The Baltic Sea Region
Cultures, Politics, Societies
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1. Scandinavia

No country in the Baltic Sea Region could be labelled a pure nation state, and all countries in the region have to cope with complicated majority-minority relations, which are indeed of many different kinds. Issues about old minorities and new immigrants are on the political agenda in practically every country. A sweep around the Baltic Sea Region will give an idea about the complexity in this respect. To start on the Atlantic, Norway, which gradually achieved independence between 1814 and 1905, was long considered one of the most homogeneous countries from an ethnic point of view. This has changed. A citation from a Norwegian anthropologist illustrates the new situation: “Today a Norwegian living in Oslo is likely to ride to work in a tram-car driven by an Indian man, have his office cleaned by an Albanian family and shop for daily provisions from his local Pakistani grocer” (Long Litt Woon 1992).

Third World immigrants have come to Norway during the last decades, and they are visible especially in the Oslo region. Asian immigrants are more visible than representatives of the larger immigrant groups of Britons, Swedes and Danes. Despite the relatively low numbers of non-Europeans, immigration and the integration of newcomers have become topical issues: How many immigrants can Norway accept? Should immigrants stick to their culture or should they become Norwegians? Should Norway become a multicultural society? What happens to Norwegian culture when newcomers arrive? Norway has old minorities as well. For long there was a tendency to overlook the large Saami (Lappish) minority in the northern parts of the country; until the beginning of this century the policy was to assimilate and Norwegianise the Saami. This policy of cultural oppression has been changed gradually during the twentieth century. The Saami are now called an indigenous minority and given special rights as such. (More about the Saami below.)

Denmark was once a great power of northern Europe with small colonies or outposts in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Denmark has, like Sweden, gradually transformed into a small power, a peaceful transformation that could serve as a model for other countries. Being a kingdom that still stretches into the Atlantic, Denmark has some overseas territories (The Faroe Islands, Greenland) where the populations ask for various degrees of autonomy. The Faroese situation is a parallel to the Åland case; the standardisation of a Faroese language during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is one aspect of these islanders’ struggle for autonomy. The area along the Danish-German border is a classic example of border minorities.
Sweden. With a few changes the above broad picture can also be applied to Stockholm and other large Swedish cities. More than a tenth of the present population in Sweden has a recent background from abroad (either born in another country or with a parent from another country). The influx of immigrants after 1945 to the early 1970s reflected Sweden’s need for labour. Most of the population exchange has been with the other Nordic countries. In Sweden the Finns have always made up a considerable share of the population. (Until 1809 Finland was an integrated part of Sweden). The arrival of large numbers of labour immigrants in the decades after World War II was fairly uncontroversial. The character of immigration changed in the beginning of the 1970s, when labour immigration from non-Nordic countries stopped, and refugees began to arrive in large numbers from Latin America and the Middle East. The main problem during the last two decades has been to provide newcomers with meaningful jobs and integrate them on the labour market during a structural change in the economy and repeated recessions. The role of non-European immigrants and refugees is one of the most burning issues in the political debate and public discourse.

Finland is traditionally a country of emigration. Much of the country’s migration policy has dealt with the many Finns who emigrated to Sweden. What happened to them as individuals, and what would happen to them if and when they returned to Finland? Aspects of language have been important. Migration between Sweden and Finland takes place within the free Nordic labour market. Unlike Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, Finland has only in recent years experienced immigration from non-European countries, but numbers have been quite small. The main minority issue in Finland concerns the Swedish-speaking minority. Swedish was once the “majority language” of the Swedish kingdom (in which Finland was a part until 1809). Swedish-speaking Finns made up 14% of the population by 1900 but their share of Finland’s population has fallen to 6%. Their decrease in relative terms is partly the result of emigration (earlier to America, after 1945 to Sweden). Urbanisation was also important and led to a large degree of mixed marriages with Finnish-speakers and, as a result, a language shift from Swedish to Finnish. The Swedish language has kept its position better in the countryside than in the cities.

2. Germany

During the last hundred years Germany has had a larger population turnover than any other country in the Region. The German population question is one with many geographical, historical, ideological and political facets. This is a result of political turnovers, harsh dictatorship, race politics, genocide, world wars, a divided nation, and unification. As far as population policies are concerned, Germany has been the hurricane centre of Europe. It is significant that the Berlin Wall was both constructed and destroyed because people were escaping from east to west. In this overview, we have to reduce the time perspective. A century ago Germany, like most other European countries, was an area of emigration, sending million after million to the New World, but Germany both sent and received labour. Foreign workers were the buffers between demand and supply on the labour market. On the eve of World War I, Germany counted as many as 1.2 million foreign seasonal workers from abroad, of which only a minority were German-speakers. Large numbers came from Galicia (then under Austria) and Polish areas. During the inter-war years the numbers of foreign workers were lower, but it is significant that Germany in the late 1930s, a period of Aufrüstung (preparation for war), was
Multicultural cities

While our first case, the Åland Islands, is a thinly populated “remote” area with a homogeneous population, our next case is a contrast: a large, culturally mixed city. The Baltic Sea Region is a highly urbanised area, and many of the cities in the region are meeting places of peoples with different backgrounds in terms of religion, culture, language, habit, and tradition. Some places in the region carry the legacy of multicultural and multilingual character – one might even use the word cosmopolitan. Historically, Viborg/Viipuri, is such a city. It was founded as a military outpost by expansionist Swedes in 1293; this city has been Swedish, Russian, Finnish, and Soviet and was once an overall trade centre and an important port for the export of Nordic forest products. It was a meeting place for western Lutheranism and eastern Orthodoxy and an episcopal see for both churches when the city was ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union in 1944. Viborg was the northernmost location for German settlers in the Baltic, and German was for a long time the foremost language of instruction in Viborg’s schools.

