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The Role of the EU in Tempering and Producing Border Conflicts

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1. Introduction: The Macroregional Context of EU-Russian Relations

The development of EU-Russian relations since the early 1990s, while conventionally international in the sense of being a treaty-based partnership¹, has also been marked by a phenomenon of relative novelty: active formation of transboundary regional linkages. This international regionalisation is an obvious novelty for Russia, whose Soviet-era foreign policy was limited to exclusive and elitist state diplomacy, but is also approached as a landmark phenomenon within Europe, where it is frequently cast as a ‘postmodern’ challenge to sovereign statehood, modern territoriality, etc.² However accurate the ‘postmodern diagnosis’ may be, the process of regionalisation, with its expansion of the field of foreign policy to plural social actors and a multiplicity of local influences, does pose important questions about the relation of cross-border regional cooperation to the transformation of sovereign statehood.

It is notable that the inter-regional cooperation of Russia and the European Union is geographically limited to the North of Europe, an area arguably most advanced in deploying multiple regional institutional arrangements (Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Council of Baltic Sea States, etc) that permit to speak of the area as a regionalized network, in which the multiperspectival reconstruction of the political space displaces the strict divide between the domestic and the international, characteristic of the discourse of sovereign statehood.³ On the other side of the border, in the Russian Northwest, the situation in the 1990s was marked by a superficially similar, albeit less ordered and more spontaneous ‘autonomisation’ of the regions, including the enhanced regional autonomy in foreign relations, a process whose political justification made a frequent reference to European practices.⁴

This paper seeks to review the discussion, analysis and interpretation of the regional dimension of EU-Russian cooperation in both Russian and European academic and policy discourses with a particular focus on the role of the EU in the *transformation* and, potentially, the *emergence of border conflicts in the Northwestern region*. The following chapter addresses the case of the Finnish-Russian border and traces the process of the transformation of a latent border dispute into the project of regional integration in accordance with what we shall term the logic of *border deproblematization*, associated with the role of the EU. Chapter 3 addresses the converse process, i.e. the emergence of conflict issues in EU-Russian relations that, according to the reviewed arguments, are capable of bringing forth wider ‘identity’ conflicts. The paper concludes with two hypotheses for further empirical research of the impact of various EU principles and practices on conflict (trans)formation in the North of Europe.

2. The Karelian Question and the EU Logic of ‘Border Deproblematization’

2.1. *The Finnish-Russian Border and the ‘Karelian Question’: Historical Background and Description of a Latent Conflict Issue*

The ‘Karelian question’ in Finnish-Russian relations relates to the latent dispute regarding the restitution of territories ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union according to the Treaty of Paris in the aftermath of World War II. The areas in question are presently located in the two

¹ See Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. EU-Russian Federation. (WWW-document.)

² For the general discussion of postmodernity as the decentring of sovereign territoriality and the emergence of ‘multiperspectival’ politics see Ruggie 1998.

³ See Christiansen and Joenniemi 1999, Haukkala 2001, Joenniemi 1998, 2003.

⁴ See Aleksandrov 2001, Aleksandrov and Makarychev 2001, Makarychev 2000, Tkachenko 2002, Cronberg 2000, 2003.

subjects of the Russian Federation: Leningrad Oblast' (the Karelian Isthmus and the city of Vyborg) and the Republic of Karelia ('White Sea Karelia' and the city of Sortavala). The dispute regarding these areas is latent on the level of inter-state relations, Finland refraining from any border claims and Russia denying the existence of the issue as such. During the Soviet period, particularly in the 1960s, the possibility of the return of the ceded areas was raised unofficially in the discussions of Finnish and Soviet leaders to no avail. Moreover, in 1975 Finland signed the founding document of the CSCE, which denounced revisionist territorial claims in Europe, without any discussion of the implications of this decision for the 'Karelian question'. Nonetheless, since the demise of the Soviet Union, the question has been addressed in the discourse of the civil society in Finland, the most active social agent in the promotion of the issue being the Karelian Association, founded in 1940. The Association justifies the call for the restitution of the areas on the basis of the following claims: the historical division between 'Russian' and 'Western' (i.e. Swedish and subsequently Finnish) Karelias, which gives Finland a 'historic right' to the areas in question, the predominance of the 'Finnic' population in the areas prior to 1940, which gives grounds to the restitution on the basis of the principle of nationality, "the most essential thing in the Finnish way of thinking", and, finally, the injustice of the Soviet system, also condemned in present-day Russia, which allegedly requires the renunciation of its territorial acquisitions.⁵ The 1996 programmatic publication by the Association proposes a number of possible solutions to the Karelian issue: buying or leasing the territories, granting the Karelian areas autonomy within Finland of the kind enjoyed by the Åland Islands and, finally, establishing a "cooperative area across the borders", drawing on the experience of Euroregions, originally deployed along German borders with Austria, Holland and Poland.⁶ More generally, within the Finnish society the support for bringing up the question of restitution was never shared by the majority and throughout the 1990s the number of those in favour of negotiating the return of the areas has fallen.⁷ The position of the Finnish state has been that the issue exists as an object of discussion in civil society, but raising it officially may jeopardise the relations with Russia and is thus only possible insofar as the Russian authorities themselves are prepared to negotiate on the restitution.

Besides empirical analyses, the Finnish-Russian border question has also given rise to theoretical interpretations. Anssi Paasi's work *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness* (1996) is a highly sophisticated study of the constitution of Finnish identity in the discourses of territoriality, in which the constructions of the Finnish-Russian border have played a dominant role. The value of Paasi's study for further empirical research is twofold. Firstly, he presents an innovative theoretical framework of a cultural approach to boundaries that thematises the relation between identity and territoriality. Paasi's approach is a combination of two foci of analysis: *social spatialisation* (i.e. the more conventional study of the social construction of space in discursive practices) and *spatial socialisation*, a less widespread account of "the process through which individual actors and collectives are socialised as members of a specific territorially bounded entity and through which they more or less actively internalise collective territorial identities and shared traditions".⁸ Furthermore, this analysis unfolds at two distinct levels. Firstly, Paasi presents a study of the role of the representations of the Finnish-Russian boundary in a variety of discourses, from diplomatic statements to geography textbooks, for the historical constitution and transformation of Finnish national identity. Secondly, Paasi undertakes an analysis of the construction and

⁵ The Karelian Issue, p. 33.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 30-32. See also Joenniemi 1998, Forsberg 1995.

⁷ See Forsberg 1995, Joenniemi 1998, Paasi 1996, pp. 164-166.

⁸ Paasi 1996, pp. 7-9.

representation of boundaries in most immediate local everyday contexts, using the border commune of Värtsilä as a case study.⁹

Similarly, Vilho Harle discusses the case of the Finnish-Russian border in his theoretical study of the role of the enemy in the construction of identity. Harle argues that Russia has played the role of the constitutive other for the construction of Finnish identity as ‘European’, ‘Western’ or otherwise ‘non-Russian’ and that ‘Karelia’, in contrast, functioned as the valorised and mythologized object of the discourse of Finnish identity, a cultural source of Finnish identity that was, as it were, more Finnish than Finland itself.¹⁰

In fact, there is no agreement on what Karelia actually is. For present-day Finns, Karelia consists of the Karelian Isthmus and the western part of Karelia, which both belonged to Finland until 1944. Unlike Karelia itself, this so-called lost Karelia is a very strictly defined area, but it is not Karelia per se. In addition, the vast area of Viena’s Karelia and major parts of Olonets’ Karelia [...] should be taken into consideration. [...] What is Karelia, then? Karelia is a utopia, a myth of a nation. In fact, *no Karelia exists outside the nostalgic or mythical images of Karelia: Karelia is an imagined community par excellence.*¹¹

Harle emphasises the constructed character of Karelia as a simulacrum of identity, noting that this valorisation did not in fact prevent the historical deployment of self-righteous, patronising and outright racist discursive practices with regard to the actual Karelians.¹² As a source of the Finnish cultural tradition, Karelia’s *exteriority* to Finland in the aftermath of World War II actually served to strengthen and perpetuate its status of a simulacrum: “Karelia has become perfect because it does not exist anymore.”¹³ The role of Karelia as a simulacrum is also addressed by Paasi, particularly in the discussion of the post-Cold War ‘commercial Karelianism’ that exploits the romantic nostalgia for the images of the ‘lost Karelia’.¹⁴ With regard to the contemporary situation, Paasi argues that the 1990s have been a period of the “fulfilment and the disappearance of the utopia”¹⁵ of Karelia, as the enthusiasm about re-discovering the lost Karelia in the postcommunist period gave way to disappointment and disillusionment that confirmed ‘the loss of Karelia’ not merely in spatial but also in temporal terms, since little in the present ‘ceded Karelia’ corresponds to the Romantic simulacrum of the origin of Finnishness.

The studies of Paasi and Harle are crucial in highlighting the role of *political mythologies* in the construction of identity and provides a more dynamic interpretation of the discourses of restitution than the mere focus on ‘past injustices’. Their approach also contributes to the problematisation of the very identity of ‘Karelia’, opening up its manifold historical constructions within the Finnish political discourse and thus enabling an empirical analysis, unconstrained by essentialist assumptions, of the potential new ways of (re)constructing Karelia.

In contrast to Finland, the Russian Federation’s position on the Karelian issue has hardly changed since the Soviet period, although the reasoning behind it may have moved from the geostrategic considerations that led to the occupation in the first place towards the concern that raising the border issue with Finland opens up the Pandora’s box of border revisions, which weakens the already fragile new Russian state. Thus, while President Yeltsin officially

⁹ Ibid., chapters 8-10.

