

# The Åland Example in Use 1990-2019

## - Where, When, How, Why and by Whom?

Susann Simolin





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## Preface

The concept of ‘the Åland Example’ has been in use and under scrutiny for quite some time now. Its essence and intention were well captured by Harri Holkeri in 2001 when he, as president of the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, said ‘the case of Åland is more a way of thinking than a model’. After several previous efforts, within and around the Åland Islands Peace Institute, to identify and articulate the layers and components of the Åland Example, as a solution to a dispute, as an institutional arrangement, as a thick web of actors and relations, as a set of ideas and principles and as a century long experience, the present report offers a systematic overview of empirical data after the end of the Cold War. Susann Simolin, the author of this report, has analysed a vast number of previously unexplored documents to which unique interviews have been added, in order to flesh out the interpretations of some of those that have worked with the Åland Example in practice in conflict situations throughout the world. Many thanks go to all that have assisted in this regard.

Soon the Åland Example, understood as a solution to a dispute, shall be turning a hundred years old. The pendulum movement between an ‘internal’ and an ‘external’ view on this solution seems to be a fruitful way of responding to the deepening impact of globalisation and complexity also on this archipelago in the middle of the Baltic Sea. Solutions and examples do not stagnate. They live their own evolving and contingent lives. Being able to contribute, however little, to the effort for a more peaceful world, is, in any case, not an opportunity to be missed.

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## Abstract

This study maps 25 conflicts in which the Åland example has been used and analyses eight of them in more depth. It discusses the questions of where, when, how, why, and by whom the Åland example has been used in conflict resolution efforts around the world as well as what has been of interest.

It was found that the Åland example has been used in more conflicts, by more actors, and in more ways than what had previously been documented. Vague reports of the Åland example having been used in Kashmir and Cyprus have now been confirmed and documented, while in cases such as Bougainville, Corsica, Crimea, Gagauzia, Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands, Kosovo, Mindanao, Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka), Tibet, Transdnestrria, Vojvodina, Western Sahara, and Zanzibar, documentation has been collected from various sources, and compiled to provide more comprehensive accounts than were previously available.

The in-depth analysis of eight cases (Corsica, Gagauzia, Cyprus, Kashmir, Mindanao, Northern Ireland, Tamil Eelam, and Transdnestrria) confirmed the conclusions from previous research that there has been an interest in all three of the main components of the Åland example, i.e., autonomy, cultural protection, and demilitarisation. This study also confirms that the idea of the usage of the Åland example is closely linked to the idea of using autonomy as a tool for conflict resolution, and indeed, the autonomy system is also what has attracted the most interest.

It was found that the usage of the Åland example has seven different functions in conflict resolution. It has worked as 1) An incitement to start a peace process or a stimulus for a stalled process, 2) As an argument to promote the cause

of conflict actors, 3) As a conflict map - a list of problems and their potential solutions, 4) As content provider - models for how systems and institutions can be designed and work in practice, 5) A safe and neutral meeting place 6) To illustrate norms, values, and, principles that are considered crucial for successful conflict resolution, and finally, 7) As a tool for conflict transformation at a conflict or an individual level.

What concerns a more concrete “impact” on conflict resolution processes, indications of Åland having been used as a ‘model’ for concrete institutions, treaties, or legislative solutions were found in the cases Bougainville, Krajina, Hong Kong, Transdnestrria, and possibly also in Gagauzia. In addition, Åland may have helped transform conflicts in the cases of Aceh, Bougainville, and Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Åland is said to have potentially contributed to steps in the conflict resolution processes of Nagorno-Karabakh and Corsica.

The findings in this study support the conclusion that ‘model’ is not an appropriate word to capture all the functions of Åland in conflict resolution processes. Åland is, at times, used as a model, illustrating the specific design of a certain system or certain institutions, however, the term ‘model’ cannot include a significant number of other functions Åland has had in conflict resolution. The conclusion is then that Åland is in fact used both as a model and as an example, a term which can refer to general principles or loose templates, and furthermore that the concept of ‘the Åland example’ can be used to cover them both.

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# List of acronyms

ARC	Autonomous Republic of Crimea
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ÅIPI	Åland Islands Peace Institute
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
CAVR	The East Timorese Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation
CEC	Central Election Commission of Moldova
CEO	Chief executive officer
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
COST	Cooperation in Science and Technology
CPP	Community of Peace People
ECMI	European Centre for Minority Rights
ETSG	East Timor Study Group
EU	European Union
EURAC	European Academy Bozen/Bolzano
FER	Forum for Ethnic Relations
FLNC	Front de Libération Nationale de la Corse/Corsican National Liberation Front
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/Free Aceh Movement
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE)
ICFY	International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia
IOM	International Organisation of Migration
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCAFP	National Committee on American Foreign Policy
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NKR	Nagorno-Karabakh Republic
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PATRIR	The Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania
PMR	Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RECAST	Reappraising Intellectual Debates on Civic Rights and Democracy in Europe
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program

UCK	Kosovo Liberation Army
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
US(A)	United States (of America)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WISCOMP	Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
YUKOM	Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights

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# 1. Introduction

In the 1920s, a dispute between Finland and Sweden over the Åland Islands was peacefully resolved through a compromise which included autonomy, minority protection, as well as demilitarisation and neutralisation for the islands. It was also established that the Åland Islands should remain part of Finland. The conflict was solved in an international conflict resolution process headed by the League of Nations. The various solutions in that process also included international guarantees. Today, the Åland Islands form an autonomous, demilitarised, neutralised, and Swedish-speaking region in bilingual Finland. The 'Åland example' - a term used to conceptualise these processes and institutions and how they have evolved over time - highlight that Åland has functioned and still functions as a source of inspiration and has been used as an example in conflict resolution processes in many parts of the world.

Writing about Åland with regards to the Kashmir conflict, Indian lawyer and journalist, Noorani, expresses rather vividly how Åland can serve as an inspiration:

“One had read the cold texts of pertinent documents. A visit to Åland last month, during which this writer met a host of people, from the Governor downwards, brought home the vibrancy of this remarkable autonomy and the pride which the people take in providing the world an inspiring example of conflict resolution in a manner acceptable to the two disputant States and the people of the disputed territory.”<sup>1</sup>

1 “It is possible to find a solution to the Kashmir is-

Reflections of the kind demonstrated by Noorani inspire research about the use of the Åland example in other parts of the world, research that can be developed on the basis of the following questions: Where, when, in which kind of processes, how, and by whom has the Åland example been used, and when has the example been considered useful or not? The answers to these questions have been sporadically documented over the years in research publications and articles. A recent attempt to do so is the publication “The Åland Example and Its Components - Relevance for International Conflict Resolution”.<sup>2</sup> However, until today, there has not been any systematic review of the usage of the Åland example globally, which is why the present report aims to contribute with more systematically collected data and analysis.

This study was funded by the Åland Cultural Foundation and the Åland Parliament Jubilee Fund. It has been supported by the Åland Islands Peace Institute (ÅIPI) and was conducted between 2018 and 2020.<sup>3</sup>

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sue on the lines of the agreement on the Åland Islands between Finland and Sweden, which was an international accord settling a territorial dispute on the basis of the status quo.” Frontline 2005. A G Noorani 2005 “The Ålands model”. Frontline Volume 22 - Issue 02, Jan. 15 - 28, 2005. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/static/html/fl2202/stories/20050128000808000.htm>. Accessed 12.5.2019.

2 Spiliopoulou Åkermark (ed.) 2011.

3 Professor Kjell-Åke Nordquist has functioned as inspiration and supervisor for this study both during his time as Acting Director of ÅIPI and after his term ended. As Director of ÅIPI, Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark has granted working time in addition to research leave, and ‘head space’ for this study, as well as invaluable scientific advice. Petra Granholm, Research Coordinator at ÅIPI, has also been a great support. Several interns at ÅIPI have assisted in this study, most prominently Lauren Stevens, who made a significant contribution to the literature search.

This study starts with a brief background in chapter 2 explaining when and how the Åland Islands were granted their special status under international law, and when it started to be used as an example. Chapter 2 also discusses how the concept 'the Åland example' has been interpreted and how the usage of the Åland example has been analysed in previous research. Chapter 3 includes some methodological reflections of concepts used in this study - why are all cases examined labelled 'conflicts', what is meant by 'usage', and what role do the concepts of 'diversity' and 'autonomy' play in this context? This chapter also explains what materials have been used and how cases were selected.

Chapter 4 maps 25 cases in which the Åland example has been used. Each entry endeavours to provide a conflict background and information about which actors have been involved in using the Åland example, what form these processes have taken, and, if known, which parts of the Åland example have been considered interesting.

Based on the 25 cases, chapter 5 discusses where, when, and in which kind of conflicts the Åland example has been used, whereas the questions of which actors have been involved and in which kind of processes are left to chapter 6. This chapter builds on in-depth analyses of fewer cases, namely eight conflicts are included. This chapter also discusses what about the Åland example that has been of interest in each case, and what material contributions the Åland example might have provided.

In chapter 7, the scope is again broadened, and examples are chosen from among all the 25 cases. The role of the Åland example in conflict resolution processes is analysed - not only in terms of material contributions, but also at the levels of processes and principles.

The concluding chapter 8 endeavours to more comprehensively answer the initial questions of where, when, how, who, and why the Åland ex-

ample has been used in conflict resolution efforts around the world. Chapter 8 also discusses to what extent Åland might have concretely contributed to conflict resolution processes as a tool or inspiration, or in other words, whether it has had an impact. Finally, it is discussed what factors may affect whether the Åland example will also be of interest in conflict resolution processes in the future.

## 2. The Åland example and its ‘usage’ - in practice and research

### *2.1 Why Åland has autonomy, demilitarisation and minority protection*

Åland consists of around 6,500 islands and has approximately 30,000 inhabitants. Approximately 90 percent of the inhabitants speak Swedish as their first language. Presently, around five percent speak Finnish as first language and around five percent speak one (or more) of around 50 other languages.<sup>4</sup> The strategically located Åland Islands, which at the time of the aforementioned conflict were Russian, were demilitarised in 1856 through an international convention. After Finland became an independent state in 1917 and a dispute arose between Finland and Sweden over the sovereignty of the islands, the League of Nations decided in 1921 that Åland should remain under Finnish sovereignty but be granted autonomy with guarantees for the preservation of its Swedish language and culture.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Åland’s demilitarisation was strengthened through neutralisation of the islands in times of war. The historical experiences of an international conflict resolution process, the combination of autonomy, minority protection, and demilitarisation/neutralisation, and the development of these regimes over time together form the background for the international interest in Åland in conflict resolution efforts.

### *2.2 Why Åland became interesting for conflict resolution*

Åland’s potential as an example of conflict resolution was highlighted in the latter part of the 1980s at the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union. At that time, questions of how

to address the issue of minorities and national groups became crucial when new national borders emerged or re-emerged. The reshuffle of international political relations at the end of the Cold War concurred with, or spurred, a shift in perceptions of autonomy. Weller and Wolff maintain that while autonomy had previously been considered a first step towards secession, “by the beginning of the 1990s, autonomy came to be presented as the only effective guarantee for the maintenance of the territorial unity of states threatened by ethnic strife”.<sup>6</sup>

In this new global context, Finland as well as the Åland Islands shared an interest in promoting the Åland Islands’ historic experience, i.e., the Åland example. A Contact Group between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Åland Government was established in 1998 by then Minister for Foreign Affairs Tarja Halonen in order to “develop and increase the use of the Åland example in international contexts as well as to further enhance information about and contacts with Åland”.<sup>7</sup> According to Ålandic officials, an increased interest in visits to Åland was noticed at the time, and since the visits often came from conflict areas and were sensitive to handle for an autonomous unit, it was considered a safety measure to involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ålandic officials main-

<sup>6</sup> Weller and Wolff 2005, p.262.

<sup>7</sup> There were also several other important reasons for establishing the group. Political actors interviewed for a report on the Contact Group’s first 20 years said that, among other things, there was a need for a platform to seek joint positions on the status of Åland, which both Åland and Finland could support, as well as for jointly formulating those positions, e.g., in information materials. Simolin 2018b, p.13.

tain that Åland was only able to be reactive in response to requests that came, and there was a hope that Finland, with the formation of the Contact Group, could become more proactive in promoting the Åland example.<sup>8</sup> Over the years, the Contact Group or its members individually have been involved in over 400 visits and seminars related to the Åland example.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.3 *The concept 'The Åland example'*

In the beginning, the concept of 'the Åland model' was utilised, but the idea of a fixed model was not well received, and instead the more open concept of the 'Åland example' was introduced.<sup>10</sup> Granlund assesses that this term is commonly used in cases where Åland is used as an international example of a successful minority solution.<sup>11</sup> Eriksson mentions the following as reasons why politicians, journalists, and officials from all over the world turn to Åland to gain knowledge of the region's status: the combination of autonomy, demilitarisation, neutralisation, the duration of the regimes, and the fact that Åland's autonomous status is a direct result of a conflict that is difficult to resolve.<sup>12</sup>

Hannikainen and Horn maintain that Åland is generally discussed as an example of successful conflict resolution in relation to communities with minority problems and risk of separatism.<sup>13</sup> Åland politician, Barbro Sundback, states that Åland is discussed as "a model, example, success and role model for democratic participation".<sup>14</sup>

The concept of 'The Åland Example' has most notably been analysed by Spiliopoulou Åkermark, who describes it as a notion that understands the autonomy as one component and the

demilitarisation and neutralisation as another, and finally the guarantees for language and culture as a third component included in one and the same regime of Åland. The notion further considers that a conflict between Finland and Sweden over Åland was peacefully solved in the 1920s, which is something that considers the longevity of the arrangements. The term is used to emphasise that the regime of Åland might work as a source of inspiration, a platform for constructive discussions and even concrete negotiations in crisis management elsewhere in the world.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the interpreted concept is extensive, and can at an overarching level serve, as an example of factors important when attempting to solve ethno-political conflicts or sovereignty disputes. In other words, it can serve as an example of how a minority under specific circumstances can live peacefully within a majority, in this case, the Swedish-speaking population of Åland within Finland. At an abstract, principle level, it can be considered as an example of the basic premise of accepting a compromise and learning to live with it - something which Spiliopoulou Åkermark describes as the essence of autonomy solutions.<sup>16</sup>

The concept is thus used both to describe the contents of the Åland solution and to describe the phenomena of Åland being used as an example in other parts of the world, which may be the more common interpretation.

### 2.4 *Previous research*

The publication "The Åland Example and Its Components - Relevance for International Conflict Resolution" (2011), which presents results from a research project coordinated by ÅIPI between 2010 and 2011, documents and analyses how the Åland example and its three main components (autonomy, demilitarisation, and neutralisation, as well as language and cul-

8 Simolin 2018b, p.13.

9 Contact Group list of visits, seminars, etc. related to the Åland example. ("Förteckning över besök, seminarier, etc. med anknytning till Ålandsexemplet i kronologisk ordning").

10 Simolin 2018b, p.9.

11 Granlund 2010, p.3.

12 Eriksson et al. 2006, p.31.

13 Hannikainen and Horn 1997, p.99.

14 Seminar report 2006, p.31.

15 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.8.

16 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.20, p.196.

tural safeguards) have been used in specific disputes and conflict situations, including in the Caucasus, in Kashmir, Japan, East Timor, Tibet, and in the Israel-Palestine conflict. It concludes that the Åland example has predominantly been used in three ways; as a set of principles, as an example of institutional design, and as a physical and symbolic meeting place.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, the use of the Åland example is mentioned in other research publications and individual articles, often briefly or with a focus on an individual case. The 2010-2011 project did not present a complete survey on all the conflicts in which the Åland example has been discussed nor the forms in which the Åland example has been used, but rather identified a number of examples that demonstrate how the use of self-government as a conflict resolution tool works in practice, as well as the role of the Åland example in Nordic diplomacy.

Furthermore, previous research it has analysed how actors officially representing Åland have used the example both for altruistic reasons to help others and out of self-interest to strengthen Åland's international contacts and thereby its negotiation position vis-à-vis Finland.<sup>18</sup> Finnish officials' and diplomats' use or non-use of the example as part of Finnish diplomacy has also been mapped to some extent.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, Öst 2012.

18 Granlund 2010.

19 Öst 2012, Wigell 2013.

### 3. Methodological reflections

#### 3.1 Concepts

What does it mean to ‘use’ the Åland example? The concept of the ‘usage’ of Åland as an example is interpreted very extensively in this study. All forms of efforts to compare a conflict region to Åland or to use Ålandic experiences for inspiration in relation to conflict resolution efforts are included in this study - be it informal discussions among diplomats, a single seminar, or an effort by a third party to introduce the topic in mediation processes.

This study maps instances when actors from conflict regions have encountered the Åland example. ‘Contact’ has been defined as a documented instance of when a person ‘living the conflict’ - either living in or representing the state claiming the disputed territory or living in or representing the disputed territory - has been informed of or searched for information about the Åland example in relation to the conflict situation. It should be noted that what is identified is contact with the idea of the Åland example and its contents, not necessarily physical contact with the Åland Islands or with Ålanders.

In which contexts has the Åland example then been used? Headings from some of the 14 seminars that the Contact Group has arranged for international target groups can provide indications. In 1999, Åland was discussed as an “Inspiration for Contemporary Crisis Management” at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. In 2000, a seminar on “Autonomy as a Conflict-Solving Mechanism” was arranged at the Parliament of Sweden. In 2001, the title of a seminar arranged at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York was “Autonomy an Alternative to Secession? A Seminar on the Åland Islands as an Example for Peaceful Governance”. In Ge-

neva in 2011 and the European Parliament in Brussels in 2012, it was respectively discussed as “a precedent for successful international dispute settlement” and “a Tool for Resolving Conflict”. When the Åland example has been scrutinised at seminars and by scholars, a variety of different concepts and descriptions have apparently thus been used. Åland is said to be used as an inspiration and possible tool, for example for conflict resolution processes, for crisis management, for peaceful governance, or for dispute settlement.

In this study, a primarily conflict resolution perspective is taken, and all the situations in which Åland has been discussed are labelled as ‘conflicts’. This is the case even though the term might not be generally used regarding some of the cases examined, and even though not all of them have included armed conflict.<sup>20</sup> An extensive definition of the concept ‘conflict’ is used, understanding it as including the three components actors, actions, and an incompatibility (an explicit issue of contestation in political

20 The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)’s online encyclopaedia on armed conflicts and organised violence distinguishes between ‘state-based conflict’ as opposed to ‘non-state conflict’, where none of the warring parties are a government. A state-based armed conflict is defined as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.” See Pettersson 2019.

The UCDP thus only maps conflicts which have resulted in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. This is not the situation in several of the conflicts in which the Åland example has been used, in which only low-level or no violence at all has occurred in many cases. While situations where armed violence has been used are qualitatively different than non-violent situations, and as Wallensteen (2002, p.24) points out, casualties are significant in the study of conflict resolution, it is still possible to compare violent and non-violent conflicts as processes and at a conceptual level.

terms)<sup>21</sup>, and defining it as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources”.<sup>22</sup> It can be noted that ‘strive’ is a vague concept, which can include warfare as well as very modest efforts to attempt to change a situation. Defined in this extensive manner, ‘conflict’ is a rather neutral notion, whereas parties themselves may go for less neutral and at times opposing definitions - violent activities which are understood as terrorism by one party may be depicted by the other as a liberation struggle. No assessment is made concerning which terminology is most justified in such cases, since the aim of this study focuses on analysing how the Åland example has been used in a collection of diverse situations that do have some basic features in common, which is why a broad definition of the relatively neutral term ‘conflict’ is used.

According to the definitions in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), in an intra-state or internal conflict, the government and its allies are always fighting on *side A* in a conflict, and the opposition organisations and their allies are fighting on *side B*. An opposition organisation is defined as “any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force to influence the outcome of the stated incompatibility...”.<sup>23</sup> There can be more than one opposition group fighting for the same cause, or at least a similar one. UCDP maps all armed opposition groups

21 See Wallensteen 2002, p.24. According to the UCDP, “theoretically an incompatibility is a disagreement between at least two parties where their demands cannot be met by the same resources at the same time. In other words, their positions are incompatible, since both sides lay claim to the same scarce resource(s). Such a disagreement is central to when social conflicts emerge, since an unlimited supply of a resource can satisfy all parties for all time.” [https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/faq/#What\\_is\\_an\\_incompatibility](https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/faq/#What_is_an_incompatibility). Accessed 3.6.2020.

22 Wallensteen 2002, p.16.

23 Pettersson 2019, p.1.

but does not systematically collect data on conflict issues and key actor characteristics in non-state conflicts. For this study, it is not the various armed opposition groups that are of core interest, but rather *opposition groups* in a wider sense; groups, movements, or communities that have contesting claims to the state, regardless of whether they are armed or not.

How can state-based conflicts over territory which include an aspect of diversity then be solved? There has been growing recognition by the international community that decentralisation, power-sharing, and power-dividing strategies can provide appropriate tools for managing such tensions. However, the idea of using such measures as a tool for conflict resolution has also been questioned, the fundamental issue being if it is really contributing to conflict resolution, or rather worsening underlying ethnic tensions and fuelling secession claims.<sup>24</sup>

In 2005, Weller and Wolff assessed that autonomy “is increasingly proposed as the principal remedy for the resolution of self-determination conflicts”.<sup>25</sup> Keating agrees that “in recent years there has been a growing, albeit not universal, consensus on the desirability and legitimacy of limited self-government within the state and broader supranational and transnational orders”.<sup>26</sup> Keil and Anderson conclude that “there has been growing recognition by the international community that decentralisation, power-sharing, and power-dividing strategies provide the appropriate tools for managing ethnocultural tensions”.<sup>27</sup>

However, based on the results of their 2005 publication, in which several cases are analysed, Weller and Wolff conclude that autonomy does not have an unambiguous track record of either success or failure.<sup>28</sup> In an overview chapter dis-

24 Keil and Anderson 2018, p.9.

25 Weller and Wolff 2005, p.262.

26 Keating 2012, p.13.

27 Keil and Anderson 2018, p.7.

28 Weller and Wolff, 2005, p.236.

Discussing decentralisation as a tool for conflict resolution, Keil and Anderson promote a similar conclusion.<sup>29</sup> As a rule, scholars conclude that autonomy as a tool for conflict resolution has a mixed record of failure or success. Autonomy is not a universal remedy, but the question that must be asked is rather under which conditions autonomy succeeds or fails.<sup>30</sup>

Conflicts in relation to which autonomy is considered as a potential device for conflict resolution are typically discussed in ethnopolitical or ethnocultural terms.<sup>31</sup> It is repeatedly concluded that ethnicity or identity issues are among the causes of a conflict, while a change of perspective might imply that it is rather the state's inability to accommodate diversity when conflicts occur. Nonetheless, the links between ethnicity, identity, minorities, and demands for independence or autonomy are complex and cannot be discussed in simplistic terms. While ethnicity and identity may be important aspects in relation to the conflicts studied here, they are not necessarily the sole or even the main reasons behind the conflict. To cover this dimension without overemphasising it, 'aspects of diversity' will be highlighted in the conflict analysis below.

### 3.2 Sources and case selection

The Contact Group between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Åland Government's list of groups and individuals who have received information about the Åland example since 1992 was an important starting point for this study. The list includes visits to Åland, seminars about or including information on the Åland example both on Åland and internationally, as well as research publications related to the Åland example.<sup>32</sup> The full list contains

29 Keil and Anderson 2018, p.7.

30 Keil and Anderson 2018, pp.7-9, 16. Schulte 2015, Schulte 2020, Keating 2012, p.13.

31 See, for example, Schulte 2020, Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.7, Keil and Anderson 2018, p.4.

32 The list was a natural starting point since it selects and specifically compiles the kind of contacts

461 entries for the years 1992-2018.<sup>33</sup> After removing posts that were assessed as irrelevant for this study<sup>34</sup>, 272 entries remained, and a basic list of conflicts in which the Åland example might have been referred to was formed.<sup>35</sup>

While many more cases have been mentioned in the materials, only 25 cases are included in this study. In these cases, adequate information

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that are interesting for this study. However, it does not cover all contacts related to the Åland example, since only it includes contacts in which the Contact Group or its individual members have been involved, it does not cover contacts before 1992 (in the 80s they were already quite numerous, according to the former Director general of the Åland Parliament, Lars Ingmar Johansson), and it is suspected that not all visits from the 90s are documented, since they were documented in retrospect. However, it was assessed that while not covering all individual events and people involved, the list should suffice to lead the author to most of the cases in which the Åland example has been used and thus function as a starting point for searching for more information elsewhere. Discussions with informants and email requests have completed the picture. In addition, information of contacts that have not involved Ålandic actors were found in other sources. In summary, while it cannot be claimed that the report covers all cases, contacts, or individual events, it is assessed that enough information was found to be able to make a valid selection of cases and fulfil the aims of the report. For studies aiming to more comprehensively map all contacts from the 80s onwards in which Ålandic actors have been involved, the Annual Report of the Åland Government, which briefly lists various kinds of visits to Åland, may serve as a starting point. Local newspapers on Åland have often also covered visits and they have not been systematically examined here.

33 When entries in the visitors' list were counted, entries until 2018 but no later were included, since the list was updated with entries from 2019 only very recently. However, visits from 2019 are mentioned in the case descriptions.

34 Such as research publication and research seminars in which the Åland example was discussed as a part of a wider theme, and visits by students or researchers in which the Åland example were only a limited part of a wider academic discussion.

35 Only if it was noted that a visit came from a specific country or region, or if the theme of the meeting was clearly related to specific countries or regions, then they were kept in the list. Examples of entries that have been excluded include entries about research reports, research seminars, or meetings with mixed international groups where the Åland example or themes such as autonomy or minority protection were discussed without being clearly linked to specific cases or regions.

could be accessed and confirmed, and it was assessed that the information could be conveyed without risking the safety of individuals or the dynamics of ongoing peace processes. Cases about which very scarce information was found, for which the reason for contact is not known, or for which it is suspected that the visit was only very remotely linked to the Åland example, were left out of this study.<sup>36</sup> Established autonomies/federal entities in the West, such as Azores, the Basque country, the Faroe Islands, Mallorca, Quebec, Sardinia, Scotland, and South Tyrol have also been left aside. It is considered that these regions and Åland learn from each other in other ways than those with newly established autonomies or conflict regions.

The information in the visitors' list is generally limited to the date, the title of the individual or name of the institution whose representatives are visiting Åland, information on the format of the visit (study visit, seminar, etc.), the name of a seminar or report, and in some cases, the name of the visitor. In this study, the list has chiefly served as an indicator of which conflict regions have demonstrated an interest in the Åland example, but more comprehensive information had to be acquired from other sources.

Previous research publications in which the Åland example has been the main or among the main topics and seminar reports from the Contacts Group's seminars have also served as a starting point for this study.<sup>37</sup> In some cases, the

36 These cases include Burma, Chechnya, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Kaliningrad, Kenya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Portugal, Thailand, and West Papua/Indonesia.

37 This literature includes 'The Åland Example and Its Components - Relevance for International Conflict Resolution' (2011), some of the articles in a special issue on territorial self-government and the Åland example in the *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* (2013), a report on the Åland example by Granlund (2010), a study of the activities and functions of the Contact Group over 20 years (Simolin 2018b), and reports on the Contact Group's seminars on the Åland example, which are listed among the references.

usage of the Åland example had been well documented in previous research, and while these cases are also summarised in this study, no or few efforts were made to find more information, since it was considered more valuable to aspire to document cases that were less well explored. Examples of cases which are thoroughly documented in previous research efforts are Abkhazia and South Ossetia, East Timor, Nagorno-Karabakh, Northern Territories/Kuril Islands, and Okinawa.<sup>38</sup>

Through database searches, searches in ÅIPI's library, searches in the library and databases of the European Academy Bozen/Bolzano (EURAC)<sup>39</sup>, and online searches on the various cases, relevant literature lists were compiled for each case and information about the usage of the Åland example in the selected case was added.<sup>40</sup> Much of the data used for this study was found in public sources, such as newspaper articles, research publications, or press releases. ÅIPI's internal archive turned out to be a very valuable source of information. Here, documentation of

38 Stephan 2011 "Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Dialogue Discontinued" in *The Åland Example and Its Components - Relevance for International Conflict Resolution*. Interview with Finnish diplomat Terhi Hakala; Nordquist 2011 "The Åland Islands as a Case in the East Timor Decolonisation Process"; Nordquist 2013 "Autonomy, Local Voices and Conflict Resolution: Lessons from East Timor"; Öst 2011. "Åland and the Nagorno-Karabakh Negotiations in the South Caucasus. Interview with Swedish diplomat Jan Eliasson; Ohnishi 2011 "The Åland Example from Four Perspectives in Japan: Area Studies, the Nitobe Saite Discourse, the Northern Territories and Okinawa".

39 In April 2019, the author had the opportunity for a two-week stay at the Institute for Minority Rights at EURAC Research in Bozen/Bolzano in the framework of a short-term scientific mission funded by the EU Horizon 2020 and an action sponsored by Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) - Reappraising Intellectual Debates on Civic Rights and Democracy in Europe (RECAST).

40 The systematic literature search general on the level 'Åland example + conflict'. While there's been no systematic database search per case, an online search of 'name of the case + Åland example' has been conducted.

many of the seminars, projects, visits, or such planned events in which ÅIPI has been involved over the years has been assembled.

For information about the context of the individual cases, the UCDP online encyclopaedia, the International Crisis Group, and other relevant research or academic sources were used.<sup>41</sup> According to the written sources, third party actors or individuals who have been active in discussing the Åland example with actors from various conflict regions were contacted and interviews were conducted.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, emails with requests for information about the usage of the Åland example in specific cases were sent to a number of experts who the literature indicates have either studied a certain case or have been active in conflict resolution efforts.