The German cultural influence was strong in many cities along the eastern coast of the Baltic: St Petersburg, Reval (today’s Tallinn), Riga (once the largest city in the Baltic Sea Region) and Königsberg (today’s Kaliningrad) and Danzig (today’s Gdańsk). Another example is Vilnius, which in the past sheltered a mixed population. The city was often called the Jerusalem of the North because of its large Jewish population. Many cities have become increasingly multicultural during the last three or four decades, for example, Berlin, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. One could add that Stockholm was at least in one respect more cosmopolitan in the 17th century, when even German and Dutch were spoken beside Swedish in the Swedish parliament, than in the 19th century.

St Petersburg. A case of population turnover and diversity

Let us take a look at St Petersburg, currently the largest metropolis in the Baltic Sea Region and consider the population mix of this city! St Petersburg today has the same population as the whole of Finland or Denmark. It houses some five million inhabitants and is of great economic importance for Russia. It also has a strong potential as an economic and cultural partner for the Baltic Sea Region. The city was founded by Peter the Great in 1703 on the river Neva and became the capital of Russia. (After the Revolution in 1917 the capital was moved to Moscow.) Thanks to its location in an inlet of the Baltic Sea, the city became a strong magnet to other parts of the region. By tradition Germans, Finns, Poles and Jews lived in the city, but the German element more or less disappeared after World War I. The area around St Petersburg was the home of Finno-Ugric groups, primarily Ingrian Finns (in Swedish ingermanländare). Also, before Finns from Finland emigrated en masse to America in the late 19th century, they went in large numbers to St Petersburg to find jobs and to settle in the city. There was also a small number of Swedes (with a background in Sweden), and for Swedish industries, for example those of the Nobel family, St Petersburg was the avenue to the large Russian market. (Many of these had to return to Sweden after World War I, leaving much of their property behind; in Sweden these returnees were

Map 34. Multicultural cities in the Baltic Region. Throughout history, some cities in the region stand out as meeting places for many cultures. Of the thirteen cities on the map, several were trading points (e.g. Riga), some had a special administrative status (e.g. Fredericia), while others lay on the border area between two or more cultures (e.g. Kraków). After the Second World War, the map changed drastically when several of the cities, among them Viborg and Königsberg, changed population completely after their incorporation into the Soviet Union. Ill.: Karin Hallgren
called "Petersburg Swedes"). St Petersburg also attracted migrants from the Baltic provinces. St Petersburg has always been a multinational city, much in contrast to the more ethnically homogeneous Moscow. In the 19th century there were those who talked of St Petersburg as an "un-Russian city" or a "German" city, and even today there are reflections of this in people's attitudes. The continual change in the ethnic mix has been typical for St Petersburg. Before the Russian Revolution, Belarusians and Ukrainians moved in, and after World War I and the ensuing Civil War the city attracted refugees, some of whom soon left. In 1918 one fourth of the city's population was non-Russian. In terms of population the city expanded rapidly because it served as a metropolis for the whole Soviet Union. St Petersburg suffered enormously during the 20th century. The city was partly destroyed during the Revolution. During World War I and the tumultuous postwar years the population was reduced to less than one half. Leningrad (the name of the city from 1924 to 1991) suffered during World War II, when the city was besieged and large numbers had to flee. During the Stalin era many of the Leningrad intellectuals ended their lives in the Gulag.

The largest increase in population occurred during the 20th century, despite the setbacks of wars and revolution. This reflects the stronghold of Leningrad/St Petersburg in science, culture, production, and trade. High population turnover and the movement of people are significant. Despite the above-mentioned peoples from neighbouring countries – and assimilated or well-integrated Ukrainians and Belarusians – St Petersburg is still mainly a city of Russians, but the picture has changed and now you can count up to one hundred ethnic groups. The language assimilation has been strong, non-Russians have become Russian-speakers. The city's character as the window on the west attracted large shares of so-called immigrants from other republics of the Soviet Union. St Petersburg has during recent years become a springboard for Russians and other ex-Soviets who want to emigrate to the west.

*Perestroika* and *glasnost* changed the ethnic landscape of St Petersburg. Many activities of ethnic groups came to the surface. There was a revival of ethnic cultural life. The Ingrian Finns, whose traditional ethnic base is the larger St Petersburg area, can be mentioned. Much of this group's activities during recent years have been to publicise the suffering of the group during the Stalin era. The Finno-Ugric character of this group makes its relation to Finland special, and their situation has a parallel in the so-called Aussiedler (Germans living outside Germany). According to current Finnish policy, "historic" Finnish groups have the right to "return" to Finland and quite a few Ingrian Finns have used their right to return to the "old homeland".