¹⁰ Harle 2000, chapter 7.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 175. Emphasis added.

¹² Ibid., pp. 172-176.

¹³ Ibid., p. 175.

¹⁴ Paasi 1996, pp. 127-132. Similar conclusions are reached by Jukka Oksa (1999), who discusses six historical images of ‘Karelia’ that come into play in various ways in the present construction of the identity of the area. Oksa argues for the gradual decline in the deployment of the nostalgic image of the ‘lost land of the evacuees’ in the Finnish discourse and the greater focus on the contemporary Karelia as a “borderland in transition”. This does not mean the discontinuation of older, emotive and more Romantic images, but rather their re-deployment in the new context of cross-border cooperation as symbolic markers or even marketing devices.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 281.

denounced the Soviet annexation in 1994, the federal policy line since 1992 has been that there are no border issues between Russia and Finland. Instead, the efforts at enhancing cross-border cooperation and making the border more transparent and less securitised have been prioritised.¹⁶ These efforts were initiated immediately in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union with the Neighborhood Agreement between the Russian Federation and Finland of January 1992.

The Putin presidency has not been marked by any changes in this position. In one of the interviews to the Finnish press President Putin suggested that even the discussion of the border issue endangers the relations between the two countries.¹⁷ However, during the 2001 state visit to Finland, Putin is claimed to have adopted a more ‘conciliatory’ line: “On the question of the possible return of the parts of Karelia ceded to the Soviet Union, Putin said that *changing borders is not the best way to resolve problems*. However, he added that those calling for the restoration of Karelia must not be ignored. Putin’s solutions to the Karelia question are *integration and cooperation*.”¹⁸ While this statement does not in principle contradict the policies of the Yeltsin presidency, it reorients the discussion away from the dichotomous and zero-sum logic of a border dispute towards integrative and cooperative arrangements and connects with the stance towards borders that arguably prevails within the EU, which Finland joined in 1995.¹⁹ In this manner the issue is shifted from high to the ‘low-political agenda’ and the Russian regions bordering on Finland, particularly the Republic of Karelia, acquire a voice in the new arrangements, as opposed to the interstate border dispute, in which the regions do not have any jurisdiction at all. According to Pertti Joenniemi (1998) this transformation of the border dispute within the EU logic of cooperation and integration carries important consequences for the borderland of Karelia: “The strategies applied tend to work around borders, thereby catering to a formation that transcends the previous territorially defined space along the border without leading to new territorial demarcations. [...] A regional system may emerge with close interaction among the participating entities creating integrated spaces that diminish the hindrances caused by distance. The spell of the territorial logic can be broken by the utilisation and pooling of different location-specific strengths, i.e. resources not previously available because of the divisive effects of borders.”²⁰ Although the conflict-tempering character of the ‘EU logic’ in Russian-Finnish relations is rarely theorised (the exceptions being the work of Joenniemi (1998) and Cronberg (2000, 2003)), a number of more descriptive studies demonstrate the impact of the EU on the scale and intensity of cross-border cooperation in the area²¹, supporting the thesis about the transformation of the Karelian question in the 1990s.

We propose to term this ‘EU-logic’ of reconstructing the Karelian question the strategy of ‘deproblematism’ of the border, in which no political decisions are taken with regard to the border per se (either restrictive or facilitative, e.g. the abolition of visa controls) but the function of borders is reconstructed in the new cooperative context. The second chapter addresses in detail how these arrangements are deployed on the regional level in the Republic of Karelia.

2.2. *The Republic of Karelia as a Regional Actor in International Relations: Regional Foreign Relations Policies and the Discourse on the Border Issue*

¹⁶ See Joenniemi 1998, pp. 196-197. See also Oksa 1999, Aleksandrov 2001.

¹⁷ Ahtiainen 2000.

¹⁸ <http://www.helsinki-hs.net/news.asp?id=20010904IE3>. Emphasis added.

¹⁹ This is the argument of Joenniemi 1998.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

²¹ See Oksa 1999, Forsberg 1995.

The Republic of Karelia, one of the 21 republics within the Russian Federation, issued a declaration of sovereignty in November 1991 and signed the Federation treaty with Moscow in 1992. Although in practice the sovereign status of the republic is widely deemed not to have amounted to a fully fledged independent internal or external policy,²² the non-antagonistic relation of the Republic to the federal centre, devoid of any trace of separatism and secessionism, has permitted it to advance its own policy agenda in a cooperative manner, in the absence of disturbances or controversies of the kind that accompanied other regions' drive for greater autonomy.²³ The moderate stance of the Republic's pursuit of autonomy was also illustrated by its reception of the federative reforms of the Putin presidency that sought to eliminate the para-constitutional excesses of the federalism of the 1990s. Having been one of the last regions of Russia to initiate negotiations on the power-sharing treaty with Moscow in 1998, the Republic was one of the first to denounce this practice in 2001 as overdetermined by contingent political considerations and contradicting the constitutional equality of the subjects of the federation.²⁴

One of the features of Karelian policy in the 1990s has been the active establishment of international links, primarily with the bordering Finland but also through membership in the multiple regional arrangements in the North of Europe (Barents Euro-Arctic Region, Council of Baltic Sea States).²⁵ Throughout the 1990s, the leadership of the Republic of Karelia prioritised the development of cross-border cooperation with Finland at the same time as it maintained the federal line on the impossibility of raising the issue of the border revision. Two important moments in the 1990s can be isolated with respect to this position. Firstly, in the early 1990s the republican leadership steadfastly opposed the proposals of territorial revision emanating from a minor radical organisation 'The Karelian Congress', which for a brief period went far beyond the restitution of the ceded Karelia and in fact proposed that the entire Republic of Karelia become an autonomous area within Finland.²⁶ Secondly, these extreme positions resurfaced briefly during the politico-financial crisis of 1998, whose aftermath was generally marked by the regions' active search for autonomous ways out, bypassing the politically fragmented federal centre. With regard to these proposals, Head of the Republic Sergei Katanandov issued a statement "denying any possibility and any form of the Republic's joining Finland" and also remarking on the danger of raising the question of restitution of the ceded Karelia: "Having noted that the calls for territorial revisions are largely resounded by a number of nationalistic representatives in Finland, the Head of the Republic has expressed his concern about the absence of an adequate reaction of the Finnish authorities. The revision of boundaries is a highly dangerous and unpredictable event, bringing forth a number of possible cataclysms. Therefore, the leadership of the Republic of Karelia is not merely against the revision of the border but *against the very return to the question as such.*"²⁷ In the same statement Katanandov also refused to consider the introduction of the Karelian language as the second state language in the Republic, a policy that was diametrically reversed by Katanandov himself in 2001, when the government

²² See Aleksandrov 2001, Joenniemi 1998. See Prozorov 2000 for the discussion of the conceptual matters involved in the discourse of the 'sovereignty' of the Republic.

²³ For the discussion of the various foreign relations strategies of Russian regions see e.g. Makarychev 2000, 2001, Tkachenko 2002, Aleksandrov and Makarychev 2002.

²⁴ See Katanandov 2002, Shlyamin 2000. In 2001 President Putin refused to extend the power-sharing treaties between the federation and the regions, a practice prevalent in 1996-1999 during the utmost weakness of the federal centre. The treaties, whose content was contingent on the political weight of the regional leader in question, manifestly contradicted the constitutional equality of the subjects of federation and made the distribution of power between the centre and the regions permanently (re)negotiable, resulting in the structurally built-in political instability. For the discussion of Putin's federal reforms see e.g. Nicholson 2001, Hyde 2001, Tompson 2002, Fedorov 2001, Bunin et al 2001, Smirnyagin 2001.

²⁵ See Shlyamin 2002b for the analysis of the Republic's vision of its foreign relations agenda in the framework of regional integration processes in Europe. For the detailed discussion of Karelia's foreign relations policy see also Aleksandrov 2001.

²⁶ See Aleksandrov 2001, pp. 22-26.

²⁷ Katanandov 1999. Translation by author.

unsuccessfully attempted to amend the Republican constitution to this effect.²⁸ The latest statements of the Head of the Republic concerning the border issue date back to the 2003 parliamentary election in Finland, commenting on which Katanandov pejoratively dismissed the proponents of restitution as, literally, ‘weirdoes’, whose discourse is of no consequence for Finnish-Karelian relations: “Friendship with our neighbours is our main priority. The fact is that among the Finns, just like among the Russians, there are some weirdoes with all sorts of radical ideas that should be treated accordingly.”²⁹ In the same interview Katanandov expressed his optimistic vision for the nearest future of the Finnish-Russian border: “In a few years the border will become more transparent, people will be able to cross it more freely and the cooperation of Karelia with our neighbours will result in the growth of trade.”³⁰

In the 2003 summary article on Karelian foreign relations in the nationwide *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Katanandov described the historical background and the present state of Karelian-Finnish relations in the following manner.