### *3.3 Organisation of the presentation of cases*

In this study, the regional level and the disputed territory is of core interest, which is why they are ordered firstly by the name of the region and secondly the state or states involved in the conflict. Furthermore, a state can be involved in more than one conflict, and in this research only the specific ones in which the Åland example has been used are of interest, which is best mir-

rored through focusing on the region, and not on states. This study follows the UCDP praxis, according to which the name of a territory used by the 'opposing' organisation will be used in cases in which the conflicting parties use different names for a disputed territory. One reason for this is that this name is often more widely recognised by the public. Another reason is that there are cases in which the disputed territories do not have an official name.<sup>43</sup> For consistency in this logic, when two countries claim the same territory, the name of the 'opposing' state is mentioned first in order, and not the name of the state which de facto controls the territory. Consequently, in cases in which two countries use two distinct names for the region, e.g., Falklands Islands for the United Kingdom (UK) and Islas Malvinas for Argentina, or Kuril Islands for Russia and Northern Territories for Japan, the name used by the 'opposing' state comes first. In two cases, this study deviates from the UCDP, which uses the names Dniestr and Eelam, while Transdnestrria and Tamil Eelam are considered more common and are chosen here in reflection of the regional level.

41 Some particular seminal publications discussing cases of territorial autonomy or power-sharing arrangements more broadly have been used as sources regarding the background of the conflicts: Ghai and Woodman 2013 "Practicing Self-government"; Hannum 1990 "Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination"; Requejo and Nagel 2011 "Federalism beyond federations"; Salat, Constantin, Osipov and Székely 2014 "Autonomy Arrangements around the World", Walsh 2018 "Territorial Self-government as a Conflict Management Tool"; Weller and Nobbs 2010 "Asymmetric Autonomy and the Settlement of Ethnic conflicts"; Weller and Wolff 2005 "Autonomy, Self-governance and Conflict Resolution. Innovative approaches to institutional design in divided societies".

42 A list of interviews conducted can be found in the references list. Interviewees, if they so wished, have had the opportunity to comment before publishing.

43 Pettersson et al. 2019.

## 4. The Åland example in use - an overview of 25 cases

This chapter includes an overview of 25 cases in which the Åland example has been used. The case descriptions in this chapter include a conflict background that discusses which actors have been involved in the conflict (states, non-state actors), the incompatibility (territory, aspects of diversity), and the level of violence. It is mapped which actors have been involved in the processes in which the Åland example has been used and which form these processes have taken. In addition, the entries contain - when known - information about which parts of the Åland example that have been considered interesting in the respective cases. The cases are named after the region the conflict centres around and are sorted in alphabetical order.<sup>44</sup>

### 4.1 *Abkhazia and South Ossetia - Georgia*

There are several documented instances of visits from Georgia to Åland or vice versa, and there has been some interest of Åland in relation to power-sharing, autonomy, and minority issues promoted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the peace process.

The two conflicts are addressed here in one entry, since the data does not reveal which contacts were related to one or the other case.<sup>45</sup> In both cases, the dissolution of the Soviet Union gave rise to an armed conflict over the regions which strived for independence from the newly independent Georgia. After 1993, these intrastate conflicts have remained 'frozen' for a long time, seeing sporadic violence and little progress in negotiations. In August 2008, ten-

<sup>44</sup> For more information about the praxis on naming the conflicts, see section 3.3.

sions heightened when the Russian military intervened in the Georgian government.<sup>46</sup>

There are nine documented instances of contacts between Åland and Georgia or Southern Caucasus, including participants from Georgia during 1996-2011, but it is not always known to what extent these contacts have specifically concerned Abkhazia or South Ossetia. The first documented contact date is in 1996 at a conference in Jerusalem on the theme: "Building Bridges to Peace in Transcaucasia", in which the Director general of the Åland Parliament Lars Ingmar Johansson, and researcher Tarja Väyrynen, who represented the ÅIPI, presented the Åland model. The conference mainly concerned Nagorno-Karabakh but also included discussions on South Ossetia.<sup>47</sup> The conference was followed up by a peace conference held in 1997 on Åland, again mostly related to Nagorno-Karabakh but also covering South Ossetia. At a press conference a participant from South Ossetia assessed that Åland was the best option for South Ossetia.<sup>48</sup> Later contacts included NGO cooperation between ÅIPI and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, an academic visit, and a visit from a television team. Mikhail Saakashvili, who made the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity a top priority when he was elected president in 2004, made a visit to the Åland Islands in 2007.<sup>49</sup>

Ambassador Terhi Hakala, who was Head of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation

<sup>46</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/393>; <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/392SUMMARY>. Accessed 21.4.2019.

<sup>47</sup> Johansson, email 15.6.2020.

<sup>48</sup> Johansson, email 15.6.2020.

<sup>49</sup> Stephan 2011, 2013.

in Europe (OSCE) mission from 2007 until the mission was terminated in June 2009, has confirmed that the Åland example had been promoted by NGOs in relation to the two conflicts. Hakala says that these NGOs, which have not been specified, drew attention to the Åland example when promoting autonomy and minority protection and reasoned that the Åland example had shown its capability to solve a difficult issue over time.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, it seems that Hakala had received questions about Åland, which she answered, but without taking an active role in promoting the example.

The information of the content of the discussions is limited, but Stephan (2011) maintains that the discussions were generally limited to the academic level and focused largely on basic principles.<sup>51</sup> Different models for power-sharing were studied; autonomy or non-autonomy, federalism or non-federalism.<sup>52</sup> Demilitarisation was also an issue in the negotiations<sup>53</sup>, but there is no documentation of Åland having been considered in this context.

#### 4.2 Aceh - Indonesia

Aceh, located on the northern tip of the Island of Sumatra in northern Indonesia, has had an intermittent autonomous status since the independence of Indonesia in 1948. In the territorial conflict over Aceh, which stems from economic and religious grievances, the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/Free Aceh Movement (GAM) first fought for independence in the 1970s, when it was defeated by government troops, and again from 1990. Negotiations starting in 2000 resulted in ceasefires and a peace agreement in 2005. Indonesia legislated on autonomy for Aceh in 2011, and one of the provisions in the peace agreement, which was brokered by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, was self-governance for Aceh.<sup>54</sup>

Documented contacts between Åland and Indonesia have been found in some six cases, of which three are confirmed to have concerned Aceh. In 2003, ÅIPI arranged a seminar on secession conflicts with participants from Aceh, West Papua, and Jakarta. The participants represented various NGOs working for peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Aceh and Papua.<sup>55</sup> In 2005, the embassy of Finland in Djakarta invited ÅIPI to a seminar on West Papua and Aceh, to which NGOs, politicians, and civil servants were also invited to attend.<sup>56</sup>

At a seminar about international conflict resolution organised by the representations of Finland and Indonesia to the UN and the International Peace Institute in New York in 2012, Indonesian ambassador I. Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, who had been involved in the Aceh peace negotiations, is reported to have said that the autonomy system of Åland was considered interesting and was thoroughly studied in this context. In the same account, it is also noted that Aceh's influence in international matters is almost identical to Åland's, but it is not explicitly claimed that it was inspired by Åland.<sup>57</sup>

Stepan (2013) confirms that Åland was an inspiration in the Aceh peace negotiations, and according to his account, to a rather profound degree. In 2007, Stepan interviewed one of the GAM negotiators in Helsinki, Nur Djuli, who gave the following personal account of why he came to believe that an arrangement in line with the one on the Åland Islands could lead to self-government.

“One evening, he and some other GAM negotiators were sitting with Ahtisaari looking out at the sea. They respected Ahtisaari, who, among

50 Stephan 2011, p.174.

51 Stephan, 2011, p.174.

52 Stephan 2011 p.174-175, 2013, p.120.

53 Stephan 2013, p.135.

54 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp>.

[uu.se/conflict/366](http://uu.se/conflict/366). Accessed 1.3.2020.

55 ÅIPI internal archive.

56 ÅIPI internal archive.

57 Nya Åland, Op-ed by Elisabeth Nauclér 23.1.2012.

many other accomplishments, had been nominated for a Nobel Prize for Peace for his peace-keeping achievements in the Balkans as a high official of the United Nations. Ahtisaari noticed a ship going by and asked Djuli if he recognized the flag the ship was flying. Djuli said he did not. Ahtisaari said the flag was from the Åland Islands. Ahtisaari went on to say that the Åland Islands were a part of the unitary state of Finland with special self-governing arrangements. He said that he, as president, could not send a Finnish ship to the Åland Islands without the permission of the legislature of the Åland Islands. He said further that no major domestic law or treaty affecting the Åland Islands could go into effect without the consultation and consent of the government and legislature of the Åland Islands. Djuli insisted that he and some other GAM negotiators literally did not sleep that night. They spent the night Googling the Åland Islands and then Greenland. They may or may not have heard the word “federacy” before, but they increasingly began to feel that the Finnish-Åland arrangement might produce a serious form of “self-government” for Aceh.”<sup>58</sup>

According to Stepan, now “the bargaining situation in Helsinki was no longer a zero-sum one. A positive-sum game was now on the table”. In the view of GAM, an Åland Islands-style solution would fulfil many of its goals concerning self-government and at the same time the government’s central goal of keeping Aceh inside the unitary state of Indonesia would be met. Subsequently, an agreement that could be accepted by both parties, the Memorandum of Understand-

58 Stepan 2013, p.243-244.

ing (MoU) between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement was signed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2005.<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, while Stepan gives this vivid account of the positive outcomes of using the Åland example in relation to Aceh, some Finnish actors who’ve been involved in the peace negotiations are reported to perceive the usage of the Åland example in a much more negative light. According to some of the Finnish actors that were involved and interviewed by Wigell, “it complicated the efforts to get the government side representatives to trust in the peace talks, as the Åland solution to them appeared as overly generous to the minority side”.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.3 Bougainville – Papua Nya Guinea

Åland has been referred to in relation to Bougainville on at least three separate occasions. The conflict is a state-based, intrastate conflict over a territory in which the population has a distinct local culture and the islands have always had more in common with the nearby Solomon Islands. The incompatibility is also linked to mining, which has caused environmental degradation, and a large influx of foreign workers. According to locals, the government has not provided them sufficient compensation for loss of land and other disadvantages.

When the former Australian colony Papua New Guinea (PNG) became independent in 1975, the Bougainville provincial government voted for independence, but this was blocked by both the Australian administration and the PNG government. The rebels, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), initiated an armed struggle for independence in 1989. A 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement stipulated large-scale autonomy for the island and a referendum on possible independence.<sup>61</sup> In a non-binding ref-

59 Stepan 2013, p.243-244.

60 Wigell 2013, p.81.

61 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/36>. Accessed 2.10.2019.

erendum held in 2019, an overwhelming majority voted for independence, but the referendum will be followed by consultations and the outcome is not clear.<sup>62</sup> Still, large areas of the Bougainville island remain outside government control.<sup>63</sup>

In 1990, Swedish professor, Peter Wallensteen, was asked by a regional thinktank to come to Bougainville Island to help solve the ongoing conflict. In a conversation with the leader of the BRA, Sam Kauona, Wallensteen discussed self-rule and independence. "I told him of the Åland Islands, located between Sweden and Finland. It made him interested, not only because these were also islands, albeit distant. What interested him was the demilitarisation and the autonomy of the islands."<sup>64</sup> Wallensteen contributed to accomplish a ceasefire agreement, which was to be followed by peace negotiations, but no negotiations were started, and violence broke out again.

In peace negotiations in 1998, attention was again drawn to the Åland example. Ghai reports that:

"... both parties agreeing to focus on enhanced autonomy for Bougainville (leaving open secession in case autonomy did not function satisfactorily). It was in these negotiations that the Åland model was examined in some detail, even to the extent of Bougainville wanting the area around it declared a zone of peace and a form of demilitarisation under which the national army would be completely pulled out. The complex arrangements

for both a separate constitution for Bougainville and the entrenchment of the autonomy in the national constitution and its alteration solely by approval of both sides were inspired by the Åland experience."<sup>65</sup>

It can also be noted that Åland has also been mentioned in relation to Bougainville more recently. It is one of the cases examined in a comparative overview on asymmetric autonomy solutions with specific regard to islands published in 2018. It was authored by researchers at the Institute for Comparative Federalism at EURAC Research who had been asked to provide background information as preparation for a stipulated referendum regarding whether the population wanted an independent Bougainville or would prefer to remain autonomous within Papua New Guinea.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.4 Corsica - France

The Åland example has been discussed in relation to Corsica in seminars as well as by political actors and in the media on several occasions. Corsica has administrative autonomy and specific institutions, but the status of the Corsu language and the recognition of the existence of a separate Corsican people remain contested questions.<sup>67</sup>

The Corsican nationalist movement, begin-

62 The interpreter, Lowy Institute 2020. McKenna, Kylie. The Bougainville referendum: Celebrations turn to sadness and hope. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/bougainville-referendum-celebrations-turn-sadness-and-hope>. Accessed 12.4.2020.

63 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/36>. Accessed 2.10.2019.

64 Wallensteen 2009, p.266.

65 Ghai 2011, pp.92.

66 Kössler, Palermo and Woelk 2018; Eureka A blog on all things EU, EURAC Research 2019. Trettel, Martina. What is going on with Bougainville (the island in the Pacific Ocean, not the flower)? <https://blogs.eurac.edu/eureka/what-is-going-on-with-bougainville-the-island-in-the-pacific-ocean-not-the-flower/>.

67 Minority Rights Group International. World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/corsicans/>. Accessed 26.6.2019; AFP The local 2 April 2019. Bombs and arson attacks spark fears of return of terror campaign in Corsica. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20190402/bombs-and-arson-attacks-spark-fears-of-return-of-terror-campaign-in-corsica>. Accessed 27.11.2019.

ning in the 1960s as a regionalist movement, became increasingly militant, and the Front de Libération Nationale de la Corse/Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) are responsible for thousands of bombings over the years.<sup>68</sup> Although it was officially disbanded in 1983, FLNC and its various offshoots have continued violent action, despite several ‘ceasefires’, most recently in 2014.<sup>69</sup>

In 1998, a comparative seminar on the Åland example and the Corsican case was held on Åland, organised on the initiative of the European Centre for Minority Rights (ECMI), located in Flensburg in Germany, and more specifically by Professor John Loughlin.<sup>70</sup> It was organised with the help of ÅIPI, the Åland Government, and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and both researchers and politicians from France and Corsica attended. Representatives came from the Corsican Assembly and the two departmental councils, as well as from nationalist and autonomist movements, NGO representatives, and the media. The seminar has been documented in a report in English and a publication in French and was followed up by a third report.<sup>71</sup>

It has been claimed in French media that the 1998 Åland conference had a significant impact

on the so-called Matignon process, which took place from December 1999 to July 2000 and led to new competences for Corsica.<sup>72</sup> The final report from the 1998 seminar suggests one important “lesson” learned from the experience of Åland was “the success of the step-by-step gradual approach to developing autonomy”<sup>73</sup>. While no documentation of a direct link between the Åland example and the Matignon process has been found in the scholarly literature, it seems that the impact concerned the entire process rather than any specific elements of the Åland system.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, the report published after the seminar concludes:

“It was clear from the final discussion that Åland’s form of regional citizenship had caught the interest of the majority of the participants who com-

68 Minority Rights Group International. World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/corsicans/>. Accessed 26.6.2019; AFP The local 2 April 2019. Bombs and arson attacks spark fears of return of terror campaign in Corsica.

<https://www.thelocal.fr/20190402/bombs-and-arson-attacks-spark-fears-of-return-of-terror-campaign-in-corsica>. Accessed 27.11.2019.

69 Minority Rights Group International. World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/corsicans/>. Accessed 26.6.2019.

70 The ECMI works for the improvement of the situation of Europe’s minorities through heightened awareness of minority rights and minority issues. It is based on the German-Danish border area and was founded in 1996 by the governments of Denmark, Germany, and Schleswig-Holstein. <https://www.ecmi.de/the-centre/our-mission>. Accessed 17.2.2020.

71 Loughlin and Daftary 1999.

72 Two articles in *Corse Matin* and *Corse Net Infos* respectively regarding a seminar held in 2018 refer back to the seminar from 1998 and maintain that it was instrumental for the Matignon process: *Core Net Infor*: “20 ans après le colloque sur les îles Åland, en 1998 qui avait notamment débouché sur le processus de Matignon...” in “Paris : Un colloque sur l’autonomie des territoires organisé par les trois députés nationalistes corses”. *Corse Net Infos*. Jammes, Philippe. Published 8.6.2018 [https://www.corsenetinfos.corsica/Paris-Un-colloque-sur-l-autonomie-des-territoires-organise-par-les-trois-deputes-nationalistes-corses\\_a33645.html](https://www.corsenetinfos.corsica/Paris-Un-colloque-sur-l-autonomie-des-territoires-organise-par-les-trois-deputes-nationalistes-corses_a33645.html). Accessed 24.2.2020. *Corse Matin*: “Ce rendez-vous marquera aussi avec les vingt ans du colloque qui s’était tenu dans les îles Åland, en présence notamment de Jean-Guy Talamoni, Paul Giacobbi et de Pierre Joxe. Il avait d’ailleurs beaucoup pesé sur le statut conçu par ce dernier puis sur le processus de Matignon. “L’article constitutionnel au Parlement : “Bouger les lignes”, J.-M. R. 10.6.2018, <https://www.corsematin.com/article/article/larticle-constitutionnel-au-parlement-bouger-les-lignes>. Accessed 24.2.2020. The law of 22nd January 2002 allocates new competences to Corsica but does not change its status. (La loi du 22 Janvier 2002 relative à la Corse lui a donné des compétences nouvelles, mais n’en a pas modifié le statut.) *Vie Publique.fr*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/20150-le-statut-de-la-corse>. Accessed 24.2.2020.

73 Loughlin and Daftary 1999, pp.46-47.

74 In an email dated 1.5.2020, Daftary endorses this interpretation.

mented that this might be a solution to the lingering problem of electoral fraud in Corsica where the number of people registered to vote tends to exceed the true number of voters. This is undermining the very basis of democracy in Corsica - universal suffrage.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition, the Corsican interest in the right of domicile is mentioned in a follow-up report<sup>76</sup>, as well as at a general level by an Ålandic politician interviewed by Granlund in 2010.<sup>77</sup>

Scholars studying Corsica confirm that Åland has been mentioned in political statements in relation to nationalist/regionalist demands for a resident status related to land and real estate property rights, to a regional citizenship more broadly, to a Corsican electoral body, and to the ‘Corsication of jobs’. Documented mentions date early 2000s.<sup>78</sup>

In an article published in 2019, Chillaud maintains that: “Indeed, in French newspapers, it is possible, at odd occasions, to find articles about the Åland Islands: for instance, the Åland Islands as a model for Corsica...”<sup>79</sup>

In recent years, former Director General of the Åland Government Administration, and former Member of Parliament (MP) of Åland in the Parliament of Finland, Elisabeth Nauclér, has been invited to two seminars about Corsica held in Paris.<sup>80</sup> In 2018, she spoke about Åland

at a seminar on territorial autonomy and Corsica, overseas territories, and the Åland Islands, organised in Paris by three Corsican representatives to the French Parliament just before the National Assembly of France was to debate a constitutional reform.<sup>81</sup> This seminar is said to be a follow-up on the 1998 seminar, in which ECMI and the Institute for Comparative Federalism at EURAC took part.

#### 4.5 Crimea - Ukraine

On several occasions, Åland has been considered in relation to Crimea, with its mixed population of Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tartars, since Ukraine’s independence in 1991 and until Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. After Ukraine’s independence in December 1991 followed a long period of political turbulence and strife in the relations between Kiev and Simferopol (the capital of Crimea). The 1996 Constitution of Ukraine and the 1998 Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) secured the position of most of the peninsula as the only autonomous territory within Ukraine.<sup>82</sup> The autonomy was not formally linked to a specific

75 Loughlin and Daftary 1999, pp.46-47.

76 Daftary 2000, pp.47-48.

77 Granlund 2010, p.13.

78 Email correspondences with Professor Andre Fazi 8.7.2019 and with Verena Wisthaler 5.7.2019. In her PhD thesis, Wisthaler looks at political party manifestos and party newspapers/press releases. She kindly checked her database and found three examples of references to regional citizenship on Åland in the beginning of 2000s, mainly made by the regionalist party Corsica Nazione (the party of Guy Talamoni, which has changed its name a few times).

79 Chillaud 2019 refers to the article ‘Une Corse prospère en pleine Baltique’, *La Tribune*, 8 April 2005.

80 Petit déjeuner - débat “Autonomie, une alterna-

tive à l’indépendance”, 19.6.2018, Chambre de Commerce Franco-Finlandaise. <http://newsletter.ccff.fr/a/s/146920438-1d09fce194e4f-139fac2ba5a7dee0a64/2530196>. Accessed 30.8.2019; Colloque: L’autonomie des territoires Regards croisés: Corse, Outre-mer, Iles Åland et autres exemples internationaux. Jeudi 21 juin 2018.

81 Colloque: L’autonomie des territoires Regards croisés: Corse, Outre-mer, Iles Åland et autres exemples internationaux. Jeudi 21 juin 2018. *Corse Matin* 2018. “L’article constitutionnel au Parlement: “Bouger les lignes”” Par J.-M. R. Published 10 juin 2018. <https://www.corsematin.com/article/article/larticle-constitutionnel-au-parlement-bouger-les-lignes>. Accessed 24.2.2020. *Corse Net Infos* 2018. “Paris: Un colloque sur l’autonomie des territoires organisé par les trois députés nationalistes corses”. Philippe Jammes. Published 8.6.2018. [https://www.corsenetinfos.corsica/Paris-Un-colloque-sur-l-autonomie-des-territoires-organise-par-les-trois-deputes-nationalistes-corses\\_a33645.html](https://www.corsenetinfos.corsica/Paris-Un-colloque-sur-l-autonomie-des-territoires-organise-par-les-trois-deputes-nationalistes-corses_a33645.html). Accessed 24.2.2020.

82 Osipov 2014. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#country/36>. Accessed 12.6.2019.

ethnic group, and over the years, the Crimean Tatars have claimed to be recognised as an indigenous people of the Crimea and for the territorial autonomy of Crimea to become a national territorial autonomy for the Crimean Tatars.<sup>83</sup>

On 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> November 2001, ÅIPI organised a Seminar on Autonomy and Conflict Management with parliamentarians and NGO representatives from Ukraine and the Crimea. The seminar was funded by the Åland Government and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs with Ukraine's Embassy in Finland and organisations in Ukraine as partners. According to ÅIPI's 2001 Activity Report, the seminar focused on autonomy as a conflict management mechanism and "...offered an important platform for dialogue for the participants". According to the Activity Report, confidence was built, and follow-up activities and collaborative projects were planned.

In 2010 and 2011, staff at ÅIPI were involved in the Crimea Policy Dialogue project, implemented by the Romania-based NGO, the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), with financial support from the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.<sup>84</sup> Two researchers took part in project seminars<sup>85</sup>, and in 2011, came a visit to Åland by politicians and

researchers from Crimea as part of a project study tour to Finland focused on identity policy.

"The study tour was organised for project participants working on the development of recommendations in the sphere of identity policy for Crimea. The study tour was focused on policy mechanisms for protection of minority identities and perceptions of discrimination in Finland, including the Åland Islands, as compared to Crimea."<sup>86</sup>

In addition, researcher Sarah Stephan visited the cities Simferopol and Sevastopol in autumn 2011 for a summer school on democracy and identity in post-Soviet Ukraine with a focus on Crimea.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4.6 East-Timor - Indonesia<sup>88</sup>

The question of self-government was central in the peace process of East Timor.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the Åland example was one of the autonomous concepts that East Timorese experts and other members of civil society familiarised themselves with during their quest for inspiration and alter-

83 Malyarenko and Galbreath 2012, p.73-74.

84 "The overall purpose of the project was the establishment of a sustainable mechanism for the prevention of violent escalations of unresolved conflict situations in and related to Crimea. The desired outcome of the project was the implementation of new policies by relevant institutions in Crimea and dealing with Crimea. These policies were based on inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue and informed by evidence-based research." <https://patrir.ro/projects/crimea-policy-dialogue/>. Accessed 24.6.2019.

85 Sarah Stephan took part in Inception Dialogue in Brussels, 27.2-2.3.2010 and Heidi Öst took part in the First Thematic Dialogue on Language Policy Yalta, 24-25.7.2010. <https://patrir.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Crimea-policy-dialogue-cpd-en-update-project-outputs.pdf>. Accessed 24.6.2019, see also <http://www.peace.ax/en/nyhetsarkiv/136-debattartikel/1380-artikel-om-dialog-pa-krim-en>. Accessed 24.6.2019.

86 <https://patrir.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Crimea-policy-dialogue-cpd-en-update-project-outputs.pdf>. Accessed 24.6.2019.

87 There've also been other contacts more loosely linked to the Åland example. In connection to the Ukraine crisis and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, ÅIPI was asked to comment on the situation in media, including on Ukrainian TV. As President of the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Director of ÅIPI, Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, visited Ukraine from 21st-26th March 2014 and contributed to the Committee's ad hoc report on the situation of national minorities in Ukraine, in which the Advisory Committee expresses deep concern about the safety and access to rights of minority populations in Crimea, in particular the Crimean Tatars and people belonging to the Ukrainian community.

88 The text on East Timor is an excerpt from a longer summary written for this study by Mari Ek during her internship at ÅIPI.

89 Nordquist 2011, p.114.

natives for the solution to a situation that was called ‘the East Timor problem’ at the time.<sup>90</sup>

The conflict of East Timor is rooted in its decolonisation process from Portugal that retreated rather abruptly from East Timor in 1974, leaving the region in a state of political vacuum. Confrontations between economic and political elites over the future of the country escalated into a civil war followed by Indonesian invasion.<sup>91</sup> Fighting between Indonesian troops and East Timorese armed resistance, along with severe human rights violations and complete isolation from the rest of the world, marked the years in East Timor from the occupation in the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s. According to the estimates of the East Timorese Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR), the complete conflict period of 1975-1999 caused at least 102,800 deaths.<sup>92</sup>

According to Nordquist, the conflict was “not a religious, ethnic, or cultural/linguistically framed conflict - it was about whether East Timor should have its right to self-determination or not.”<sup>93</sup> However, it can be argued that the conflict included an aspect of diversity, since centuries of colonial rule of Portugal over East Timor and the Dutch over Indonesia have impacted the linguistic, cultural, and religious differences between the two countries. Furthermore, during the Indonesian occupation, a harsh policy of forced integration was pursued in East Timor, which “included forced resettlement and imposing the Indonesian language and what was considered Indonesian values. This made Timorese nationalism grow stronger and a new generation of resistance fighters arose.”<sup>94</sup>

In the late 1990s, the East Timor Study Group (ETSG), consisting of Master’s students,

journalists, local politicians, and political activists, organised seminars where the Åland example and its adaptability for negotiation processes was studied.

In cooperation with Uppsala University in Sweden, American University in Washington, and Australian National University in Canberra, and with the presence of representatives from the UN, the ETSG engaged in a four-year long series of seminars starting from 1997, which included visits to the Åland Islands. Nordquist, who led the Peace and Conflict Research Programme on reconciliation in East Timor at Uppsala University between 1997 and 2001, and collaborated with the ETSG during this time, describes the seminars: “within this framework of seminars, the autonomy of Åland was studied in detail - as a concept and as an internationally applied reality - both on site on Åland and in comparative perspective with some other self-governing territories.”<sup>95</sup>

The seminars with the ETSG enabled the East Timorese to explore different views on their own future without political implications or costs. Nordquist highlights that the development of the autonomy option was an important contribution to the quality of the referendum: “...whatever opinion there was about the alternatives as such, a serious referendum requires a serious expression of the options in order to be legitimate. This was one, among others, of the functions that the utilisation of the Åland Islands case had in this political process.”<sup>96</sup>

#### 4.7 Gagauzia - Moldova

Gagauzia is an autonomous region in Moldova, mainly populated by Gagauz (around 80 percent), as well as Bulgarians, Moldovans, Russians, and Ukrainians.<sup>97</sup> The Gagauz are Orthodox Christians with a Turkic language, locat-

90 Nordquist 2013, pp.108, 112.

91 Nordquist 2011, p.114.

92 Nordquist 2011, p.115.

93 Nordquist 2013, p.109.

94 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/330>. Accessed 29.4.2020.

95 Nordquist 2011, p.116.

96 Nordquist 2011, pp.119-120.

97 Prina 2016, p.260.

ed mainly in the South of the country and accounting for about five percent of the Moldovan population.<sup>98</sup>

The conflict appeared around the 1990s as Moldova started to liberate itself from the Soviet Union. The Gagauz national movement in 1989 claimed autonomy and in 1990 proclaimed its own Soviet republic, which was followed by violence, and repeated clashes between Gagauz paramilitaries and Moldovan police saw a few people killed.<sup>99</sup> In December 1994, the Moldovan Parliament passed the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri), which is commonly referred to as the Autonomy Statute.<sup>100</sup>

The Autonomy Law was elaborated with support from the Council of Europe and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).<sup>101</sup> Previous experiences of autonomies in Europe, including Åland, were of course known to these organisations and were also explored by actors from the region. Gagauzia's first speaker of the People's Assembly, Piotr Pashali, in an interview in public television in Gagauzia 2014 said that the authors of the law on the special legal status of Gagauzia drew on the experience of South Tyrol, Corsica, the Åland Islands and other autonomies. Furthermore, he said that such experiences had been considered and codified in the law, but however, had only been implemented to 30 per cent.<sup>102</sup>

98 Walsh 2018 p.144.

99 Schulte 2015, pp.59-60.

100 Walsh 2018, pp.144-146.

101 Troebst 2003; Council of Europe 1995. Report on the application by Moldova for membership of the Council of Europe. <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=6851&lang=en>. Accessed on 23.6.2020.