Organisations were formed among many ethnic groups in St Petersburg during the early glasnost years, and an inter-ethnic society, *Yedineniye* (Unity), was founded in 1988. *Glasnost* also unleashed other forces: anti-Semitic organisations appeared and latent hostility towards Jews came to the surface. The anti-Semites have a small base in the city's population, but their spokesmen are vociferous. Three such groups can be noted: neo-Nazis who also turn against aliens in their hate campaigns; the more numerous Russian nationalists (propagating Russia for the Russians) who blame Jews for the political and economic troubles; and the "Soviet patriots" with a base among former bureaucrats and party functionaries. There have been attempts to measure the latent and open anti-Semitism in the city. According to one investigation, half of the population bears anti-Jewish antagonism in some form or another, while 15 percent display open anti-Semitism (Voronkov 1991). Nonetheless, a large part of the St Petersburg population has developed co-existence with Jews, whose tendency to intermarry with Russians and in the long run become Russians is quite pronounced.

Anti-Semitism is held up as one factor behind the large number of Jewish emigrants to Israel during recent years. It is disputed how strong this emigration potential is in St Petersburg. It is interesting to note, however, that Germany has stood out as the most desired goal.
short of labour and filled the vacuum by external recruitment. The situation during World War II was extraordinary. The war efforts all around Europe resulted in shortages of work forces on the home front. Labourers were “recruited” to Germany from occupied areas. More than 8 million foreign workers, mainly from Eastern Europe, were forced to Germany to fill the gap. They made up a third of the total work force in the Reich.

With a heavily reduced working population, the country was in bad need of extra man-power after the Second World War. (West) Germany gradually became dependent on an imported workforce again. This was intentional; Germany reached agreements with several countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey and others) during the late 1950s and 1960s. West Germany entered a policy of immigration, but officially, at least, the country only reluctantly developed into an immigration country. The idea was evident: people from other countries were invited to the BRD but they were not supposed to stay more than a few years. This was called the rotation principle, and the Germans developed a guest worker (Gastarbeiter) policy; later one talked about a staying guests policy (Dauergäste), when it was evident that many Gastarbeiter had a tendency to settle down permanently. As late as 1991 it was claimed in the Bundestag in Bonn, that Germany was not a country of immigration (kein Einwanderungsland).

Rising xenophobia is a tendency in several West European countries of immigration. Stealing from immigrants, attacks on homes of asylum-seekers and foreigners, demonstrations in favour of a restricted immigrant policy are more common now than a decade ago. Parallel to these phenomena we see, however, very sharp and decided activities from governments and organisations to counteract. These phenomena are evident both in countries with few immigrants, such as Norway, and countries with many immigrants, such as Germany, where confrontations between police and demonstrating youth have been vehement during recent years.

From a sociological perspective the German situation is extremely complex. Some observers see historic roots of German xenophobia. In German culture there has traditionally been a strong dichotomy between Germans and non-German (deutsch and undeutsch). The notion of Germans as one people (ein Volk) grew out of the German national process in the 19th century. And the idea of the Germans as one Volk is also linked to German wars: war purifies the people (or the nation). The current unification of the two Germanies and the amalgamation of the East Germans and West Germans have added another factor to the German identity process.

Germany received half of all asylum-seekers that came to Western Europe during the last decades. One reason behind this high figure is the liberal German laws. In the West German constitution of 1949 a basis is found for the benevolent reception of asylum-seekers, and article 16 reflects an ambition to settle accounts for atrocities in the past, i.e. Nazi Germany’s genocidal policies vis-à-vis Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, etc. Article 16 of the constitution states that West Germany can not refuse entry to an asylum-
seeker; his case has to be investigated in the country. An overwhelming majority of asylum-seekers have not qualified for refugee status according to the law, but many have nonetheless been allowed to stay for humanitarian reasons. A more restricted application of the law was introduced in the early 1990s.

The amalgamation of the two Germanies came about abruptly and took many West and East Germans by a surprise. The fusion of the two halves was indeed ideologically prepared in the west, where all GDR citizens were considered as potential citizens of a unified Germany. But 45 years of division has left its mark on mentality on both sides. After the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the existence of separate West German and East German identities was evident, and these differences can not be easily reconciled. Many former East Germans feel that unification was achieved only on West German terms.

One must not forget that regionalism in Germany is strong. The feeling for historical region is strong, a typical North German is a Protestant and a South German a Catholic and for many reasons they look differently on the world. Now a new, east-west dimension must be added. Germany has a federal political system, which prepares the ground for varying political solutions, and the restoration of the old Länder-organisation in former East Germany has given regionalism even freer scope.