The very geographical location of Karelia has determined the development of trade relations with Finland, which have both *withered away and were revived in various historical periods. The tense atmosphere that existed for many centuries in the border areas of Finland and Russia that was rooted in wars and border revisions was not conducive to the enhancement and perfection of transborder contacts.* In the 20th century, for over 70 years the Russian-Finnish border was practically closed, though contacts between Karelia and Finland did persist. [...] With the end of the Cold War external borders were opened and Russian-Finnish contacts became more active. This was reflected in the both *quantitative and qualitative growth of cooperation*, [...] new forms of cooperation having appeared. The Government of the Republic of Karelia considers cross-border cooperation not as an end in itself but as an *important instrument in solving the socioeconomic problems of border territories and the development of mutual understanding between our countries on the subregional level.*³¹

The same vision has been propounded by Valery Shlyamin, the Minister of Foreign Relations of the Republic in 1992-2002.³² According to Shlyamin, the relations between Karelia and Finland are fully deserving of the name ‘strategic partnership’, a multi-level strategy of cooperation, in which the Republican authorities are merely one of many actors on par with economic, social, cultural and educational agents. In the 2000 interview, Shlyamin both advanced a strategy for advancing and deepening the project of cross-border cooperation, including the revision of the legal status of the Russian border region to allow for greater facilitation of trade and tourism, and sharply criticised the “advocates of the revision of good-neighbourly relations between our countries”.³³ Shlyamin has also welcomed the EU initiative of Northern Dimension as advantageous for Karelia, yet was critical of the lack of substance to this policy and the passive role, allegedly inscribed for Russia in that framework.³⁴ Shlyamin’s monograph *Russia in the Northern Dimension* (2002b) addresses the wider implications of the EU initiative for Russia and offers a long term vision of integrating

²⁸ For the statement explaining this policy shift see Katanandov 2001b.

²⁹ Katanandov cited in Farutin 2003a. Translation by author.

³⁰ Ibid. Translation by author.

³¹ Katanandov 2003e. Emphasis added. Translation by author.

³² In the aftermath of the general election of 2002, the structure of the Republican government was overhauled, with the number of ministries drastically reduced. One of the ‘victims’ of this reorganisation was the Ministry of Foreign Relations, restructured as a Department within the Ministry of Economic Development and its representative functions transferred to the Administration of the Head of the Republic. Shlyamin served briefly as the Minister of Economic Development in 2002 before being promoted as Russia’s Trade Representative in Finland. The Ministry is presently headed by Anatoly Grishenkov, formerly the Head of the regional Revenue Inspection Service. Katanandov has given the following reasons for the restructuration: “The Ministry has done a lot for the development of cooperation with the regions of Northern European countries, interaction with international organisations and EU programmes. However, it has not fulfilled a great number of tasks. These primarily relate to the activation of trade and economic cooperation with foreign partners and the attraction of foreign investment to Karelia.” (Katanandov 2003a)

³³ Shlyamin 2000b. Translation by author.

³⁴ See Shlyamin 2000b, 2002b, Ukkone 2001a.

Russian and European regional developmental projects.³⁵ These positions have been elaborated in detail in two key policy documents of the Ministry: Main Directions of the Activities of the Government of the Republic of Karelia in the Development of International Cooperation in 1999-2002 and the Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation of the Republic of Karelia in 2001-2006.

Thus, the position of the Republican government on the border issue has been twofold. On the one hand, the federal ‘anti-revisionist’ policy line has been strongly maintained and annoyance has been expressed with the advocates of restitution in Finland. On the other hand, the Republic has prioritised and made active efforts to develop cooperative relations with Finland, both bilaterally and (increasingly) in the framework of the EU programmes of Tacis and Interreg and in the wider network of transnational regional arrangements such as BEAR and CBSS.³⁶ Since the early 1990s the Republic has been one of the primary beneficiaries of Tacis funding of all the Russian regions and some of the larger Tacis projects in Karelia, e.g. the restructuring of the health care and social protection sector, have been cast as exemplary for other Russian regions and their results worthy of nationwide dissemination.³⁷ The most ambitious project of cross-border cooperation has been the formation of Euregio Karelia (discussed in more detail in the next chapter), modelled on the experience of Euroregions within the EU and between EU members and future member states. The hopes and possibilities of the institutionalisation of Finnish-Russian cooperation according to this model have been discussed in the literature during the 1990s.³⁸ Finally, the republic gained international acclaim with its victory in the first competition of European Regions, becoming (along with Balearic Islands) ‘the European Region of the Year 2003’.³⁹ These active efforts in foreign relations substantialise the Republic’s deployment of the metaphor of a ‘window onto Europe’, originally conceived and usually applied to St. Petersburg. Two interviews of Katanandov in the federal press in 2003 (‘Karelian Window onto Europe’, ‘Russian Window onto Northern Europe’)⁴⁰ actively advanced this image and presented Karelia’s policies as exemplary for other border regions of Russia. Similarly, in the 2002 interview to the local weekly *Karelia* Katanandov gave a highly positive assessment of the Republic’s international profile and optimistically concluded: “I have become convinced that we are of interest to the world.”⁴¹ Moreover, the Republic has insisted on the pragmatic utility and political legitimacy of the autonomous activities of Russian regions in foreign relations: “The activation of foreign relations of the subjects of the Russian Federation appears to me to be a *natural consequence of the decision in favour of an open society* that was made by our country in the beginning of the 1990s.”⁴²

One might venture that the ‘anti-revisionist’ and ‘integrationist’ stances are in fact related insofar as the ‘strategy of cooperation’ is hampered by any reconstruction of the border area as a ‘zone of conflict’, whether in the Finnish discourse of restitution or in the Russian ‘counter-discourse’ of entrenchment that gives federal-level publicity to the Republic only negatively as the ‘bastion’ of Russian statehood in the Northwest. Thus, the Republican government, directly involved in concrete cooperation projects with Finland, is highly wary of recasting the border question as a divisive issue in the Russian political discourse and hence eager to dismiss or silence not merely the claims for restitution but *all kinds* of conflictual discourses as such, even those sympathetic to the Russian stance on the issue. In short, the

³⁵ See Shlyamin 2002b.

³⁶ See Ukkone 2001a, 2001b.

³⁷ Katanandov 2003a, 2003d. The EU Tacis project of health care and social protection reform is analysed in detail in Prozorov 2003.

³⁸ See Joenniemi 1998, pp. 199-200, Oksa 1999, Forsberg 1995.

³⁹ Republic of Karelia, European Region of the Year 2003. (WWW-document.) See Katanandov 2003c.

⁴⁰ Katanandov 2003c, 2003d. See also Shlyamin 2000a.

⁴¹ Katanandov 2002a. Translation by author.

⁴² Katanandov 2003c. Emphasis added. Translation by author. See also Katanandov 2003d.

stance of the Republic of Karelia is opposed to any kind of problematisation of the border question and is thus in accordance with the logic of deproblematisation that we have associated with the EU cooperative framework. This position is well illustrated by the official response to the controversy that was unleashed in the Karelian media by a number of provocative interviews of the Finnish sociologist Johan Bäckmann that sought to highlight the continuous existence of revisionist and more generally ‘Russophobic’ sentiment in Finland and, most critically, the sympathies towards that sentiment within the Finnish foreign policy establishment.

Johan Bäckmann’s study of the image of Russia and the Russians in Finland sharply disturbed the prevailing image of Finnish-Russian relations as an “epitome of good-neighbourliness”,⁴³ bringing up the existence of chauvinist and outright racist discourses about Russians that, furthermore, were allegedly enunciated by individuals belonging to the foreign policy circles in Finland. Bäckmann posited the existence of a ‘double-talk culture’ in Finland, whereby the official statements of denial of any claims to Russia’s territory are supplemented and subverted by a discourse that denies any right of “lazy and dishonest [Russians], the thieves and prostitutes to live in the former Finnish territories of Karelia [that] must be immediately returned to Finland and cleansed of this population”.⁴⁴ This discourse was, according to the Finnish scholar, accompanied by the increasing revisionism with regard to the history of Finland’s participation in World War II, i.e. the so-called Continuation War, during which the Finnish forces not merely re-occupied the Karelian areas lost in the Winter War but advanced further, capturing the ‘Eastern’ or ‘Russian’ Karelia, including its capital Petrozavodsk. Bäckmann alleged that the revisionist sentiment is stimulated by a sharply pessimistic account of Russia’s future, predicting its dissolution into dozens of new states, which opens a window of opportunity for restitution.

Bäckmann’s claims, that point to the continuing discursive articulation of Russia as Finland’s Other, have stimulated a lively debate in the Karelian media⁴⁵, questioning the almost axiomatically unproblematic state of Karelian-Finnish relations. Problems of Russians and Karelians living and working in Finland, the problems involved in increasingly frequent Finnish-Russian intermarriages as well the reception of Russian visitors in Finland were all addressed, putting the question mark after the semi-official concept of ‘good neighbours’.⁴⁶ Noticeably, it was ‘society’ (concretely, the independent press and research institutions (e.g. the Karelian Centre for Political and Social Research) rather than the ‘government’ that initiated this discourse, much to the chagrin of the latter, whose intervention once more drew the distinction between ‘official’ Finnish discourses and the ‘extremist’ voices which were simply not to be listened to.⁴⁷ The government thus sought to efface both the existence of a border conflict issue *and* its possible evolution into a wider ‘identity’ conflict that would result from the problematisation of Finnish attitudes to Russia and Russians. The dangers of the discussion initiated by Bäckmann (praised in the local media for daring to antagonise both Finnish and Russian establishments in his defence of a country that is, furthermore, not his own) of course consisted in elevating a ‘spectral’ or latent border issue, which never was an

⁴³ Somov 2002b.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Translation by author. Bäckmann’s particular target was the association Pro Karelia (www.prokarelia.net), whose demands concern not merely the territorial restitution, but also the relocation of the present non-Finnish population from the areas in question as incapable of internalising “Finnish Lutheran culture, relation to work and responsibility”.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Andreeva 2002, Somov 2002a, 2002c.