102 Gagauzinfo.MD news portal. Пашалы: Гагаузия отличается от европейских автономий лишь экономически. Published 10 12 2014. <http://gagauzinfo.md/top1/15554-pashaly-gagauziya-otlichaetsya-ot-evropeyskih-avtonomiy-lish-ekonomicheskii.html>. Accessed on 21.6.2020. This statement in the interview was documented in Guboglo 2015. Губогло, М. Власть

The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia is often considered a rare - or even the only - case of successful conflict resolution among the many post-Soviet conflicts.<sup>103</sup> However, the autonomy law is very general and provides little guidance on which rights are allocated to Gagauzia. The actual implementation of the autonomy has been a highly contested issue which has led to many disagreements between Chişinău and Comrat.<sup>104</sup> In processes to improve the relations between the state and the autonomy, Åland has featured as one of several examples studied.

Among others, the ECMI has been involved in processes to improve relations between Chişinău and Comrat during the 2000s, at times inviting experts from Åland. For example, in 2016, the ECMI organized a workshop in Vadul lui Vodă, Moldova, where Elisabeth Naclér, former civil servant in the Åland administration and former Member of the Parliament of Finland held a speech on the Åland autonomy<sup>105</sup> Naclér says she had visited Gagauzia also earlier, and that people she met were knowledgeable of Åland.<sup>106</sup>

знания и знание о власти, В: Когда инновации становятся традицией / НИЦ Гагаузии им. М.В. Маруневич; Сост.: П.М.Пашалы, И.А.Константинова, П.А.Чеботарь,... - Комрат: Б.и., 2015, p.7. (Guboglo, Mikhail 2015. Power of knowledge and the knowledge of power, In: Eds.: Pashali, P.M, Constantinova, I.A; and Cebotari P.A (eds.), *When innovations become a tradition*. Comrat, Scientific Research Center of Gagauzia named after M.V. Marunevici.) [https://library.kdu.md/web/viewer.html?file=kogda\\_innovatii\\_stanoviatsia\\_traditiei.pdf](https://library.kdu.md/web/viewer.html?file=kogda_innovatii_stanoviatsia_traditiei.pdf). Accessed on 21.6.2020

103 Schulte 2015, p.60, Protsyk 2010, p.231.

104 Walsh 2018, pp.141-142; Protsyk 2010, p.231; CMI 2017, <http://cmi.fi/2017/08/11/new-dialogue-eases-tensions-moldova-breakthrough/>. Accessed 20.5.2019..

105 "Seminar on strategies and techniques for overcoming tensions in relations between central governments and autonomous units". Organised by the European Centre for Minority Issues within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Programme: National Minorities and Ethno-Cultural Issues. Belarus-Moldova-Ukraine. With financial support from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 15-16 April 2016. Seminar program on file with author..

106 Naclér email 10.6.2020

In May 2016, Åland was visited by the working group of the Parliament of Moldova and the Gagauzia People's Assembly. The study visit to Åland was arranged by Finnish NGO, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), with financial support from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>107</sup> CMI works to facilitate informal and official dialogue processes between the Parliament of Moldova and Gagauzia People's Assembly to improve mechanisms of centre-autonomy relations.<sup>108</sup>

Within the framework of the dialogue project, it is clearly the autonomy of the Åland Islands that has been of most interest. In the project, the legislation and institutions pertaining to the autonomy have been systematically studied - alongside studies of the autonomy of regions such as South Tyrol and Wales. These autonomy systems have been thoroughly compared to the Gagauz autonomy and context.

CMI staff report that participants of the study visits have shown a distinct interest in the autonomy of Åland, and even though there are vast differences in the functions and contexts the autonomy of Åland and Gagauzia, Ålandic experiences are considered relevant and inspiring. There are ongoing efforts to improve the autonomy system, and in this process, Åland has been

one of several sources of inspiration and might even inspire concrete measures.

The objectives of the visit in 2016 were to learn about the division of competences within centre-autonomy relations, relations between the governments of Finland and Åland, as well as devolved funding arrangements, fiscal strategies, and budget distribution principles. In the Åland case, a core theme which has been studied and found inspiring has been the entrenchment of the autonomy. Another area of interest has been the relations between Åland and Finland.

In Gagauzia, the autonomy statute is an organic law. It is not underpinned by constitutional law and can be changed by qualified majority in the Moldovan Parliament without Gagauzian consent. On the other hand, in the Åland case, the Autonomy Act can only be changed if both the Parliament of Finland and the Parliament of Åland approve. Likewise, the autonomy of South Tyrol has a veto mechanism. CMI staff say the study visits, including to Åland, empowered the Gagauz members of the delegation to file a proposal to the Parliament of Moldova that changes to the autonomy law would need to be approved by the Gagauz legislative assembly. So far, this proposal has not been met with approval among Moldovan MPs. However, a proposal to include a provision in the rules of procedures on mandatory consultation with Gagauzia in the event of changes in the autonomy law may fare better, which would, according to CMI staff, be a concrete result of the CMI project and the usage of the Åland example.

Another area of interest has been the relations between Åland and Finland, including mechanisms for cooperation and conflict resolution. For example, the joint appointment and role of the Governor of Åland, the role of the Åland Delegation, and the process for legislative control in general have attracted interest. In the Gagauz case, there is a consideration to explore mechanisms dealing with the clarification

107 The Åland Islands Peace Institute 2016, <http://www.peace.ax/en/nyhetsarkiv/26-visits/1989-visit-from-moldova-and-gagauzia>. Accessed 13.8.2019

108 The NGO, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), is an independent Helsinki-based organisation that works to prevent and resolve violent conflicts through informal dialogue and mediation. The organisation was founded in 2000 by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari. Some information about the Gagauzia dialogue project is available online at [cmi.fi](http://cmi.fi), but most of the information about the content and results of the project activities referred to in this text has been kindly provided by CMI staff through interviews, access to documents, and email correspondence. Since the process is still ongoing and documents have not been made public, this information is, at times, only generally referred to and specific sources are not always provided in the text.

of competences and extrajudicial dispute resolution. These discussions have only started recently, but CMI staff assess that Åland may have an impact in these cases.

According to CMI staff and documentation from the study visit, one of the major lessons was that competences need to be very clearly divided, to avoid constant tension. However, the set-up of the division of competences in the Åland case was not assessed to be applicable as it is too different from the Gagauz case. While Åland has exclusive legislative powers in many domains, this is far from reality in Gagauzia.

In addition, in 2019, ÅAPI was visited by researcher Elena Cuijuclu from Moldova who has an interest in autonomy matters and who has also co-authored two reports comparing Åland and Gagauzia.<sup>109</sup> The author of the present report was invited to a seminar in Moldova organised within the CMI Gagauzia dialogue framework to present the institutions of the Åland Islands.

#### 4.8 Hong Kong – China

Three contacts with Hong Kong have been documented by the Contact Group and ÅAPI:

109 Elena Cuijuclu is a PhD student at Moldova State University, and visited Åland in May 2019 for research purposes. Together with Mihail Sirkeli, Cuijuclu has published two papers which compare the Gagauzian autonomy to that of Åland, as well as other regions. Cuijuclu, Elena and Sirkeli, Mihail, 2015. Implementation of the status of Gagauz-Yeri autonomy: Challenges and Prospects. Research paper prepared in the framework of the project “Increasing Civic Participation Among Youth and Civil Society in ATU Gagauzia (2015)”, implemented by the OSCE Mission to Moldova in partnership with NGO Pilgrim-Demo from Gagauzia. (<http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/en/cercetare/ru-analiticeskae-rabota-ovoenie-statusa-avtonomii/>). Accessed 15.8.2019; Cuijuclu, Elena and Sirkeli, Mihail, 2015. Reciprocal control between the centre and autonomy: experience of implementing the Gagauz status. Research paper prepared in the framework of the project “Increasing Civic Participation Among Youth and Civil Society in ATU Gagauzia (2015)”, implemented by the OSCE Mission to Moldova in partnership with NGO Pilgrim-Demo from Gagauzia. <http://pilgrim-demo.org.md/en/cercetare/reciprocal-control/>. Accessed 15.8.2019..

a researcher in 1998, a television team in 2016, and a legislative councillor from Hong Kong in 2019. The researcher in question was Professor Yash Ghai, who has continuously followed developments in Hong Kong. Ghai maintains that when the autonomy was negotiated and established before Hong Kong was handed over from the UK to China in 1997, a specific mechanism for resolving disputes between Hong Kong and mainland China was clearly and explicitly inspired by Åland. The resulting body, the Committee on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, was a semipolitical body with representation from both sides that could mediate disputes. “In advancing this idea, China explicitly referred to the Nordic model – the Delegation in the case of Finland/Åland”.<sup>110</sup>

#### 4.9 *Islas Malvinas / Falkland Islands – Argentina, the United Kingdom*

It is sometimes claimed that there has been an interest in the Åland case in relation to the war between Argentina and United Kingdom over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in 1982, but it has not been well documented in previous research.<sup>111</sup>

In 1993, a delegation from Argentina, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Guido di Tella, visited Åland. According to Lars Ingmar Johansson, who worked as a civil servant in the Åland Parliament, the Minister came directly from London, where he had told John Major that he was prepared to offer the UK an Åland model for the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.<sup>112</sup>

There have also been a handful of other visits to Åland from Argentina and several from the UK, but it is not known if the Malvinas/Falklands issue was brought up on those occasions.

110 Ghai 2011, p.90.

111 For example, in an email to the author on 27.5.2019, Ambassador Holger Rotkirch refers to such claims spread during the conflict.

112 Johansson, email 15.6.2020. Johansson kept a diary during his years at the Parliament as well as newspaper cuttings from visits.

There is, however, one publication in Spanish comparing the Åland Islands and the Malvinas written by Dr. Reina Sotillo de Galgano in 2001.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the same author has written a publication about Åland in 1994. In email and telephone conversations, Dr. Sotillo de Galgano has expressed a continuous interest in the Åland case, and also maintains that there have been seminars organised in Argentina in which the Åland case has been highlighted in relation to the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.

During her time as a MP in Finland's Parliament, Elisabeth Nauclér says that she experienced an interest from the side of Argentina, and she had several meetings with Ambassadors and other civil servants representing Argentina. Some of them also visited Åland.<sup>114</sup> Indications of more recent and academic interest in this topic has also been found in the form of research articles and speeches.<sup>115</sup>

#### 4.10 Kashmir - Pakistan/India

Since the independence of India and Pakistan in

1947, Kashmir has been a disputed region, divided between India, Pakistan, and China. India and Pakistan claim the entire Kashmir region, while China claims part of it. The dispute over Kashmir escalated into full-fledged war between Pakistan and India in 1948. The ceasefire line agreed upon through UN mediation in 1949 has effectively defined the de facto borders of Kashmir, divided between the three countries.<sup>116</sup> In addition, over the years, a significant number of insurgent groups have fought against the Indian government, aiming for Kashmir's secession from India. Despite arrangements providing local autonomy, there has been continued political confrontations and tensions between the local population and the state government, and many of the conflict years have reached the intensity of civil war.<sup>117</sup>

Åland has been considered in relation to Kashmir in newspaper articles, scholarly articles, and in NGOs from time to time since the late 1990s until today.<sup>118</sup>

In 1998, an Indian official came to Åland for a visit and in 2004, eight journalists from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka visited. In 2004, ÅIPI had plans for a seminar on Kashmir with participants from Kashmir, but no documentation from such a seminar has been found.<sup>119</sup> In 2005, came a visit by journalist and lawyer, A.G Noorani, who, after his visit, wrote several articles about Åland for Indian media.<sup>120</sup> In ad-

113 Sotillo de Galgano, Reina. *Åland-Malvinas: dos culturas, una nación (Åland, un modelo inspirador para otras islas)*. Honorable Senado de la Nación. Imprenta del Congreso de la Nación. Buenos Aires, 2001.

114 Nauclér, email 10.6.2020.

115 Eissa 2019 writes about Åland and Malvinas and refers to earlier articles touching upon the topic. Eissa, S. Gabriel 2019. *Åland Islands: Lessons for the conflict of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas Islands)?* *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations*, 2019, vol. 12, issue 2, pp. 210–228. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu06.2019.207>. Accessed 15.6.2020. For another example, in Spanish, see Pita, Manuel Carlos Giavedoni 2004. *El caso de las Islas Åland: ¿una solución para la soberanía en malvinas?* *Boletín del Centro Naval*. Número 807. Enero/abril de 2004. <https://www.scribd.com/document/329939626/EL-CASO-DE-LAS-ISLAS-ÅLAND-UNA-SOLUCION-PARA-LA-SOBERANIA-EN-MALVINAS>. Accessed 15.6.2020. In a talk at a public meeting, at the Falkland Islands Chamber of Commerce, Stanley, 8 March 2013, Peter Willetts, Emeritus Professor of Global Politics, City University, London, mentions Åland briefly. <http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/p.willetts/SAC/COMMENTS/PW080313.HTM>. Accessed 15.6.2020.

116 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/364>. Accessed 15.3.2019.

117 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/364>. Accessed 15.3.2019.

118 For a recent example: *The Nation* 30.7.2018. Ghulam-Nabi Fai. *The Åland Islands Model and Kashmir*. <https://nation.com.pk/30-Jul-2018/the-aland-islands-model-and-kashmir>. Accessed 14.8.2019. See also World Kashmir Awareness Forum.

119 ÅIPI internal archive.

120 According to Finnish diplomat, Mikko Pyhälä, who is acquainted to Noorani and was involved in the visits to Åland, Noorani is a very respected journalist and legal expert whose opinions have been taken seriously, among others, by Prime Ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi and the In-

dition, other articles in Indian, Pakistani, and Kashmiri news outlets as well as scholarly articles and seminar reports have been found which promote (in English) how Åland could be used as one - among several possible - examples for resolution of the Kashmir conflict.<sup>121</sup> For example, Åland is one of the examples discussed in relation to Kashmir in at least two Annual Conflict Transformation Workshops arranged by the foundation Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP).<sup>122</sup>

In 2005, a report on potential future solutions

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dian National Congress party, who commissioned Noorani to make legal assessments and participate in international conferences. During his career, Noorani has written for the Times of India, and in legal and other academic journals, such as Economic and Political Weekly, among others.

121 See for example: Daily Times 26.5.2002. Ahmed, Ishitaq. Kashmir dispute and Åland model. ÅAPI internal archive. Quote: "The Åland model could succeed because the two main contenders, Sweden and Finland, showed signs of maturity". Accessed 14.3.2019; The Hindu, 1.11.2004. Varadarajan, Siddharth. Looking beyond Musharraf's proposals. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/looking-beyond-musharraf-proposals/article27711652.ece>. Accessed 13.8.2019 - behind paywall. This article investigates several examples of constitutional solutions of territorial disputes or sovereignty claims that involve homogenous, mixed, or divided populations. Åland's demilitarisation is highlighted.

122 Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) is a peacebuilding initiative in South Asia. Established in 1999, it foregrounds women's leadership in the areas of peace and security and promotes cultures of pluralism and coexistence in the region. <https://wiscomp.org/>. Accessed 13.8.2019; Mahajan, Depti and Sewak Manjrika 2006. Kashmir, engaging with possibilities: an India-Pakistan civil society dialogue. Excerpts of the fourth annual South Asian Workshop on Conflict Transformation, held at New Delhi on 1st-9th October 2005, highlighting the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. <https://books.google.com/books?id=7GASAQAAMAAJ>. Accessed 13.8.2019; DasGupta Sumona and Sewak Manjrika 2007. Transforming conflict in Jammu and Kashmir: alternative frameworks, new metaphors: fifth annual Conflict Transformation Workshop 2006. Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace, Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2007. University of Michigan. Accessed 13.8.2019.

for Kashmir was issued by the Kashmir Study Group. The group, established in 1996 and consisting of 25 members with political, diplomatic, and academic backgrounds, launched several proposals for the future status of Kashmir, and in this context Åland was referred to as one example, among others, by researcher Hurst Hannum.<sup>123</sup>

In the articles found where Åland is mentioned in relation to Kashmir, Åland and its autonomy are referred to in general terms and the demilitarisation as well as the attitudes of Finland and Sweden are mentioned.<sup>124</sup> For instance, Noorani wrote:

"Here is a territory, overwhelmingly Swedish, which is under Finnish sovereignty. Sweden accepted the *status quo* once Finland agreed to *international* guarantees of its autonomy. It proceeded thereafter to *widen*, not restrict, the scope of that autonomy. Sweden is not a bit sorry that it agreed to the arrangement. Ålanders are proud to be Swedish in culture and Finnish by nationality."<sup>125</sup>

#### 4.11 Kosovo – Serbia

The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia affected also Kosovo, demographically dominated by Albanians, which had had its autonomy revoked by the government in 1990. This sparked the

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123 "Kashmir - A way forward". Press release 8.1.2004. ÅAPI internal archive.

124 The Daily Times 30 May 2005. Gilani, Iftikhar. "Musharraf's proposal to demilitarise Kashmir". Excerpt in the ÅAPI archive.

125 A G Noorani, 2005. "It is possible to find a solution to the Kashmir issue on the lines of the Agreement on the Åland Islands between Finland and Sweden, which was an international accord settling a territorial dispute on the basis of the status quo." Frontline Volume 22 - Issue 13, 18th June-1st July 2005. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/static/html/fl2202/stories/20050128000808000.htm>. Accessed 12.5.2019.

drive for independence and in 1996, the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) declared its goal to establish an independent Kosovo. In 1998, the armed conflict escalated until 1999, when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) launched an air bombardment campaign, intense negotiations were conducted, and the conflict was terminated.<sup>126</sup>

Some of the chief negotiators involved in the resolution of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia came from the Nordic countries and had knowledge of the Åland situation, and the autonomy of Åland was well known in the region.<sup>127</sup> In 1998-2001, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Embassies of the Nordic countries in the Balkans arranged a series of seminars in the region, the topics of which highlighted the situation of the Nordic autonomous regions and hence included the case of Åland.<sup>128</sup>

In 2001, Dušan Janjić, Director of the Forum for Ethnic Relations in Belgrade, came to Åland to study minority questions. Together

with, among others, Elisabeth Naucér, an Åland expert and civil servant who had been sent to the Balkans on missions for the UN between 1993 and 1996<sup>129</sup>, he initiated a publication about the autonomy of Åland in Serbian<sup>130</sup> as well as a publication on decentralisation in Kosovo published in 2003.<sup>131</sup>

The authors of the publication on decentralisation arranged seminars and press conferences and met with politicians and officials at all levels in Belgrade, attempting to convince them that it could be a good idea for Serbia to offer Kosovo more autonomy in order to attempt to solve the status issue.<sup>132</sup> In addition to this, there were other contacts. According to Naucér, the autonomy of Åland was brought up in the negotiations headed by Martti Ahtisaari between 2005 and 2007.<sup>133</sup> Finnish diplomat, Marcus Laurent, says he brought up Åland in relation to Kosovo in the UN Sixth Committee<sup>134</sup>, and reportedly there was also a visit to Åland from Kosovo upon invitation from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Ahtisaari-led negotiations.<sup>135</sup>

Naucér assesses that stakeholders on the ground publicly showed no interest in the Åland example since the Kosovars wanted independence and Serbia wanted a more restricted solution for Kosovo.<sup>136</sup> However, in the late stag-

126 Uppsala Conflict Database. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/412>. Accessed 29.4.2020.

127 Naucér, 2011, p.155, footnote 475; Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.20 refers to an interview with Thorvald Stoltenberg, who confirms Åland was repeatedly brought up in discussions in the Balkans in the 1990s.

128 The Nordic Council of Ministers and the Embassies of the Nordic countries in the Balkans had been arranging a series of seminars in the region, and during the years 1998-2001, three such seminars were held. At a later seminar in Brussels in 2002, the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Erkki Tuomioja, spoke about these seminars: "... the three autonomous territories in the Nordic Countries - Åland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands - have all been subject to discussions in international seminars focusing on the Nordic cooperation model. The constitutional and functional aspects of autonomy have been on the fore in three seminars held in former Yugoslavia; the first in Sarajevo in 1998, the second in Ljubljana in early 1999, and the third in Belgrade in October 2001. It is worth noting that at Belgrade, a total of 12 states of the region attended the seminar where the Åland case was the subject of a presentation of its own." Seminar report 2002, Autonomies in the European Union. The Special Case of the Åland Islands. Seminar in the European Parliament, Brussels, 12.3.2002.

129 Before and after her UN missions, she worked in the Åland Parliament administration, and from 1999 to 2007, she was Head of Administration in the Åland Government. She was also a member of the Contact Group from 1999-2004, and a member of the Parliament of Finland 2007-2015.

130 Authors are Dr. Boris Krivokapic, Dr. Klaudio Scarpulla, and Elisabeth Naucér. The book was published by the Institute of Comparative Law in Belgrade, Serbia.

131 Authors are Stevan Lilic, Dušan Janjić, and Biljana Kovacevic-Vuco. Printed by Dosije. Forum for Ethnic Relations (FER), Belgrade. Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUKOM), Belgrade.

132 Naucér interview 2019.

133 Naucér interview 2019.

134 Laurent interview 2019. *The Sixth Committee* is the primary forum for the consideration of legal questions in the General Assembly.

135 Naucér interview 2019.

136 Naucér interview 2019.

es of the negotiations between 2005 and 2007, the Serbs brought up Åland and Hong Kong as models in connection to arguments for respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of internationally recognised states, thus promoting autonomy as an alternative to secession.<sup>137</sup>

After Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, there was one visit to Åland in 2011 by non-majority parliamentary groups from the Assembly of Kosovo and another by journalists.

In addition, Elisabeth Nauc ler has received some inquiries about Åland in relation to the disputed Northern Kosovo region, where there is a significant Serb population.<sup>138</sup>

#### 4.12 *Krajina - Croatia*

In 1993, Elisabeth Nauc ler, at the time working as an official at the Åland Parliament, was recruited and sent by the UN to Knin in Krajina, with the task of endorsing the Åland example to local leaders in this Serb-dominated region in Croatia.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, she discussed it with Nordic diplomats who were involved in the efforts to solve the conflict over the right to the territory populated by the Serbs living in Croatia, among them Thorvald Stoltenberg, Kai Eide, and Knut Wolleb k.

Croatia's declaration of independence in 1991 had sparked fear of a minority status among the Serbian population in the eastern part of Croatia. Autonomy was declared for a 'Serbian Republic of Krajina' within Croatia, something which was rejected by the Croatian government.

Violence erupted and continued despite several negotiations and ceasefires.<sup>140</sup>

The UN and the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) were attempting to resolve the conflict of Krajina through a proposal for an autonomy regime for Serbs in Krajina, the so-called Z-4 Plan, drafted in 1995.<sup>141</sup> The Z-4 Plan was meant as an attempt to convince the Serb minority to agree to remain an integral part of Croatia. According to Nauc ler, the Z-4 Plan clearly had the Act on Autonomy for Åland as an example.<sup>142</sup> In the Z-4 Plan, demilitarisation was proposed for Krajina, but there are no indications that the demilitarisation of Åland was alluded to in this context.

In this case of conflict resolution, Åland was included in high-level negotiations, and the international community showed an explicit interest in Åland as an example and specifically regarding autonomy and the Autonomy Act. However, Nauc ler reports that the parties did show an interest in private, but not in public, since it was not in line with the aims that they promoted.<sup>143</sup>

After two large Croatian offensives, the Croatian Serbs were almost defeated. Intensified negotiations lead to the signing of a peace agreement in 1995. The conflict thus ended partly through Serbian defeat, and partly through the signing of a peace agreement, and the outcome was that Croatian sovereignty was restored.<sup>144</sup>

#### 4.13 *Mindanao - the Philippines*

In 1989, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) had been established to attempt to solve the armed rebellion promoting independence for the Moros in the southern region of Mindanao, which has been ongoing

137 References to Åland in the context of the negotiations are documented in briefs from the negotiations, which are published online. Belgrade, 21.11.2007. Daily survey. "Belgrade's proposal freezes Kosovo status for 20 years". [http://www.mfa.gov.rs/Bilteni/Engleski/b211107\\_e.html#N1](http://www.mfa.gov.rs/Bilteni/Engleski/b211107_e.html#N1). Accessed 29.4.2020.

138 Nauc ler interview 2019. About this issue see International Crisis Group: <https://www.crisis-group.org/europe-central-asia/balkans/kosovo/north-kosovo-meltdown>. Accessed 12.5.2020.

139 Nauc ler interview 2019, Nauc ler 2011.

140 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/390>. Accessed 29.5.2019.

141 Nauc ler 2011, p.147.

142 Nauc ler 2011, p.156.

143 Nauc ler interview 2019.

144 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/390>. Accessed 29.5.2019.

since 1972.<sup>145</sup> However, the conflict has proven intractable in nature, despite many attempts at its solution. Several agreements have been signed, none of which have ended the conflict.<sup>146</sup> In several instances, the Åland example has been referred to in relation to this conflict.

In 2000, Finnish diplomat Holger Rotkirch, on the initiative of the Ambassador for Finland to the Philippines, Pentti Majanen, talked to a Philippine senator about the Åland example.<sup>147</sup> Majanen has confirmed efforts to bring up the Åland example in an attempt to address the political, economic, and social root causes of the wars, violence, and kidnappings. Majanen himself talked about the matter with President Fidel Ramos, two Senate Presidents, Blas Aple and Nene Pimentel, and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader, Nur Misuari, among others.<sup>148</sup>

In 2001, the president of the Philippine Senate, Aquino Pimentel, came on a visit to Åland, and in 2003, a journalist came to visit.<sup>149</sup>

Blomberg (2015) asserts that models and examples from successful autonomies - including Åland - have been introduced in the negotiations during recent years, since it's maintained that Manila and Moro leaders need to learn from other working autonomies around the world.<sup>150</sup> In this context, he refers to Mohagher Iqbal, head of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) panel, who in December 2011, referred to the autonomy of the Åland Islands during the peace talks with the Philippine Government in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>151</sup> Blomberg further

maintains that the Philippine Ambassador to Finland visited seminars about the Åland example in Mariehamn and in Helsinki in 2011 and 2012.<sup>152</sup>

In his capacity as the Special Representative of the Foreign Minister of Finland, Kimmo Kiljunen endorsed the Åland case in contact with the Philippines. In 2014, he shared information about the Åland example and held a presentation specifically exploring how the Åland issue had been solved and if Åland could be a model for Mindanao.<sup>153</sup> In a news article published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014, it is documented that Kiljunen, together with a British diplomat who spoke about the UK experience with Northern Ireland, provided an international perspective in a roundtable on 'Media and Peace', in which media practitioners from print and broadcast media from all over the country took part. The article reports that the roundtable was sponsored by the Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility "as the first of many activities planned to provide the media with background and context in their coverage of the historical transition towards official recognition of the Bangsamoro".<sup>154</sup>

Kiljunen says that he was planning a process in which representatives from the Philippines would come to Åland, but it did not materialise before his term as special representative ended.<sup>155</sup>

145 Blomberg 2015, p.8.

146 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/308>. Accessed 12.6.2019.

147 Rotkirch email 27.5.2019.

148 Majanen email 27.6.2019.

149 Visitors list, Åland Government 2001 annual report.

150 In his report *The Åland Example Applied - a Case Study of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao* published in 2015, Gustav Blomberg discusses to what extent the Åland example has been used in the Mindanao case.

151 Blomberg 2015, p.7. This has been documented

in a news article from 2012, in which Åland is mentioned as one of several models: Philippine Daily Inquirer 2012. Rosauo, R.D. *Talks aim for new autonomous gov't*, (Online) 12 January 2012. <https://m.inquirer.net/newsinfo/126995>. Accessed 12.6.2019.

152 Blomberg 2015, p.9.

153 Kiljunen interview 2019.

154 Philippine Daily Inquirer, 24th October 2014, Rina Jimenez-David. *The unwilling and the ungrateful*. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/79547/the-unwilling-and-the-ungrateful#ixzz5qiYOZsA9>. Accessed 13.6.2019.

155 Kiljunen interview 2019.

#### 4.14 Nagorno-Karabakh<sup>156</sup> - Azerbaijan

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh might be the conflict in which Åland has featured most frequently as an example. The usage of the Åland example in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh has been documented rather thoroughly in previous research, and the ÅIPI internal archive features a wealth of documentation regarding such contacts.<sup>157</sup> More than 20 contacts have been documented since 1992. Åland has been a meeting place and Ålanders have participated both in high-level conflict resolution processes and in civil society efforts.

The conflict between Armenians and Azeris, with the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan as a core incompatibility is one of the most intractable conflicts of the former Soviet Union. Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous region within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, mainly populated by ethnic Armenians. In the late 1980s, Nagorno-Karabakh sought to be united with neighbouring Armenia. The conflict started as a 'non-state conflict' between Armenians and Azeris, but escalated into a full-scale intrastate war between Azerbaijan and separatists fighting for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh in late 1991.<sup>158</sup> Today, Azerbaijan has no control over Nagorno-Karabakh, which has elements of a de facto state.<sup>159</sup> The conflict remains unresolved until today, and the ceasefire that was signed in 1994 is often violated.<sup>160</sup>

In 1993, parliamentarians from Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan came to Åland to a meeting organised by ÅIPI, the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>161</sup> The meeting resulted in another meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in May 1994, which included a delegation from the Åland Parliament led by its then Speaker, Roger Jansson.<sup>162</sup>

In the peace negotiations 1995-1996, Swedish politician and diplomat, Jan Eliasson, participated as Chairman of the Minsk conference, and repeatedly referred to the Åland example.<sup>163</sup> In addition, Finnish diplomat, Heikki Talvitie, who succeeded Eliasson in 1995 as Co-chair of the Minsk group and who has served as the European Union (EU) Special Representative for the South Caucasus, is known to have highlighted the Åland example in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations.<sup>164</sup>

Later, there have been more than 20 visits to Åland or Ålandic participation in events in the Caucasus, including discussions on the Åland example and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, involving a wide range of different actors such as NGO representatives, journalists, researchers, and students.<sup>165</sup> The ÅIPI publication "Islands of Peace" has been translated into Armenian, Azeri, and Russian in cooperation with NGOs in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Öst has found that all the elements of the Åland example, i.e., demilitarisation, autonomy,

156 The Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh or Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) is also called Republic of Mountain-Karabakh or Artsakh republic. Uppsala Conflict Database. <https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/338>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

157 Among others, see Makili-Aliyev 2018; Naucler 2015; Wigell 2013; Pashayeva, 2012; Öst 2011; Öst 2012; Granlund 2010; Potier 2001; Väyrynen 1998.