The conditions for the Slavic-speaking Sorbian minority in Brandenburg reflects somewhat the German complex. The German Democratic Republic housed only one territorial minority, the Sorbs. In the constitution of 1949 Sorbs were granted the status of “socialist citizens of Sorbian nationality”. This was used as propaganda and through the protection of Sorbs as a minority, East Germany wanted to achieve international legitimacy and improved relations to “Slavic” republics in Eastern Europe. In return, the Sorbs had to accept the supremacy and infallibility of the Communist party. The government’s economic support for Sorbian culture was massive, but the effect double-edged. Sorbian ethnicity seems to have been on the decline during later decades, and more so among protestant than catholic Sorbs. Can a minority survive as a result of this combination of economic benevolence and pressure for ideological standardisation? After German unity, the Sorbs, who live in a brown coal district, have been hit harder by unemployment than the average Germans in the east, and they are under the added stress of anti-foreign attitudes. The future of the Sorbs as a minority is uncertain.

3. Karelia

Karelia is a border region between Finland and Russia. The Finnish seclusion from the Tsarist Empire in 1917 spurred the Karelians to seek independence, which was not achieved. There is one Karelia in southeastern Finland, and Karelia is also an autonomous region in Russia. The composition of the population changed dramatically in the Karelian ASSR. The Karelians, a nationality according to Soviet terminology, made up a tenth of the population in 1989 and were far outnumbered by the Russians (73%). This is in great contrast to the figures of 1929, when Karelia’s population was much smaller; at that time there were twice as many Karelians as Russians. The change in the proportion between these two groups is a result of large-scale in-migration of Russians (and to some extent other Slavic-speakers), out-migration of Karelians to other parts of the Soviet Union, and mixed marriages in which Karelians tend to shift language. After the 1917 Revolution, Finns moved in from Finland, Canada and the United States, hoping that Soviet Karelia would materialise as the socialist utopia. The
situation of the Finns was crucial during and after World War II, when the Soviet Union and Finland were at war.

4. The Baltic Republics

In Estonia the ethnic composition has changed during the 20th century. One of the most urgent problems in Estonia is to create a modus vivendi between the Estonian majority and the large Russian minority. Moreover, other nationalities have immigrated to the country under the Soviet system. The problem is complicated since the official Estonian line of argument is that the country was occupied by the Soviets and that the influx of people from other republics of the Soviet Union was an oppressor instrument. Many Russians lack citizenship in Estonia and are hence stateless but consider Estonia their home country.

Latvia. Historically Latvia is a multiethnic country. Because of its central location on the Baltic Sea some coastal points have been natural transit places for goods to and from a large hinterland. Latvia was early an object for foreign expansion and cultural influence: Viking raids in the early Middle Ages, Greek Orthodox mission, and Danish mission and colonisation. From the 1200s, Germans took over leading functions, because of the expansion of the Teutonic Order. For several centuries, high culture in the area bore a German stamp. The dominant groups have been Germans, Poles, Swedes, and Russians. Latvians made up the lowest strata of the population, with limited rights. One may wonder how the Latvians have been able to survive as an ethnic group, and how the Latvian language has been able to strengthen its position during the last two centuries.

Latvia, and especially Riga, was a centre and a garrison city in the Swedish empire. The Russian presence and influence is of later date, and it is striking that the Germans maintained their leading positions as landowners and administrators even after Peter the Great’s takeover around 1710 during the Great Northern War. Russians did not move in large numbers until the late 1800s. Two factors were important for the growing Russian presence at the time, industrialisation and Russification. Russians appeared in the large cities, where impoverished Russian farmers made up a substantial part of the factory work force. This city/countryside division between Russians and Latvians is striking to this day.

A walk through Riga shows how different groups made an impact on the city, once the largest port on the Baltic Sea.

From a demographic point of view the situation in Latvia is parallel to that in Estonia. The ethnic composition of Latvia has undergone a dramatic change during the 20th century. The share of Latvians has gradually decreased, while the share of Russians has increased. Both in relative and absolute figures Latvians were fewer in 1989 than in 1935. There were several background factors: emigration during and after World War II, the deportation of Latvians to inner parts of Russia, and low birth rates among the Latvians during the last decades; one consequence is the increase in the number of old people. The Soviet occupation in 1940 soon led to purges among resistant Latvians. During the first year of Soviet occupation 35,000 Latvians disappeared. Some were killed, others were sent to Siberia.

Taken as a whole, migration was more important than natural increase for the growth of the population. The increasing number of Russians during recent decades is a result of Soviet industrial and population policy. Industrial enterprises were located to the Baltic republics and immigration followed in its wake. As noted above, there are strong regional differences...
in the distribution of the respective ethnic groups. Immigrating Russians were located mainly
in cities and industrial centres. In Riga, Latvians are a minority (36.5-% in 1989), while the
Russians amount to 47.3 %.

Many observers point at the conflict potential between Latvians and Russians in Latvia. Therefore it is necessary to analyse the relations between the two groups. The Russians in Latvia
are not a homogeneous category. Some have deep roots in the country with a family history
that goes back to early tsarist days. As a whole, this group is integrated in Latvian society. They
are Latvian citizens, speak Latvian to a large extent, and quite a few have married Latvian men
or women. This group can be regarded as the integrated group.