⁴⁶ The article by Olga Andreeva (2002) featured a question mark after the title ‘Good Neighbours’ and lamented the lack of accurate knowledge about the Finnish perception of Russia and the will ‘not to notice’ the troubling events on the other side of the border.

⁴⁷ Andrei Somov (2002b) quotes the Republic’s officials as being “fully satisfied with the present state of relations with Finland. The attempts to mix the extremist statements of Finnish nationalists with the official point of view of the Finnish President and Government appear, at the very least, incorrect”. Of course, what was at issue in the Karelian press discussion was not the ‘misidentification’ of two positions but the problematisation of precisely the minoritarian discourse of ‘Finnish nationalists’ – something the government has been highly wary of.

obstacle to regional cooperation, into a more manifest ‘identity conflict’ on the societal level, in which ethical questions of recognition and cultural construction of images assume priority to the pragmatic dimension of cooperation. One possible hypothesis that might be inferred from this incident is that *it is in fact ‘social’ actors rather than the government that may be likely to initiate problematising and confrontational discourses on the level of ‘identity’, which the government may be willing to contain as potentially hazardous to existing cooperation programmes.* The same distinction is arguably at work in the Finnish discourse since social agents, such as the Karelian Association, are capable of a more assertive and polemical discourse on restitution than the state authorities, whose deployment of such discourse risks jeopardising the actually existing cooperation. Social encounters, unfolding in the absence of the security of ordered discursive practices and rituals of diplomacy, may well be more *prone* to openly stating and even hyperbolising differences. On the other hand, the regional government, for whom the “strategy of cooperation” with Finland has become an essential feature of its own political identity, focuses on the minimisation of damage from media controversies to the already operating cooperative arrangements. The enthusiasm for the conflict-tempering role of social actors as opposed to the more conflict-prone state actors must therefore be qualified, particularly as we approach borders as cultural constructs, tied up with the construction of the representations of ‘self’ and ‘other’.

2.3. Euregio Karelia as an Instance of Border Deproblematisation: The EU’s Role in Displacing the Border Issue

Let us now briefly address the discussion of the way in which the EU logic of border deproblematisation is deployed in concrete arrangements. Since Finland’s entry into the EU in 1995, EU frameworks of cross border cooperation (Interreg and Tacis, including the Tacis CBC subprogramme) have to a great extent supplanted bilateral programmes with Finland as the primary format of cooperation. In 1998 the Karelian government launched the proposal of the establishment of Euregio Karelia as an ‘umbrella project’ utilising the opportunities of the ‘peripheral border area’ status. Officially inaugurated in 2000, Euregio Karelia comprises the Republic of Karelia and the Finnish provinces of North Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and North Karelia. “The goal of the project is the stimulation of transboundary subregional cooperation in various spheres, the priority areas being the economy, the environment, tourism and culture.”⁴⁸ For the Republic of Karelia, the Euregio exemplifies a qualitative leap forward in Finnish-Karelian relations that substantialises the EU initiative of the Northern Dimension and permits more effective and efficient coordination of cooperative arrangements, particularly the combination of Tacis and Interreg funding, which has been a major irritant in the Republic’s dealings with the EU.⁴⁹ The Government also views the Euregio as a model of new forms of cooperation that could be replicated by other Russian regions in the North of Europe (Leningrad, Murmansk and Pskov oblasts). Katanandov’s speech at the 4th meeting of the Management Committee of the Euregio proclaims that in the two years of its operation the Euregio project has become a genuine “pilot project for the EU and Russia to design the mechanism of cooperation at the regional level”.⁵⁰

The basic principle of the project is the formation of what the Karelian Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation refers to as “the *culture of transparent borders*”, making cross-border contacts in trade, science, culture and tourism a ‘natural activity in the everyday life’ of the border communities.⁵¹ In December 2000 a joint cross-border development programme

⁴⁸ Programme of Cross Border Cooperation of the Republic of Karelia, 1.4. Translation by author.

⁴⁹ Katanandov 2000, 2003d, 2003e. See also Main Topics of Bulletin no. 1 of the Tacis project ‘Euregio Karelia as a Tool of Civil Society’.

⁵⁰ Katanandov 2001a. See also Shlyamin 2000a, 2002a, 2002c. Translation by author.

⁵¹ Programme of Cross Border Cooperation of the Republic of Karelia, 3.2.

was approved of by the Management Committee of the Euregio, entitled ‘Our Common Border’ and articulating a joint approach of the four territories of the region to the management of cross-border cooperation. The following nine projects have been accepted as the priorities of the Euregio for the period of 2002-2006.

1. Development of the cross-border point Kortosalmi-Suopera in accordance with standards required to international cross-border points
2. Sortavala sewage treatment works rehabilitation
3. Special industrial complex in Kostamuksha (PIK)
4. Joensuu and Petrozavodsk as centres of scientific co-operation
5. Support to Finnish language and Karelian culture through National theatre of the Republic of Karelia
6. Development of health care and social services in Karelia under changing conditions
7. Construction of heating power stations utilising local fuel resources in Kalevala and Lahdenpohja
8. Social and medical rehabilitation of drug addicts and prophylactics of dependence on psychedelic substances in Karelia
9. Development of border areas of Belomorskaya Karelia.⁵²

Besides, the development of civil and information society was officially stated as a grand ‘umbrella objective’ of the Euregio. During 2000-2001 a Tacis project of information support to the Euregio was undertaken in the Republic, casting the Euregio as a ‘tool of civil society’⁵³. The most recent development is the official approval by the EU of the e-Karelia (Electronic Karelia) programme, with the funding exceeding € 2000000, that seeks to contribute to the development of ‘information society’ in the Region.

The reception of the initiative among local analysts has been rather optimistic, with high expectations regarding the formation of a new macro-entity of ‘Karelia’ transcending the division between Russian and Finnish Karelias. According to Alexei Ukkone (2001) the formation of the Euregio carries profound implications for the transformation of the very entity of Karelia from an area divided by borders into a new, transboundary regional body. “This very model of cross border cooperation, if it continues to develop, creates a *wholly new situation in the region*. There is an invisible process of the *erosion of the interstate border*. [...] As we are claiming the unity of a regional body, the obstacles to our interaction must logically weaken, which requires the transformation of the Russian-Finnish border climate with regards to the population of the new interstate entity of Karelia.”⁵⁴ This optimistic vision demonstrates at least the potential role of the Euregio project in displacing the divisive discourse of the border dispute and launching the construction of a new regional identity that transcends state borders. The “socioeconomic and cultural integration of the concrete [border] territories” is expected to have implications for Russian-Finnish relations on the interstate level as well, although Ukkone is wary of the potential negative nationwide reception of the Euregio as conducive to regional separatism.⁵⁵

Tarja Cronberg, who played a key role in the establishment of Euregio Karelia as the Executive Director of the Regional Council of North Karelia, has both provided a first-hand empirical account of the formation and functioning of this model of cooperation in Karelia and addressed the implications of the growth of Euroregions theoretically, arguing for the appearance of new spaces for action that pose a “postmodern challenge to the nation-state”,⁵⁶

⁵² Main Topics of Bulletin no. 1 of the Tacis project ‘Euregio Karelia as a Tool of Civil Society’.

⁵³ For the presentation of the project see Main Topics of Bulletin no. 1 of the Tacis project ‘Euregio Karelia as a Tool of Civil Society’.

⁵⁴ Ukkone 2001. Emphasis added. Translation by author. See also Feklichev 2003.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Cronberg 2000, 2003. Such a theoretical approach is also articulated in Joenniemi 1998, Christiansen and Joenniemi 1999, Käkönen 1999, Paasi 1999. In the Russian discourse on regionalisation a similar understanding has been advanced by Makarychev (2000, 2001).

as divisive borders turn into *integrated borderlands*. Cronberg explicitly notes that the background for the development of cooperation across the Finnish-Russian border has been made problematic by the “scars of the war” and the continued existence of the “Karelia back” discourse.⁵⁷ Similarly, Minister Shlyamin has remarked that the model of the Euroregion that the Karelian government analysed in greatest detail and eventually decided to emulate is the Egrenzis Euroregion on the border of Germany and the Czech Republic, precisely because it exemplifies the cooperation across the border that used to ‘divide different sociopolitical and economic systems and two states with a history of war between them’.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the degree of cooperation and mutual trust between Finland and Russia, reached during the 1990s, is deemed to be impressive and explicitly linked with Finland’s entry to the EU. The success is deemed by Cronberg to be all the more profound, since the border around which integration is unfolding is of one of the lines, along which a Huntingtonian ‘clash of civilisations’ has been envisioned. Cronberg deploys the concept of *para-diplomacy* to theorise the regional ‘foreign policies’ of the institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation and describes this process as a “twofold mobilisation process” in which ‘horizontal’ interaction of regional and local actors on both sides of the border must, in order to gain legitimacy, be supplemented by ‘vertical’ interactions of the two parties with state authorities in both countries. Additionally, ‘region-builders’ benefit considerably from the support from supra-national actors, such as the EU and the Association of European Border Regions.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Cronberg also describes the way the *institutional structure* of the European Commission itself poses problems for the model such as the Euregio: since regional development and external relations are handled by different directorates-general of the Commission, the coordination of these activities (which is the very substance of the Euregio) is frequently made problematic by bureaucratic hurdles.