158 Uppsala Conflict Database. <https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/338>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

159 According to de Waal (2018, p.10), Nagorno-Karabakh has elements of being a de facto state, however, in terms of economy, security, and civil documentation, it is much more internationally isolated and more closely integrated into its patron state, Armenia.

160 Uppsala Conflict Database. <https://ucdp.uu.se/>

[nonstate/5419](https://ucdp.uu.se/nonstate/5419). Accessed 30.4.2020.

161 Öst 2011, p.165, ÅIPI internal archive.

162 Öst 2012, p.9.

163 Öst 2011, p.163.

164 Wigell 2013, p.78, Rotkirch email 27.5.2019.

165 As one example, in June 2010, some 20 civil society activists from the region visited Åland. Concrete topics of the meeting included administration, institutional building, Åland's EU integration, as well as exchange with local politicians and citizens. (<http://peace.ax/en/nyhetsarkiv/138-courses-and-workshops/1269-besoek-fran-soedra-kaucasus-en>; see also [http://peace.ax/images/stories/pdf/Address\\_.pdf](http://peace.ax/images/stories/pdf/Address_.pdf)). Accessed 18.8.2019.

as well as the protection of a minority culture and language in a specific territory, have been discussed.<sup>166</sup> In an article sent from ÅIPI to Amnesty International in Stockholm for publishing, then ÅIPI Director, Robert Jansson, writes that during the meeting on Åland in 1993, the participants were informed about the autonomy of Åland and Åland's role in international contexts. The article further claims that participants were interested in the economic system, Ålandic identity, and demilitarisation.<sup>167</sup> At this meeting, parallels were drawn to Nagorno-Karabakh, and in addition, secret negotiations were held in smaller groups – however, it was not known what they concerned.<sup>168</sup> Later visits have come at various stages in the so-called frozen conflict and have aimed at attempting to find openings for finding solutions.

In an interview, Jan Eliasson says that there were many people interested in and knowledgeable about Åland, however, the mentioning of Åland came to indicate discussions on the status issue, a sensitive subject to be avoided. Eliasson asserts that in the 1990s, there was no real interest among the parties to find a compromise on the status issue that would be acceptable to all parties.

Although the conflicting parties were knowledgeable about the Åland example, they are said to have been hesitant to refer to it due to the delicate connotations of the autonomy concept.<sup>169</sup>

#### 4.15 Northern Cyprus – Cyprus/Turkey

The Åland example has been brought up in relation to Cyprus both by international experts in relation to the peace negotiations and by Turkish Cypriots with regard to the land rights and

exception to EU law. Demilitarisation has also been highlighted.

The complex Cyprus issue includes many layers and components, among which are competing ethno-nationalisms between Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities, linked to their ethnic kin on mainland Greece and Turkey. These states have their own interests, as well as the former colonial power, the UK, which has two military bases on the island.

Cyprus became independent from the UK in 1960 after four years of extrastate conflict. The relationship between the Greek Cypriot majority and the Turkish Cypriot minority remained strained, eventually intercommunal violence erupted, and in 1974, the UN set up a peace-keeping force. In the same year, the military junta in Greece supported a coup against President Makarios, who fled, and subsequently Turkey responded with a military intervention and took control over more than a third of the island. The UN Security Council has passed repeated resolutions calling on Turkey to withdraw its troops from Cyprus, but Turkey has refused to do so, and the island remains partitioned between north and south along the 'Green Line' ceasefire line drawn up by UN forces in 1963.<sup>170</sup>

The UN has sponsored several rounds of peace talks. In 2002, then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, presented a comprehensive peace plan for Cyprus which envisaged a federation with two constituent parts presided over by a rotating presidency.<sup>171</sup> Negotiations were held with prospects of EU membership for a united Cyprus as an incentive, but in 2004, Cyprus joined the EU

166 Öst 2011, p.167.

167 ÅIPI internal archive. Article dated 12.1.1994.

168 ÅIPI internal archive. Article dated 12.1.1994.

169 Öst 2011, p.163. Azerbaijan consistently maintained that Nagorno-Karabakh was part of the territory of Azerbaijan, while the Karabakhi felt that they were either becoming independent or part of Armenia.

170 Uppsala Conflict Database. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#/country/352>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17219505>. Accessed 30.4.2020. Nicolini 2016.

171 International Crisis Group 2004. *Cyprus: Three advantages of the Annan peace plan*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/cyprus/cyprus-three-advantages-annan-peace-plan>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

as a divided island.<sup>172</sup> The UN-led Cyprus reunification process aspires to establish a bicommunal and bizonal federation following a principle of political equality between Turkish and Greek Cypriots.<sup>173</sup>

Since the Republic of Cyprus became part of the EU in 2004, it must adhere to the EU *acquis communautaire*, and when the conflict is resolved, EU law and the four freedoms will also apply to the currently occupied northern area.<sup>174</sup> When EU membership was negotiated for Cyprus in late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, Åland's derogations from EU law, in particular regarding land rights, were already promoted in relation to Cyprus.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, Åland's provisions have been brought up later by the Turkish Cypriots as support for their argument for restricting the purchase of property by Greek Cypriots in the Turkish Cypriot federal region of a reunited Cyprus.<sup>176</sup>

Professor Joseph Marko at the University of Graz and Head of the Institute of Minority Rights at EURAC Research in South Tyrol, Italy, was drafted to the UN Cyprus Talks in June 2016 as the UN's legal advisor on human rights. In this context, he brought up Åland as an example in relation to EU derogations and land rights. According to Marko, the parties "agreed more or less", even if the leader of the Turkish Cypriots was not convinced. The European Commission, however, did not support to the suggestion.<sup>177</sup>

Furthermore, Marko says that in 2016, Åland was promoted in relation to discussions on the complete demilitarisation of a reunified Cyprus.

172 BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17219505> accessed 30.4.2020. Nicolini 2016.

173 UN Cyprus Talks. <http://www.uncyprustalks.org/sample-page/>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

174 Nicolini 2016, p.313.

175 Bahcheli 2000 p.211, Kyle 1997, p.37, Tozun Bahcheli email 2.7.2019.

176 This has been confirmed by Professor John McGarry, who was involved in the negotiations during 2008-2017, in an email 28.6.2019.

177 Marko interview 2019.

The demilitarisation of Åland was brought up by the UN and parties on the ground, but since complete demilitarisation would include the withdrawal of foreign troops, the suggestion was met with resistance. The UK has particular interest in keeping its military bases, which are extraterritorial, under British sovereignty.<sup>178</sup>

#### 4.16 Northern Ireland - the United Kingdom

Although not a main topic, the Åland example has been a point of reference both in civil society efforts and in high-level negotiations aimed at solving the conflict in Northern Ireland. ÅIPI was engaged already from 1993 - which was the same year when the initial contacts between the British Government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) were made<sup>179</sup> - and after the conflict was settled through the Good Friday agreement in 1998.<sup>180</sup> Mediator Harri Holkeri, former Prime Minister of Finland, in turn, made materials about Åland available to the parties during the peace talks to resolve the long-standing conflict between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland between 1968 and 1998.

At the core of the conflict of Northern Ireland lies intracommunal tensions between Irish nationalists, mostly Catholics, who have promoted the independence of Northern Ireland or a reunion with the neighbouring kin state, Ireland, and the Unionists/loyalists, mostly Protestants, who have wished to retain Northern Ireland's position as part of the UK.<sup>181</sup> These intracom-

178 Marko interview 2019.

179 Smyth 1998, p.12.

180 Between 1993 and 2000, seven youth exchanges occurred between Åland and the Community of Peace People (CPP), a peace organisation with headquarters in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 2003, a two-week exchange was organised together with Public Achievement Northern Ireland, which addressed the topics of active citizenship, democratic participation, and workshop facilitation. In 2006, the international youth camp "Peace, Democracy and Human Rights" was organised with participation from the Balkans and Northern Ireland.

181 Walsh 2018, p.46; Uppsala Conflict Data-

munal tensions were addressed at civil society level in eight youth exchanges organised in 1993 and 2003 by including participants from Åland and Northern Ireland. Robert Jansson, who was the Director of ÅIPI at the time, says that the youth exchanges always included information about the self-government of Åland, but they did not explicitly explore Åland as a model for Northern Ireland.<sup>182</sup>

It is often said that Finnish statesman, Harri Holkeri, brought the Åland example into the negotiations in Northern Ireland. In research based on interviews, Wigell writes that “according to anecdotal evidence, Harri Holkeri, when co-chairing the Northern Ireland peace talks that eventually led to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, though without explicitly bringing up the Åland example, made sure information about it was at hand in the negotiation room.”<sup>183</sup>

Finnish diplomat Holger Rotkirch (who was also interviewed by Wigell) gives the same version of the story, saying that Harri Holkeri told him that he did not want to take up the Åland example during the actual negotiations, but that English language material about the Åland example had been made available to the participants in the negotiations.<sup>184</sup>

In a speech in 2001, Holkeri himself confirmed such an indirect use of the Åland example in relation to the peace negotiations:

“Besides listening and discussing, I naturally elaborated on our own experiences of conflict resolution in our own part of Europe. The Office of the Independent Chairmen also produced and provided information in writing on the example of the Åland Islands. It has to be said that information also

was prepared and distributed on the institutional and practical cooperation between the Nordic Countries as well. I also understood that our information in writing was a real selling article in the corridors of the Stormont Castle Buildings. It is evident that some parts of the Nordic concept can be found in the Belfast Agreement. The Åland Islands for their part might well have influenced the thinking of the negotiators as an example of autonomy in an international and constitutional framework.”<sup>185</sup>

Finnish diplomat Marcus Laurent, who assisted Harri Holkeri, and who was the one actually ensuring that materials about Åland were made available, emphasises that since peace negotiations are characterised by discretion and tactfulness and the chairmanship was to be neutral, it was not possible for Holkeri and his team to put forward outright proposals. It was for this reason that materials about Åland - as well as about Nordic cooperation - were instead placed at strategic locations in the Stormont.<sup>186</sup> Laurent received follow-up questions from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Northern Ireland Office, as well as from Downing Street, so there was a certain interest, even if the questions were presented at a very general level. His own assessment of the usefulness of

185 United Nations. Closing Words by His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri, President of the General Assembly, Autonomy - An Alternative to Secession? A Seminar on the Åland Islands as an Example for Peaceful Governance 15th March 2001. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/president/55/pdf/statements/20010315-alandislands.pdf>. Accessed 15.1.2020.

186 Laurent interview 2019. Harri Holkeri visited Åland in March 1999 and was then asked to comment on the youth exchanges. According to the ÅIPI magazine ‘Papper’ (1-1999), he considered them to be a good idea, and furthermore suggested similar exchanges between parliamentarians from Åland and the Northern Ireland Parliament. He also offered to assist if such a plan would be initiated.

base. <https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/315>. Accessed 15.1.2020.

182 Jansson email 20.5.2019.

183 Wigell 2013, pp.77-78.

184 Rotkirch email 27.5.2019.

the Åland example in the process is that while it may not be possible to discern a direct impact of the Åland example in the Good Friday Agreement, “anything that could move the process forward was useful. Åland could have been one element, South Africa and the process for reconciliation was similarly much discussed”.<sup>187</sup>

Recently, Åland has been mentioned in news articles in relation to Brexit, as one of several other enclaves and islands that have a special legal status within the EU and could provide a post-Brexit model.<sup>188</sup>

#### *4.17 Northern territories/Kuril Islands – Japan/Russia*

Over the years, there has been at least 20 documented contacts with Japan. Topics of interest have concerned both the Japanese involvement in the settlement of the Åland questions in the League of Nations in the 1920s, as well as Åland as a source of inspiration regarding the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands problem between Japan and Russia. Topics of interest have also concerned the Okinawa prefecture in Japan.<sup>189</sup> In fact, the very first entry in the list of the Contact Group refers to a visit from Japan related to the Northern territories/Kuril Islands issue, a civil servant representing of the Prime Minister’s office, Mr Koiso.<sup>190</sup>

The Northern Territories/Kuril Islands problem is a territorial dispute between Japan and Russia over four islands north of Japan, which is rooted in the Soviet Union’s takeover during the Second World War, when all Japanese residents living on the islands were forced to move to Hokkaido. Even the Ainu people, who consider themselves the island group’s indigenous people, claim the Kurils.<sup>191</sup>

187 Laurent interview 2019.

188 The Guardian 2017. *Half in, half out: EU territories show the way for Northern Ireland*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/20/half-in-half-out-eu-territories-show-way-northern-ireland>. Accessed 28.6.2019.

189 Ohnishi 2011.

190 Johansson, email 15.6.2020.

191 Öst 2012.

The seminar “New Initiatives for Solving the Northern Territories Issue between Japan and Russia: An Inspiration from the Åland Experience” was arranged in Mariehamn in August 2006. The Japanese academics Kimie Hara and Masakko Ikegami were the main organisers of the seminar.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, Hara, a Japanese expert in Japanese-Russian relations, published a book including a solution for the Kuril Islands modelled along the Åland example, specifically with regard to the 1921 Autonomy Act.<sup>193</sup>

Ohnishi has found documentation that shows that the Åland solution has been raised at least once in the bilateral negotiations between Russia and Japan, more precisely in the so-called ‘Japanese and Russian wise men’s conference’ led by Japan’s Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Russian President Vladimir Putin between 2004 and 2006.<sup>194</sup>

There is no reference to Russian interest in discussing Åland as an inspiration for the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands case in the literature and materials reviewed.

#### *4.18 Okinawa – Japan*

Over the years, the demilitarisation and economic structure of the Åland Islands has attracted some interest from Japanese and Okinawans in relation to the province of Okinawa. The islands of Okinawa formed an independent kingdom from 1429-1609 and became integrated into Japan in the 1870s. After the Second World War, it was put under United States (US) occupation with limited autonomy, and lands were expropriated to build military bases. In 1972, Okinawa was returned to Japan, but the bases are still left and the islands are economically dependent on

192 Ohnishi 2011, p.134.

193 Hara, Kimie 2009. *Envisioning Åland-inspired solutions for the Northern Territories Problem*, in Hara, Kimie and Geoffrey Jukes 2009. *Northern Territories, Asia-Pacific Regional Conflicts and the Åland Experience. Untying the Kurillian knot*. Routledge, London and New York.

194 Ohnishi 2011, p.133.

the bases and on Japan.<sup>195</sup> According to Ohnishi, the Okinawan interest in Åland has mainly centred around its demilitarised and prosperous economy, rather than around autonomy and demilitarisations as such, although these regimes also attracted some interest in their own right.<sup>196</sup>

In 2002-2004, there was a research project headed by Toshiaki Furuki about the “Self-Governance of Islands in the Era of Regions: A Comparative Study of the Åland Islands in the Baltic Sea and the Ryukyu Islands in the East China Sea”. A book of the same title was published in 2009.<sup>197</sup>

2008-2009 saw conflict solution proposals from the private body of local opinion leaders “Okinawan Gathering for Discussion on a New Provincial Government System”, in which proposals for establishing an exceptional provincial government on Okinawa explicitly mention Åland as example for self-government.<sup>198</sup>

In 2009, a seminar with the title “Joint Okinawa Prefecture - Åland Islands Seminar: Transforming the Relationship with Central Government” was held, initiated by the Japan Local Government Centre in London and ÅIPI. Among the participants were both academics and officials.

Ohnishi points out the significant differences between Åland and Okinawa and assesses that “... is in general difficult to draw implications from the experience of Åland for Okinawa, but the structure of the devolution of powers between local and central authority as developed in the case of Åland would be useful for Okinawans when it comes to detailed planning of a future special self-government”.<sup>199</sup>

195 Ohnishi 2011, p.135.

196 Ohnishi 2011, pp.138-139.

197 Ohnishi 2011, p.138. Furuki, Toshiaki 2006, *Rijon no jidai to shima no jichi: Baruto kai orand to to higashi shina kai Okinawa to no hikaku kenkyu (Self-governance of Islands in the Era of Regions - A Comparative Study of the Åland Islands in the Baltic Sea and the Ryukyu Islands in the East China Sea)*, Tokyo: Chuo University Press.

198 Ohnishi 2011, p.138.

199 Ohnishi 2011 p.139.

#### 4.19 Palestine/Israel

At the core of the Israel-Palestine conflict is the question of what state should exist in the territories that today are either in the state of Israel or are occupied by it. In this conflict over territory, the state of Israel is opposed by various armed Palestinian movements.<sup>200</sup>

In relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Åland solution has been referred to specifically in the discussion of a possible solution of the Jerusalem issue. George Schwab, president of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP), has in interviews and publications, highlighted two aspects of the League of Nations decision of June 1921, i.e., that the local population on Åland should be offered international guarantees for the preservation of the language, culture, and local customs, and at the same time that the protected region should be demilitarised and neutralised under international agreement.<sup>201</sup>

In addition, the rules governing police administration are said to have been carefully studied by the Palestinian authorities.<sup>202</sup>

#### 4.20 Tamil Eelam - Sri Lanka

During the 2000s, Norway and the other Nordic countries were very active in attempting to help solve the conflict in Sri Lanka. The incompatibility concerned the territorial status of the northern and southern provinces of Sri Lanka, which have traditionally had a Tamil majority

200 Uppsala Conflict Database. <https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/234>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

201 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.194, refers to George Schwab, in Carol Rittner and Stephen D. Smith, *No Going Back - Letters to Pope Benedict XVI on the Holocaust, Jewish-Christian Relations and Israel*, the Holocaust Centre, London: Quill Press, 2009, pp.128-130.

202 Then Senior Adviser to the Parliament of Åland, Susanne Eriksson, mentions this in a panel discussion in a seminar documented in the report: “Seminar on Autonomy as a Conflict-solving Mechanism”. Swedish Parliament, Stockholm, 20th November 2000. Regeringskansliet, Utrikesdepartementet.

and claim an independent state of Tamil Eelam. Between 1989 and 2009, over 60,000 people lost their lives in this devastating conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and various opposition groups, most notably the Tamil Tigers.<sup>203</sup>

As part of the conflict resolution efforts, Åland was studied on the spot. Among other activities, the Tamil Tigers were invited to Åland in 2003.

The memoirs of Finnish diplomat Mikko Pyhälä, then Ambassador for Asia and Oceania based in Helsinki and responsible for Finland's relations with Sri Lanka, includes a chapter on Sri Lanka and the contacts between Åland and the Tamil Tigers.<sup>204</sup> Pyhälä describes how Norwegian diplomat Erik Solheim<sup>205</sup>, the main facilitator of the peace process in Sri Lanka from 1998 to 2005, made contact with the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ask if Finland was ready to host the political committee of the Tamil Tigers and show them the autonomy solution of Åland.<sup>206</sup> The Tamil Tigers wanted to visit several Nordic and European countries to study political relations and look for peaceful solutions.

In April 2003, 19 delegates from the political committee of the Tamil Tigers came via Sweden to Åland. On the ferry from Sweden to Åland, a seminar was held with civil servant and Åland expert, Elisabeth Naucclér, and Swiss MP Andreas Gross, who had an interest and expertise in autonomy solutions. On Åland, the delegation learned about the legislation and practice of the autonomy. Thereafter, the delegation continued to Helsinki.<sup>207</sup>

203 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/additionalinfo/352/1>. Accessed 27.11.2019.

204 Ambassador Pyhälä had a long career in the diplomatic service of Finland in Europe, Asia (based in New Delhi and Islamabad), and South America (based in Mexico, Lima, and Caracas).

205 At the time, Solheim was working as an advisor at the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He later held ministerial positions and positions in international organisations. Between May 2016 and November 2018, he was the UN Environment Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. <https://www.unenvironment.org/people/erik-solheim>. Accessed 20.5.2019.

206 Pyhälä 2016, p.107, 119.

207 Pyhälä 2016, pp.106-111.

According to Pyhälä, the leaders of the political committee very seriously considered the notion of an autonomous status as a possible solution to the conflict. They asked very concrete questions and wanted to know how things work in practice on Åland as well as in other parts of the world.

Other visits followed. In September 2004, journalists from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka visited Åland, and in November 2004, came politicians, civil servants, and civil society representatives from Sri Lanka. A press release from the Åland Government about the visit 15-19.11.2004 says:

“a delegation from Sri Lanka is visiting Finland and Åland 15-19.11 to familiarise themselves with the Åland example, democracy in Finland, and popular participation in society in general. The delegation consists of representatives from the government and the opposition, religious communities, and NGOs.”<sup>208</sup>

In October 2007, a seminar on Property Restitution was held in Sri Lanka, with participation by research fellow at ÅIPI, Rhodri C. Williams, who gave the lecture “Post-Conflict and Transitional Restitution in International Law”.

The visits to Åland in 2003-2004 came after a ceasefire had been agreed in 2002, and there was some hope that the conflict could be solved through territorial autonomy for the Tamil, whose leadership was, at that moment, open for such a solution. Later, the Tamil leader, Prabhakaran, decided not to settle for anything less than independence. In 2006, he established that “...war was the only option left for his guerrilla forces in their pursuit of an independent state”.<sup>209</sup>

208 ÅIPI internal archive.

209 Pyhälä interview 2019. The Guardian 2006. *Tamil*

The conflict ended with the government's military victory in 2009, but the original incompatibility has not disappeared.<sup>210</sup>

#### 4.21 Tibet - China

The remote and mainly Buddhist territory of Tibet is governed as an autonomous region of China. The status of Tibet is disputed. According to China, Tibet is an inalienable part of China and has been so for centuries. Tibetans maintain that Tibet has historically been an independent country, which was invaded by China in 1949. The allegiances of many Tibetans lie with the exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who has abandoned the thought of independence and instead promotes autonomy for Tibet.<sup>211</sup> According to autonomy expert Yash Ghai, Tibet is "... the territory in respect of which the Åland model has been most earnestly studied".<sup>212</sup> He maintains that the Åland example has been relevant for Tibet for a number of reasons:

*independence is only option, says rebel leader.* Randeep Ramesh, South Asia correspondent. Published 27.11.2006. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/27/srilanka>. Accessed 2.5.2019.

210 According to the International Crisis Group, "the government has done little either to heal the war's wounds or to address the ethno-nationalist dynamics that drove the conflict. It has largely limited itself to generic statements in support of 'reconciliation', disappointing many Sri Lankans, most notably the 11 percent Tamil minority, who suffered huge casualties in the war's crushing last days. Failed political reforms, inadequate economic development, heavy militarisation of the Tamil-majority north, and government resistance to provide information on disappeared persons have further deepened many Tamils' grievances. Their sense of betrayal, and the absence of spaces to work through the suffering experienced by Muslims and Sinhalese, too, threatens hopes of reconciliation - either between ethno-religious groups and the state or among the groups themselves - and risks further instability. For many Sri Lankans living in the bitterly contested north and east, the war has never quite ended." International Crisis Group, *Picturing Sri Lanka's Undead War*, published 17th May 2019 <https://www.crisis-group.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/picturing-sri-lankas-undead-war>. Accessed 3.6.2019.

211 Sperling, Elliot 2004. BBC News. Tibet Profile. Published 26 April 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16689779>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

212 Ghai 2011, p.89.

"the relatively small size of Tibetan population compared to the rest of the people in China; the religious, cultural, and linguistic differences between Tibetans and the Han and other groups in China; the necessity of the separation of institutions and political parties between Tibet and China and constitutional guarantees of autonomy; and the Dalai Lama's project of a zone of peace in the Himalayan region centred around the demilitarisation of Tibet".<sup>213</sup>

However, Ghai maintains that China has not been interested in the Åland example since it did not want any real delegation of power, but preferred centralisation.

The Åland example has been discussed with or in the presence of the Dalai Lama on several occasions. In 2006, then Director General of the Åland Government Administration Elisabeth Naucclér took part in a meeting with him in Dharamsala in India, where the Dalai Lama has lived in exile since 1959. In 2009, Åland was introduced as part of a conference held in South Tyrol in Italy, where the Tibetan initiative "Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People" was the core topic.<sup>214</sup> In 2011, when the Dalai Lama visited Finland, Naucclér, at the time MP in Finland's Parliament, ar-

213 Ghai 2011, p.89.

214 Svenska riksdagsgruppen, Press release 2009. *Naucclér med i diskussion om autonomi med Dalai Lama*. Published. 20.11.2009 [https://riksdagsgruppen.fi/arkiv/article-115884-39388-nauccler-med-i-diskussion-om-autonomi-med-dalai-lama?offset\\_115884=850&categories\\_115884=1744](https://riksdagsgruppen.fi/arkiv/article-115884-39388-nauccler-med-i-diskussion-om-autonomi-med-dalai-lama?offset_115884=850&categories_115884=1744). Accessed 23.3.2020; Tidningen Åland 2011. Österman, Kerstin. *Naucclér ordnar möte för Dalai lama i riksdagen*. Published 19.8.2011. <https://www.alandstidningen.ax/nyheter/nauccler-ordnar-mote-dalai-lama>. Accessed 23.3.2020. University of Trento online information about the conference: <https://www.unitn.it/archivio/events/en/autonomiaregionalecomparata.html>. Accessed 15.6.2020.

ranged an unofficial meeting for the Dalai Lama and MPs of Finland.<sup>215</sup>

#### 4.22 Transdnjestria – Moldova

Åland has been observed in relation to Transdnjestria on several occasions and contacts have been documented in 1995, 2001, and again in 2015 and onwards.

The conflict in Moldova appeared in the 1990s as the country started to liberate itself from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Slavic minority east of the river Dniestr objected to the independence, as they feared unification with Romania. In 1992, violent clashes occurred between Moldovan troops and the self-proclaimed Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR). The incompatibility remains unsolved. The tensions between the two parties have occasionally intensified, but there has been no armed conflict or violence between them since 1992. A peace process is ongoing, in which the parties meet regularly in the 5 + 2 format; Moldova and PMR as parties to the conflict, Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE as mediators, and US and EU as observers.<sup>216</sup>

In 1995, parliamentarians and officials from Moldova and Transdnjestria gathered in Mariehamn for a seminar, together with representatives from CIS as well as officials from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN, and the OSCE. The seminar was organised by the Council of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of CIS and the Åland Government.<sup>217</sup> No further information has been found about the content of this seminar.

In 2001, a seminar that brought together ne-

gotiators of all the main parties in the dispute was organised on Åland. The seminar was organised by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and speeches from the seminar have been summarised in a report. Speakers from Åland and Finland told the audience about the specifics of the Åland solution. Representatives from the OSCE, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* (PACE), as well as from Moldova, Transdnjestria, and Russia shared their views on possible solutions to the Transdnjestria issue.<sup>218</sup>

Finnish politician, academic and author, Kimmo Kiljunen, who was Chair of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Team on Moldova from 2000 to 2006, repeatedly brought up the Åland example when outlining possible solutions for the conflict between Moldova and Transdnjestria, and he was a driving force behind the seminar.<sup>219</sup> In the 2001 seminar, the general issues brought up by the speakers were autonomy, aspects of minority protection, and demilitarisation.

In 2015 and 2016, before the first direct presidential elections in 16 years, several visits came to Åland. In 2015, a delegation came from the Central Election Commission of Moldova (CEC) to study the election process on Åland.<sup>220</sup> In September 2016, Moldova's Deputy Prime Minister, Gheorghe Bălan, and two officials came to Åland on an official visit. Another visit to Åland in the same year was organised at the initiative of the Finnish-based NGO, CMI. The visiting group consisted of high-level former and current experts in a so-called High-Level Expert Dialogue Group, which had discussed opportunities

215 Nauclér 2011, p.148. Nya Åland 2011. Arvidsson, Mårten. *Nauclér träffade Dalai Lama i riksdagen*. Published 21.8.2011. <https://www.nyan.ax/nyheter/lokalt/naucler-traffade-dalai-lama-i-riksdagen/>. Accessed 23.3.2020.

216 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/394>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

217 ÅIPI internal archive.

218 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 2001. OSCE Parliamentary Seminar. *Seminar on Self-government*. Helsinki, Mariehamn, Finland 28th–31st May 2001. Published by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Copenhagen.

219 Kiljunen interview 2019; Wigell, 2013, p.78.

220 Törnroth, Titte. *Moldavien bevakar valet. Nya Åland*. 18.10.2015. <https://www.nyan.ax/val2015/moldavien-bevakar-valet/>. Accessed 20.5.2019

for resolving the situation of Moldova/Transdnistria since 2011 with CMI as a facilitator.<sup>221</sup>

In addition, Åland was visited by a delegation consisting of people active in small businesses, business organisations, and NGOs in Moldova and Transdnistria. This visit was organised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Moldova and focused on business issues, but also included questions of confidence building and why the Åland example was of interest.<sup>222</sup>

As a general background to the study visits, the question of the status of Transdnistria should be mentioned. It is widely agreed that strong autonomy with security or even a neutrality clause based on an international agreement and the involvement of surrounding powers is needed for Transdnistria.<sup>223</sup>

All the groups familiarised themselves with the Åland example as an entirety and as a concept, but in addition, the individual groups had some more specific focal points. Among the issues of interest during the study visits in 2016 were the demilitarisation, Åland's say in foreign politics, the legislative framework, as well as entrenchment of the autonomy, trade, and education.<sup>224</sup>

221 CMI homepage 2016. *CMI's Dialogue Group from Chisinau and Tiraspol visited Finland*. Published on 15th November 2016. <http://cmi.fi/2016/11/15/cm-diologue-group-chisinau-tiraspol-visited-finland/>. Accessed 15.8.2019.