Somewhat schematically one can distinguish three other groups of Russians. A second
group is the immigrants. They are Russians who by free will have moved to Latvia with the
ambition of settling down there and making their careers in Latvia. The high standard of living
in Latvia (and other Baltic republics) enticed some of them. This group has a relatively positive
attitude to the new country. A third group, the transients are those Soviet citizens who more
or less happened to end up in Latvia. Some were ordered there to work in industry or take
up managerial jobs in plants, enterprises, or state bureaucracy. Many lived in other republics
before they came to Latvia. Because of the high degree of industrialisation and development,
especially in heavy industry, Latvia received a larger share of the transient Russian population
than most other republics in the Soviet Union. This group shows a low degree of integration
in Latvia, is unwilling to learn Latvian and to socialise with the Latvians. A fourth category,
the intruders is related to the Soviet Union as an occupying power and consists of military
personnel, functionaries and workers in strategic industry (of which Latvia has had a large
share), party people, and those who held positions in the KGB and other surveillance organisa
tions. In this category are many former military officers, who served all over the Soviet Union
and who, upon retirement, have chosen to live in Latvia. The Latvians aversion towards the
Russians mostly concerns this fourth category, which they see as representatives of the occupa
tion power. The view of the Latvians is that the Soviet Union annexed Latvia in 1940 and
occupied it until 1989.

In many respects one can compare the Soviet occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
with the Nazi occupation of Denmark and Norway. The German occupation of Scandinavian
countries was an affair of five years while the Soviet occupation of the Baltic republics lasted
almost a half a century, from 1940/44 until 1990. (In December 1989 a Soviet commission
acknowledged the existence of secret paragraphs in the German-Soviet “non-aggression pact”
of 1939 according to which the Germans accepted the Baltic countries as a Soviet sphere inter
est.) In Denmark and Norway, German occupants (military troops, administrators, forced
labour) had to leave immediately after the end of the war in 1945, while the effects of Soviet
occupation on culture, language and population will be long-lived.

After the Soviet take-over in the Baltic area around a million were deported, a quarter of a
million emigrated to Scandinavia, Germany and overseas countries during and after the war.
Soviet occupation resulted in Sovietisation and Russification of all aspects of life: schools,
culture, media, language, industry. Immigration from Russia and other Soviet republics was
a combined result of economic and population policy. Estonia and Latvia, and to a lesser
extent Lithuania, became advanced industrial areas. Russians, Russian culture, and the Russian
language were given preferential treatment. Now that the Baltic republics have regained their
independence, many counter-activities to the long Russian domination are of a cultural char
acter. Latvians give priority to the protection of language, culture and historical monuments.
Many Latvians fear that a liberal citizenship law in combination with demographic change
can make the Russian population the majority group and lead to Russification again, in other

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words a new take-over in “democratic disguise”. The understandable argument is that Latvian culture can only survive in Latvia, and overseas Latvians cannot fulfil this task.

The current regimes try to link up with traditions from the short period of independence. This also includes the minority policy. Estonians refer to the law of cultural autonomy from 1925, and Latvians also refer to traditions from the 1920s when the rights of minorities were protected.

Population groups in all three Baltic countries have been worried about the minority policy of the independent states. Will a new nationalism choke their aspirations? In Lithuania this concern led to the founding of a counter-front (in opposition to the Peoples Front), which gathered Poles and Russians, by far the largest minorities. Worries and complaints from these groups brought about a special law for national minorities (1989), which guarantees minority rights to schools, newspapers, organisations, religious congregations, etc. The ethnic composition of Lithuania reflects much of the country’s history. Russians (9% in 1989) and Poles (7%) are the largest minorities. Like in Estonia and Latvia, Russians are concentrated to the cities; they make up a fifth of Vilnius, and they dominate some industrial cities, like Snieckus, where Ignalina, the nuclear power station, is situated. Poles live in areas in the southern part of the country, which were Polish during the inter-war period. During much of its history the capital, Vilnius, was under Polish control. In the inter-war years Poles and Jews formed
the larger part of the population. The city was once called the Jerusalem of the North, with reference to its large Jewish group, tragically decimated during the last world war. The Jewish group is now quite small.

5. Poland

In Poland of today the population is homogeneous to a degree that it was in the early Middle Ages. Polish areas once encompassed large groups of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, and Jews. Also, Poland has not always been so heavily Catholic as it is today. Much of Poland’s shifting ethnic composition through the centuries is a result of fluctuations in the political situation. No country in the region has undergone such far-reaching and drastic changes of its borders. Poland has been victim of its neighbours’ avarice: Sweden, Prussia, Russia, Germany. Adam Mickiewicz’s epithet of Poland is expressive: The Christ of nations.

In the inter-war years ethnic minorities constituted a third of Poland’s population, but after the war this figure was some five percent. Similar figures also refer to religion. Ukrainians were 15 percent and were represented in parliament, but they were under strong pressure to assimilate. Generally the relations between the Polish majority and the minorities were bad. The Jews suffered most. In the inter-war years the large Jewish population met the opposite attitude: they were isolated. The Nazi extermination during the war almost annihilated the Jewish minority. Among communist leaders and functionaries that the Soviet Union sent to Poland at the end of the war there were many Jews. They were later made responsible for the unpopular “reforms” during the Stalinist era. The Jewish population again served as scapegoat and was accused for the bad conditions. Authorities supported anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist campaigns. Emigration in the 1950s and the late 1960s reduced the Jewish group to a trickle.