The EU may thus be said to have been successful in displacing the Finnish-Russian border dispute issue onto the new conceptual site of the EU's Northern Dimension and into the web of EU cooperation programmes (Takis and Interreg). The Euregio Karelia in particular exemplifies the region-building logic that sidelines the border issue (whose resolution on the official level is in any case unrealistic) by offering a concrete plateau for transboundary regional integration. Moreover, it is within the EU logic that the border question, which in the statist logic belongs squarely to the competence of national authorities, becomes reinscribed within the *low-political* framework of cross-border cooperation.⁶⁰ This change is evident even in the discourse of the Karelian Association in Finland, whose discourse in the 1990s shifted from a clear strategy of restitution of the ceded territories towards accepting a multiplicity of possible arrangements, including regional-level cooperation within the EU.⁶¹ The impact of the EU thus does not consist merely in moderating the Finnish stance on the question (which was never assertive in the first place) but in making possible the arrangements “that reach beyond the dichotomic perception of Karelia belonging either to Finland or to Russia”.⁶² From the historical perspective, this change, which enabled the Republic of Karelia to play a more active role in border cooperation, has fundamental implications for *Karelian identity*. As historically Karelia has largely been divided into ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ parts between Sweden and Russia, and subsequently Russia and Finland⁶³, it has always lacked the unitary identity of its own, resulting in frequent confusion regarding the very entity implied in the ‘Karelian question’ (Is it Russian or Eastern Karelia, coterminous with today’s Republic; the ceded Finnish territories, the entire area of Karelia, etc.?) While the discourse of restitution

⁵⁷ Cronberg 2003.

⁵⁸ Shlyamin 2000a. Translation by author.

⁵⁹ Cronberg 2003.

⁶⁰ See Joenniemi 1998.

⁶¹ See The Karelian Issue, pp. 31, 36-37, 50.

⁶² Joenniemi 1998, p. 184.

⁶³ See Forsberg 1995, Paasi 1996, Joenniemi 1998, Harle 2000 (Chapter 7).

perpetuates that division, installing a clear distinction between the valorised ceded Karelia and ‘the other’, largely irrelevant Russian Karelia⁶⁴, the discourse of border deproblematisation enhances the potential for identity construction in the macro-region of Karelia, delineated by the cross-border scope of the Euregio.

One of the signs of the transformative effects of this logic for the actual Finnish-Russian border has been the reduction in 2003 of a number of Russian border troops and the dismantlement of the engineering constructions that called to mind the metaphor of the iron curtain. The Finnish-Russian border has also been repeatedly described by President Putin and Russian military officials as unproblematic and exemplary in contrast to the poorly managed southern borders of the country. According to Andrei Farutin, the experiment on the optimisation of the structure of border guard service in the area is the most significant relaxation of the border regime in the 85 years of the existence of the Finnish-Russian border.⁶⁵ “Primarily it is to be explained by the increasingly friendly relations with our neighbour, the growing trade and economic cooperation with [Finland] and the European Union. Recognising the new political realities, the border troops are now given tasks to facilitate economic contacts, prevent economic crimes and reduce the costs of their own operations.”⁶⁶

According to Cronberg (2000, 2003), the formation of the Euregio is an instance of the *desecuritisation* of the Finnish-Russian border, in which the high-political security agenda is sidelined by regional and local cooperation on issues that may be united under the rubric of ‘soft security’. “Security, seen in terms of threats to a national survival, is not part of cross-border activities. Trust building across the border, through cooperation and interaction in small projects on the local level, builds, however, *microstructures of security* for the future. *Healing the scars of wars* is an important aspect of the Euregio formation and an activity, which naturally takes place in a cross-border context.”⁶⁷ This process therefore confirms Joenniemi’s (1998) hypothesis on the transformative effect of the EU logic of cooperation and integration on the ‘Karelian question’. At the same time, Cronberg’s empirical research into the practical dynamics of the Euregio process opens up the question of whether the EU itself is not merely a conflict-tempering actor in relation to Russia and the North of Europe but also a conflict-producing one. It is to this question that we turn in the following chapter.

3. The EU as a Conflict-Producing Agent: Problematics of Exclusion and Strategic Intersubjectivity

While there appears to be an agreement in the literature that the EU’s general logic in relations with Russia and its specific regional initiatives with regard to Russia have helped to prevent the manifestation of the latent Finnish-Russian border issue, there has recently also been an upsurge in the Russian discourse on the negative effects of the EU policies (and specifically, the enlargement process) that may give rise to new conflicts.⁶⁸ These ‘potential conflicts’ may be divided into two categories: specific episodes and issues and more general problematics that in the typology utilised in the EUBORDERCONF framework correspond to ‘identity conflicts’.⁶⁹ Rather than being distinct, let us suggest that these categories are in fact interdependent, the specific issues potentially triggering wider conflicts on the level of identity, and the identity conflicts in turn contextualising and hence delimiting the

⁶⁴ The Karelian Issue, p. 5, 11, 33.

⁶⁵ See Farutin 2003b.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Translation by author.

⁶⁷ Cronberg 2003. Emphasis added.

⁶⁸ See e.g. Trenin 2000a, 2000b, Bordachev 2001, 2003, Leshukov 2000, Moshes 2003, Tkachenko 2000, Khudolei 2003, Baunov 2003, Potemkina 2003.

⁶⁹ See Stetter, Diez and Albert 2003.

possibilities of addressing specific conflict issues. Two of such ‘conflict dyads’ may be isolated in the literature.

3.1. The Schengen Curtain: The Negative Implications of EU Enlargement

The Russian concerns with regard to the EU enlargement, voiced as early as 1999 but increasingly highlighted in the second half of Putin’s presidential term⁷⁰, primarily relate to the stringency of the Schengen border-and-visa regime, which complicates the travel of Russian citizens to EU countries and hampers the existing forms of cross-border cooperation with future member-states. Indeed, the extension of the Schengen regime in the enlarged EU entails the imposition of a visa regime that far exceeds in its strictness the bilateral visa practices that existed between Russia and the prospective and current (e.g. Finland) EU members.⁷¹ The problem is particularly critical with regard to Kaliningrad Oblast’ that emerges as an enclave within the enlarged EU, which not merely complicates its socioeconomic relations with the rest of Russia, but, more importantly in our context, serves to jeopardise the cross-border cooperation arrangements between the oblast’ and its neighbours in Poland and Lithuania.⁷² *Pace* the EU policy discourse with its valorisation of inclusion, integration and regional cooperation, the unequivocal extension of the Schengen regime both draws a clear line of exclusion of Russia from the ‘area of freedom, security and justice’ and, what is less often articulated, actually destroys the ad hoc cooperative arrangements, from shuttle-trading to cultural exchanges, that already *exist* and were made possible by the relaxed border control regimes agreed on bilaterally by Russia with the future member states during the 1990s.

The Russian responses to these problems include the proposals on the relaxation or even the abolition of the visa and passport control regime, which in the Putin presidency has become the primary object of advocacy in the Russian discourse on the relations with Europe. While such solutions require addressing a number of complex technical issues and resolving legal problems (most importantly, the signing of the readmission treaty between Russia and the EU), they also depend on more political decisions with regard to Russia’s exclusion/inclusion from the European space.⁷³ Thus, while the ‘Schengen problem’ in itself is capable, particularly with regard to Kaliningrad, of generating an issue conflict with regard to transit through the EU territory, it also points to the possibility of a wider conflictual discourse centred on the problematic of exclusion, the reception of Russia and the Russians as European ‘Others’ whose access to the zone of freedom, security and justice must be contained and controlled, and hence ultimately raises the question of identity/difference. In contrast to specific issues such as the Kaliningrad transit, which has largely been contained within a narrow discursive arena, the problematic of exclusion, which the former discourse exemplifies, is in principle able to unfold within a wider discursive space, since it ultimately touches upon the very question of Russian identity in relation to Europe. “The discussion about Russia’s inclusion in Europe is as much a question of identification, of value choice as it is a matter of deciding on the vector of economic development and political strategy.”⁷⁴

This general discourse, whose historical unfolding is analysed by Iver Neumann (1996), has resurfaced during the 1990s and acquires particular importance with the enlargement process,

⁷⁰ See Potemkina 2003 for the detailed analysis that counters the prevailing understanding that Russia has, as it were, ‘slept through’ the process of enlargement and began voicing its concerns far too late for them to be addressed properly.

⁷¹ See Khudolei 2003.

⁷² See Fairlie 2001 for the discussion of the border and visa regime around Kaliningrad and Potemkina 2003 for the analysis of the policy process leading to the temporary EU-Russian compromise regarding the transit to Kaliningrad through the territory of Lithuania. The problematic of Kaliningrad, particularly the issues specific to the oblast’, is beyond the scope of the present review.

⁷³ See Bordachev 2003, Potemkina 2003, Trenin 2000a.