222 The Åland Islands Peace Institute 2016. *2016 Activity report of the Åland Islands Peace Institute*. [http://www.peace.ax/images/stories/pdf/Activity\\_Report\\_2016\\_webb.pdf](http://www.peace.ax/images/stories/pdf/Activity_Report_2016_webb.pdf). Accessed 16.5.2019; IOM 2016. International Organisation for Migration, Newsletter no. 7, October-December 2016. *Moldovan delegation, including IOM representatives, visit Sweden and the Åland Islands*. <https://www.iom.md/sites/default/files/publications/docs/SIMP%20II%20Newsletter%2C%20no%207%20ENG.pdf>. Accessed 16.5.2019. The IOM visit was part of the EU-funded project "Supporting the implementation of the migration and development component of the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership and harnessing its benefits for the residents of the Transdnistria Region of the Republic of Moldova".

223 See Wolff 2012, Coppieters 2003, p. 6-7.

224 The author of this study attended the seminar and the topics of discussion have been confirmed by

Some of the visitors that came to Åland in 2016 were interested in the processes and procedures associated with the registration of vehicles in the autonomous Åland Islands. Their programme included a visit to the Motor Vehicle Office, where they received information on car plate registration. Since December 2016, the OSCE-led negotiations process has focused on having Moldova and Transdnistria develop and implement practical outputs to advance the settlement process.<sup>225</sup> The sides identified a package of eight priorities with agreements reached on six of them by April 2018.<sup>226</sup> One of these agreements concerned a mechanism for the participation of vehicles from Transdnistria in international road traffic. In 2018, two Vehicle Registration Offices were opened in the left-bank cities of Tiraspol and Ribnita as part of the implementation of the so-called 'license plate' agreement. The Vehicle Registration Offices will issue internationally recognised Moldovan neutrally designed license plates to vehicles from Transdnistria to allow for their participation in international traffic.<sup>227</sup> CMI staff confirm that the processes and procedures associated with the registration of vehicles on Åland has served as a reference point when the question of the participation of vehicles from Transdnistria in international road traffic was solved.<sup>228</sup> However, it is not known if features from Åland concretely inspired solutions, or rather just as a point of reference.

#### 4.23 Vojvodina – Serbia

As previously discussed, Åland was well known in post-Yugoslavia and was brought up in multiple contexts. One of the cases concerns the autonomous province of Vojvodina in Serbia.

CMI staff.

225 OSCE. <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-moldova>. Accessed 16.5.2019.

226 OSCE. <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-moldova>. Accessed 16.5.2019.

227 OSCE. <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/392231>. Accessed 16.5.2019.

228 Discussion with CMI staff. ÅIPI internal archive.

During the Second World War, Vojvodina was occupied by Hungary, but was regained by Yugoslavia in 1945. After the Second World War, Vojvodina, as well as the region of Kosovo, was granted autonomy within Serbia.<sup>229</sup>

The autonomy of Vojvodina did not come about to protect a linguistic minority, but rather for historical, economic, cultural and geographic reasons. In contrast to the rest of Serbia, Vojvodina was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for many years, which has influenced its culture, architecture, and general way of life.<sup>230</sup>

The ethnic makeup of Vojvodina was altered considerably by the warfare in the Balkan region that followed the breakup of the Yugoslav federation. According to the province's own webpage, 26 different ethnicities live in Vojvodina today. Serbians are the majority, comprising about two thirds of the population, the Hungarian minority consist of some 10 percent of the population, and there are also smaller Romanian, Slovak, Croat, Ruthenian, Muslim, and many other groups.<sup>231</sup> According to Beretka, there is no strong regional Vojvodinian identity, however, the Hungarian minority has been advocating more autonomous rights for the region and for the Hungarians in Serbia.<sup>232</sup>

In 1974, the autonomy was expanded, and Vojvodina was granted extensive legislative, executive, and judicial powers to self-rule, including a constitutional court and its own budget. However, in the constitution of 1990, most of the autonomous powers were lost. Since then, there has been a process of regionalisation in Serbia, as well as attempts to strengthen the autonomous powers from within Vojvodina.<sup>233</sup>

In August 2002, a seminar about Vojvodina and the Nordic autonomies was held on Åland,

with a delegation of politicians and civil servants from Vojvodina. The seminar was a follow-up of seminars on the autonomies of the Nordic countries, which had been held in the Balkans during 1998-2001. A report was compiled after the seminar and press releases have been archived at ÅIPI. According to the report, the seminar was held because "... politicians in Vojvodina are now struggling to get back the autonomy that they lost in 1990. Vojvodina was first granted its autonomy in 1945, after the Second World War. The autonomy was expanded in 1974, when part of the legislation and taxes were transferred to the competence sphere of Vojvodina."<sup>234</sup>

The seminar report was published by the Government of Åland and ÅIPI with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. At the seminar, the autonomies of Åland and Vojvodina were presented, as well as the autonomies of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, which were presented by representatives from these islands.

The visit was well-documented in the report, which included a section of questions and answers with the guests. Their assessment was that it is difficult to compare Åland and Vojvodina, since the history and general context differ. The delegation from Vojvodina expressed a wish to have more financial autonomy and symbols such as their own flag and stamps. However, they thought this would be difficult since they assessed the attitude of Serbia towards its autonomy was much different from that of Finland. They suggested that politicians from Belgrade should come to Finland in order to learn how to manage questions of autonomy.<sup>235</sup>

In November 2005, a delegation from Vojvodina visited the Åland Islands again. This time, the visit was part of a project aimed at strengthening

229 Beretka 2014, pp.251, 254.

230 Beretka 2014, pp.251, 254.

231 Official site of Vojvodina. <http://www.vojvodina.gov.rs/en/autonomous-province-vojvodina>. Accessed 13.4.2019.

232 Beretka 2014, pp.250, 252.

233 Beretka 2014, pp.250, 254.

234 Vojvodina and the Nordic Autonomies. Report from a seminar 14th-18th August 2002. Published in 2005 by The Government of Åland and ÅIPI with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers, p.57.

235 Ibid.

contacts with regions in Europe and to study various cross-border cooperations. The project and delegation were headed by PhD Dušan Janjić, accompanied by three other people.<sup>236</sup>

#### 4.24 *Western Sahara - Morocco*

The conflict in Western Sahara, which is sometimes referred to as ‘The Sahara’s frozen conflict’, concerns the status of the territory over which Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania, as well as local groups have forwarded different claims. Western Sahara was annexed by Spain in 1884, and in the 1970s, UN calls for Spain, in cooperation with Morocco and Mauritania, to set a date for a referendum to decide the future status of the territory were not adhered to. Several political and armed groups with different objectives emerged within the Spanish Sahara, among them the Polisario Front movement of the local Sahrawi people who wanted independence, which conducted guerrilla attacks in the territory.

In 1975, 350,000 Moroccans marched into the formerly Spanish-controlled region, later followed by troops. The response was armed resistance by the Polisario Front. Armed conflict between the Polisario Front and the government of Morocco followed. The armed conflict ended in 1989, and after a 1991 ceasefire, there have been several attempts to reach an agreement to solve the conflict. Among the proposals, Morocco has suggested creating a ‘Sahara autonomous region’ under Moroccan sovereignty. The Polisario Front, however, wants a referendum with independence as a clear option.<sup>237</sup>

There were reportedly several visits from Western Sahara to Åland in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including a visit by the Polisario Front, and it is also said that the Åland case has been

explored in several seminars over the years.<sup>238</sup> In 2001, parliamentarians from Morocco and representatives from the National Democratic Institute in the United States of America (USA) visited the Åland Islands. They came to Finland to study Finland’s democracy, and while on Åland, they learned about Åland’s autonomy.<sup>239</sup>

In 2016, there were media reports that the Åland example was mentioned in leaked documents from the Government of Morocco. According to the reports, Moroccan authorities are studying the example of the Åland Islands to encourage the country’s occupation of Western Sahara. The source of information was Erik Hagen, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara who had read the leaked documents.<sup>240</sup> The reports were followed by comments from Western Sahara, quoted in the media as saying that autonomy would not be an appropriate solution for Western Sahara.<sup>241</sup>

238 Then MP for Åland in the Parliament of Finland, Elisabeth Nauclér, wrote in 2011: “The situation in Western Sahara is difficult, several have been killed this week. They have always looked at Åland. The Polisario Front has been at Kökar, Mariehamn, and at our UN seminar in New York in 2001. Now I am the object of new awakening and calls for help. They want me to attend meetings on site, while of course Morocco does not want the issue to be addressed, and says I should not travel to see just one side, and it is true one must always see and listen to both sides.” Weekly letter 5th October 2011. <http://www.naucler.ax/2011/10/>. Accessed 29.5.2020. Translated to English by the report author.

239 Visit documented in ÅIPI magazine “Papper”.

240 Nya Åland 2016. Johansson, Julia. Published 3.8.2016. *Ålandsexemplet med i läckta dokument*. <https://www.nyan.ax/nyheter/alandsexemplet-med-i-lackta-dokument/>. Accessed 21.3.2020. See also this article from 2019 (author’s translation from Finnish): *Åland as a model for the conflict in West-Sahara?* “Morocco has occupied Western Sahara for over 40 years. The solution to the conflict that is now offered is the model of autonomy in the Åland Islands. Western Saharan aspirants for independence are dissatisfied.” MaaIlman Kuvalehti, Jauhiainen, Johannes. Published 13.06.2016. Original title: *Abvenanmaalta mallia Länsi-Saharan konfliktiin?* <https://www.maailmankuvalehti.fi/2019/6/pitkat/ahvenanmaalta-mallia-lansisaharan-konfliktiin>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

241 Nya Åland 2016. Johansson, Julia. “Autonomy is

236 ÅIPI internal archive.

237 Uppsala Conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/331>. Accessed 21.3.2020. International Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/western-sahara/saharas-frozen-conflict>. Accessed 21.3.2020.

Over the years, the Emmaus organisation on Åland has maintained contacts with Western Sahara, among others, through inviting the local Sahrawi people to their yearly summer camps. At these camps, the Åland example and its possible application have been discussed. At these occasions, participants from Western Sahara have pointed out that they have a right to self-determination and a referendum.<sup>242</sup>

#### 4.25 Zanzibar - Tanzania

Just like Åland, Zanzibar is an autonomous island where wishes to increase the level of self-determination are voiced, and where the relationship with the mainland is a central issue, but apart from these aspects, many circumstances differ between the islands. Zanzibar, in contrast to Åland, was once an independent state, which, after independence in 1963, voluntarily merged with the mainland, Tanganyika, to form the United Republic of Tanzania in 1964. A new union constitution of 1977 reduced the initial autonomy of Zanzibar, and today most Zanzibaris consider their autonomy to have been eroded and want more self-determination.<sup>243</sup> In the current system, a union government decides over both union and non-union matters for the mainland, and Zanzibar has its own government with competence in non-union matters only.<sup>244</sup> Suggested changes to the status issue - from a two-tier to a three-tier government or secession - would affect not only Zanzibar but also the political set-up of the country at large. However, the conflict on Zanzibar does not solely concern relations with the mainland, but also political tensions and violence within the island.

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not a solution; so the Western Saharans themselves say about Morocco's internal proposal to look at the Åland example as a way to solve the situation in Western Sahara." Published 4.8.2016 <https://www.nyan.ax/nyheter/autonomi-ar-in-gen-losning/>.

242 Robert Jansson, email 24.5.2020.

243 Virkkunen and Valtonen 2016, pp.25-27, Suksi 2011, pp.188, 192-193.

244 Virkkunen and Valtonen 2016, p.31.

Seven visits from Tanzania to Åland have been documented in the visitors list, six of them from Zanzibar. In October 1991, three delegates in a committee with the task to assess Zanzibar's future status within Tanzania as well as the party system in the country, visited Åland.<sup>245</sup> In 1998, the then President of Tanzania, Benjamin William Mkapa, visited Åland together with the then President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari as part of an official state visit to Finland. Reportedly, the visit to Åland was made on the initiative of Ahtisaari and with the aim to introduce the autonomy system.<sup>246</sup> Between 2004 and 2006, there were four visits to Åland from Zanzibar. In 2004 came one journalist, in 2005, came the then President of Zanzibar, Amani Karume, with a delegation, and in the same year as well as in 2006 came the Tanzania-Zanzibar Joint Financial Commission. As a follow-up to the visits, there were plans for a delegation from ÅIPI to visit to Zanzibar to study the Muafaka Agreement, a plan for a seminar on Åland about autonomy and peace, and a potential continuation with a project discussing ways of power-sharing - both in the form of autonomy and along the lines of the Muafaka agreement. However, these plans did not materialise.<sup>247</sup>

The visits in 2004 and 2005 came at a time when the Muafaka II Accords, an agreement between political fractions in Zanzibar, were being implemented and the political situation on the island had been normalised.<sup>248</sup> The Muafaka Accords are repeatedly referred to in ÅIPI's internal documents related to planning for a study visit and a seminar.

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245 Lars Ingmar Johansson, email 15.6.2020.

246 Lars Ingmar Johansson, email 15.6.2020.

247 ÅIPI internal archive, ÅIPI internal documents.

248 Virkkunen and Valtonen 2016, p.26.

## 5. Where and when has the Åland example been used?

After mapping 25 cases, it can be assessed that the author found more documentation of the usage of the Åland example than had been anticipated, and that the Åland example has been used in more conflicts, by more actors, and in more ways than what had previously been documented.

Vague reports of the Åland example having been used in Kashmir and Cyprus have now been confirmed and documented, while in cases such as Bougainville, Corsica, Crimea, Gagauzia, Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands, Kosovo, Mindanao, Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka), Tibet, Transdnestrria, Vojvodina, Western Sahara, and Zanzibar, documentation has been collected from various sources, and compiled to provide more comprehensive accounts than were previously available. In addition, several cases for which only scarce information was found or for which information could not be obtained or conveyed due to the sensitivity of ongoing conflict resolution efforts were not included in the study. Hence, at a quantitative level, the amount of data found and the number of cases in which Åland has been referred to exceed the author's expectations.

The information in the case descriptions cannot be considered exhaustive. Since it is likely that there have been discussions and events that have not been documented or the documentation has not been found, it should be said that the various cases have at least included the noted aspects, while there may well be more information that has not been included here.

In this chapter, it will be discussed where, when, and in which kind of conflicts the Åland example has been used. The questions of which

actors have been involved and in which kind of processes are addressed in chapter 6, which builds on in-depth analyses of fewer cases.

### *5.1 Where and in which types of conflicts has the Åland example been used?*

The mapped cases are mostly located in Europe, Asia, and Oceania, while only one case was identified in America and two in Africa. With regards to Africa, there is information about the Åland example having been promoted or having been of interest among conflict actors at least to some extent in some ten additional cases, but this information was either too sensitive or too vague to be included in this study.

Several of the conflicts are linked to a process of decolonialisation and a considerable number of cases are situated in post-Soviet sphere. Twelve cases share a colonial past: Aceh, Bougainville, East Timor, Hong Kong, Kashmir, Minadanao, Northern Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Palestine/Israel, Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka), Western Sahara, and Zanzibar. Some claim that this is also the case for Corsica.

Among the 25 cases, 9 have been part of the Soviet sphere, and 3 of them in the former Yugoslavia. These are Abkhazia, Crimea, Gagauzia, Kosovo, Krajina, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Transdnestrria, and Vojvodina.

It can also be noted that most of the listed conflicts occur on islands, parts of islands, or peninsulas.

It can be maintained that the Åland example has featured both in very violent conflicts, such as Sri Lanka, where 60,000 people lost their lives in the conflict over Tamil Eelam, and in conflicts

with no or very low levels of violence, such as in Gagauzia, where only a few people died in 1989 and no violence has occurred since. Indeed, in some cases, among them Crimea, Hong Kong, Okinawa, and Vojvodina, the appropriateness of the term conflict can be questioned, since while incompatibilities exist and there are actors to voice them, the incompatibilities have not been manifested in violence. Some of the conflicts, such as those in Cyprus and Transnistria, are occasionally described as ‘frozen’, since for many years the incompatibilities have not been manifested violently by the actors involved, and peace negotiations are ongoing. Indeed, Northern Cyprus and Transnistria are among the cases which involve the function of a de facto state, and power-sharing arrangements have been featured in the peace negotiations.

Other conflicts have ended in various ways. In the case of Sri Lanka, the conflict ended through military means in 2009, and in the case of Northern Ireland, through the peace agreement in 1998. Some of the cases see a low level of violence occur again and again, as in Corsica, where thousands of bombings have taken place.<sup>249</sup> Some of the conflicts were still active in 2018, for example, Mindanao and Kashmir were listed as active conflicts in the UCDP, with over 25 dead in that year.

All the listed conflicts are state-based, since in all cases, at least one state is involved. In some cases, as in Kashmir, Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands, Northern territories/Kuril Islands, and Northern Cyprus - more than one state is directly involved. Most of the conflicts also include non-state actors and one or several armed groups that are in opposition to the government.

All cases examined in this study can be said

249 AFP, The local 2019. ‘Bombs and arson attacks spark fears of return of terror campaign in Corsica’. Published on 2nd April 2019. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20190402/bombs-and-arson-attacks-spark-fears-of-return-of-terror-campaign-in-corsica>. Accessed 17.4.2020.

to concern an incompatibility over territory as there are contesting claims regarding the status of a territory between a state and the community or communities residing in the territory and/or between two or more states.<sup>250</sup> However, ‘territory’ may not be the cause of the conflicts, and it might not be the only or even the main incompatibility. It might well be claimed that most of the conflicts are over diversity – they are related to identity or minority issues and sometimes the discrimination of one or several groups that reside in a certain territory, which is why territory becomes a dimension in the conflict.

The links between diversity, identity, territory, and conflicts are complex. Most cases are linked to issues of diversity, as there is at least one group residing in the disputed territory which sees itself (and may be perceived by others) as distinct from the other groups in the rest of the state - and furthermore, in many cases, in relation to other groups in the disputed territory.

While many of the listed conflicts can be described as ‘ethnic conflicts’, this is not always the case. Diversity is not always characterised by ethnicity or language. In some cases, a group residing in a specific region may perceive itself as distinct to other groups in the state due to differing historic and cultural experiences, as in East Timor, Vojvodina, and Hong Kong. In the latter case, diversity also includes a different political and economic system compared to mainland China.

In addition, in some cases, the status of the territory is disputed between different communities residing in the territory. In several cases, such intracommunal tensions are an important part of the conflict, or even the central issue, which is the case in Northern Ireland and Cy-

250 In the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, an incompatibility concerning territory is specified as follows: “Incompatibility concerning the status of a territory, e.g., the change of the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict), secession or autonomy (internal conflict).” Pettersson 2019.

prus. These different levels and claims might overlap.

In most of the cases studied here, such communities or ethnic groups claim full or shared control over the territory in question. The claims of the communities or groups in the different cases can be based on a variety of arguments - they might refer to historic self-rule in the territory, the need to protect distinct ethnic, linguistic, or religious features that separate the group from the majority population of the country or the right to people's self-determination.

Demands for self-determination can take various forms as independence or as autonomy within the state, which can be considered as a form of internal self-determination. These demands can vary over time. Several of the noted cases have various kinds of autonomy arrangements, as in Corsica, Gagauzia, Mindanao, Kashmir, and Northern Ireland. In many of the cases, there are actors who aspire for more. However, in some cases, processes go in the other direction, as was the case of the autonomy of Kashmir, which was abolished by India in 2019.

In most of the cases, one or several groups are

diverse in relation to the state in which they reside, but in other cases, the situation is the contrary - in Islas Malvinas/Falklands Islands, the population is content belonging to the UK, while Argentina claims the territory, and in the cases of Nagorno-Karabakh and Transdniestria, the population may prefer the current status as de facto states (or almost de facto states) with strong links to their kin states, rather than becoming a part of the states claiming the territory, which are Moldova and Azerbaijan respectively.

### 5.2 When has the Åland example been used?

In the present study, the Contact Group's list about groups and individuals who have received information about the Åland example since 1992 was thoroughly examined. In the list, which contains 461 entries for the years 1992-2018, the number of entries per year has risen in later years. In the early years, there are around 10 entries per year, and in later years, around 20. There may be several reasons for why the number of listed entries has increased. The list of visitors to ÅIPI was only created in 2005, and it's possible that the statistics from the first ten years

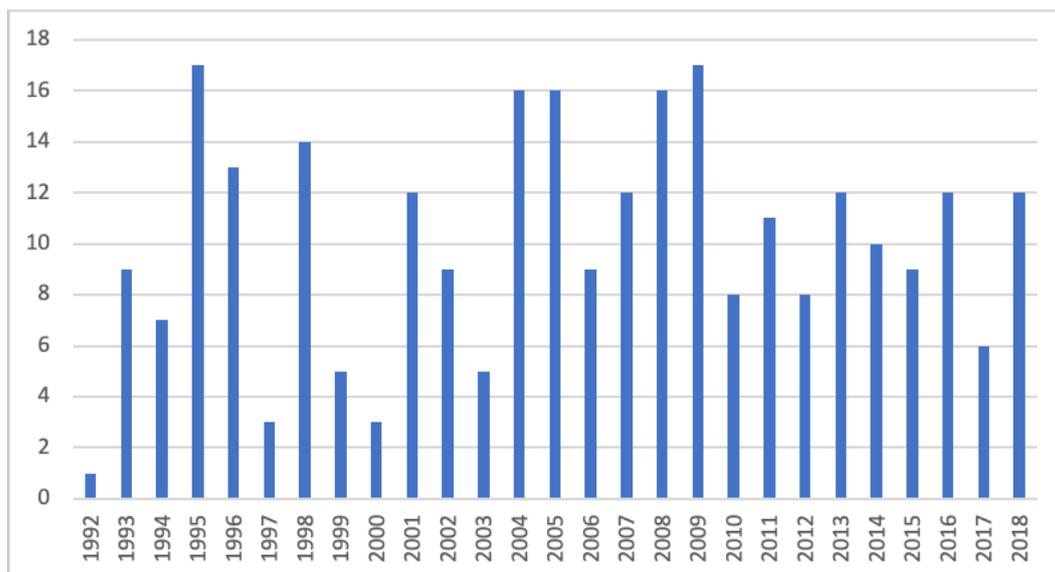


Figure 1. The number of visits per year related to the Åland example according to the list of the Contact Group.

are less reliable than later statistics, since they were documented in hindsight. Another trend is that there are more research events and articles to include in the list in later years. It is also possible that the list has become more liberal in its criteria, but this is difficult to assess, since it is not known what was omitted before 2008.

However, after having removed entries that were not relevant for this study from the list<sup>251</sup>, the numbers even out, and the pattern is rather one of consolidation. In the remaining 272 listed cases, the number of visits per year differ from 1 (in 1992) to 17 in a year. There were greater fluctuations in the number of visitors per year during the 1990s and early 2000s. The peak years were 1995, 2004-2005 and 2008-2009, after which there has been a stabilisation in the number of entries. It was found that during these 26 years, there has been an average of 10 visits per year.

In a previous report mapping the activities of the Contact Group between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Åland Government since its establishment in 1998 - a group whose mandate includes developing and increasing the use of the Åland example in international contexts - it was found that during the early years, the Group's work was characterised by issues of crisis and conflict management in practice and in international contexts. The minutes of the Contact Group often mentioned requests for visits, programmes for visits, and follow-up of visits from different parts of the world, as for example the Philippines, Mindanao, East Timor, Cyprus, and Western Sahara. The Group's members also lectured on issues related to the Åland example around the world. However, new topics were included on the Contact Group's agenda over the years, and dis-

251 Such as research publications and research seminars where the Åland example was discussed as a part of a wider theme and visits by students or researchers in which the Åland example were only a limited part of a wider academic discussion without being specifically related to certain cases or regions.

cussions about visits and international conflict resolution became less frequent, at least proportionally.<sup>252</sup> These findings gave rise to the question of whether the number of visits has diminished over the years<sup>253</sup>, although this does not correspond with the statistics from the Contact Group's visitors' list.

Some of the interviewees in a previous study of the Contact Group as well as in this present study have shared their assessments of this matter. Their conclusions vary. While one interviewee said that the Åland example might have played out its role, others claim that the interest in it is as significant as ever.<sup>254</sup>

An attempt was made to map all documented instances of contact into parallel timelines. The result was that the bulk of known and documented instances of contact occurred during the 2000s, which suggests that these were the 'golden days' (at least so far) of the Åland example. However, the documentation from earlier years is more sporadic, and it may also be the case that more recent information has not yet been mapped or made public, since it is part of ongoing peace efforts and hence sensitive.<sup>255</sup>

252 Simolin 2018b.

253 Simolin 2018b, p.25.

254 Simolin 2018b.

255 The timeline is not published here, since it is not accurate enough. It had to be based on estimates to a large extent, so a full picture cannot be provided, and it is difficult to draw any reliable conclusions.

## 6. Actors, processes, phases and areas of interest – an analysis of eight cases

To investigate in which types of processes the Åland example has been used, which actors have initiated and participated in the discussions, as well as which parts of the example that have been considered most interesting, eight cases have been examined in more detail.

When cases were selected for the qualitative analysis, one main criterion was access to materials - there needed to be enough information at hand to answer the questions in the qualitative analysis. This criterion was met by 18 cases; eight cases that had been well documented in previous research and the ten cases for which new information had been found. It was assessed that eight cases would provide a sufficient basis for the qualitative analysis. As said, the Åland example has been used in a variety of situations around the world, and the analysis should mirror both variety and geographic spread.

By selecting Corsica, Gagauzia, Cyprus, Kashmir, Mindanao, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Transdnistria, the analysis covers two cases from within the EU (Corsica and Northern Ireland - at the time of writing), three in Europe (Northern Cyprus, Gagauzia, Transdnistria), and three in Asia (Kashmir, Mindanao and Sri Lanka).

No case from Africa or America was included, which corresponds well with the full list of 25 cases, which includes only one case from America and two from Africa, and those cases - Malvinas/Falklands, Western Sahara, and Zanzibar - provided too scarce information to be analysed.

Five cases selected for the qualitative analysis have a colonial background: Kashmir, Mindanao, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lan-

ka. The ratio corresponds rather well to the full list of 25 cases, in which 12 cases share a colonial past. Some claim that this is also the case for Corsica.

Three of the cases selected for analysis are situated in the post-Soviet sphere, whereas in relation to the full list, 9 of the 25 cases have been part of the Soviet sphere, three of them in the former Yugoslavia.

### *6.1 Which actors have used the Åland example?*

When assessing which actors have used the Åland example as a source of inspiration and a tool in conflict resolution processes, aspects of core interest are the geographic affiliation (nationality) of the actors involved in discussing the Åland example in the various cases and their position in relation to the conflict. In particular, who initiated the discussions is of interest - third parties or actors from the conflict regions? In addition, it is of interest whether the actors from the conflict region involved in discussing the Åland example represent or reside in the state or in the disputed region.

Some of the actors that have been involved in using the Åland example are quite well-known from previous research. In particular, it has been analysed how and why political actors from Åland, as well as politicians and diplomats from Finland, promote the Åland example in international conflict resolution processes, both for altruistic reasons and as a part of Ålandic paradiplomacy or Finland's foreign policy.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, the views of Nordic diplomats have been highlighted in other contexts.<sup>257</sup>

<sup>256</sup> Granlund 2010, Wigell 2013.

<sup>257</sup> Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, reports from the

While third parties, especially from Åland, Finland, and the wider Nordic region, are well represented in previous research, voices of actors from the conflict regions are heard to a much lesser extent in research about usage of the Åland example. Many such actors are mentioned and, in some cases, written documentation of the views of actors from conflict regions is available, but this study has mostly had access solely to secondary information, in which third parties have shared their perceptions of which actors in conflict regions have found the Åland case interesting.

A related question is that of who initiated the contact. Did the initiative come from Åland, Finland, the wider Nordic region, or third parties elsewhere, or was it first brought up by actors representing or residing in the conflict region, either from the state or the disputed territory? To analyse this question based on information in the core materials, an instance of an initial documented contact has been identified.<sup>258</sup> This study maps the initial and following documented contacts with Åland and investigates which actors have initiated and participated in the discussions.

It is not always known who initiated contacts with or interest in Åland in a certain region or state. In some cases, there are several initiators for different processes or events at various stages. However, based on information in the core materials, it has been possible to identify an instance of an initial documented contact in six of the eight cases. As far as the collected data reveals, it has mostly been third parties that have introduced the Åland example in the conflict region, and it is not actors from the conflict region who have taken the initiative.

As shown in the matrix above, it has been assessed that one contact was initiated from Åland (Northern Ireland), two from Finland (Mindan-

<sup>258</sup> Contact Group's seminars (see references).  
<sup>258</sup> For a definition of 'contact', see section 3.1.

ao and Gagauzia), one from the Nordic region outside Finland (Sri Lanka), two by third parties from wider Europe (Corsica and Northern Cyprus), while in two instances (Kashmir and Transdnistria), it has not been possible to find documentation of who took the initiative in the contact, which has been defined here as the first known and documented contact.

Many different types of actors have been involved in the processes. Diplomats from Finland or other Nordic countries have often been involved, and there are several examples of scholars from outside the Nordic region who have brought up the Åland example either in expert functions in mediation processes (such as Joseph Marko in Cyprus) or in order to organise academic seminars hosted by research centres (such as John Loughlin in the ECMI on Corsica). In addition, there are several examples of international NGOs active in the field of conflict resolution at a practical level as main organisers of events or processes in which discussions on Åland have been included.<sup>259</sup> Finnish NGO, CMI, is active in Gagauzia in cooperation with research centre EURAC, and CMI is also active in Transdnistria.

In addition, it can be noted that actors from Åland have not been involved in all the cases. Ålandic involvement is documented in the case of Corsica, Gagauzia, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Transdnistria, but no evidence has been found of Ålandic involvement in Cyprus and Mindanao.<sup>260</sup> Concerning Kashmir, Åland has received visits from the regions, but has not been involved in any processes to solve the in-

<sup>259</sup> Distinctions between research centres and NGOs with a more practical agenda for conflict resolution is not always clear-cut. For example, ÅIPI, which has both research and practice in its mandate, was one of the organisers for the Crimea seminar in 2001.

