sovereignty” ... non-self-governing islands are actively developing a new form of sovereignty.

We see five patterns...
Five patterns of Islandian sovereignty vis-à-vis their metropoles

1. Islanders voting ‘no’ in seventeen referenda on independence since 1980s.
   

   ![New Caledonia independence referendum in 2018](image)

2. Islanders negotiating *continuously* over series of exceptional and ever-evolving constitutional statuses.

   E.g., France has “as many statuses as overseas territories” (Mrgudovic, 2014: 85). New Caledonia has had ten different statuses since 1946 (Mohamed-Gaillard, 2003). Same goes for overseas territories of UK, Netherlands, USA, New Zealand.

3. ‘Get away with’ bending metropolitan rules to local interests.

   E.g., New Caledonia ignores French labour laws since 2009; Aruba acknowledges but does not register same-sex marriages since 2001; and of course there are the schools of Wallis & Futuna…
France’s Law #2004-228 of March 15, 2004 … concerning the principle of the separation of church and state, prohibits the wearing of symbols or garb which show religious affiliation in public primary and secondary schools.
Five patterns of Islandian sovereignty vis-à-vis their metropoles

4. Islanders securing metropolitan transfers to compensate poor domestic revenues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-self-governing islands</th>
<th>metropole</th>
<th>Metropolitan budget support (USD)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget support per capita (USD/cap)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1,500m</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallis &amp; Futuna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>123m</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>10,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Caribbean Municipalities</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>294m</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>11,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Islands</td>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>13.2m</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Helena</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>27.6m</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montserrat</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>27.6m</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palau (CoFA)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>38.3m</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Mariana Islands</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>72.0m</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Islanders signing agreements beneficial to islands, but awkward to metropoles.

E.g., the Faroe Islands signed a Free Trade Agreement with Russia; New Caledonian local bodies sign billion dollar “non-French” nickel deals with China.

And there is off-shore banking. E.g., Niue was in Top-3 of the Mossack Fonseca business (Panama papers, 2015)
Debating...

Do you think an ‘Islandian’ sovereignty is emerging among non-self-governing islands as opposed to the classic continental Westphalian sovereignty?

Why?
References