⁷⁴ Leshukov 2000, p. 26. Translation by author.

as Russia looks set to remain one of the few countries, whose 'Europeanness' (whether cultural or geographic) does not find an institutional embodiment in the EU membership. "In the process of the enlargement of the EU there is formed a new pan-European community, of which Russia is not a part. The Russian Federation risks remaining the only state that is European in the geographical sense but de facto outside Europe."⁷⁵ The work of Dmitry Trenin (2000a, 2000b) is particularly sensitive to the possibility of marginalisation and peripheralisation of Russia as a result of EU enlargement and highly critical of the Russian political establishment for not properly responding to the 'challenge of Europe'.⁷⁶ Other authors (e.g. Igor Leshukov, Stanislav Tkachenko, Timofei Bordachev, Konstantin Khudolei) point to the paradox whereby Russian authorities have focused excessive criticism on the enlargement of NATO, which may pose direct threats to Russia only in barely conceivable scenarios, while being blissfully oblivious or strangely benign to the EU enlargement, which carries forth a number of immediate drawbacks and challenges.⁷⁷ In this kind of discourse, the expansion of the Schengen regime is displaced from its specific sector and becomes an *index of the problem* on the more general level. In a pessimistic assessment of the present state of EU-Russian relations, Trenin remarks: "The paradox consists in the fact that despite the mutual openness and the veritable explosion of contacts, the degree of the understanding of partner since the Cold War has scarcely increased. This is equally true for both Russia in relation to the rest of Europe and for Europe in relation to Russia."⁷⁸

Moreover, the problem of the 'Schengen curtain', widely discussed in the Russian media, concerns large numbers of the population and may well be considered a priority issue in EU-Russian relations not merely from the perspective of the government, but also from the 'social' perspective. While such important aspects of EU-Russian relations as the 'Energy Dialogue' or the creation of the Common Economic Space remain too abstract to attract much popular or media interest, the increasingly stringent visa regime has created considerable media controversies that also succeeded in raising the profile of this issue in the more scholarly Russian discourse on the relations with the EU: "This aspect of relations between Russia and the EU can by no means be ignored. Many citizens of Russia, particularly young people, wish to visit Europe and the clash with the visa regime, complicated by bureaucratic procedures, leaves them with a negative impression of it."⁷⁹ Ultimately, the incongruence between the official proclamations of the deepening and widening 'strategic partnership' with the EU and the increasingly strict visa regime for Russians threatens to undermine popular support for the 'pro-European' foreign policy course of the Putin presidency. Ironically, the visa issue also jeopardises the overall 'border deproblematisation' strategy that we discussed in relation to Karelia, insofar as the latter depends on the stimulation of active cross-border contacts on the societal level that the Schengen regime makes problematic. Cronberg's (2003) study explicitly demonstrates the paradox, whereby the EU is simultaneously the 'condition of possibility' of the transformation of the Finnish-Russian border into an integrated borderland of the Euregio and the main structural constraint to this very transformation.⁸⁰

Christopher Browning's (2002) notion of the 'external/internal security paradox' of the EU permits to understand the way EU's own practices contradict and endanger its own cooperative logic. According to Browning, there is a distinction between EU's goal of 'internal security', essentially a 'modernist' (supra-) statist project that rests on the strict and exclusive delimitation of borders, and the more open and outward-oriented project of external security, in which inclusive and cooperative relations with Russia appear to be crucial. In the

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 44. Translation by author.

⁷⁶ Trenin 2000b, particularly pp. 17-18.

⁷⁷ See Tkachenko 2000, Bordachev 2001, Leshukov 2000, Khudolei 2003.

⁷⁸ Trenin 2000b, p. 19. Translation by author.

⁷⁹ Khudolei 2003, p. 24. Translation by author.

⁸⁰ See also Tkachenko 2000 for the discussion of the detrimental effects of the enlargement on the existing cross-border cooperation.

context of EU-Russian relations the goal of internal security refers to containing the ‘soft security threats’ emanating from Northwest Russia⁸¹, including crime and illegal immigration, and thus *guarding* the freedoms that obtain *within* the delimited EU space. The Schengen regime clearly serves to respond to these threats, yet simultaneously problematises the project of external security. According to Lyndelle Fairlie (2001), who analyses this dilemma in relation to Kaliningrad⁸², the EU faces a problem of simultaneously preventing the emergence of ‘new dividing lines’ in a project of enhancing cooperative arrangements in the Wider Europe and actively drawing those very same lines in the project of optimising internal security.⁸³ While Kaliningrad obviously illustrates this dilemma most starkly, being the ‘internal outside’ of the EU that is impossible to deal with within the inside/outside logic, the dilemma in question appears to be of general significance for EU-Russian relations and the increasing number of border regions, including Karelia. Simply put, *the conflict-tempering project of border deproblematisation is undermined by the re-problematisation of the EU-Russian border as a line of exclusion from the area of ‘freedom, security and justice’*. The role of the EU in the displacement of the border dispute between Russia and Finland should not therefore be equated with the transformation of the border itself from a line of exclusion into an integrated borderland of cooperation, which remains a potentiality rather than an assured outcome. Within the conceptual framework of Browning and Fairlie, the actualisation of this potentiality will largely depend on internal discursive dynamics within the EU, i.e. on whether the ‘soft-securitising’ discourse with regard to Russia prevails over the more cooperative or integrationist stance.

3.2. The Lack of Strategic Intersubjectivity: Problems with Regard to Cooperation in the Northern Dimension

The specific problems with regard to the existing forms of cooperation have partially been addressed above and primarily concern the inflexibility of the European Commission’s operating procedures with regard to the coordination of Tacis and Interreg programmes, which complicates the functioning of such arrangements as the Euregio and more generally disables the logic of combining regional development and external relations into a coherent policy.⁸⁴ While the problem of coordination has now been officially accepted by the EU and preliminary studies have been carried out on the possibility of improving the situation⁸⁵, no practical solutions have yet been implemented, one of the interpretations ventured in the literature being the EU unwillingness to give the external party any control over EU funds.⁸⁶ In the Republic of Karelia, this problem has been raised repeatedly by both Head of the Republic Katanandov and Minister Shlyamin in their articles and speeches regarding the implementation of the Euregio project.⁸⁷ A number of Russian analysts have also raised the question of the possibility of restructuring the operation of EU Tacis along the lines of the Phare programme, whereby the current focus of the programme on the minimisation of soft security threats in areas such as health care, social protection, environment, etc. is

⁸¹ See Pursiainen 2001 for the detailed discussion of ‘soft security threats’ allegedly emanating from Northwest Russian regions, bordering on the EU.

⁸² Fairlie 2001, pp. 14-19. The tension between external and internal security, i.e. between an “open and secure Union” is also the point of departure of Potemkina’s (2003) analysis of Russian concerns with regard to the enlargement. See particularly pp. 229-234.

⁸³ According to Khudolei (2003, pp. 24-25) this ambiguous situation is likely to be intensified with the enlargement, insofar as domestic policy discourses in many of the new member states (e.g. the Baltic states) still actively deploy the construction of Russia as a security threat and exhibit scepticism with regard to closer cooperation.

⁸⁴ For the discussion of these problems see Cronberg 2003, Aleksandrov 2001, Tkachenko 2000, Fairlie 2001, Khudolei 2003. See also Joenniemi and Sergounin 2003.

⁸⁵ See Bringing Interreg and Tacis Funding Together. (WWW-document.)

⁸⁶ See particularly Cronberg 2003.

⁸⁷ See Shlyamin 2000a, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, Katanandov 2001a, 2003c, 2003d. See also Ukkone 2001a.

supplemented by the regional-level support to structural reforms undertaken by the federal government.⁸⁸ Decentralisation of the management of the programme and the transfer of decision-making on concrete projects to the regional and local levels has also been advocated.⁸⁹

The EU wariness of surrendering any measure of control to the external party is also evident in the politics of the Northern Dimension Initiative (NDI) which, according to a number of Russian critics⁹⁰, to date manifestly remains an EU *policy* on Russia rather than a *framework* of EU-Russian relations. The conceptual difference is evident: in the present case Russia figures as an external *object* of the initiative rather than an equal *subject* within a joint framework. While neither institutionalised nor endowed with an independent budgetary basis, the Northern Dimension is nonetheless highly important as a delimitation of the EU's interest in Russia, singling out the Russian Northwest as a priority area. This delimitation was initially anticipated in Europe as liable to misconstrual on the part of the Russian authorities as possibly contributing to further fragmentation and disintegration of the federation.⁹¹ None of such worries materialised, perhaps since the fear of increasing regional disparities must presuppose massive financial inputs of the EU in the grand project of 'raising' the Russian Northwest, that are manifestly absent at present and may hardly be anticipated in the future. Instead, Russia's initial restrained response was rather motivated by the absence of any substantive content in the Initiative aside from the focus on natural resources. Indeed, the Russian Midterm Strategy on the EU emphasises "*substantialising by joint efforts* the initiative of the Northern Dimension in the European cooperation [...] to ensure that the implementation of this initiative is directed not only at the promotion of exploration and exportation of raw materials but also at the *integrated development of the Northern and the Northwestern Russia*"⁹². Similarly, there have been repeated calls on the regional level (e.g. by Karelian officials) to form *joint* working groups on the NDI to substantialise the initiative, which was perceived by regional policy makers including Minister Shlyamin to be devoid of concrete content and not harmonised with the interests of the Russian state and Russian regions.⁹³ "To date, the Northern Dimension Action Plan [...] is not articulated with Russian projects in the north of Europe."⁹⁴

The Russian discourse on the NDI has undergone a considerable transformation after the establishment in May 2000 of seven Federal Districts, headed by presidential plenipotentiary representatives and, more specifically, after the formation in the Northwestern Federal District of two policy think tanks: the independent Strategic Designs Centre (SDC) 'North-West' (an offshoot of the Moscow SDC, which produced the Russian government's long-term reform programme) and the Expert Council on Economic Development and Investment (ECEDI), associated with the administration of the Presidential Representative.⁹⁵ Two strategic policy documents were produced during 2001-2002: the SDC Doctrine of the Development of the Northwest of Russia and the ECEDI Strategy of Socioeconomic Development of the

⁸⁸ The task of articulating the priorities of EU Tacis with the reform programme of the Putin presidency was resolved with relative success during 2001-2002, when the main coordinating function of the operation of the programme was bestowed on the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, which is also responsible for strategic reform design. The latest Tacis Indicative Programmes explicitly link the change in priorities with the need to articulate the operation of the programme with the reforms undertaken by the Russian government. See National Indicative Programme 2004-2006 (WWW-document.) and Tacis Indicative Programme. Russian Federation. 2000-2003. (WWW-document.)