<sup>260</sup> According to anecdotal evidence, a statesman from Åland was at some point asked to take part in the Cyprus negotiations, but at the time it was assessed that it was not compatible with his current official position.

Case	Some contacts + actors	Formats	Actors involved
<b>Corsica</b>	1998, seminar on Åland organized by ECMI, Professor Loughlin, Cardiff University, Wales. Youth exchange in 2000. 10 unspecified visits from France to Åland 1995-2018. Regionalists/nationalists have mentioned Åland in political documents and media. Seminars in Paris 2018, Åland expert Nauclér.	Seminars. Political and media discussions in the region	Both from Corsica and France. Researchers, politicians, NGO, media. Third parties: Research centre ECMI.
<b>Gagauzia</b>	CMI Dialogue project, including 2016 study visit to Åland and lecture in Moldova 2019. Research visit to Åland, 2019.	Study visit and lecture as part of dialogue process, academic publications	Both from Gagauzia and Moldova. Parliamentarians, researchers, civil servants, NGO:s. Third parties: CMI, ÅPI
<b>Kashmir</b>	Civil servant from India visited Åland 1998. Ålandic participation in youth exchange in India 1996. Visits by journalists 2004 and 2005, including journalist and lawyer Noorani. Newspaper articles, scholarly articles (including Kashmir study group) and discussions in NGO forums in the region from time to time late 1990's until presently.	Youth exchange, visits, newspaper articles, academic publications	Both from India and Pakistan. Civil servant, Journalists, NGO:s. Participation from Kashmir not known.
<b>Minadanao</b>	Diplomats Majanen and Rotkirch from Finland discussed with Philippine leaders in early 2000's. 2001 visit to Åland by senate president of Philippines and 2003 a journalist. 2012 Moro leader refers to Åland in news article. 2014 Finnish politician Kiljunen in seminar and discussions in region.	Diplomatic discussions, visit to Åland, news article, seminar participation in region, academic publications	Both from Philippines and Mindanao. Politicians, journalist. Third parties: Finnish diplomats and politicians.
<b>Northern Cyprus</b>	There has been an interest especially from the Turk Cypriot side since 1990's. According to experts taking part in negotiations (McGarry, Marko) Åland has been brought up in connection to peace negotiations on occasions during 2008-2017. Åland has also been discussed in relation to Cyprus in academic works (Bahcheli).	Discussed in relation to peace negotiations, political discussions and academic publications.	Both from Cyprus and Northern Cyprus as well as Turkey. Politicians, civil servants, researchers. Third party experts.
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	1993-2006 Youth exchanges. Åland Islands Peace Institute + NGO in Northern Ireland. (ÅPII chairperson Sundback and Director Jansson). Åland was indirectly referred to in the peace negotiations 1996-98 (Holkeri, Laurent). Åland mentioned in media also in relation to the Brexit process.	Youth exchanges, peace negotiations, media	Both from Northern Ireland and UK. Youth and youth workers, participants in high-level peace process. Third parties: ÅPII, Finnish statesman, diplomats.
<b>Tamil Eelam</b>	2003 Tamil Tigers visited Åland. Statesman Erik Solheim, Norway, Diplomat Mikko Pyhälä, Finland. Visits: 2004 journalists from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, politicians civil servants and NGO:s from Sri Lanka. 2007, ÅPII research fellow at seminar on Property Restitution in Sri Lanka.	Study visits, seminar participation	Both Sri Lankan and Tamil actors, Political leadership, NGO:s. Third parties: Norwegian mediators, MFA Finland, Åland government, ÅPII.
<b>Transdnierstria</b>	1995 seminar on Åland organized by the interparliamentary council of the CIS-states and the Åland government. 2001 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly organized a seminar on Åland, with Finnish Politician, Academic and Author Kiljunen involved in seminar and brought up Åland also on other occasions. Several visits to Åland in 2015 and 2016 (CMI, IOM among others)	Seminars, study visits, diplomatic contacts	Both from Transdnierstria and Moldova. Parliamentarians, experts, minister, NGO:s, business. Third parties: CIS-states (1995), OSCE (2001), Finnish politician, CMI, ÅPII

Figure 2. Contacts, actors and processes in eight cases

compatibilities in these cases to a significant extent.

In all eight cases, it has been documented that a variety of different actors from the conflict region have been informed about or have in other ways found information about the Åland example. As a rule, politicians and journalists as well as NGOs and researchers or other experts are documented either to have taken part in processes or events in which Åland has been considered or to have themselves disseminated information about the Åland case and its relevance to the conflict in question.

In at least seven of the cases, political leaders from both the state and the disputed region are known to have taken part in disseminating information about Åland. In the case of Kashmir, there is no evidence of either Indian or Kashmiri leaders having been reached by the information. Information about Åland has reached researchers from either the state, the disputed territory, or both in four cases: Corsica, Cyprus, Gagauzia, and Transnistria.

In all the cases studied, information about the Åland example has reached both the involved states and regions either separately or at the same time, sometimes first separately and then jointly. The possible exemption here is Kashmir, where it is difficult to say who was reached by the information. In some cases, discussions about Åland have been held together, with a broader selection of stakeholders and surrounding states, as in the Transnistria case, when several post-Soviet states took part both in 1995 and in 2001.

### *6.2 In which phases and processes has the Åland example been used?*

In what phases of a conflict has the Åland example been used and in which types of processes of peace diplomacy? One aspect of interest is the continuity of usage in the different cases. Has the Åland example been promoted only in separate instances, or more in the framework of

long-term efforts? Another aspect to examine is at what levels the Åland example has been used. Is it used in official and high-level contexts or rather in more low-key and unofficial settings?

These aspects can be analysed against the background of the wide notion of peace diplomacy, which is defined by Wallensteen and Svensson (2016) as diplomatic efforts in a wide sense that aim to prevent outbreaks of political violence, achieve a peaceful solution to armed conflicts, and to contribute to building stable peace around the world.<sup>261</sup> Conflicts can be divided into different phases, which each require specific types of peace diplomacy. The labels for and number of phases can vary among authors. For example, Wallensteen and Svensson distinguish three phases of a conflict cycle and corresponding peace diplomatic activities.<sup>262</sup> Firstly, in the phase before a conflict has broken out, or while it still has not reached high levels of violence, diplomatic efforts of conflict prevention can be carried out. These are actions that aim to prevent an armed conflict breaking out or to stop an armed conflict from escalating. Secondly, when a conflict is ongoing, measures to manage or resolve the conflict can be taken. Thirdly, after the conflict has ended, typically with a peace agreement, implementing diplomacy can help make the promises made in the peace treaty become reality.<sup>263</sup>

At times, it may be difficult to distinguish between the different phases of a conflict and the corresponding diplomatic efforts in practice and to establish when one phase has ended and the next has started. For example, diplomacy during a phase of low-level violence can be considered both a preventive and a conflict-solving measure, and post-conflict work may well include the aim of preventing conflicts from entering a new round of hostilities.<sup>264</sup>

261 Wallensteen and Svensson 2016, p.24.

262 Wallensteen and Svensson 2016, p.35.

263 Wallensteen and Svensson 2016, p.35.

264 See for example Weller and Wolff 2005, p.269.

Based on the interpretation of the data, it can be maintained that in all eight cases, the Åland example has been discussed in relation to conflict resolution efforts. In Gagauzia, however, Åland has been more prominently discussed in a phase of implementation of the autonomy of Gagauzia, and potentially also as a preventive measure, since the international community is concerned about regions with connections to Russia and the Russian language after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 caused international concern and interest in other regions with connections to Russia and the Russian language, Gagauzia among them. It was in this context that the CMI project with Gagauzia was established. The project's aim is to improve the function of an already existing autonomy - which can be defined as implementing measures after a conflict - but it can be assumed that it is included a preventive aim in attempting to reduce the risk of possible future conflict.<sup>265</sup>

Another distinction within peace diplomacy

265 CMI itself describes the project and its aims as follows: "In 2015, CMI, with funding from the Embassy of Sweden, designed a project based on a structured and sustained dialogue process, bringing together equal numbers of legislators from Chişinău and Comrat to improve the functioning of the Gagauzia autonomy. Since then, CMI has provided the resulting dialogue platform, known as the Gagauzia Working Group, with 'good offices', capacity building, and access to experts. The Working Group has become Moldova's longest-lasting dialogue about Chişinău-Comrat relations, leading to over 40 joint decisions on matters affecting the functioning of the Autonomy, a common vision and roadmap for the future of the process, and recommendations for adjustments to 11 national laws to better reflect the needs and legal status of Gagauzia.

The Moldovan Government and the Moldovan Parliament have made a number of decisions drawing on recommendations from the Gagauzia Working Group, including creating the first Gagauzia Development Plan, establishing an Agency for Regional Development in Gagauzia, and passing four laws including revisions proposed by the Group. These decisions demonstrate the ability of the dialogue platform to develop joint, politically acceptable solutions to previously intractable problems." <http://cmi.fi/2018/07/16/gagauzia-working-group-explores-strategy-next-stage-dialogue-process/>. Accessed 30.4.2020.

regards the actors who are carrying out the efforts and at what levels it is happening. When the representatives of states are the actors, it can be called 'official diplomacy'. Is it the individuals in their personal capacity or the organisations in civil society who conduct the activities that might rather be called 'unofficial diplomacy'? The terminology 'tracks' is used to describe which actors are involved in the efforts, track I denotes official diplomacy and track II denotes unofficial diplomacy. A third term, track III, is used to specifically denote the efforts of academics in peace diplomacy.<sup>266</sup>

In a considerable number of cases, it seems that Åland has been brought up in relation to formal peace processes between the parties. This applies to four of the eight cases included in the qualitative analysis. The Åland example has been discussed in formal and high-level peace processes concerning Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Transdniestria.

Such high-level mediation processes at the official level are the perhaps most well-known tools in peace diplomacy, but they are merely one of all the possible efforts to promote peace in conflicts. Moreover, Wallensteen, and Svensson highlight the importance of projects in civil society at grassroots level, a form of unofficial diplomacy in which people are brought together to build trust between groups in conflict-ridden societies.<sup>267</sup>

The usage of the Åland example in the case of Northern Ireland might illustrate this. In this case, ÅIPI already introduced the Åland example at a civil society level in 1993 - which was the same year when initial contacts between the British Government and IRA were made, but when the conflict was still ongoing.<sup>268</sup> Youth exchanges were organised up until 2006, which

266 Wallensteen and Svensson 2016, pp.33-34.

267 Wallensteen and Svensson 2016, p.17.

268 Smyth 1998, p 12. Uppsala conflict Data Program. <https://ucdp.uu.se/#conflict/315>. Accessed 10.6.2019.

means that ÅAPI was engaged both during the negotiations and after the conflict was settled through the Good Friday agreement in 1998. In this case, Åland also featured in a high-level context, when materials about Åland were provided to the parties during the negotiations sometime between 1996 and 1998.<sup>269</sup>

Gagauzia is an example of a case in which Åland has been brought up within a dialogue project, which is NGO-driven, but also includes high-level participants and official funding. Åland has been studied and visited within a dialogue process headed by the Finnish NGO, CMI, with financial support of the Swedish of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of the project is to facilitate informal and official dialogue processes between the Parliament of Moldova and Gagauzia's People's Assembly to improve mechanisms of centre-autonomy relations.<sup>270</sup>

Åland has thus been included in long-term processes in both Gagauzia and Northern Ireland. This was also the case of Sri Lanka, since the visits from Sri Lanka to Åland in 2003 and 2004 were part of the peace process in which Norway as well as other Nordic countries, including Finland, were profoundly engaged. In addition, available data indicates that there have been continuous processes in the Transdnistria case, if not in relation to the 1995 seminar, at least concerning the 2001 seminar arranged by the OSCE, among others. Some of the visits in 2016 are believed to be at least informally linked to the ongoing peace negotiations.

In the remaining cases, i.e., Corsica, Cyprus, Kashmir, and Mindanao, it seems the Åland example has been included more sporadically at separate events. Indeed, some of the parties in the cases of Corsica and Kashmir claim that they

are strictly domestic matters, which is why external efforts may not be as welcome as in many other cases.

### *6.3 Which parts of the Åland solution have been found interesting?*

One of the conclusions in previous research on the usage of the Åland example is that Åland has mainly functioned and contributed at three different levels; as a set of principles, as an example of institutional design, and as a physical and symbolic meeting place.<sup>271</sup> Nordquist has assessed that in peace processes, Åland can be a content provider, a concept provider, a space provider, a freedom provider, a singularity provider, and a compromise provider.<sup>272</sup>

This chapter first examines which material contributions the Åland example might have provided - how Åland has been a content provider - while in the next chapter analyses the role of Åland example in conflict resolution processes at a more abstract level.

In previous research, a number of authors have evaluated which material contributions the Åland example may provide. The discussion centres around what are defined as the three core components of the Åland example. Spiliopoulou Åkermark assesses that the three core components of the legal and political regime that pertains to the Åland Islands are:

- The demilitarisation and neutralisation of Åland through a nexus of treaty regimes since 1856;
- The self-government of Åland as encapsulated in the Act on the Autonomy of Åland;
- The protection of the language and culture on Åland, which formed part of the decision of the League of Nations in 1921 and has evolved through legislation and practice.<sup>273</sup>

269 Rotkirch email 27.5.2019, Laurent interview 2019.

270 The Åland Islands Peace Institute 2016. <http://www.peace.ax/en/nyhetsarkiv/26-visits/1989-visit-from-moldova-and-gagauzia>. Accessed 13.8.2019.

271 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.196.

272 Seminar report 2015, p.16.

273 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.9.

Spiliopoulou (2011) concludes that “the relative weight of the Åland example can and has been put differently upon each of its three components (autonomy, culture and language guarantees and demilitarisation) in each specific conflict or dispute”. It was further assessed that at the level of substance, “the institutions of autonomy have attracted most attention, i.e., the way the political relationship between the centre and the autonomous region is arranged, namely the division of competences, the legislative process, and judicial review, the relations between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches on Åland, the role of the police, dispute solution mechanisms including the Åland Delegation, the appointment and the role of the Governor on Åland, and the management of regional integration and communication mechanisms between the autonomy and the central state”.<sup>274</sup>

The same study concludes that while autonomous arrangements are often perceived as methods of minority protection, the two are not automatically and per definition linked to each other, but rather need to be kept apart, since autonomy is not sufficient to ensure the effective protection of a distinct identity, but rather needs to be complemented by mechanisms for the protection of culture and language.<sup>275</sup>

Spiliopoulou Åkermark also concludes that the demilitarisation and neutralisation regimes of Åland have been of interest. The security arrangements are said to be points of reference and inspiration in Nagorno-Karabakh, Tibet, Cyprus, Kashmir, Bougainville, the Northern Territories, and Okinawa. According to the study, discussions have materialised in two forms in those cases; on the one hand, as a discussion of a demilitarised buffer zone and as a confidence-building measure, on the other hand, as a substantive component covering the entire autonomous territory.<sup>276</sup>

274 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, pp.196-197.

275 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, pp.196-197.

276 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.197.

In the individual chapters of the publication from 2011 as well as in the reports from the Contact Group’s seminars, additional information about the Åland example’s substantial contributions to conflict resolution has been identified. Based on the core literature and the author’s own observations from meetings with actors from conflict regions, here is a summary of which aspects are often brought up when Åland is used as an example in international situations. This is followed by an assessment of which parts have been of interest in the eight cases analysed in this study. For more information about each of the features below, please see the entry about Åland in the online database World Autonomies.<sup>277</sup>

### **1. The conflict resolution process.**

The dispute was solved by an international organisation, the League of Nations in 1921, and by negotiation between Finland and Sweden, which resulted in the so-called Åland agreement, whereby six guarantees for the protection of the Ålanders became part of the international settlement.<sup>278</sup>

### **2. The entrenchment.**

The status of Åland is entrenched both in international and constitutional law, and the Autonomy Act cannot be amended without the participation and consent of both Finland and Åland. The international entrenchment and the international guarantees have been of interest.<sup>279</sup>

277 Spiliopoulou Åkermark et al., 2019.

278 Spiliopoulou Åkermark et al., 2019, pp.6-7.

League of Nations, 1921, The Åland Decision.

279 The Autonomy Act 1991 section 67; Spiliopoulou Åkermark et. al. 2020, p.88, Constitution of Finland 1999, Simolin 2018a, p.11; Suksi, 2005, s. 527; Joint committee (Ålandskommittén 2013) 2017. Åland självstyrelse i utveckling. Ålandskommitténs 2013 slutbetänkande - Ahvenanmaan itsehallinnon kehittäminen. Ahvenanmaakomitean 2013 loppumietintö. Finland, Ministry

### 3. The regional context and its development.

The development of good interstate relations among the Nordic countries are manifested in the Nordic cooperation, in which the Nordic autonomies, besides Åland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands in Denmark, are intensely involved - not quite on equal footing with the state, but the autonomies do have a say.<sup>280</sup> More recently, the exceptions to EU law concerning to the special regime of the Åland Islands have attracted interest, namely the right to domicile, the right to acquire real estate, and the right to establish business.<sup>281</sup>

### 4. The national context.

The behaviour and characteristics of Finland, including democratic governance and rule of law, are often mentioned not solely as a prerequisite for successful diversity management, but also for peaceful development at large.<sup>282</sup>

### 5. Power-sharing arrangement.

Autonomy within Finland. Åland de-

viates from the rest of the country because it is the sole autonomous entity with exclusive legislative competences in an otherwise unitary state. Åland has the power to legislate and govern in many areas, and for this reason, it has its own Parliament and Government. Within the autonomy systems, several more specific institutions and mechanisms have been of interest to conflict actors, among them:

- The institutions of the autonomy system. The Åland Parliament and Government, the court system, the police, and mechanisms for conflict resolution have attracted interest. Among these are a Governor appointed in cooperation between Åland and Finland; an Åland Delegation, which is an expert organ with participants from both Åland and Finland and can propose solutions to disputes in some cases; the system for legislative control; and the role of the President of Finland in relation to Åland.

- Legislation. The composition and content of the Autonomy Act, its relationship with the constitution, the division of competences laid out in the Act, etc.

- Development of the system. The fact that the system is alive and continuously developing. It has been amended on several occasions, which is reflected in new versions of the Autonomy Act.

### 6. Cultural and linguistic protection devices, including the right of domicile.

The Åland region is Swedish-speaking by law, in an otherwise bilingual country, and communication between

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of Justice, pp.202-203.

280 Stephan, 2014, p.14; Stephan, 2015, pp.73-74.

281 Accession Treaty of Finland to the European Union, Protocol No. 2 on the Åland Islands, OJ C241, 29 August 1994.

282 At a seminar in Geneva in 1999, Barbro Sundback spoke about the rule of law and Finland's wish to fulfil international obligations, Seminar report p.28. There are several variations of an anecdote related to Finland as an ideal host for an autonomy. René Nyberg: "...I once came across an Armenian who said that he had come back from the Åland Islands convinced that Nagorno-Karabakh should become a part of Finland. And I am not sure that that was the idea of the lesson taught." Geneva 1999, p.35. At a conference on Åland in 2012, Barbro Sundback talked about the ceasefire negotiations in Bishkek, to which she and two other Ålanders, Roger Jansson and Robert Jansson, were invited, and where she talked to a representative of Nagorno-Karabach, who said that autonomy would be acceptable on one condition, if Nagorno-Karabakh can become a part of Finland.

Ålandic officials and those on the mainland is held in Swedish.<sup>283</sup> A well-known feature within this system is the right of domicile, a kind of regional citizenship, based on the guarantees afforded to the Ålanders in the Åland Agreement of 1921. A person holding right of domicile has full rights to vote and stand for elections, to acquire real estate, and to conduct a business. In addition, the right of domicile is linked to exemption from military service.<sup>284</sup>

### 7. Security arrangements.

Demilitarisation means Åland must not be fortified or otherwise used for military activity. Military presence in times of peace is strictly regulated. Neutralisation means that Åland shall remain outside of any military activity in times of war.

### 8. The symbols.

Åland has its own flag that is blue with a yellow/red cross, its own stamps, and its own internet top-level domain (.ax). For example, car plates and passports also have features that are specific for Åland.

283 The 1991 Autonomy Act, section 36; The 1999 Finnish Constitution, sections 17 and 120; Spiliopoulou Åkermark, et al., 2019, pp.4-5.

284 People without the right of domicile are subject to some restrictions in the areas mentioned above, however, the Åland Government can give permission to buy land or set up a business upon application, and most importantly, Finnish citizens can apply for the right of domicile after five years of residence on Åland. Spiliopoulou Åkermark et al. 2019, p.27. Joint committee 2013, 2017, p.53. The 1991 Autonomy Act contains detailed regulations on the right of domicile in Sections 6-12 and 72. Act on the Right to Conduct Business (1996:47), [Landskapslag om rätt at utöva näring (1996:47)]; Act on Land Acquisition (1975:7) [Jordförvärvslagen för Åland (1975:7)]; Act on the Right to Acquire Land and on Permit to Acquire Land (2003:68) [Landskapslag om jordförvärvsrätt och jordförvärvstillstånd (2003:68)]. Act on the purchase of real estate (140/1938).

In the eight cases analysed, a documented interest in autonomy has been found in seven of the eight cases, Cyprus being the exception. Among the cases, there are variations regarding which aspects have more specifically attracted interest. In Kashmir, Mindanao, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Transnistria, there is a documented interest in discussing the status issue of a territory, and in this context, the territorial autonomy of Åland features as an example of autonomy in practice. In those cases, only scarce documentation about more specific interest in particular aspects has been found. On the contrary, in the case of Gagauzia, interest has at least in recent years been rather specific, and there are certain aspects that have been studied in-depth. In the case of Corsica, the documented interest has concerned both issues related to the Matignon process and the 'gradual step-by-step' development of autonomy, and to the land rights. Both of these concern the development of an autonomy system and the aspects of cultural and linguistic protection.

There is documented interest in the protection of language and culture in four cases; general interest from Mindanao and Sri Lanka, and a specific interest from Corsica and Cyprus, where the right of domicile and especially land rights have attracted interest. In the latter two cases, the derogations from EU law in connection with land rights have attracted interest. The regional context is also mentioned in the Kashmir and Sri Lanka cases, about which Noorani and Jayasinha respectively write about the attitudes of Finland and Sweden.<sup>285</sup> Kashmir is the only case in which specific references to the conflict resolution process have been found.

The entrenchment of autonomy is mentioned by Noorani in relation to Kashmir and has also been discussed in relation to Gagauzia within

285 However, their discussions may well be considered as more of a discussion of principles than of actual content. See discussions about the Åland example as an illustration of norms in chapter 7.

the CMI dialogue project. In the Transdnjestria case, there has been a specific interest in something which can be labelled as a symbol - car plates - but which may be of great importance for facilitating the practical question of international car traffic.

In addition, the demilitarisation and neutralisation regimes of Åland have been of interest. The security arrangements have attracted some interest in discussions about Cyprus, Kashmir and Transdnjestria, but what specifically in the arrangements have been regarded as interesting is not known.

Since it is likely that there have been discussions and interest that have not been documented or documentation has not been found, it should be said that interest in the various cases has 'at least' regarded the aspects noted, and 'at least' at a general level if no evidence of more specific interest has been found.

## 7. The role of the Åland example in conflict resolution processes

Chapter 6 discusses what concrete and substantive contributions Åland might have made in the various cases. This is probably the type of contribution that most commonly and immediately comes to mind when reflecting upon the usage of the Åland example. Have any institutions been copied? Was an autonomy system in a conflict region designed with the autonomy of the Åland system as a template? While some indications have been found of Åland having been used in this way - as a vantage point when institutions or pieces of legislation have been formed - this was not the outcome in most of the cases examined. However, this does not necessarily mean that Åland did not have a role in the other cases. Both previous research and the data from this study indicate that if only such 'material contributions' are considered in conflict resolution processes, several other roles of the Åland example are neglected. 'Using' the Åland example is not only about 'copying' features from the Åland system - it is also about drawing inspiration from Åland in the development of conflict resolution processes when discussing principles considered necessary to be able to solve a conflict or when a safe and neutral meeting place is needed to start a dialogue.

Previous research has concluded that the Åland example has mainly been used in three ways: as a set of principles, as an example of institutional design, and as a physical and symbolic meeting place.<sup>286</sup> Nordquist states that the Åland Islands case contributed to the conflict resolution in East Timor by providing concepts, substance, a space, and a focus on specific issues

<sup>286</sup> Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, Öst 2012.

and ideas to their solutions during the process.<sup>287</sup> He assesses more generally that in peace processes, Åland, can be a provider of content, concept, space, freedom, singularity, and compromise.<sup>288</sup> In her analysis of the usage of the Åland example in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, Öst assesses that in connection with the intergovernmental negotiations about Nagorno-Karabakh in the early 1990s, Åland represented a physical meeting place for peace negotiations between the parties, featured as an outside observer with expectations that the peace negotiations between the parties would achieve results, and functioned as an example to inspire discussions about autonomy for Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>289</sup>

Based on previous analyses as well as on the analysis of data collected for this study, it was found that further nuances can be given to these three levels in order to explain the role of the Åland example in international conflict resolution processes. It has been found that the role of the Åland example can be divided into the following seven clusters: 1) An incitement to start a peace process or a stimulus for a stalled process, 2) As an argument to promote the cause of conflict actors, 3) As a conflict map - a list of problems and their potential solutions 4) As content provider - models for how systems and institutions can be designed and work in practice 5) A safe and neutral meeting place 6) To illustrate norms, values, and principles that are considered crucial for successful conflict resolution, and finally, 7) As a tool for conflict transformation.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>287</sup> Nordquist 2011, pp.123-124.

<sup>288</sup> Nordquist 2015, p.16.

<sup>289</sup> Öst 2012, p.9.

<sup>290</sup> The seven clusters mostly feature examples from

*7.1 An incitement to start a peace process or a stimulus for a stalled process*

Firstly, at a and very general level, the Åland example can be used as a part of a process and in efforts to have parties start a dialogue or to re-fuel stalled peace processes. In previous research, Öst noted that Nordic diplomats, Jan Eliasson and Thorvald Stoltenberg, both state that they have referred to Åland to start discussions on the status issue in Nagorno-Karabakh and to obtain a peaceful solution in the former Yugoslavia. In both cases, Åland was thus used by third party mediators to incentivise parties to a conflict to enter into negotiations.<sup>291</sup>

Pyhälä mentions several reasons why the Tamil Tigers were brought to the Nordic countries and to Åland in 2003, and one of the reasons was that the Nordic peace mediators wanted to take advantage of the momentum created by the 2002 ceasefire agreement in an attempt to engage the parties in a very active dialogue.

In these cases, parties visited Åland physically, but there are also examples of Åland being used as an incitement at a distance. For instance, Kiljunen says that he has used Åland in this way in relation to Somaliland in Somalia. However, in this case, it was not met with interest, since Somaliland sees independence as the only option.<sup>292</sup>

In addition, Åland has been promoted by third parties in the Mindanao case, and Kiljunen was planning a process in which representatives from the Philippines would come to Åland, but this did not materialise before his term as Special Representative ended.<sup>293</sup>

In the Northern Ireland case, Laurent argues that Åland was one of several examples that were considered to potentially influential in advancement of the peace negotiations.<sup>294</sup>

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the cases that are included in the qualitative part of this study, but when information has been available, examples may also be used from the other 25 cases.

291 Öst 2012, p.17.

292 Kiljunen interview 2019.

293 Kiljunen interview 2019.

294 Laurent interview 2019.

These are all examples when third party mediators have used the Åland case as a stimulus, but there are also examples where Åland has been promoted as an incitement to start a dialogue by actors from the conflict region, as in relation to Kashmir, when Noorani points to the processes of conflict resolution that have been used on Åland.

After a meeting held on Åland in 1993 for parliamentarians from Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, Jansson writes that during the meeting, the participants were informed about the autonomy of Åland and Åland's role in international contexts.<sup>295</sup> Parallels were made with Nagorno-Karabakh, but according to Jansson, the aim of the meeting was not to start formal peace negotiations, but rather to have the warring parties discuss, socialise, and get closer to one another in order to create a climate fit for continuing dialogue. This, he assesses, was achieved at the meeting. Secret negotiations were also held in smaller groups, although it was not known what they concerned.<sup>296</sup>

In addition, there is at least one instance when the Åland example - or more specifically Ålanders themselves - is said to have played a role in the progress of negotiations. In the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, a delegation from Åland to Bishkek is said to have potentially affected the outcome, having played a role as an external observer with expectations of the parties as they negotiated a ceasefire. According to then member of the Åland Parliament, Barbro Sundback, who participated in the meeting in Bishkek that resulted in the 1994 ceasefire agreement, a South Caucasus party later confessed that he had noticed the expectations of the Åland Islands that the meeting would yield results, and that he wanted to fulfil these expectations. In this way, Sundback believes that the participation of the

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295 Öst 2011, p.165; ÅIPI internal archive, article by Robert Jansson sent from the Åland Islands Peace Institute to Amnesty International in Stockholm for publishing.

296 ÅIPI internal archive. Article dated 12.1.1994.

Ålandic delegation had a positive influence on the peace negotiations.<sup>297</sup>

In Corsican media, it has been claimed that the 1998 Åland conference had a significant impact on the so-called Matignon process, which took place from December 1999 to July 2000, and led to new competences for Corsica.<sup>298</sup> It seems that inspiration was drawn from the approach of the gradual development of autonomy rather than material provisions.

### *7.2 An argument to promote the interests of parties in the conflict*

Actors from the conflict region may use Åland as an argument to more specifically promote their own cause or interests in a conflict situation. For example, in the Cyprus conflict and the Corsican case, the Turkish Cypriots or nationalists/regionalists in Corsica have referred to Åland to promote their interest in regional citizenship and land rights.<sup>299</sup>

297 Öst 2012, p.9-10, Öst 2011, p.165.