After World War II population transfers with Ukraine and Belarus also reduced the ethnically deviant population. According to official sources no Germans stayed in Poland after the war, which was false information. Germans who claimed German nationality were allowed to leave the country in the 1980s and 1990s. Estimations vary, but the number of Germans is now supposed to be between half a million and 800,000.

Since the mid 1980s the situation for minorities in Poland has changed, which is a result of democratisation and improved international relations, especially with Germany. Germany has signed bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries regarding the mutual protection of minorities; an agreement with Poland was signed in 1991. The general attitude of the population may not have changed drastically and the situation in Silesia, the southwestern part of Poland with a traditionally large German population, will be a test for the future. Ethnic minorities are now allowed to form associations and act publicly; nine
German representatives were elected to the Sejm, the Polish parliament, as a result of the elections in 1991.

The Kashubian case illustrates much of the minority conditions in Poland over the centuries. Kashubes live in what is often called the Kashubian Switzerland, an area that stretches west and northwest of Gdańsk. The Kashubes are one of the most distinctive cultural groups in Poland but, as usual, nobody can tell exactly how many they are. They have never constituted a nation, because they have never aimed at creating a political unit of their own. They are of Slavic descent, and the Kashubian language – some say it is only a Polish dialect – is Slavic. Over the centuries the Kashubes have maintained their cultural features, but the Germans and the Poles especially have influenced them from several angles. The Polish influence was strong during the late Middle Ages, when the upper social strata of Kashubians were polonised. Fishermen and peasants maintained the Kashubian culture. After the division of Poland, Kashubians were exposed to pressure from the Prussians, and German culture was strong in school and church.

The Kashubians were slow in adopting nationalism as a principle, but many Kashubians sympathised with the Polish struggle for independence in the 19th century. Kashubian ethnic identity is deeply rooted in Polish national identity. Typical are the words of the Kashubian poet Jan Hieronim Derdowski: “There is no Kashubia without Poland and no Poland without Kashubia”. During the inter-war years much of Kashubia was located within the Polish corridor. Poles were negative to the Kashubian culture and Kashubes were accused of having “German manners”. Later, during the German occupation, they were badly treated by the Germans; priests and teachers were executed, which led to resistance activities.

The Kashubian story shows how difficult it is for a distinct group to maintain its culture, and in the post-war period there were problems because Poland did not officially acknowledge cultural minorities. There are, however, new signals, and when the Pope visited Poland in 1987 he praised the Kashubes for their loyalty to the Kashubian language and culture.

6. The Jews

Jewish immigration has long been prevalent in the countries around the Baltic Sea, and the treatment of Jews can serve as a measurement of the general tolerance – or intolerance – towards foreigners. In European diasporas, the Jewish people have lived for centuries in relative isolation with social networks, culture and language that have made them distinct from the rest of the population. Jewish minorities have often filled a function, more or less imposed upon them, as merchants and moneylenders. As a distinct group in society, they have often been scapegoats during periods of depression or when things went wrong as, for example, during the Great Plague in the 14th century. During the era of the Crusades violent persecutions of Jews took place in Western Europe.
As early as the 11th century, Jewish settlement took place in Poland. During the 13th and 14th centuries, when the Polish kings encouraged immigration, Jewish refugees from Western Europe were given protection and, to a certain extent, liberal rights. During the 16th and in the beginning of the 17th centuries the Polish-Lithuanian Jewry formed a spiritual centre for Jews throughout the world. This was a golden age, with extensive Jewish self-governance and a high level of religious culture. The Jewish population upheld an important economic function on a medium level between the peasants and the gentry, for example as leaseholders; another important task for them was to handle tax enforcement. Development during the 17th century had a detrimental impact on the Jewry in Poland and Lithuania. It has been calculated that the number of Jews dropped from between 300,000 and 500,000 in the 1640s to some 120,000 in the 1670s. Massacres of the Jews in that period of time were the largest before those of the Holocaust during World War II. In purely demographic terms, the Polish Jewry recovered during the 18th century, but they were then reduced to poverty.

During the 16th and 17th centuries the Jewry in Germany was able to return to many of the cities from which they had been expelled in the Middle Ages. During the 18th century a certain group of so-called court Jews had crystallised. Many of them were wealthy merchants and close to the royal families, but the large masses of Jews were poor and suffered from discrimination. In Denmark immigration by Jews was not allowed until the 17th century and in Sweden until the 18th century. There was a hope that wealthy Jews would come, invest their capital and bring good international contacts. In this respect the arrival of Jews was a disappointment, since many of those who actually arrived were poor German Jews, and therefore they were given limited rights in their new countries.

The 19th century was, in general, an era of the so-called emancipation for the Jewry. Gradually their civil rights were extended in western European countries like Germany, Denmark and Sweden. Another side of the coin was that much of the solidarity within the group was lost in the process. Assimilation was beneficial to the Jew as an individual but detrimental to the Jewry as a people. There were religious as well as non-religious forces that served as a counterweight, above all Zionism, a movement that aimed at creating a Jewish national state. But in the shadow of growing nationalistic tendencies all over Europe in the 19th century, the pressure on the Jewish population increased. Anti-Semitism (the actual word was coined in 1873) had a severe impact on the Jews in Germany and Poland, and a new dimension was added when racist theory gained ground during the late 19th century. There were similar tendencies in Denmark and Sweden, but much less pronounced.