⁸⁹ See Khudolei 2003, Bordachev 2003.

⁹⁰ See Bordachev 2003, Khudolei 2003. See also Haukkala 2001 for the Finnish perspective on this question. For the detailed discussion of the Russian reception of the Northern Dimension see Joenniemi and Sergounin 2003, chapters 3, 4.

⁹¹ See Haukkala 2001, Tkachenko 2000.

⁹² Russia's Midterm Strategy towards the EU. (WWW-document.) Emphasis added.

⁹³ Shlyamin 2000a, 2002b.

⁹⁴ Shlyamin 2001b. Translation by author. See also Khudolei 2003. For the local perspective on the possibilities that the Northern Dimension initiative offers Karelia see Feklichev 2003.

⁹⁵ See respectively <http://www.csr-nw.ru>, <http://www.expnw.ru>. The activities of these institutions in the process of "region-making" in the Russian Northwest are addressed in more detail in Makarychev 2002.

Northwestern Federal District. Significant differences notwithstanding⁹⁶, both documents take their points of departure from problematising the absence of a strategic vision for the Russian Northwest as a whole, the weakness and the incommensurability of separate development strategies of the subjects of the federation and the consequent *passivity* of the Northwest vis-à-vis the EU policies. The SDC doctrine is particularly explicit about the need to restore *political subjectivity* to the Northwest as a macro-regional entity that could be a *partner* of the EU in the Northern Dimension. The Doctrine advocates *macro-regionalism*, exemplified by the formation of federal districts, as a *creative response* to globalisation/regionalisation, an alternative to ‘regionalisation-by-default’ that results in fragmentation and the stagnation of Northwestern regions as weak and inefficient administrative-territorial subjects that are at best capable of being passive *objects* of EU macro-regional projects such as the Northern Dimension. More specifically, the Doctrine stipulates the following ‘mega-projects’ that partly connect with the priorities of the Northern Dimension initiative and may thus serve as possible points of interface: the introduction of innovations in energy production and consumption, development of innovative technologies in forestry and timber industry, development of human capital through lifelong education, construction of ‘multicultural communication networks’ through transboundary regional cooperation, the development of Kaliningrad as a pilot project of “addressing the problem of the independent development of the country within international integration” and development of the Russian (Far) North.⁹⁷ The work of the Strategic Designs centre has been praised by Karelian policy-makers, including Minister Shlyamin, who considers macro-regional integration to be central to the successful response to future challenges in the north of Europe:

The Northwest requires a thoughtful complex approach to itself as a common economic space. Unfortunately for a long time such an approach was lacking, as every subregion of the Northwest of the Russian Federation designed the strategy of its development autonomously, which did not give the Northwest proper investment attractiveness. In 2000, after the establishment of federal districts, the situation changed for the better. *Finally, the state has posed the task of designing a strategy of the development of federal districts, [...] thus reviving the very concept of strategic planning.*⁹⁸

The federal district must undoubtedly become a common economic space, literally penetrated throughout by inter-regional infrastructural projects. Thus, the efforts of the Strategic Designs Centre ‘North-West’ in developing a strategy of the development of our macro-region are extremely valuable. [...] *Only in this manner is it possible to achieve organic development of the whole space of the Northwest, make it attractive for investment and create preconditions for an adequate response to the Northern Dimension of the European Union.*⁹⁹

If subjected to practical implementation, the Northwest Development Doctrine radically reorients EU-Russian regional cooperation away from largely tactical, problem-solving, peripheral projects undertaken on EU terms and on the basis of the EU’s interest in minimising the ‘soft security’ threats to the inclusion of the international dimension into the

⁹⁶ These differences may be summarised as follows. The SDC Doctrine is a fairly radical policy vision that seeks to offer a new ‘mega-project’ for the construction (‘assembly’) of the macro-region of the Northwest, while the Strategy is a more conceptually modest programme of socioeconomic development, focusing less on the radical transformation of the political subjectivity of the Northwest than on sector-specific problem-solving measures. The Doctrine remains a more interesting document for our present purposes insofar as it is more explicit and detailed in its treatment of the international environment of the Federal District and its proposal to integrate the ‘assembly of the Northwest’ with the dominant international trends.

⁹⁷ Doctrine of the Development of the Northwest of Russia, pp. 34-35. Projects of energy innovations, education and multicultural communication most clearly accord with the priorities of the Northern Dimension and the Tacis programme.

⁹⁸ Shlyamin 2001b. Emphasis added. Translation by author. See also Ukkone 2001b.

⁹⁹ Shlyamin 2001a. Emphasis added. Translation by author. Similarly, with regard to the negotiations on the Euregio, Shlyamin recalls that “we have insistently raised the question of *harmonising EU programmes with Russian interests*, our own plans, since we have ourselves designed a long-term programme of the socioeconomic development of the region until 2010, in which we clearly state our objectives in the spheres of the economy, environment, education, health care, international tourism and culture.” (Shlyamin 2000a. Emphasis added.) The demand for what may be called strategic intersubjectivity, in which EU strategies would be integrated with domestic reform visions, is thus articulated on both regional and macro-regional levels.

overall macro-regional development project so that ‘international regionalisation’ complements, rather than substitutes for, the inter-regional integration within Russia.¹⁰⁰ One may say that in this manner EU-Russian regional cooperation will be strategically integrated into the Russian postcommunist reform programme, elaborated at the federal level but concretised and diversified on the macro-regional (and, in the process of implementation, the local) level. In other words, we may speak of the possibility of the emergence of a *strategic intersubjectivity* (rather than a subject-object relationship) between Russia and the EU, regarding the cooperation in the North of Europe.

There remains a question of whether the EU is willing and capable of a similarly innovative response to this initiative (and hence the reconstruction of the regional aspect of the present frameworks of cooperation with Russia). The assertive tone of the Doctrine and its opposition to the passive role of the Northwest as the object of external development strategies and the recipient of European technological and policy innovations should not obscure the fact that the Doctrine exemplifies one of the first consistent and internally coherent programmes of Russian integration into the European space. In the case of the interface of this Doctrine with EU policies in the Northern Dimension, the Northwestern Federal District may become the proper ‘pilot project’ (i.e. an experiment with potentially generalisable results) for EU-Russian relations, instead of Kaliningrad, which as an exceptional case is not fit for the pilot status by definition (in a more practical sense, it is precisely the limitation of Kaliningrad to a testing ground of more general forms of EU-Russian cooperation that would constitute a major policy *failure* on the Russian part.)¹⁰¹ Such a project, grounded in the interface of strategic visions, could endow with concrete content the principles of “complementarity, subsidiarity and synergy”, proclaimed in the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan,¹⁰² and substantialise the long-term project of cooperation, stipulated in the EU initiative of the ‘Wider Europe’.¹⁰³

Alternatively, the failure of such an inter-subjective reconstruction of the NDI is likely to increase tensions not merely with regard to specific issues but more generally concerning the future of EU-Russian relations as ‘strategic partnership’. It is precisely the form and the degree of *partnership* that is presently being problematised and found wanting in the Russian discourse with regard to both the EU and Northern European regional arrangements.¹⁰⁴ As the socioeconomic situation in the country is stabilising and the political regime consolidating, one may anticipate a more assertive orientation in Russian foreign policy. While there is a general consensus about the benefits of cooperation with the EU, the specific *model* of EU-Russian relations is a more contentious matter, which is reflected in the official declarations on the need to review the existing Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.¹⁰⁵ It is to be emphasised that as a state that is not even potentially viewed in terms of prospective EU membership, Russia is only to be expected to ‘take exception’ from externally designed rules and principles and demand the recognition of its autonomous voice and legitimate interests in the region. “The fact that Russia tries to have its norms coincide with EU norms does not mean that it will automatically abide by the norms that have been designed without its

¹⁰⁰ The example of the SDC Doctrine supports the thesis in Joenniemi 2003 that, contrary to the conventional view, it is Russia rather than the EU that has been at the forefront of policy innovations (at least on the level of a ‘grand vision’), while the EU’s relations with Russia have been characterised by the wariness of experimentation and the affirmation of the immutability of EU principles and practices. The nature of EU common foreign and security policy as based on the lowest common denominator of the variable interests of the member states (See Haukkala 2000, 2003) may account for the risk-averse and moderate orientation of EU policies with regard to Russia.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Khudolei 2003, p. 27.

¹⁰² The Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, p. 2. (WWW-document.)

¹⁰³ See Wider Europe: Neighborhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours. (WWW-document.)

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Shlyamin 2001b, Ukkone 2001c. See also Tkachenko 2000, Khudolei 2003.