298 Two articles in Core Matin and Corse Net Infos respectively regarding a seminar held in 2018 refer back to the seminar from 1998 and maintain that it was instrumental for the Matignon process: Core Net Infor: "20 ans après le colloque sur les îles Åland, en 1998 qui avait notamment débouché sur le processus de Matignon..." in "Paris: Un colloque sur l'autonomie des territoires organisé par les trois députés nationalistes corses". Corse Net Infos. Philippe Jammes. Published 8.6.2018 [https://www.corsenetinfos.corsica/Paris-Un-colloque-sur-l-autonomie-des-territoires-organise-par-les-trois-deputes-nationalistes-corses\\_a33645.html](https://www.corsenetinfos.corsica/Paris-Un-colloque-sur-l-autonomie-des-territoires-organise-par-les-trois-deputes-nationalistes-corses_a33645.html) (Accessed 24.2.2020). Corse Matin: "Ce rendez-vous marquera aussi avec les vingt ans du colloque qui s'était tenu dans les îles Åland, en présence notamment de Jean-Guy Talamoni, Paul Giacobbi et de Pierre Joxe. Il avait d'ailleurs beaucoup pesé sur le statut conçu par ce dernier puis sur le processus de Matignon." L'article constitutionnel au Parlement: "Bouger les lignes", J.-M. R. 10.6.2018, <https://www.corsematin.com/article/article/l'article-constitutionnel-au-parlement-bouger-les-lignes> (Accessed 24.2.2020). The law of 22nd January 2002 allocates new competences to Corsica but does not change its status. (La loi du 22 Janvier 2002 relative à la Corse lui a donné des compétences nouvelles, mais n'en a pas modifié le statut.) <https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/20150-le-statut-de-la-corse>. Accessed 24.2.2020.

299 Their claims can coincide with suggestions of

Another such example is the Kosovo case, in which in the late stages of the negotiations before Kosovo's independence, the Serbs brought up Åland and Hong Kong as models of autonomy as an alternative to secession.

The cases of Western Sahara and Tibet are other cases in which interest in the Åland solution seems to be one-sided. The state of Morocco reportedly promotes a solution of autonomy, while the people in Western Sahara claim their right to external self-determination. In Tibet, the situation is reversed, and China has not shown interest in the idea of autonomy, which has been promoted by Tibetan leaders.

### *7.3 Mapping the conflict – conflict issues and their potential solutions*

In previous research, it has been assessed that a case of autonomy such as the Åland Islands both raises issues and presents ideas for the solution of similar issues. This may be relevant for other regions since certain issues are necessary when addressing any peace process that involves power, identity, and recognition. According to Nordquist, the Åland example, which has, over time, succeeded in managing the tension between the centralised state and the local society, can, in this way, demonstrate how implemented solutions work - or may not work.<sup>300</sup>

In previous research on the Åland example, the concept has sometimes been described as a notion that understands autonomy as one component, and demilitarisation and neutralisation as another, and finally the guarantees for language and culture as a third component included in one and the same regime of Åland. It has been claimed that the settlement of the Åland issue concerned four core problems. Firstly, the power-sharing problem was dealt with by establishing autonomy, including exclusive legislative

third parties – as, for example, in the case of Cyprus, international experts have discussed the same suggestion.

300 Nordquist 2011, pp.123-125.

competences. Secondly, the security problem was met through reconfirmation of the demilitarisation of Åland from 1856, to which neutralisation was added in 1921. Thirdly, the issues of identity and minority culture were met with language guarantees and legislative competence in relevant domains. Finally, the economic issue and the question of the economic viability of autonomy were ensured through allowing Åland the control of land and by limiting the right of establishment of business.<sup>301</sup> Such conceptualisations illustrate that Åland can be used as a 'problems and solutions map', mapping a number of problems and their solutions. The components described above can be further divided into their constituent parts, and so the map becomes even more detailed. At this level, the Åland example can illustrate a system of societal institutions that have been created to meet certain challenges.

One of the participants in the visit to Åland from Sri Lanka in November 2004, Asoka M. Jayasinha, wrote an article for the press, in which he summarises his understanding of several parts of the Åland system, the "Finland's Example" as he calls it.<sup>302</sup>

"Shown earlier to the LTTE Visitors as well, we were taken to Åland Islands as a case study containing elements for a Federal experiment in Sri Lanka keeping intact the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. The following features inter alia, are note-worthy:

- The Autonomy is guaranteed by Finland the main partner and Sweden the Neighbouring country;
- Åland speaks a language distinct from Finnish in the mainland;
- The Finland Parliament has a seat reserved for Åland Island;

301 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2013, pp.21-22.

302 Internal archive of ÅIPI. It is not specified to which media outlet the article was sent. Spelling in quote as in original.

- The Åland Parliament has a multi-party system with representation only from Elections, with coalitions common. A note: while the Prime minister of Åland Island was hosting a Dinner for us, it was obvious to everyone from his frequent hand-phone calls that he was engaged in meeting and attempt in Parliament to move a vote of No-Confidence. This underlined the genuineness of Democracy, showing Representation is only by popular voting.
- The ground reality underpinning peace in Åland Islands is it is a De-militarized Zone; showing the need for de-commissioning of weapons as a vital undertaking by the LTTE.
- Last but not least is the obvious prosperity in Åland Island."

Åland has had such a role in many cases in which it has been discussed in relation to conflict resolution processes. It is possible to use the Åland example as a 'conflicts and their solutions map' both at a distance and physically on Åland, and both in practice and at a more abstract academic level.

Swedish diplomat, Jan Eliasson, and researcher Kjell-Åke Nordquist have used Åland in this way in relation to Nagorno-Karabakh. A matrix listing problems and potential solutions was presented to the parties to the conflict during mediation within the Minsk group.<sup>303</sup>

In the cases of Gagauzia and Transdniestria, it has been important for actors in the conflict regions to observe in person how asymmetric systems and decentralisation can work in practice. The Tamil Tigers and other groups from Sri Lanka studied Åland as a whole system in 2003-2004. Likewise, after having visited Åland, Noorani analyses Åland as a whole system in relation to Kashmir. At an academic level, sever-

303 Nordquist, conversation 20.5.2020.

al publications analyse Åland and compare the system to other contexts. For example, this goes for Islas/Malvinas and the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands.

#### *7.4 Material contribution - institutions, legislation, symbols*

Both the Åland system as a whole and its separate parts can be used for ‘substantial contribution’; concrete ideas and measures that can inspire an ongoing process towards autonomy or other settlements, or indeed manifest institutions. The material contributions and which of them have been of interest in various cases is discussed in some depth in chapter 6.3, and the matter will be examined here from the point of view of impact; in which cases it is claimed that Åland inspired or influenced concrete institutions or legislative/administrative mechanisms.

Indications of Åland having been used as a ‘model’ for concrete institutions, treaties, or legislative solutions were found in rather few cases; Bougainville, Krajina, Hong Kong, Transdnjestria, and possibly also in Gagauzia, but in the last case, processes are still ongoing, so it is too early to tell.

According to Ghai, the arrangements for a separate constitution for Bougainville and the entrenchment of autonomy in the national constitution that is only altered with the approval of both sides were inspired by the Åland experience.<sup>304</sup>

In the case of Hong Kong, Ghai ascertains that when the autonomy was negotiated and established before the UK handed over Hong Kong to China in 1997, a specific mechanism for resolving disputes between Hong Kong and mainland China was clearly and explicitly inspired by Åland. The Committee on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was, similar to the Åland Delegation, a semipolitical body with representation from both sides, which

304 Ghai 2011, p.92.

could mediate disputes, and according to Ghai, China explicitly referred to this delegation when advancing the idea.<sup>305</sup>

According to Nauclér, when the UN and ICFY tried to resolve the conflict of Krajina through a proposal for an autonomy regime for Serbs in Krajina, the so-called Z-4 Plan drafted in 1995, the proposal was clearly influenced by the Act on Autonomy of Åland.<sup>306</sup> However, the Z-4 Plan was never implemented.

According to Laurent, in the case of Northern Ireland, it is not possible to discern a direct impact of the Åland example in the complex Good Friday Agreement that he helped to negotiate.<sup>307</sup> In the case of Mindanao, it is not known if Åland has impacted the autonomy agreement. When Blomberg examined the issue in 2015, he found no such evidence, and interviews and requests for this study have not added any substantial information to this issue. In the Cyprus case, the specific concerns in response to which the Åland example was raised still remain; no solution has been found. There are no indications that Åland would have contributed to any changes in the Kashmir situation or that any features from Åland should have been adopted. Indeed, since the conflict is continuous and has deteriorated rather than improved, there might not have been any opportunities to do so. The conflict in Sri Lanka ended by military means, so the peace process was interrupted and no components from the Åland Islands were considered as far as is known from the available materials.

#### *7.5 A safe and neutral physical meeting place*

It has been maintained that the Åland Islands case can contribute to conflict resolution processes by providing space - “a place on earth” - where parties can meet and peaceful processes

305 Ghai 2011, p.90.

306 Nauclér 2011, pp.147, 156.

307 Laurent interview 28.6.2019.

can be studied.<sup>308</sup> It has been claimed that an autonomous area may work particularly well as a platform for low-level meetings and talks for actors and parties in conflict in circumstances in which opposition groups do not trust states or states do not trust civil society organisations.<sup>309</sup>

Over the years, Åland has served as a physical place for meetings of various kinds, including for parties to conflict. There are examples of high-level peace negotiations organised on Åland together with international organisations such as the OSCE and CIS (Nagorno-Karabakh in 1993, and Transdnistria in 1995 and 2001), seminars and conferences organised by civil society actors (Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 1997, Aceh in 2003, Corsica in 1998, Crimea in 2001, and Nagorno-Karabakh on several instances), study visits to Åland for conflict parties directly related to high-level peace mediation (Sri Lanka in 2003-2004) or as part of a civil societal and/or academic series of discussions on potential means to solve a conflict or improve autonomy solutions (Gagauzia, Transdnistria, and East Timor).

When Åland has been used as a meeting place, the components of the Åland example have always played a role, but it was not necessarily the most important part of the visits according to some of the interviews for this study. Bringing parties to a physical meeting can be a first step for them to meet and get acquainted, while expectations might not include actually starting peace negotiations or finding suitable components for a solution.

According to Kiljunen, when parliamentarians from Moldova and Transdnistria met on Åland in 2001, the most important element was not the specific components of the Åland solution, but rather an opportunity for the contesting parties to meet each other, discuss together, and address the issue. This was the first time that

representatives from the Moldovan and Transdnistrian Parliaments met with each other within the ongoing process. According to Kiljunen, the participants perceived the situation as very peculiar, and they suddenly realised that they are actually rather similar to each other in comparison with the alien people of the Northern countries.<sup>310</sup> Pyhälä says that when the Tamil Tigers visited Åland in 2003, the visit was part of an attempt to get the peace mediators and the Tigers more acquainted. He also adds another function of the study visits; they were also a way to let the Tigers - constantly at war and risking their lives - get some rest from the tension.<sup>311</sup>

Additionally, when parliamentarians from Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan came to Åland in 1993<sup>312</sup>, the aim of the meeting, according to Robert Jansson, who then was the Director of ÅIPI, was not to start formal peace negotiations, but rather to have the warring parties discuss, socialise, and get closer to one another to create a climate fit for continuing dialogue. This, he assesses, was achieved at the meeting.<sup>313</sup>

Robert Jansson also says that the youth exchanges with Northern Ireland always included information about the self-government of Åland, but they did not explicitly explore Åland as a model for Northern Ireland. There was no formal connection to the peace process, but Jansson says "... everything was basically about creating the conditions for peaceful coexistence. For many participants, the camp was the first time they met or talked to a Catholic/Protestant. I am convinced that the camps were of great importance to the participants and really made a difference, greater difference than the meetings of the politicians."<sup>314</sup>

310 Kiljunen interview 2019.

311 Pyhälä interview 2019.

312 Öst 2011, p.165, ÅIPI internal archive. The meeting was organised by ÅIPI, the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

313 ÅIPI internal archive. Article dated 12.1.1994.

314 Jansson email 20.5.2019.

308 Nordquist 2011, p.124.

309 Nordquist 2011, p.124.

### 7.6 Illustration and platform for consideration of principles, values, and norms

Democratic governance, minority protection, the rule of law, mutual respect, trust, and compromise are some of several principles, values, or norms that are considered to facilitate or are even considered as necessary prerequisites for peacebuilding.<sup>315</sup> The Åland example can be used as a platform to start discussions on norms as well as a pedagogic tool to demonstrate or illustrate such norms considered by the international community and researchers to be of importance to build stable societies.

The Åland solution was a compromise, and it is often claimed that everyone was disappointed, but everyone also got something out of it. Finland could keep Åland, Sweden's security interests were respected through the demilitarisation and neutralisation, and Åland was granted autonomy and protection for language and culture.<sup>316</sup> Several times when interviewed, Kiljunen returned to this notion of Åland of a successful compromise as something he has brought up in relation to the conflicts he has been involved in trying to resolve.<sup>317</sup>

Previous research has shown that the Åland case has also been used to illustrate peaceful regional relations and cooperation as well as the idea that sovereignty can't be justified as a zero-sum game for power-sharing. Indeed, the example can also be used to promote the basic idea that conflicts can be solved at all, and it can provide hope that conflicts can be solved peacefully and durably.<sup>318</sup>

315 Schulte 2020, p.153, Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.20, Nordquist 2011, p.124. Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.196 referring to Unto Vesa and p.9 referring to an interview with Heikki Talvitie by Heidi Öst, Helsinki June 2010: 'the Åland Example in a nutshell is about the idea that it is possible to negotiate and compromise about solutions which work'.

316 This is almost a mantra, always repeated when groups visit Åland, which can indicate it is one of the most valuable lessons from the Åland example.

317 Kiljunen interview 2019.

318 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, pp.17-24. When

Noorani, writing about Åland with regards to the Kashmir conflict, links together suggestions for practical solutions with underlying norms about creativity, a sense of justice, and fair play:

"In the final analysis, as in South Tyrol and the Aalands, international guarantees of autonomy by agreement with Pakistan and Kashmiris are the only alternative to secession. Repression and suppression have been tried. They have failed. India not only refused to hold the plebiscite it had promised but also wiped out the autonomy it had guaranteed. It now proposes in settlement a *status quo* based on force. Only a settlement of the dispute will invest this *status quo* with legitimacy. Such a settlement is achievable with Pakistan as well as the Kashmiris. It will *not* violate Manmohan Singh's criteria. It involves no secession; only creativity and a sense of justice and fair play. The Aalands solution shows how that can be accomplished. Therein lies its great merit."<sup>319</sup>

Noorani also refers to the 'mature' behaviour of the kin state, Sweden, and the Nordic neighbours both in the conflict resolution process and afterwards, something which others have also observed. At a "Seminar on autonomy" held in Stockholm in 2000 (p.9), Birgitta Dahl said:

Åland is used in this way - as an illustration of certain values or norms - it is sometimes argued that such a 'rich, civilised, and democratic' place is not relevant for regions in which such aspects are much less developed. In response, it has been argued that Finland was not a developed nor rich democracy at the time when Åland became autonomous. See, for example, Naulé 2011, p.145.

319 Frontline 2005. A G Noorani 2005 "The Aalands model". Frontline Volume 22 - Issue 02, Jan. 15th-28th, 2005. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/static/html/fl2202/stories/20050128000808000.htm>. Accessed 12.5.2019.

“The fact that the two “defeated” parties accepted the decision, to which certain guarantees were tied, and that the “victorious” one handled the situation with tact and prudence set an example which can hardly be overestimated as a model worthy of imitation”.

The role of the kin state, Sweden, has also been of interest. At a seminar in Geneva in 1999, Peter Wahlbäck described the position of Sweden in relation to the Åland issue as “lukewarm” and said that Sweden had been showing “no real emotional support”. Speakers at seminars also refer to the wider Nordic context and the will to compromise.<sup>320</sup>

In relation to the exchanges for youth from Northern Ireland and Åland, which were held on several occasions between 1993 and 2003, Åland may have illustrated and started a process of reflection over democratic participation. Paul Smyth, Community Relations Development Officer at the Youth Council for Northern Ireland, emphasises the aspect of democratic inclusion and participation, which he believes youth from both regions started to view with new eyes during the exchanges.<sup>321</sup> Moreover, he talks about the reactions of the youth from Northern Ireland that participated in the exchanges.

“For our participants, Åland was a fascinating (if quirky) place; with an amazing level of access for ordinary citizens to decision making processes. They realised how disempowering the experience of Direct Rule from Westminster has been for the people of Northern Ireland.”<sup>322</sup>

320 See, for example, Barbro Sundback Geneva 1999, seminar report, p.28 and Peter Wahlbäck in Geneva 1999.

321 Smyth 1998.

322 Smyth 1998, p.14.

In 1993, parliamentarians from Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, and Azerbaijan came to Åland to a meeting organised by ÅIPI, the Interparliamentary Assembly of CIS, and the Russian Foreign Ministry.<sup>323</sup> A news article in a local newspaper in 1993 refers to a Russian press release that was sent by the ‘participants in the meeting’. The press release says that participants learned that conflicts can be regulated by political means.<sup>324</sup>

### *7.7 Conflict transformation at the individual and conflict level*

Using the Åland example as a physical and conceptual meeting place can also have effects for conflict transformation processes at a more profound level, affecting the minds of people and potentially also the course of the conflict resolution process. Functions of mental reorientation in relation to a conflict or to one’s own norm and value systems would, in most cases, require longer processes and a deeper investigation of the Åland example. It may also occur more rapidly, if the example, when presented, leads actors to gain a sudden insight into what a solution may look like. Written and oral reports from third parties indicate that the usage of the Åland example may have contributed to processes of mental reorientation, for example, in the cases of Tamil Eelam, Gagauzia, Transdnistria, Corsica, Aceh, Bougainville, and Northern Ireland.

After the seminar on Corsica had been held on Åland in 1998, Loughlin and Daftary assessed that

“What was remarkable about this seminar was the unanimity expressed by the Corsican participants who agreed on the vast majority of the questions raised. Of course, there was still disagreement on a number of important

323 Öst 2011, p.165, ÅIPI internal archive.

324 ÅIPI internal archive, Ålandstidningen 27.12.93.

issues but a willingness to open a dialogue which was one of the most positive outcomes of the seminar.”<sup>325</sup>

In the case of Gagauzia, a dialogue process in which actors from all levels in the conflict region have participated has been organised by a Helsinki-based NGO, and Åland has been studied as an example, including through a study visit to the islands in 2016. The aims of the study visit included improving relationships between the group members, developing a joint vision for the process and further steps, and setting the agenda of the Parliamentary Working Group on Gagauzia by reflecting on another case.

While study visits are an expensive method, Advisor Jale Sultanli and Legal Advisor Zdenka Machnyikova at CMI assess that they are instrumental for the process. Such visits fulfil several purposes. They can provide a platform for opening locked positions and can enable participants from center and autonomy challenge their own ideas through a real-life experience of how other autonomies function. In addition, study visits may demonstrate a spirit of cooperation, illustrating how both state and autonomy can take responsibility for autonomy in practice.<sup>326</sup>

According to Sultanli, studying someone else’s case can enable participants to see past their own biases and narratives and distance themselves from emotions linked to their own reality, and instead take a more analytical stance. As a result, they may start to look at their own case differently and in a more nuanced way.<sup>327</sup>

More concretely, participants from Moldova and Gagauzia are reported to have enhanced their understanding of how asymmetric systems can work, and how decentralisation can entail cooperation rather than separatism.<sup>328</sup>

325 Loughlin and Daftary 1999, p.45.

326 Sultanli interview 2019, Machnyikova interview 2019.

327 Sultanli interview 2019.

328 Machnyikova interview 2019, Sultanli interview 2019.

Machnyikova asserts that visits have been a very important part of dialogues, and that the comparative examples have been extremely important since “if you do not have perspectives, your positions remain locked”.<sup>329</sup>

When a seminar on Transdnistria was held on Åland in 2001 and the representatives from the two sides met, they were all outsiders in this new context. According to Kiljunen, it was very useful to bring someone else’s conflict into the peace process, where others were discussing how the Åland Islands problem was solved when Sweden and Finland were in a very tense situation, close to war, and it could be solved so that it was beneficial for everyone. Furthermore, Kiljunen points out that when the parties came to Åland, they met with an expectation that they too would behave “in a civilised way” concerning their conflict and its solution.<sup>330</sup>

There is some evidence to suggest that in the case of Aceh, the usage of the Åland example helped relieve tensions and open spaces for figuring out a compromise. According to one of the GAM leaders, Stepan, participants were deeply impacted by Ahtisaari’s mentioning of the status of Åland and that “they increasingly began to feel that the Finnish-Åland arrangement might produce a serious form of “self-government” for Aceh.”<sup>331</sup> Furthermore, he claims that now “the bargaining situation in Helsinki was no longer a zero-sum one. A positive-sum game was now on the table. The outcome was indeed that a treaty was agreed upon and Aceh became an autonomous region”.<sup>332</sup> However, Wigell has found that some Finnish actors asserted that the Åland example actually made the negotiations more difficult, since it was sensitive from a state point of view.<sup>333</sup>

Another case in which the use of the Åland

329 Machnyikova interview 2019.

330 Kiljunen interview 2019.

331 Stepan 2013, pp.243-244.

332 Stepan 2013, pp.243-244.

333 Wigell 2013, pp.81-82.

example might have impacted the minds of key actors in a conflict is Bougainville. In 1990, Wallensteen discussed the Åland example with one of the leaders of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army.<sup>334</sup> In this case, the usage of the Åland example might have helped open the prospect for achieving sufficient self-rule for Bougainville, which led to a greater willingness from the side of the BRA to negotiate a ceasefire.

In the Northern Ireland case, Åland may have also had a conflict-transforming impact. According to chief negotiator in the Northern Ireland peace process, Harri Holkeri, “the Åland Islands for their part might well have influenced the thinking of the negotiators as an example of autonomy in an international and constitutional framework.”<sup>335</sup>

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334 Wallensteen 2009, p.266.

335 United Nations 2001. Closing Words by H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri President of the General Assembly Autonomy - An Alternative to Secession? A Seminar on the Åland Islands as an Example for Peaceful Governance 15 March 2001. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/president/55/pdf/statements/20010315-alandislands.pdf>. Accessed 1.2.2018.

## 8. Summing up the results.

### Where, when, how, why, and by whom has the Åland example been used, and what has been of interest?

This study maps 25 conflicts in which the Åland example has been used and analyses eight of them in more depth. Various chapters and sections discuss the questions of where, when, how, who, and why the Åland example has been used in conflict resolution efforts around the world as well as what has been of interest. Now these initial questions will be more comprehensively answered.

The questions that are addressed in this study can be summarised as follows:

1. The 'where' question includes both the geographic location of the case and the types of conflict. This is discussed in chapters 5 and 6.2.
2. The 'when' question concerns which years the Åland example was used as well as in which phases of conflicts. This is discussed in sections 5.2 and 6.2.
3. The 'who' question covers the actors that have been active in promoting the Åland example and learning from it. This is discussed in section 6.1.
4. The 'what' question regards what has been of interest in the Åland case. This is discussed in section 6.3 as well as in chapter 7.
5. The 'why' question is not explicitly asked but it is underlying and essential in chapter 7, which discusses the role for the Åland example.

6. The 'how' question, finally, addresses the processes in which the Åland example was used - high-level mediation processes, dialogue processes, or separate seminars and meetings. This is discussed in section 6.1. The how question is covered also by chapter 7, which discusses the role of the Åland example.

#### *8.1 Where and in which kind of conflicts?*

The 'where' question includes both the geographic locations of the cases in which the Åland example has been used and the types of conflict. These aspects are discussed in chapter 5 and in section 6.2.

The mapped cases are mostly located in Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Several of the conflicts are linked to a process of decolonialisation and a considerable number of cases are situated in the post-Soviet sphere. Only one case in America and two in Africa were documented. In addition, indications were found of some 10 more situations in Africa in which the Åland example has been discussed, but this information was either too sensitive or too vague to be included in this study.

The 25 mapped cases encompass a variety of different conflict situations, but they all include a state as one conflict actor and a territory which is disputed. In some cases, more than one state claims the territory. Most cases involve aspects of diversity, which means that in the disputed territory, there is one or several groups with

distinct features differing from the majority of the state. In many cases, such groups claim enhanced self-determination, either as territorial autonomy or as independence. The diversity aspect is often linked to ethnicity, but this is not always the case, since diversity may also be related to historic, social, or economic differences.

The characteristics of the conflicts vary considerably. In some, there is no, or very little violence, involved, while others have been very violent. Some of the conflicts are considered by at least one party to the conflict as a strictly domestic matter in which external involvement may not be wished for. In other conflicts, international actors have been deeply involved. The characteristics of the conflict affect the conflict dynamics as well as which measures of peace diplomacy are used and indeed what role the Åland example can play.

### 8.2 *When?*

The 'when' question concerns which years the Åland example was used in the various cases as well as in which phases of conflicts. This is discussed in sections 5.2 and 6.2.

The earliest documented data is from the beginning of the 1990s, when Åland was discussed in the former Yugoslavia and in East Timor, among others. The Contact Group's list about groups and individuals who have received information about the Åland example since 1992 was examined, and it was concluded that out of the 461 entries documented for the years 1992-2018, 272 were directly linked to certain regions or conflicts and thus relevant for this study. It was found that during these 26 years, there has been on average 10 visits per year, with slightly fewer visits for the 1990s and 2010s than for the 2000s. As a whole, most of the documented contacts that were mapped in this study emanate from the 2000s, which may be interpreted as an indication that these were the 'golden days' of the Åland example. However, it is likely that

documentation from earlier years is more sporadic, and that more recent efforts have not yet been documented or are not made public, which is why no definite conclusions can be drawn regarding the variations in the level of interest in the Åland example over the years. However, it can be concluded that Åland is also discussed in relation to several contemporary conflict resolution efforts. Available information indicates that during the last five years, the Åland example has been referred to at some level in at least 12 cases; Azawad (Touareg in Mali), Ambazonia (or Southern Cameroon, in Cameroon), Corsica, Gagauzia, Hong Kong, Kashmir, Mindanao, Nagorno-Karabakh, Northern Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Somaliland (in Somalia) and Western Sahara.

It is also discussed in which phases of conflicts, and in corresponding conflict resolution efforts, the Åland example has been used. In most cases, Åland has been discussed in the conflict solving phase, however, in a few cases, it has also been discussed in the stage of conflict prevention or after a conflict was solved, in the phase of the implementation of agreements.

### 8.3 *Who?*

The 'who' question covers the actors that have been active in promoting the Åland example and learning from it, which is discussed in section 6.1.

Many different types of actors have initiated and been involved in the processes. Diplomats from Finland or other Nordic countries have often been involved, and there are several examples of scholars from outside the Nordic region that have brought up the example, either in expert functions in mediation processes or to organise academic seminars hosted by research centres. Moreover, there are several examples of international NGOs active in the field of conflict resolution at a practical level as main organisers of events or processes in which discussions on Åland have been included.

In several cases, documentation was found concerning experts from outside the Nordic region, as well as actors from the conflict region themselves having initiated discussions on the Åland case in various processes and fora independently from actors in the Nordic region, who have not participated in these events. In some cases, the documentation found does not indicate that actors from Åland have been involved in the processes whatsoever.

In previous research, it has been analysed how actors from Åland, Finland and, to some extent, other Nordic countries have used the Åland example. In contrast, something which has not been discussed to a significant degree in previous research, and to which the present study has made some contribution, is the extent to which Åland has been introduced in conflict resolution by actors from outside Åland, Finland, and the Nordic countries. In some instances, this study has found first-hand documentation of the views of such actors, for example, in the articles written by Noorani in relation to Kashmir and by Jayasinha in relation to Sri Lanka.

For the most part, however, this study has had access to solely secondary information, when third parties have shared their perceptions of which actors in conflict regions have shown interest in the Åland case. This is an aspect which deserves further research.

A variety of different actors from the conflict regions have been informed about the Åland example or have found information about it in other ways. In some cases, discussions about Åland have been held together with a broader selection of stakeholders and surrounding states, as in the Transdnistria case both in 1995 and 2001, which several post-Soviet states took part in the seminars.

It was also concluded that the academic interest in Åland in relation to conflict resolution efforts and its use within academic diplomacy more generally should not to be underestimated.

Scholars participating as experts in peace negotiations or other peace processes are known to have introduced the Åland case when they have found it relevant for the process. Examples include John Loughlin in the case of Corsica, Joseph Marko in relation to Cyprus, and Peter Wallensteen in Bougainville.

#### *8.4 What has been interesting to study?*

The ‘what’ question regards what has been of interest in the Åland case, which is discussed in section 6.3 as well as in chapter 7. The ‘what’ question is interpreted here to cover only the ‘material contributions’ that the Åland example may have made, whereas the other functions of using the Åland example are understood as relating to the questions of why and how.

The in-depth analysis of eight cases (Corsica, Gagauzia, Cyprus, Kashmir, Mindanao, Northern Ireland, Tamil Eelam, and Transdnistria) confirmed the conclusions from previous research that there has been an interest in all three of the main components of the Åland example, i.e., autonomy, cultural protection, and demilitarisation. This study also confirms that the idea of the usage of the Åland example is closely linked to the idea of using autonomy as a tool for conflict resolution, and indeed, the autonomy system is also what has attracted the most interest. However, there has also been some interest in the protection of language and culture, particularly regional citizenship, ‘the right of domicile’, and the land rights linked to them. It was previously unknown to the author that in two cases, Corsica and Cyprus, there had been an interest in these features explicitly in conjunction with the EU derogations Åland is subject to. It can be said that a new feature of the Åland example, appearing when Finland and Åland acceded to the EU in 1995, has gained some international interest. It has concerned both procedure and content - derogations from EU law as a transition agreement as well as its content and protec-

tion of land rights. The prospect of being half-in, half-out of the EU more generally has also been mentioned in relation to Northern Ireland coupled with the Brexit process.