In the beginning of the twentieth century the Jewish population around the Baltic Sea was divided in two groups that differed considerably from economic, social and cultural points of view. While the Jewish elements in Germany, Denmark and Sweden formed a largely assimilated group of the population, those in Poland, the Baltic countries and Russia were much more bound to orthodox Jewish traditions and also lived very much separated from
the majority populations. In Eastern Europe, tightly knitted Yiddish enclaves existed both in the cities and in the countryside. Many villages were formed by Jewish culture, so-called shtetls. Much of the shtetl life in these places has been brilliantly portrayed in Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer's novels. The Polish-Lithuanian Jewry developed into a centre both for Orthodox Judaism and for secular Jewish movements such as Zionism and Bundism, the latter being a Socialist movement. Anti-Semitism was a constant threat, in Western Europe more so as a social movement, while anti-Jewish laws were in existence in Russia until the fall of the tsarist government in 1917.

While the emancipation of the Jews in Western Europe meant a liberation on individual grounds – without any official minority policy – the Jews in Poland and the Baltic countries were acknowledged as minorities in the newly independent republics. This was an opportunity for the Jewish population to be on equal terms with other groups in cultural and political life. In Lithuania, where the Jewish population amounted to more than 150,000 (7.5% of the population), there were in 1936 more than a hundred Hebrew and Yiddish elementary schools, 60 secondary schools etc. The conditions in Latvia were similar. In the anti-Semitic atmosphere of the 1930s the Polish Jews were victims of vicious pogroms, while the Baltic Jews suffered from antisemitic agitation. In Latvia, Jewish autonomy was abolished after the coup d'état in 1935. During the Holocaust, the largest genocide in world history, the Polish and Baltic Jewish cultures fell into pieces. Only a tiny fragment of the Jewish populations survived. (The fate of the Jews under Nazi rule is treated above in section I.)

The Åland Islands: a case of homogeneity
Harald Runblom

Let us turn to the middle of the Baltic Sea, where the Åland Islands are situated. Geographically these thousands of islands once linked the western and eastern parts of the Swedish kingdom, which until 1809 included both Sweden and Finland. As in many other parts of northern Europe the question has been raised: Where did the people of the Åland Islands originally come from? There are relics from stone age culture on the islands, but nobody can define their origin with certainty. It is clear both from archaeological data and place names that the Åland Islands were settled from the west during the Middle Ages. People moved in from Sweden proper.

Today the Åland Islands make up a province in Finland. In terms of language, the Ålanders belong to the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland. The old links to Swedish culture are important to the Ålanders, since these links provide historical arguments in their struggle to withhold and strengthen their special status in Finland. The Åland Islands have a large degree of autonomy.

Any visitor to the islands is struck by the ambition of the Ålanders to emphasise the uniqueness and special culture of the province. The Ålanders say neither they are Finns, nor Swedes, but Ålanders. Collectively the Ålanders are anxious to protect their culture, much of which is linked to the language. The interest in local folklore is strong, and the number of books published every year about the culture, historical monuments and traditions of the islands is impressive. Åland does not have strong academic traditions (the few who aspired to a learned career moved to Helsingfors/Helsinki, Stockholm, Åbo/Turku or Uppsala) but during the last century the area around Mariehamn has become a strong educational city for its size. Contacts between Ålanders scattered abroad
and those at home are also lively, which is especially important since Ålanders have moved in large numbers to mainland Finland, Sweden and North America.

One might argue that the Åland case is marginal or untypical for the Baltic Sea Region as a whole. The Ålanders form less than one half of one percent of Finland’s population. On the other hand, this case illustrates much of the majority-minority problem in the region as a whole and in modern Europe. Ålanders are aware of the risk that the Islands could easily become prey to Fennization. Since the number of Ålanders is only 25,000 (1994), they could easily be outnumbered if Finnish-speakers from the mainland chose to move in. During the last ten years the Ålanders have established contacts with other areas and population groups in Europe with similar situations, for example, the Faeroe Islanders in the Atlantic and the Frisians in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands.

Åland’s special status in Finland is a result of the Ålanders’ political actions and of negotiations between the local assembly and the Finnish government. The international turmoil in the wake of World War I both stimulated the Ålanders to change their status, and gradually gave room to manoeuvre. Even before Finland had become independent in 1917, the Ålanders organised a referendum. The result was a clear expression that the population wanted Åland to become part of Sweden. This turned into a delicate issue for the Finnish and Swedish governments: the Finns rejected the idea, the Swedes were reluctant and unwilling to act. The question of the Åland Islands was soon submitted to the League of Nations, which decided that the islands remain Finnish. The Ålanders were given a special status, and the present autonomy is the result of 70 years of negotiations between Mariehamn and Helsingfors/Helsinki. A new autonomy law came into force in 1993, widening the sphere of Ålanders’ right to legislate in municipal matters, social assistance and communication. The new law also mentions other spheres of legislation (for example, banking and alcohol policy) which may later on be transferred from the Finnish parliament to the regional parliament in Mariehamn.