¹⁰⁵ See Bordachev 2003.

participation.”¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the wariness of subjection to external norms is by no means restricted to conservative or ‘nationalist’ discourses. A number of analysts of liberal persuasion, as well as the politicians on the center-right, have recently voiced strong scepticism about the ultimate goals of Russia’s cooperation with the EU and urged to put the question of potential EU membership aside once and for all.¹⁰⁷ Instead of *being integrated* into the EU, leading liberal reformers, such as Anatoly Chubais, have posed the task of actively *integrating* the post-Soviet space into what became controversially termed a ‘liberal empire’ that could act as an *equal partner* of the EU rather than an object of EU policies.¹⁰⁸ In all these discourses it is precisely the dimension of active political subjectivity and autonomous strategic vision that is prioritised.

As the prospect of Russia’s EU membership is increasingly perceived even by the liberal political forces as both unlikely and ultimately unattractive, and Russia’s foreign policy becomes more assertive due to the political stabilisation and consolidation in the Putin presidency, it appears unrealistic to anticipate Russia to embark (even in a selective and lukewarm manner) on the passive course of approximating its legislation and practices to the EU *acquis communautaire*. On the other hand, the very overcoming of the protracted political and socioeconomic crisis of the 1990s enhances the potential for EU-Russian cooperation to be more than ‘crisis management’ or a ‘firefighting’ *response* to ‘new security threats’. The innovative potential of EU-Russian relations, particularly in the regional aspect, appears to depend on the EU’s willingness to recognise Russia as a legitimately active *subject* rather than a passive object of the implementation of a Common Strategy. Thus, while in the first conflict dyad, described above, it was the EU *exclusion* of Russia that was problematised, the problematic of strategic intersubjectivity points to a certain wilful ‘*self-exclusion*’ of Russia from the EU normative space as a state with a newly found appreciation of sovereignty, keen to retain the freedom of manoeuvre in domestic reforms and foreign policies. Timofei Bordachev (2003) considers the tension between the reassertion of state sovereignty in the Russian discourse and the interest in (particularly economic) cooperation and integration with the EU to be the key contradiction in EU-Russian relations that is liable to create conflictual situations and crises.¹⁰⁹ The sustainability of EU-Russian cooperation in the North of Europe thus depends on the willingness and the capacity of the parties to find a balanced format of cooperation that accommodates both sovereign and integrationist logics. Ironically, this dualism echoes the EU dilemma of internal/external security, insofar as what is at stake is a choice between clear lines of division and delimited spaces of authority, and a more open, inclusive and ‘desecuritized’ orientation. It therefore appears that for both Russia and the EU the strategy of cooperation and border deproblematisation eventually encounters the limit, posed by more state-centred, exclusionary, boundary-producing or, simplistically, ‘modernist’ projects of the two parties. This is not to say that these projects are antagonistic to cooperation *per se*: one may well envision a considerable degree of strategic intersubjectivity between self-consciously sovereign agents, recognising each other’s legitimate differences. It is rather to suggest that more ambitious arrangements in e.g. regional integration are by definition made problematic by the two sides’ delimitation of the inside/outside distinction, i.e. by the EU’s exclusionary approach to borders on the one hand and Russia’s self-assertion as a sovereign political subject on the other.

¹⁰⁶ Khudolei 2003, p. 31. Translation by author.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. Baunov 2003, Remizov 2003. In contrast to the more conventional opposition to Russia’s EU membership from geopolitical and other ‘multipolarity-oriented’ discourses, the liberal opposition to the EU membership proceeds from the unwillingness to abide by the detailed prescriptions of the *acquis communautaire*, particularly insofar as the second round of liberal reforms in the Putin presidency has increased the liberal forces’ sense of self-certitude and thus makes integration into European structures less important politically and symbolically than in the beginning of the 1990s.

¹⁰⁸ See Chubais 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Bordachev 2003, pp. 102-108.

In conclusion, on the basis of the above review we may formulate two working hypotheses for further empirical research:

1. With regard to *specific border disputes* such as that unfolding around the Finnish-Russian border, the impact of EU-Russian relations in the framework of the Northern Dimension and concrete cross-border cooperation programmes has served to displace the border issue, narrowly conceived in terms of interstate relations, by opening multiple pathways for cooperative arrangements on the regional level, both *ad hoc* and, in the case of Euregio Karelia, relatively institutionalised. With regard to this *border deproblematization hypothesis*, it remains to be said that this conflict-tempering role of the EU is perhaps made possible by the latency of the border issue on the official level, which limits the hypothesis in question to such cases as ‘the Karelian issue’.
2. However, the practices of EU-Russian relations also serve to *produce* conflictual dispositions that, furthermore, may be anticipated to *spill over* beyond the narrow *issues* in interstate relations into the social space and acquire characteristics of ‘*identity conflicts*’. Two key discursive axes, along which conflictual dispositions are enunciated, have been identified in the literature:
 - 2.1. The *problematic of the ‘Schengen curtain’*, related to the expansion of the strict visa regime for Russians in the course of EU enlargement. This issue is capable of developing into a conflict discourse on Russia’s *exclusion* from Europe and, in practical terms, is hazardous to the EU’s own strategy of border deproblematization. The interpretation of this contradiction may be found in the dilemma between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ security projects of the EU, whereby the logic of regional integration clashes with a ‘soft-securitising’ uniform approach to borders.
 - 2.2. The problematic of Russia’s low degree of influence or *passive status* in cooperative arrangements with the EU, which has resulted in the efforts to reconstitute the Northwestern Federal District as an *active political subject* and the calls to enhance Russia’s *participation* in the design of programmes within the Northern Dimension, recasting the NDI in terms of ‘strategic intersubjectivity’. In the extreme case, the lack of recognition of Russia as a legitimate political subject with its own interests that need not necessarily coincide with those of the EU may bring forth a discourse of *self-exclusion* from European integration, grounded in the renewed reaffirmation of sovereignty. In practical terms, such a disposition undermines the cooperative and integrative EU-Russian arrangements already at work in the North of Europe.

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Summary

The development of EU-Russian relations since the early 1990s, while conventionally international in the sense of being a treaty-based partnership, has also been marked by a phenomenon of relative novelty: active formation of transboundary regional linkages. This international regionalisation is an obvious novelty for Russia, whose Soviet-era foreign policy was limited to exclusive and elitist state diplomacy, but is also approached as a landmark phenomenon within Europe, where it is frequently cast as a 'postmodern' challenge to sovereign statehood and modern territoriality. The inter-regional cooperation of Russia and the European Union is geographically limited to the North of Europe, an area arguably most advanced in deploying multiple regional institutional arrangements (Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Council of Baltic Sea States, etc) that permit to speak of the area as a regionalized network, in which the multiperspectival reconstruction of the political space displaces the strict divide between the domestic and the international. These new regional arrangements have been anticipated to transform the nature of EU-Russian relations in the North of Europe, which, although never explicitly conflictual, have, as in the case of the Finnish-Russian border, been marred by the heritage of historical animosities. The review of the literature on EU-Russian relations in the European North permits to venture the following hypotheses:

3. With regard to *specific border disputes* such as that unfolding around the Finnish-Russian border and the territories ceded to the USSR after World War II, the impact of EU-Russian relations in the framework of the Northern Dimension and concrete cross-border cooperation programmes has served to displace the border issue, narrowly conceived in terms of interstate relations, by opening multiple pathways for cooperative arrangements on the regional level. These pathways range from *ad hoc* contacts, exchanges and linkages to more ambitious and relatively institutionalised arrangements such as Euregio Karelia. Moreover, it is within the EU logic of regional integration that the border question, which in the statist logic belongs squarely to the competence of national authorities, becomes reinscribed within the *low-political* framework of cross-border cooperation. We propose to term this 'EU-logic' of reconstructing the Karelian question the strategy of 'deproblematisation' of the border, in which no political decisions are taken with regard to the border per se (either restrictive or facilitative, e.g. the abolition of visa controls) but the function of borders is reconstructed in the new cooperative context. In this case, the EU may be said to have an *enabling impact* on the transformation of the 'border question'.
4. However, the practices of EU-Russian relations also serve to *produce* conflictual dispositions that, furthermore, may be anticipated to *spill over* beyond the narrow *issues* in interstate relations into the social space and acquire characteristics of '*identity conflicts*'. Two key discursive axes, along which conflictual dispositions are enunciated, have been identified in the literature:
 - 4.1. The *problematic of the 'Schengen curtain'*, related to the expansion of the strict visa regime for Russians in the course of EU enlargement. In addition to creating

practical controversies in specific discursive arenas, this issue is capable of developing into a conflict discourse on Russia's *exclusion* from Europe and, in practical terms, is hazardous to the EU's own strategy of border deproblematization, insofar as the latter depends on the stimulation of active cross-border contacts on the societal level that the Schengen regime makes problematic. Moreover, exclusionary border policies weaken the force of the *connective impact* that EU cross-border cooperation programmes elicit on the wider societal level. The interpretation of this contradiction may be found in the dilemma between 'external' and 'internal' security projects of the EU, whereby the logic of regional integration clashes with a 'soft-securitising' uniform approach to borders that casts Russia as a source of 'new security threats'.

- 4.2. The problematic of Russia's low degree of influence or *passive status* in cooperative arrangements with the EU, which has resulted in the efforts to reconstitute the Northwestern Federal District as an *active political subject* and the calls to enhance Russia's *participation* in the design of programmes within the Northern Dimension, recasting the NDI in terms of 'strategic intersubjectivity'. In the extreme case, the lack of recognition of Russia as a legitimate political subject with its own interests that need not necessarily coincide with those of the EU may bring forth a discourse of *self-exclusion* from European integration, grounded in the renewed reaffirmation of sovereignty. In practical terms, such a disposition undermines the cooperative and integrative EU-Russian arrangements already at work in the North of Europe.

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