Demilitarisation has been referred to in more cases than anticipated. The eight cases include Bougainville, Kashmir, Nagorno-Karabakh, Cyprus, Okinawa, Israel/Palestine, Tibet, and Transnistria. More specific details on how demilitarisation has been discussed in various contexts are not included in this study and this might be a field of interest for future research.

The question of what actual impact the Åland example might have made - both in terms of material contributions and other functions in peace processes - are discussed in the concluding chapter.

#### *8.6 How - which kind of processes?*

The 'how' question addresses the processes in which the Åland example was used - high-level mediation processes, dialogue processes, or separate seminars and meetings. This is discussed in section 6.2. In addition, chapter 7, which discusses the role of the Åland example in peace processes, answers the question how as well as the question why.

After analysing eight cases, it was found that the Åland example has been used both in official and unofficial contexts. In many instances, Åland seems to have been brought up in connection to ongoing dialogue or even formal peace processes between the parties. In the in-depth study of eight cases, the Åland example has been discussed in connection to formal peace processes in Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Transnistria, while in the Gagauz case, Åland was brought up within a dialogue project between the parties. Northern Ireland is an example of a conflict in which the Åland example has been discussed both in a long-term NGO cooperation in the form of youth camps and in high-level negotiations. The latter can illustrate how

Åland can be indirectly introduced - materials about Åland were made available to the participants without Åland being officially or explicitly promoted as an example.

In the late 1990s and beginning 2000s especially, several high-level and NGO peace conferences were held on Åland. Åland has not seen major high-level peace conferences since the late 1990s and early 2000s, and this may be a thing of the past, but on occasions, NGO conferences have also been held on Åland more recently.

It was found that the usage of the Åland example has seven different functions in conflict resolution. It has worked as 1) An incitement to start a peace process or a stimulus for a stalled process, 2) As an argument to promote the cause of conflict actors, 3) As a conflict map - a list of problems and their potential solutions, 4) As content provider - models for how systems and institutions can be designed and work in practice, 5) A safe and neutral meeting place 6) To illustrate norms, values, and, principles that are considered crucial for successful conflict resolution, and finally, 7) As a tool for conflict transformation that aims to affect the minds of conflict actors and achieve mental reorientation. Among the processes of mental reorientation that were mentioned by interviewees in this study are changes in intergroup relations, the development of a joint vision in an environment disconnected from one's own conflict and associated emotions, letting go of one's own expectations, challenging one's own ideas, learning cooperation, and taking responsibility for the solutions.

#### *8.7 Why?*

The 'why' question is partly answered in chapter 7, which discusses the role that the Åland example has had, since its functions correspond to underlying needs relative to the conflict or the resolution effort in question. The functions are summed up in the preceding section. At a more general level, it can be claimed that Åland is used

as an example because among actors there is a wish for transition from conflict to peace and towards relations between groups that are perceived as more just by the parties involved, and it is believed that the Åland example can help in achieving this.

## 9. Discussion: International interest in the Åland example over time - a quantitative and qualitative assessment

Since state-based conflicts over territory in which diversity is an important aspect are common, and much effort is invested in trying to solve such conflicts, attempts to better understand the processes are valuable and potentially useful to improve conflict resolution efforts. Against this background, it is important to be able to take care of and be relevant to those who seek inspiration from the Åland example - or indeed other similar examples - which is why knowledge-based reasoning and analysis about the 'applicability' and 'relevance' of examples are valuable. In which cases and circumstances can Åland be a useful example? What is meant by 'useful' - for whom and in what way? When is the Åland case relevant - and when is it not?

The aim of this study is to contribute to such discussions through systematically mapping where in the world the Åland example has been used and in what types of processes, which actors have initiated and participated in the discussions, and which parts of the example have been considered most interesting. In addition, this study aims to shed some light on the patterns of situations the Åland example has been used in as well as the content of the discussions in the different cases.

While the main findings were summed up in the previous chapter, it is now time to discuss the findings in a broader context and reflect on the question of the impact of the Åland example on conflict resolution processes worldwide. This chapter also discusses how Åland has been and can be used in such processes - as a model

or as an example? Finally, this chapter discusses which factors may affect whether the Åland example will also be of interest in conflict resolution processes in the future.

### *9.1 Assessment of the impact on conflict resolution processes*

What then can be concluded regarding the actual impact of the Åland example? Has it impacted conflict resolution processes and solutions to any significant degree, and has it helped solve any conflicts?

Indeed, it is perhaps too much to hope that Åland would solve conflicts abroad. Conflicts are complex and contingent, and social life is not rules-bound but rather depends on actors and their decisions in the moment, as well as on structures. Do actors want to solve the conflict? Are there great power interests that hamper the potential for a solution? In many of the cases analysed, no solution has been found and the conflict remains, whereas in others, the conflict was ended by military means rather than through a peace agreement.

The process for conflict resolution in Sri Lanka can serve as an example. Åland was used here in many ways - as a meeting place, as an idea of conflict resolution and compromise, as a place to rest from war, and as a concrete example of autonomy, minority protection, and a stable political system with functioning institutions resting on principles of the rule of law and human rights. Even though there was some interest in autonomy and the Åland solution at one point,

especially from the side of the Tamil Tigers, the parties continued to wage war, the Government of Sri Lanka used excessive violence, and the conflict could not be solved peacefully.

In the case of Transdniestria, the visit to Åland in 2001 was not followed up in the OSCE framework, since the situation took a new turn and it was no longer deemed to be fruitful to continue the Åland track. It is neither clear to what extent the parties were interested more concretely in the components of the Åland example, and nor to what extent they were willing to attempt to solve the issue. Moreover, even if they would have wanted to find a solution, significant power interests in the conflict cannot be disregarded. As Kiljunen puts it, “irrespectively of what they internally would like to do the geopolitics played a role, and so the process was ended”.<sup>336</sup> However, in more recent conflict resolution efforts in Transdniestria, Åland may have played a small role. Visitors to Åland in 2016 showed an interest in the processes and procedures associated with the registration of vehicles on the Åland Islands. While it has not been claimed that the Åland system was “copied”, according to CMI staff, the Åland system served as a reference point when the question of the participation of vehicles from Transdniestria in international road traffic was solved through an agreement brokered within the OSCE-led negotiations process. Another case where Åland made a “material contribution” is Hong Kong. Ghai maintains that the Committee on the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was inspired by the Åland Delegation.<sup>337</sup>

Åland may also have had an impact on a proposed solution for the Krajina conflict, although this solution was never implemented. According to Nauc ler, when the UN and ICFY tried to resolve the conflict of Krajina through a proposal for an autonomy regime for Serbs in Krajina, the

so-called Z-4 Plan drafted in 1995, the proposal was clearly influenced by the Act on Autonomy for Åland.<sup>338</sup>

With the wide definition of conflict used in this study, indeed no conflict can be considered completely solved, as incompatibilities and competing interests remain in all the cases. Some of the cases have seen no or very little violence, however, during the time span included in the analysis, 1990-2018, several conflicts have transitioned from a violent or very tense situation to a non-violent and rather stable situation. Apart from the alleged stability of so-called ‘frozen conflicts’ and the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Krajina, which were ‘solved’ by military means, at least the situations in Aceh, Bougainville, East Timor, Gagauzia, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland can be considered to have become more peaceful. East Timor and Kosovo became independent, while in Aceh, Bougainville, Gagauzia, and Northern Ireland, autonomy or other power-sharing solutions have been introduced or strengthened.

Åland was discussed both in the Kosovo case and in East Timor. In Kosovo, it may not have had any significant impact, but served as a last resort for the Serbian side to try to keep Kosovo within its borders. In the East Timor case, it could be said that Åland functioned as what may be called an ‘inverted example’. After having studied Åland and the self-government alternative very thoroughly, actors concluded that it was not what they were searching for.<sup>339</sup>

As was discussed in chapter 7.7, in the cases of Aceh, Bougainville, and Northern Ireland, Åland may, according to third parties, have had a conflict-transforming impact. In Aceh, the introduction of the Åland example might have even been a game changer, which opened new prospects for opposition leaders and for the

336 Kiljunen interview 2019.

337 Ghai 2011, p.90.

338 Nauc ler, 2011, pp.147, 156.

339 Nordquist 2011,  st 2012.

peace process.<sup>340</sup> According to Stepan, a “positive-sum game” emerged and the outcome was indeed that an agreement was established and Aceh became an autonomous region.<sup>341</sup>

In the case of Northern Ireland, indications of the impact of the Åland example are more inconclusive. Chief negotiator in the Northern Ireland peace process, Harri Holkeri, suggests that “the Åland Islands for their part might well have influenced the thinking of the negotiators as an example of autonomy in an international and constitutional framework.”<sup>342</sup> However, Laurent, who assisted Holkeri in the negotiations, did not discern any direct impact on the Good Friday Agreement.<sup>343</sup>

In Bougainville, the Åland example might have also impacted the minds of key people. In 1990, Wallensteen discussed the Åland example with one of the leaders of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army<sup>344</sup>, and in this case, the usage of the Åland example might have helped open the prospect for achieving sufficient self-rule for Bougainville, which led to a greater willingness from the side of the BRA to negotiate a ceasefire. In Bougainville, Åland did also inspire concrete measures. The complex arrangements for both a separate constitution for Bougainville and the entrenchment of autonomy in the national constitution that is only altered with the approval of both sides were inspired by the Åland experience.<sup>345</sup>

While there are no indications of Åland having been discussed at the time when autonomy was granted to Gagauzia, Åland may have an

impact on ongoing reforms and efforts to improve the functioning of the autonomy. Indeed, in time, Åland might even inspire concrete measures for strengthening the entrenchment of the Gagauz autonomy and the mechanisms for state autonomy cooperation and conflict resolution.

Concerning Corsica, it has been claimed that the 1998 Åland conference had a significant impact on the so-called Matignon process, which led to new competences for Corsica in 2002. In this case, it is assessed that it was the Åland way of gradually expanding autonomy that inspired Corsica rather than material provisions.<sup>346</sup> It can thus be said that Åland had an impact on the process rather than on the content of the outcome.

Another example in which Åland might have had an impact on the peace process is the meeting in Bishkek, which resulted in the 1994 ceasefire agreement over Nagorno-Karabakh. According to then member of the Åland Parliament who was present at the meeting, Barbro Sundback, a South Caucasus party later confessed that he had noticed the expectations of the Åland Islands that the meeting would yield results, and that he wanted to fulfil these expectations. In this way, Sundback believes that the participation of the Ålandic delegation had a positive influence on the peace negotiations.<sup>347</sup>

Hence, indications of Åland having been used as a ‘model’ for concrete institutions, treaties, or legislative solutions were found in the cases Bougainville, Krajina, Hong Kong, Transdnestrria, and possibly also in Gagauzia. In addition, Åland may have helped transform conflicts in the cases of Aceh, Bougainville, and Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Åland is said to have potentially contributed to steps in the conflict resolution processes of Nagorno-Karabakh and Corsica.

340 Stepan 2013, pp.243-244.

341 Stepan 2013, pp.243-244.

342 United Nations 2001. Closing Words by H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri President of the General Assembly Autonomy - An Alternative to Secession? A Seminar on the Åland Islands as an Example for Peaceful Governance 15 March 2001. <http://www.un.org/ga/president/55/speech/aland.htm>. Accessed 1.2.2018.

343 Laurent interview 2019.

344 Wallensteen 2009, p.266.

345 Ghai 2011, p.92.

346 Daftary email 1.5.2020.

347 Öst 2012, pp.9-10, Öst 2011, p.165.

### 9.2 *The Åland example or the Åland model?*

The usage of Åland as an example is sometimes questioned based on the argument that the situation of Åland is too different from those in the conflict regions in relation to which it's discussed. As an example, in an article from 1995, Neville S. Ladduwahetty assesses that "Autonomy of the Åland province of Finland not a model for Sri Lanka". He finds the differences in contemporary and historic context to be too different and considers the usage of the Åland case as a basis for autonomy in Sri Lanka to be "baseless".<sup>348</sup>

Several authors have observed that the components of the Åland example cannot be replicated as such, since conditions vary in each dispute.<sup>349</sup> In relation to Corsica, Loughlin and Daftary concluded that "... the Åland model could not simply be transported to Corsica - the conditions were too different for a simple transplant to succeed."<sup>350</sup> However, they acknowledge both differences; "Åland has a strong autonomy while Corsica's is weak; Åland's language, culture and identity are very protected, while Corsica's are more fragile; the Åland economy is booming and Åland is prosperous, while Corsica is a region with grave economic problems; Åland is peaceful, while Corsica suffers from political violence" and similarities; "both are islands; both are in unitary states; both have strong cultural identities; both are island regions within the European Union"<sup>351</sup>, and they also see benefits of comparing Åland to Corsica since "by travelling to another, very different situation, we can learn a great deal about our own."

Swedish professor, Peter Wallensteen, who was asked by a regional thinktank to come to Bougainville to help solve the ongoing conflict in the 1990s introduces a different conclusion.<sup>352</sup>

"By following different conflicts, ideas could be identified and their use in particular settings could be reviewed. Ideas are not tied to contexts. They are transferable, even globally. Ideas from the Åland Islands and Nicaragua were applicable in the South Pacific. Thus, academics not only served as impartial listeners, but could also inject proposals into process. In this case, central element was the autonomy idea."<sup>353</sup>

How crucial is the context then? How similar do two cases need to be to learn from one another? Is it so that Åland could be of no use in Tamil Eelam because it was too different, but Åland was more useful in Bougainville because the cases were alike? Or is it rather so that Ladduwahetty and Wallensteen were looking for different things and considered the potential of using Åland from different perspectives?

From the cases analysed in this study, we have seen that while, in some cases, the use of the Åland example has been generic, i.e., actors have searched for inspiration or solutions or 'anything' that could lead them closer to a solution, in other cases, the study of Åland has been very specific, such as in studies of the right of domicile in relation to Cyprus and Corsica. In chapter 7, seven functions of the Åland example are discussed. When Åland is used to provide a map of problems and their solutions or to provide material contributions, such as concrete institutions or legislative provisions, context might surely be crucial, but when Åland is used as incitement to get parties to the negotiation table, when it is used as a vantage point for discussing principles and norms, or when it functions as a platform for conflict-transforming processes, the similarities or differences in context are not as significant. If discussions remain at an abstract level and at the level of ideas, perhaps there is no problem us-

348 ÅIPI internal archive. Printed from webpage LAKBIMA - Sri Lankan Issues. November 4, 1995.

349 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, pp.9-10.

350 Loughlin and Daftary 1999, p.45.

351 Loughlin and Daftary 1999, p.45.

352 Wallensteen, 2009, p.266.

353 Wallensteen 2009, p.269.

ing Åland as an example despite contexts being different, but context and solutions matter more when Åland is used as a conflict map and content provider.

For example, at the level of mapping a conflict and seeking appropriate answers, one significant question is which type of autonomy system could be relevant in various cases, something which may indeed vary depending on context.

According to Wolff, the concept of “territorial autonomy” is used at two levels; both at an abstract level to describe “the functional status of a particular level of government within a multilayered system”, and more specifically to allude to the specific territorial status of an entity within an otherwise unitary state, as in the case of Åland.<sup>354</sup> When territorial autonomy is discussed as a tool for conflict resolution, it is often discussed in the more abstract sense - meaning ‘power-sharing’ or ‘decentralisation’ as a tool for conflict resolution rather than the specific asymmetric Ålandic-style autonomy.

However, it is possible to argue that the Åland example can be understood and used at both of these two levels. At a more abstract level, it can be understood as one among many possible forms for systems of power-sharing, and at a more concrete level, it can be understood as an example of territorial autonomy in a unitary state, or even more specifically as a model of the certain form of autonomy pertaining specifically to Åland.

It can also be noted that while Ladduwahetty as well as Loughlin and Daftary refer to Åland as a “model”, in contrast, Wallenstein talks about an “idea”. When used in international conflict resolution, Åland has, at times, been alluded to as a ‘model’, and indeed, this is the term used in a significant number of written sources as well as in some of the interviews conducted for this study. However, many scholars and diplomats have pointed out that Åland could not be used

354 Wolff 2013, pp.3-4.

as a blueprint, since it is not possible to transfer systems from one context to completely different ones. For this reason, they have preferred to use the concept ‘the Åland example’, since it is more open and can describe Åland as a source of inspiration rather than a set model.<sup>355</sup>

The concepts of ‘model’ and ‘example’ can be considered as mutually exclusive when the word ‘model’ is understood to allude to concrete policies, institutions, or legislative paragraphs, while ‘example’ can refer to loose templates or general principles.<sup>356</sup> Interpreted in this way, it should be said that Åland is sometimes used as a model, and sometimes as an example. The findings in this study support the conclusion that ‘model’ is not an appropriate word to capture all the functions of Åland in conflict resolution processes. Åland is, at times, used as a model, illustrating the specific design of a certain system or certain institutions, however, the term ‘model’ cannot include a significant number of other functions Åland has had in conflict resolution.

However, the concept of the ‘Åland example’ is also commonly used to include the concept of the Åland model. The conclusion is then that Åland is in fact used both as a model and as an example, and that the concept of ‘the Åland example’ can be used to cover them both.

### *9.3 Factors affecting the future relevance of the Åland example*

The extent to which the Åland example has been and still is relevant for conflict resolution is dependent on several internal and external factors. In 2008, when Granlund asked Ålandic politicians what role the Åland example has to play in the future, different answers emerged. Most of the interviewees believed that Åland would continue to have a role to play in an internation-

355 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, pp.8-9.

356 Unpacking the concept of policy, Weyland (2007, p.18, pp.54-55) distinguishes between loose templates or principles on the one hand and concrete policies or models on the other.

al arena, although this would depend on developments in the world. One of the interviewees believed that future interest in the Åland example would depend on whether it will be major power thinking or international law concepts that are central to international politics in the future. Another of the interviewees foresaw that interest in the Åland example might increase as the importance of nation states decreases in the context of general regionalisation and globalisation, in the case that there would be no drastic changes in the form of environmental disasters or wars.<sup>357</sup>

The geopolitical situation as well as the nature of conflicts and conceptual mindsets have undergone changes since the Åland example started to be used in the 1990s. After the end of the Cold War came a period of optimism and an enhanced belief in possibilities for peaceful trade and cooperation between countries, as well as in multilateralism and diplomacy. Recent decades have also seen processes of globalisation, decentralisation, and multilevel governance coupled with a questioning of the position of the state as the central actor in international politics. These perceptions have again been challenged by more recent trends indicating the comeback of the state and of territorial politics. Such factual and conceptual changes of course also have an impact on understandings and usages of the Åland example.

The 25 conflicts mapped in this study can all be described as state-based conflicts over territory, and the aspect of diversity is a factor in most cases. This type of conflict is still frequent, which is displayed in conflict databases as well as in other research.

The UCDP recorded 52 active state-based armed conflicts in 2018, i.e., conflicts with at least one state as an actor and with more than 25 battle-related deaths in the calendar year.<sup>358</sup>

357 Granlund 2010, p.15.  
358 Pettersson et al. 2019.

Most of those conflicts are intrastate, i.e., within a state, as opposed to interstate conflicts, which are conflicts between states. Out of the 52 state-based conflicts, 27 concerned territory. It can be noted that about half, 11, of these were related to the Islamic State. The remaining conflicts include diversity aspects. Some of the cases are discussed in this study, such as Palestine, Kashmir, and Mindanao. Several conflicts concern the Kurds; Iran-Kurdistan, Syria-Rojava Kurdistan, and Turkey-Kurdistan. Other conflicts include West Papua (Indonesia), Arakan and Kachin (Myanmar), Ambazonia (Cameroon), and Somaliland (Somalia).

It should be noted that this data do not include conflicts with less than 25 deaths in a calendar year, i.e., neither does it include so-called frozen conflicts, nor does it include non-violent situations where independence claims or autonomy demands are voiced among communities within a state. Schulte, 2020, maintains that an “ethnic group’s demands for increased autonomy or secession have been a cause for more than a third of all civil wars since the end of the Second World War”<sup>359</sup>, and the presence and challenge of this type of conflict in the contemporary world are well-documented in research.<sup>360</sup>

Several of the conflicts documented in this study are linked to a process of decolonialisation and a considerable number of cases are situated in the post-Soviet sphere. Indeed, findings in this study indicate that Åland was subject to significant attention in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, including in relation to the Yugoslav Wars. The bulk of major seminars documented were also held in relation to such conflicts in the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s.

On many occasions, incompatibilities have appeared - or at least resurfaced - during a pro-

359 Schulte 2020, p.1.

360 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, p.7, Keil and Anderson 2018, p.4.

cess of reshuffling, decolonialisation, or the fall of an empire. Reshuffles in the geopolitical environment may also provide opportunities to solve conflicts. The data used for this report is too limited to enable conclusions to be drawn on this matter, but it indicates that there may be a correspondence between major geopolitical events - such as the independence of Kosovo and/or the war in Georgia in 2008 and the usage of the Åland example. Indeed, 2008-2009 were the 'peak years', with a slight increase in visits to Åland.

Political security concerns may be an incitement for the international community to enhance efforts to solve conflicts. In some of the cases examined, reference to events in the surrounding environment were found. For instance, in the case of Crimea in 2010-2011, references were made to the Kosovo declaration of independence as well as to the Russian Federation's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia.<sup>361</sup>

It can also be assumed that the usage of the Åland example corresponds to wider trends in conflict resolution processes. While it has been out of the scope of this study to comprehensively map such trends, several questions can be raised based on the findings in the data.

Firstly, it can be assessed that there is a correspondence between the phase of a conflict and subsequent conflict resolution processes on the one hand and the functions which the Åland example has had or indeed which functions are

possible for it to have on the other. Åland can be incorporated in peace processes only if such processes are ongoing and if the primary conflict parties are prepared to involve third parties or open to study other cases. In many cases, disputes may rather be considered as strictly domestic matters and similar Åland-style solutions may be outruled by one or several parties to the conflict.

Secondly, it may be the case that there has been a change regarding the levels at which the Åland example has been used over the years as well as by which actors. In the early years, CIS and the OSCE were the major actors in arranging seminars on Åland, and the work of the Contact Group included seminars and cooperation at a high level, for example with the UN. In addition, during the early days of the work of the Contact Group, visits to Åland were often mentioned in the minutes and visits were arranged by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs or jointly together with Ålandic actors to a more significant degree than what is documented for later years. The OSCE is still a major actor within international conflict resolution in vast parts of the world and it is involved in the Transdnistria case, for example. While according to Kiljunen, Åland is still on the agenda in OSCE seminars, no high-level seminars have been organised and recent visits to Åland from this region were arranged by the IOM and through an NGO rather than directly by the OSCE. Is it specifically the Åland example that is included to a lesser extent in high-level processes these days, or is it part of a wider trend in conflict resolution? Is the 'grand seminar' outdated and replaced with other measures? Has there been a trend towards a privatisation of conflict resolution, responsibility moving from the official and state level to an unofficial level, headed by NGOs?

A third potential tendency is that other actors independently bring up Åland to an increasing degree, while actors on Åland are less involved

361 According to the International Centre for Policy Studies, the "declaration of independence by Kosovo in February 2008 and recognition of independence of South Ossetia by the Russian Federation negatively affected the safety and stability in the Black Sea region, particularly in the context of the Crimean issue. Therefore, the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR) initiated the Crimean Policy Dialogue Project". International Centre for Policy Studies 2015. *Mapping of dialogue initiatives to resolve the conflict in Ukraine*. p.29. [http://icps.com.ua/assets/uploads/files/mapping\\_of\\_dialogue\\_initiatives\\_eng\\_.pdf](http://icps.com.ua/assets/uploads/files/mapping_of_dialogue_initiatives_eng_.pdf). Accessed 27.5.2020.

than they were in the 1990s and 2000s. Has the Åland example become famous enough to stand on its own legs? Or is it the case that it is perceived that Ålandic actors are not needed, and hence are not included in the processes? This may be a problematic development, since this would risk not including the minority perspective.

When Åland or other regions are used as examples, this is because there is a perception that the systems are working reasonably well. In conflict resolution contexts, Åland has been described as a success story, since a historical conflict was solved peacefully, Sweden and Finland have had no disputes over Åland since, no violence has occurred between the linguistic minority and majority in Finland, the cultural protection for Ålanders has been maintained, and Åland's autonomy has evolved over time. Furthermore, the system has been described as both stable and dynamic, based on strong guarantees, and well-entrenched in both national and international law. The climate between Åland and Finland has been described as one of negotiation with compromise as its aim.<sup>362</sup>

However, in recent years, some Ålandic actors have occasionally claimed that Åland is no longer as relevant as an example it once was, partly because the interest from post-Soviet states has declined and partly due to changes in Åland's status; changes affecting the autonomous region itself and in relation to the status of other regions. From time to time, it is claimed that Åland is no longer at the forefront of autonomy development, for instance, the Faroe Islands may be considered more developed nowadays.<sup>363</sup>

<sup>362</sup> See, for example, Eriksson et al. 2006, pp.74-75.

<sup>363</sup> Simolin 2018b, p.22. Comparing regions, Lindström (2019, p.62) assesses that the autonomy of Åland 'can be regarded as a form of territorial protection rather than a fully developed political autonomy'. An account of Finland's and Åland's positions on some of the main features in the process for revision of the Autonomy Act can be found in Simolin 2018a.

In previous research, Öst found that Finnish diplomats rarely actively highlight the Åland example, and assesses that the modest line sometimes borders on the outright concealing of it.<sup>364</sup> Wigell assesses that Finnish actors are more ambivalent in the promotion of the Åland example than Ålandic actors, and concludes that many Finnish representatives have no emotional connection to the Åland example and that it is not a natural part of the perception of Finnish identity. Another reason is claimed to be that the use of the Åland example may imply negative consequences in peace mediation contexts, since autonomous arrangements are sometimes regarded as a step towards independence. In general, some Finnish diplomats argue that autonomy arrangements are often viewed as a stepping stone for independence, making it unacceptable to the government side. Thus, highlighting such events can be seen as providing support for separatist ambitions.<sup>365</sup>

Such perceptions among actors at national and local levels play a role for the usage of the Åland example. If some Ålandic actors claim, as is described above, that the autonomy of Åland has lost strength in relation to other regions, that competences have been lost to the EU, and that relations with Finland are strained, this may well hamper their will to promote the example. In other words, the inclination to 'showcase' Åland may be linked to both Ålandic and Finnish actors' perceptions of whether the Åland solution is a successful one.

The willingness of Ålandic and Finnish actors to promote the Åland example can also be mirrored in their inclination to include it in diplomatic or paradiplomatic activities, more specifically by allocating resources to promoting the Åland example and/or to accommodating visitors that show an interest in it. It has been assessed that actors from Åland and Finland gen-

<sup>364</sup> Öst 2012.

<sup>365</sup> Wigell 2013, p.81.

erally provide information about Åland “upon demand” rather than actively promoting it.<sup>366</sup> In interviews with current and former members of the Contact Group, Simolin found that some Ålandic actors and the Åland Government also claimed that the interest in promoting the Åland example had varied slightly over time, and one of the respondents expressed that continuous work is needed in order to maintain information flows between Åland and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in order to remind them of the existence of the Åland example and to be prepared to properly accommodate the interest when it appears.<sup>367</sup> It may also be the case that Åland has mostly focused on “sharing its own experiences”, and that in order to be relevant for those who are looking for information, Åland may need to enhance its capacity to compare its own situation to those of other regions as well as to provide advice.<sup>368</sup>

As discussed above, it is often considered that decentralisation, power-sharing, and power-dividing strategies can provide appropriate tools for managing certain conflicts. However, the idea of using such measures as a tool for conflict resolution has also been questioned, the basic question being if it is really contributing to conflict resolution, or rather worsening underlying ethnic tensions and fuelling secession claims. Indeed, the prospect of the future usage of the Åland example is linked to international norms and beliefs. Such norms and beliefs will affect choices made in international conflict resolution. At its most basic level, the Åland example will only be used if the international community demonstrates a belief that conflicts can be solved, a perception that autonomy can be useful to prevent or solve certain types of conflicts,

as well as a contemplation that Åland is indeed a successful example of how to manage minority issues in today’s complex world.

366 Spiliopoulou Åkermark 2011, Simolin 2018b.

367 Simolin 2018b, p.22.

368 It can be noted that EURAC Research in South Tyrol has developed expertise in this field on a much larger scale - however, the region is also much larger.

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- Joseph Marko 12.4.2019 Bolzano  
Elisabeth Nauc ler 30.4.2019 Mariehamn  
Kimmo Kiljunen 22.5.2019 Helsinki  
Mikko Pyh l  22.5.2019 Helsinki  
Marcus Laurent 28.6.2019 phone call  
Zdenka Machnyikova 16.8.2019 Skype  
Jale Sultanli 26.8.2019 Skype

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Peace, conflict and conflict resolution are the three main areas of activity for the Åland Islands Peace Institute (ÅIPI). These wide areas are mainly considered through the special status and competencies of Åland: autonomy within Finland, minority rights, demilitarisation and neutralisation. The ÅIPI is an independent foundation, established in 1992, and specialises in research, education and information. A Board of Directors and a Research Council are responsible for the activities of the Institute. The Åland Islands Peace Institute has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC.

The Åland Islands Peace Institute ...

- conducts research into autonomy, minorities and security, often in collaboration with international networks of scholars.
- disseminates research results through publications, seminars and conferences.
- presents what is called the "Åland Example" and dis-

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- offers web-based education on territorial autonomy and the Åland Example.
- arranges regular high-level meetings, for instance the Kastelholm Talks on Peace, held with the former Finnish President Tarja Halonen as a patron, and with leading researchers, diplomats and international experts on the panel.
- promotes and participates in local and international networks in order to further democratisation, gender equality and non-violence.

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