Dilemmas of a small nation. One could talk about the dilemma of the Ålanders. The question marks are many. First, there are economic issues. Ålanders are aware of the fact that they need a strong economic base. A sound regional economic policy is important; otherwise the province will lose much of its bargaining capacity vis-à-vis Helsingfors/Helsinki. Cultural and economic issues are intertwined, but how do you preserve and develop a culture, originally based on fishing, small-scale shipping and agriculture? The Ålanders have been successful in finding economic niches, mainly in vegetable production, tourism, and shipping, but the problems in periods of swift structural change are evident; one suggestion is to make Mariehamn the casino capital of the North.

A second issue is how to protect culture, language, and tradition in surroundings where forces of internationalisation are strong. How do you protect a local culture within a nation-state (Finland) which is involved in far-reaching regional cooperation (with the other Nordic countries) and which since 1995 is a member of the European Union with all possible consequences of the free movement of capital and labour? The law of governing autonomy safeguards the Swedish language and serves as a barrier towards immersion in the Finnish language, for example, by means of rather strict and restricted rules for outsiders to settle and seek domicile. This is in conflict with a main principle of the European Union, namely the principle of the free movement of labour.

Very few Ålanders advocate today that the islands should be totally independent, and no voices recommend that the islands break away from Finland and seek association with Sweden. During the negotiations leading to Finland’s membership in the EU from 1995, the Ålanders were quite successful in holding its own both with Finland and the Union. The Islands have a special status in the EU, and the Ålanders were able to uphold the exclusive right for themselves to own real property.

The Åland Islands could be considered a border region between Finland and Sweden. As for politics, Finland’s sovereignty over the islands is undisputed, and the current status of the islands within the republic of Finland has been solved in a way that satisfies the Ålanders. It is the cultural aspect that reveals the border character. Since Ålanders are Swedish-speaking, there is an immersion of Swedish culture through newspapers, literature, radio, and television. The ether media are available through special agreements between Sweden and Finland within the framework of co-operation in the Nordic Council. Leading Swedish entertainers, singers and musicians have a market on the Åland Islands. The cultural reliance on Sweden is much stronger than in the rest of Swedish-speaking Finland, where the Swedish-speakers to a large extent live in bilingual milieus but with a dominant Finnish language. The “cultural dependence” of the Ålanders on Sweden is also connected with the island’s character as a tourist resort for Swedes, thus giving many Ålanders daily contact with the pulse of the neighbouring society in the west. (This is in strong contrast to sports, where there are hardly any links between the islands and Sweden: Ålanders share the sports world with mainland Finns, and in international athletic competitions there is no doubt where Ålanders have their sympathy.)
The Åland case brings a lot of issues of principle to the fore. How can relations between a minority and a majority population be solved? What are the international implications when a territory or a segment of a country’s population prefers special treatment which has implications for the security of the whole region? (The Åland Islands comprise a demilitarised zone, and Ålanders are exempt from military service in the Finnish army.) The Åland case may also provide a basis for reflection on the duties and obligations of the minority vis-à-vis the majority. Since the Ålanders want to protect themselves from the cultural and linguistic inundation of Finnish, one may wonder whether the majority population should have the right to settle down or to use their own language (Finnish) on the Islands, where the Swedish language almost has a monopoly situation.

7. The Saami of the North

The Saami (former usually Lapps) live in a wide area in northern Scandinavia. The Saami interpretation is that they were the earliest inhabitants in the area, and that the others (Finns, Norwegians, and Swedes) came later and therefore are to be seen as immigrants in Sápmi (the land of the Saami). Recent archaeological findings substantiate this view. Both the number of the Saami populations and speakers of Saami languages/dialects are hard to establish. There is no such thing as an unambiguous definition of a Saami. The Saami population amounts to approximately 40,000 people in four countries, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia. Many of those who consider themselves Saami have become urbanised. Hence, concentrations are to be found in cities like Oslo, Stockholm and Göteborg. After constant repression from the governments towards the Saami culture in Sweden and Norway, which culminated by the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the policy now is to protect Saami language, culture and societal life. This is partly due to demands from the Saami. Especially after World War II, the Saami have organised in order to promote their economic, political, and cultural interests. It would be wrong to say that there is a Saami autonomy, but both in Sweden and Norway the parliaments have accepted representative Saami councils. One reason for this is the need for authorised bodies for negotiations with the governments. Also, these councils will have influence in the sphere of language development, culture and schooling. The first elections to Saami councils were held in 1989 in Norway and 1993 in Sweden. Traditionally, the Saami have supported themselves mainly by fishing, hunting and reindeer herding; handicraft has also been important. Modern reindeer herding uses all available technology, e.g. helicopters to gather and drive herds. The majority populations’ request of traditional Saami areas for colonisation, mining, roads and tourism have led to conflicts between the Saami and the majority society. Balancing ecological needs is delicate. Among current conflicts are the tendency among the Saami in some areas to keep more reindeers than can be sustained by the environment, and river regulations for electricity that threaten vital pasture lands.
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Figure 122. Seal hunters, a detail of *Carta marina* by Olaus Magnus, published 1539 in Venedig. Ill.: Uppsala University Library